Stepping Into the Fray: When Do Mediators Mediate?

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In this article, I analyze the conditions that promote the request, offer, and occurrence of mediation between enduring rivals. Although the mediation literature has devoted considerable attention to the form that mediation takes, the approaches that mediators use, and the conditions under which it is successful, little attention has been given to the conditions under which mediation is most likely to occur. The results of the analysis point to a disconnect among enduring rivalries between the factors that the literature highlights as promoting mediation success and those that promote the onset of mediation. This disconnect is particularly apparent in the conditions that prompt third-parties to offer mediation.

This article examines the conditions that promote the request, offer, and occurrence of mediation between enduring rivals. Although the mediation literature has devoted considerable attention to the form that mediation takes, the approaches that mediators use, and the conditions under which it is successful, little attention has been given in the literature to the conditions under which mediation is most likely to occur. In general, there seem to be two primary reasons for this lack of attention within the scholarly literature.

First, mediation studies have largely been driven by a prescriptive aim, seeking to better understand how the prospects for successful conflict management can be improved. As a result, scholars have tended to focus their attention on mediation outcomes rather than the causes of mediation. Second, there is scant work in other disciplines from which to draw that study when mediation takes place. This limited attention to the occurrence of mediation is most directly tied to the fact that, quite often, mediation is required by law, rather than chosen by the parties. Many states, for example, require divorcing couples that are unable to agree on the division of marital assets to participate in mediation. Mediation between disputing states rarely carries such a mandate. Instead, international mediation requires the presence of a willing mediator and the consent of the disputing states.

Despite this lack of attention in the literature, understanding the conditions under which mediation takes place is important from both a practical and a methodological perspective. Practically, understanding the conditions that prompt the occurrence of mediation provides a basis for comparison to the conditions that promote successful mediation outcomes. In short, does mediation tend to take place when it is most likely to be successful? The analysis in this article, although not focused on mediation success, will be paralleled with the empirical findings in the mediation ripeness literature.

Methodologically, it is necessary to understanding the conditions under which international mediation takes place in order to control for selection bias. Selection bias is likely to be an important issue in the study of international mediation because it is reasonable to expect that, rather than selecting cases for mediation randomly, disputants and third-parties tie their decision to mediate to the chances for its success. Much of the literature, however, fails to control for this source of bias, raising the possibility of faulty inferences. This study, although not explicitly examining the process behind mediation success, will provide a jumping off point for future studies of mediation success.

The analysis below focuses upon enduring rivals for two key reasons. First, the empirical literature on mediation ripeness has emphasized enduring rivals, providing a useful basis for comparison. Second, from a practical standpoint, enduring rivalries represent the most dangerous dyads in the international system. They are both particularly likely to escalate to high level of conflict and particularly likely to draw mediation. As a result, it is
critical to understand the conditions that promote mediation between them. Before examining the conditions under which mediation occurs, I begin with a discussion of international mediation as a conflict management tool.

**Mediation as a Conflict Management Tool**

Mediation is a frequently used tool in dispute resolution between individuals, companies and workers, and states. As such, mediation research is a cross-disciplinary endeavor, attracting work in psychology, labor and industrial relations, sociology, and political science. Not surprisingly, this diversity of approaches has led to a variety of definitions of mediation. Pruitt and Kressel (1989) describe mediation as the assistance of a third party to multiple interacting parties. Often, conceptions of mediation and the role of the mediator tend to emphasize the role of the mediator in fostering an agreement between the parties (Zartman and Touval 1996). Ott, for example, defines a mediator as “one who comes between the conflicting parties with the aim of offering a solution to their dispute and/or facilitating mutual concessions” (1972, 597).

Other conceptions of mediation emphasize not only its role in fostering agreement between disputing parties, but also its role in reducing conflict between them. Skjelsbæk, for example, describes mediation as “efforts by third parties to prevent the eruption or escalation of destructive conflict behaviour and to facilitate a settlement which makes renewed destructive behaviour unlikely” (1991, 100). Young (1967) develops a more specific definition of mediation, describing it as an action aimed at reducing the problems of bargaining and facilitating the termination of a crisis through the action of an actor not a direct party to the crisis. Bercovitch (2002) links mediation and negotiation by defining mediation as an extension and continuation of the parties’ conflict management efforts. In each of these conceptions of mediation, the mediation effort is viewed as part of the broader process of conflict and conflict management, a point emphasized by Bercovitch and Houston (2000).

Although mediators play an important role in proposing solutions to the disputes they mediate, mediators do more than just propose possible settlements. A key impediment to mediation is what Ott (1972) terms the “bargainer’s dilemma.” The bargainer’s dilemma results because, although disputants tend to fear that a willingness to make concessions signals weakness, disputants must make concessions in order to reach an agreement. Mediators can play a useful role by reducing disputants’ fears of exploitation and providing the political cover necessary for the parties to make concessions (Carnevale and Choi 2000). By playing this face-saving role for disputants, mediators can better enable disputants to “sell” an agreement to their domestic constituents. It was, for example, easier for China to release captured American pilots shot down over Korea when asked to do so by the U.N. Secretary-General than it would have been if asked to do so by the United States (Urquhart 1972, cited in Carnevale and Choi 2000).

Although mediators often share similar goals in impacting the disputes in which they intervene, they have different incentives for doing so. Some third parties intervene in disputes with little direct interests at stake. In other cases, third parties intervene in conflicts because they see their own interests at stake. Princen (1992) describes these two types of mediators as neutral mediators and principal mediators.

Principal mediators, such as the United States during the Falklands War, have both an indirect interest in the dispute and the ability and willingness to bring resources to bear in order to aid in settling it. American mediation in the Middle East following the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, for example, was driven by threats to American interests in the region more than by an American desire to be an impartial mediator in the conflict. Because of their interest in the dispute itself, principal mediators are often willing to offer side-payments such as security guarantees, cease-fire monitoring, and direct aid to the disputants in order to sweeten potential deals and pave the way for an agreement between the parties. Disputants are often keenly aware of the interest that principal mediators have in the settlement of their dispute and sometimes attempt to translate that interest into higher levels of side-payments from the mediator.¹

Neutral mediators, by contrast, lack an interest in the outcome of the conflict itself and bring few resources to settle the dispute. Instead, neutral mediators promote agreements between disputants by providing forums for discussion and interaction between disputants, acting as go-betweens among disputants when face-to-face dialogue is problematic, and seeking to build trust between disputants. Princen (1992), for example, points to the papal mediation of the Beagle Channel dispute between Chile and Argentina as a classic example of neutral mediation. Norwegian mediation in the Middle East has also taken the form of neutral mediation.

¹Richmond’s (1998) discussion of mediation with devious objectives provides an excellent discussion of the ways in which disputants can take advantage of the interests and resources of third-parties.
Because mediation is a costly and time-consuming process for both the mediator and the disputants, mediation efforts, if they are to be successful, should be timed in order to take advantage of favorable conditions for mediation. The remainder of this article will examine the conditions under which mediation is most likely to take place among enduring rivals.

**Bringing the Parties Together: When Mediation Occurs**

The literature has largely focused upon four sets of factors as the key influences upon when international mediation takes place. These factors center upon the likelihood of mediation success, the characteristics of the disputants, the previous conflict management history of the disputants, and the threats, both domestic and international, outside the rivalry faced by the disputants.

**Conflict Stalemate Factors**

Ideally, mediation will take place when it is most likely to be successful. Although no consensus on the definition of mediation success exists in the literature, scholars have generally focused upon the ability of mediation to stimulate an agreement between disputants, reduce the frequency of future conflict, or to reduce the intensity of conflict when it does break out as indicators that mediation has been successful. The mediation literature has pointed to the costs and outcomes of conflict, the presence of other threats to disputants, and power parity as key contextual factors that promote successful mediation. As a result, if mediation tends to take place when it is most apt to be successful, we should see a linkage between these factors and the occurrence of mediation.

A key argument within the mediation literature is that successful mediation is most directly tied to the costs of conflict. Mitchell (1995), for example, argues that agreement between disputants can only occur when the disputants cannot neither conceive of a successful outcome through the continued use of conflict nor an see end to the unbearable costs of conflict. Indeed, there is much theoretical work that suggests that intense conflict functions to heighten the willingness of disputants to accept mediation (Jackson 1952; Regan and Stam 2000; Young 1967). Similarly, Zartman (2000) points to the importance of the development of a “hurting stalemate,” suggesting that mediation efforts are more likely to bear fruit when neither side is capable of imposing its will upon the other and the status quo is sufficiently unpleasant that disputants are encouraged to move away from the status quo. Mor (1997) makes a similar argument, suggesting that a key time-point during a rivalry occurs when the leadership and/or the general publics within disputing states realize that a transition to a more cooperative strategy would better serve state interests than a continued reliance upon conflictual strategies.

Richter (1992) argues that repeated international crises can function to demonstrate to leaders that the existing foreign policy is likely to continue to result in heavy losses. As a result, the high costs and patterns of repeated failure endemic to hurting stalemates function to encourage movement toward less conflictual strategies. Henry Kissinger, for example, in mediating between Egypt and Israel during the 1973 October War recognized that only a war with neither victory nor defeat could lay the groundwork for settlement and sought to manipulate events to foster this stalemate (Richter 1992). By forcing the disputants to continue to incur costs with little benefit, Kissinger sought to foster recognition of the failure of conflictual strategies between the rivals. Greig (2001) empirically tests these arguments about conflict costs and finds that mediation is most apt to be successful as a hurting stalemate develops between the disputants. In particular, successful mediation among enduring rivalries is significantly related to the severity of previous conflict and the extent to which conflict outcomes have been stalemated. Greig finds that the longer a rivalry persists and, by extension, these costs mount, the more likely mediation is to be successful.

Other empirical work, however, has emphasized the restraining effect that previous conflict has upon the occurrence of mediation. Bercovitch, Anagnoson, and Wille (1991), for example, find that mediation becomes less likely to be accepted by disputants as the severity of conflict increases. In this view, severe conflict functions to harden negotiating positions and alienate disputants. It, however, is unlikely that enduring rivalries follow this pattern. Enduring rivalries, because they are marked by frequent conflictual interactions, are by definition dyads that have moved well beyond this first opportunity for mediation. Instead, it is more reasonable to expect that enduring rivalries become amenable to mediation when they approach a second tipping point in which the level of conflict, although continuing to alienate the disputants, also becomes unbearable for them. This logic suggests the following hypotheses:

**Conflict Stalemate Hypothesis 1: The longer the duration of an enduring rivalry, the more likely mediation is to take place.**
Conflict Stalemate Hypothesis 2: As the severity of previous conflict between enduring rivals increases, the likelihood of mediation increases.

Conflict Stalemate Hypothesis 3: As the percentage of disputes ending in stalemate increases, the likelihood of mediation increases.

Fundamental to the idea that conflict intensity promotes the occurrence of mediation is the principle that as the ability of disputants to impose unilaterally their own preferred solution to the issues under conflict wanes, they become more likely to embrace cooperative approaches like mediation. A considerable body of the mediation literature (Bercovitch 1989; Kriesberg 1992; Touval 1982; Zartman 1981) points to power parity as a condition that encourages successful mediation. Modelski, for example, states "it goes strongly against human nature to seek a negotiated solution when one can be imposed merely by demanding it" (1964, 19). Similarly, Mitchell (1995) argues that adversaries in conflict will only begin to seek a negotiated solution when neither party can foresee a successful outcome through the currently conflictual policies.

Holsti (1966), for example, suggests that the two Koreas became more motivated to begin negotiations with one another by 1951 when it became increasingly apparent that neither side was able to develop the capability to defeat the other. In this sense, states engage in what Leng (2000) terms "diagnostic learning" in which they change their interpretation of situations as well as the intentions, motivations, and capabilities of their adversary. This logic suggests that because power parity tends to limit the ability of disputants to impose their own preferred solutions upon one another, parity will make mediation more likely to take place.

Another argument, however, has been made that suggests power parity functions to reduce incentives for mediation rather than increase them. Organski (1968) and Wright (1965) both suggest that power parity functions to encourage competition between disputants. When power is evenly divided between disputants then each side may come to believe that they can "win" the dispute, encouraging conflict escalation and undercutting conflict management efforts as the disputants continually challenge one another. This rationale suggests the following hypothesis:

Conflict Stalemate Hypothesis 4: The occurrence of mediation is significantly related to the power distribution between rivals.

Implied within the argument that disputants move toward mediation when a hurting stalemate develops between them is the assumption that mediation is chosen when disputants expect a better outcome with mediation than without it (Princen 1992; Pruitt 2002; Regan 2002). In this respect, not only may the costs and outcomes of previous conflict between enduring rivals stimulate their movement toward mediation, but the presence of other threats outside of the rivalry may change their strategic calculations. Pruitt (2002), for example, argues that disputants become more receptive to mediation as the cooperation of one other becomes more necessary to deal with the threat posed by a third party.

Because violence enjoys such a preeminent position within the relationship between enduring rivals, it tends to be difficult to change the strategies rivals direct toward one another and move them toward mediation. Only the most significant threats to disputants are likely to encourage rivals to change their willingness to accept mediation. Limited challenges to enduring rivals such as an isolated militarized dispute outside the rivalry are unlikely to be significant enough to increase their willingness to accept mediation. An enduring rival faced with a civil war within its borders, for example, may seek to reduce conflict within the rivalry in order to better focus its resources upon the civil war. Similarly, a state in an enduring rivalry faced with an even more challenging immediate threat in another rivalry may see mediation as a way to gain breathing space in order to deal with the immediate threat. Although disputants may use many ways of deciding which rivalry to focus upon—the most severe one, the longest running one, the most geographically proximate one—in general, the more enduring rivalries a state participates in, the more likely it should be willing to engage in mediation within those rivalries.

This logic, however, begs a second question—how does the rival not experiencing the threat react to the existence of an internal or external threat to its adversary? On one hand, the non-threatened rival may resist mediation, expecting that its hand is suddenly strengthened. Internally the threat posed by a third party.

Conflict Stalemate Hypothesis 5: Mediation is more likely to take place when a civil war is ongoing within at least one of the enduring rivals.

Conflict Stalemate Hypothesis 6: As the number of outside enduring rivalries participated in by a pair of enduring rivals increases, the likelihood of mediation increases.
Disputant Characteristics Factors

Although mediation may be needed within a dyad marked by frequent, intense conflict, this is no guarantee that mediation will actually occur. In addition to a willingness on the part of the disputants to participate in mediation, a willing third party is also necessary for mediation to take place. Because mediation among enduring rivals entails costs and risks for both mediators and disputants, mediation among rivals is most likely to take place when there is a third party either sufficiently interested in the conflict or the disputants themselves to intervene diplomatically. Thus, it is not surprising, given its close relationship with Israel and the importance of the Middle East in American foreign policy, that the United States has had a prolific role in mediation efforts between Israel and its neighbors.

Although all rivalries are theoretically susceptible to mediation, in practice some types of rivalries are unlikely to experience mediation. In particular, rivalries in which there is at least one major power are unlikely to attract mediation. Conflicts involving minor powers may benefit from the assistance of both principal mediators and neutral mediators. Much of the reason why the United States can play such a critical role in mediating conflict in the Middle East rests on the resources that the United States can bring to the negotiations in an effort to influence the bargaining positions of the disputants. The United States can offer carrots such as foreign aid, loans, and security guarantees as a means of creating incentives for agreement, moving disputants from their previously incompatible bargaining positions toward agreement. Neutral mediators can contribute by aiding dialogue between the disputants. Yet, the inclusion of a third party into the dialogue between disputants, particularly principal mediators, also places constraints on the actions of disputants. For minor powers, the trade-off between the benefits of mediation and the limits on action that the inclusion of a third party often entails may still favor mediation.

Major powers such as the United States or the Soviet Union/Russia, however, face a different decision calculus in agreeing to mediation. Few principal mediators are likely to have the leverage or the ability to offer the resources necessary to change the bargaining dynamic between the disputants in ways sufficient to foster agreement between the disputants when it would not otherwise take place. Butterworth (1978) finds that conflict managers were significantly less likely to attempt mediation of superpower conflicts. Similarly, Princen comments that:

Neutral mediators are also unlikely to play a decisive role in mediating conflicts between enduring rivalries involving major powers because their ability to facilitate communications between the rivals is unlikely to be worth the costs and risks that participating in mediation presents to the rivals. Instead, major powers are more likely to rely upon themselves to negotiate with their rivals rather than involve a third party. This, however, is not to say that there are not unique circumstances where neutral mediators can benefit a dispute involving a major power. The Algerian mediation between the United States and Iran during the hostage crisis is the best example of this type of case. Because both the relationship between the United States and Iran and domestic political conditions effectively foreclosed direct dialogue between the two parties, and the status quo of the dispute was highly painful to both parties (the continued holding of the U.S. hostages became increasingly unbearable to the United States, particularly as the 1980 election approached and the freezing of Iranian assets was a key concern of Iran), Algeria was able to play a key role in facilitating this communication. Yet, this case seems to be exceptional. The United States, Soviet Union/Russia, and China have each consistently sought to avoid third-party diplomatic intervention into their conflicts. This logic suggests the following hypothesis:

Disputant Characteristics Hypothesis 1: Mediation is less likely to occur in rivalries involving a major power.

An existing relationship can provide a source of prospective mediators to a conflict. Some former colonial powers, for example, have taken an active role in mediating conflicts involving their former colonial territories. These mediations are primarily driven by the history shared between the colonial power and its former colony as well as the significant economic, political, and emotional ties that persist even after the colonial ties are broken. Koen Vervaeke, Belgian Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, has commented on the Belgian role in mediating conflict in central Africa by saying:

Strictly spoken, Belgium no longer has any vital interests to protect Central Africa, even in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, despite its
potential riches. But Belgium is convinced that it has moral responsibility to demonstrate solidarity with the region in Africa it knows best and where it still has ties. Is this recognition that Belgium is responsible for all that is going wrong in its former colonies 40 years after independence? Certainly not. But as Minister Michel often says, there is a strong feeling that we owe these countries something. (2003)

Bercovitch and Schneider (2000) suggest that the residual power of former colonial rulers such as Britain and France that makes them particularly prone to mediate conflicts involving their former colonies. Britain, for example, has been involved in numerous mediation efforts involving foreign colonies, including efforts at mediating the India-Pakistan rivalry. France has been involved in mediating the conflict over the Bakassi Peninsula between Cameroon, a former colony, and Nigeria, a significant trading partner. This logic suggests the following hypothesis:

**Disputant Characteristics Hypothesis 2: Former colonies are more likely to attract mediation efforts than noncolonies.**

Beyond the colonial relationship, other ties between states can create incentives for third-parties to intervene in conflicts. Touval and Zartman (2001), for example, discuss the defensive motivation mediators often have in offering mediation. Third parties, they suggest, may offer mediation to conflicts involving their allies due to a fear that these conflicts will function to weaken the alliance or undermine the third party’s interests in a region. NATO mediation between Greece and Turkey is an example of such a case. Similarly, third parties also offer mediation as a means of preventing conflict from escalating and drawing in additional parties, including the third party itself. Touval and Zartman point to American and Soviet efforts to mediate during the 1973 Arab-Israeli war as an example of this motivation.

In this sense, this defensive motivation for mediation closely parallels Princen’s (1992) description of principal mediators because it emphasizes the important role that third-party interest plays in the selection of cases for mediation. Because major powers tend to have both the most expansive alliance networks and the resources necessary to promote their interests in the international system, it makes sense to expect that conflicts that are linked to major powers through alliance ties will be more prone to receive mediation. This logic suggests the following hypothesis:

**Disputant Characteristics Hypothesis 3: States allied to major powers are more likely to attract mediation efforts than other types of states.**

The democratic peace literature has emphasized the manner in which democracies externalize their domestic norms of compromise to their interactions in the international system. Indeed, a sizeable body of literature has suggested that democratic dyads are more amenable to accepting mediation of their conflicts. Dixon (1994) and Raymond (1994), for example, both find that democratic dyads are more likely to accept mediation of their conflicts. Bercovitch, Anagnoson, and Wille (1991) find a correlation between political pluralism and participation in mediation. In their analysis, multiparty democracies are more likely to participate in mediation than other regime types. This logic suggests that the more democratic a dyad is, the more likely it is to participate in mediation. As a result, I expect that:

**Disputant Characteristics Hypothesis 4: The more democratic a dyad is, the more likely mediation is to take place.**

Beyond the previous relations between disputants or their shared linkages, the literature has also pointed to geography as an important influence upon the occurrence of mediation. The conflict literature points to the strong tendency of disputes among contiguous states to escalate to war (see Vasquez 1995 for review). Indeed, Vasquez emphasizes the need for conflict resolution efforts to, in order to facilitate success, delink territorial issues from other types of issues. This suggests that contiguous disputants, because the issues under conflict between them are so fundamental to their security, are more likely to resist participating in mediation (Lall 1966; Ott 1972).

Another logic, however, suggests that because contiguous disputants tend to fight over territorial issues, they are more likely to participate in mediation. Although disputes over territorial issues are highly prone to escalation (Holsti 1991; Vasquez 1995), this escalatory potential may be sufficiently threatening to the disputants that they become more motivated to accept mediation. Wilkenfeld et al. (2003) find that crises between contiguous states are more likely to be mediated than those between non-contiguous states. The divisibility of territorial issues may also make disputes between contiguous states more open to mediation. Bercovitch, Anagnoson, and Wille’s (1991), for example, find that territorial issues are more amenable to mediation than other types of issues. This logic suggests that:

**Disputant Characteristics Hypothesis 5: Mediation is more likely to take place among contiguous states.**

Hensel (1999a) notes that the rivalry policies of enduring rivals become deeply entrenched into the foreign policies of rivals, making them difficult to dislodge. Diehl
and Goertz (2001), similarly, emphasize the stasis in poli-
cies that rivals direct toward one another as a basic feature
of enduring rivalries, arguing that enduring rivalries "lock
in" to conflictual policies early in their relationship. This
suggests that once committed to a conflictual policy, the
history of conflict between enduring rivals creates a mo-
mentum of its own, making changing the policy difficult.
Maoz and Mor (2002) suggest that without significant
changes in either the political or strategic makeup of rivals,
rivalries stabilize around a general pattern of conflictual
interaction.

This stasis can be broken by the occurrence of po-

titical shifts within the rivals that create an opening for
the reevaluation of the policies of enduring rivals. Stein
and Lewis (1996), for example, argue that regime changes
can assist in reviving stalled negotiations and launching
new peace initiatives. These changes can include such
things as changes in the type of regime, new methods
of leadership selection, or changes in the size of the lead-
ership selectorate. Each of these changes, because they
alter the way the government functions and the relation-
ship between the government and its citizens, can provide
a break between past and current policies. As these po-

titical changes occur, a wide range of policy beliefs and
assumptions tend to be reevaluated and replaced. In en-
during rivalries, where patterns of repeated conflict exist,
policies toward the other disputant are likely to be in-
cluded among those that are reevaluated and altered. In
this respect, major political changes within one of the dis-
putants should provide an opening for changing the rela-
tions within enduring rivalries and create an opening for
mediation.

The empirical literature has devoted some attention
to the impact of political changes upon enduring rivals. Stein
and Lewis (1996), for example, find that "shocks"
function to dislodge enduring rivals from the normal
pattern of interaction. Similarly, Greig (2001) finds that
polity changes within enduring rivals facilitate success-
ful mediation between disputants. This logic suggests the
following hypothesis:

**Disputant Characteristics Hypothesis 6:** Mediation
is more likely to take place following a recent polity
change within one of the rivals.

**Previous Conflict Management Factors**

Although mediation efforts can be tied to the history
between and characteristics of disputants, mediation is
also likely to be related to their previous conflict manage-
ment experiences. The frequency and outcomes of previ-
ous conflict management efforts, in particular, are likely
to influence the occurrence of mediation efforts between
enduring rivals.

One common theme within mediation research is
the idea that mediations do not occur in isolation from
one another. Instead, mediations often occur as part of a
broader process in which previous mediations influence
the outcomes of subsequent mediation efforts. Zubek
et al. (1992), for example, argue that mediation is more
likely to be successful as disputants develop a rapport with
the mediator and gain experience mediating their conflict.
Previous negotiations between disputants can also foster
a rapport between one another and signal a commitment
toward conflict management by them. Bercovitch (2002),
for example, describes mediation as a continuation of ne-
gotiation efforts between disputants. In this sense, me-
diation and negotiation exert a cumulative effect upon
the relations between states, an effect noted by Regan and
Stam (2000). This suggests the following relationships:

**Previous Conflict Management Hypothesis 1:** Mediation is more likely to occur the more often it has occurred in the past.

**Previous Conflict Management Hypothesis 2:** Mediation is more likely to occur the more disputants have engaged in bilateral negotiations in the past.

Although it makes sense to expect that frequent medi-
ation in the past will promote further mediation efforts in
the future, it is also reasonable to expect that the outcomes
of previous mediation efforts are likely to influence the
occurrence of mediation. By providing positive reinforce-
ment to both the disputants and the mediator, successful
mediation efforts promote further mediation. This logic
suggests the following hypothesis:

**Previous Conflict Management Hypothesis 3:** The more successful previous mediation efforts are, the more likely mediation is to take place.

**Conflict Triage Factors**

Although the occurrence of mediation may be influenced
by what has gone on within the rivalry during the past,
current events within the rivalry are also likely to im-
 pact the likelihood of mediation. Mediators may be most
apt to intervene and disputants may be most willing to
accept mediation when circumstances appear most dire.
Zartman and Touval (1996), for example, suggest that pe-
riods of crisis facilitate acceptance of mediation, a point
for which Dixon (1996) finds empirical support. Similarly,
Zartman (2000) points to the perception of a "precipice" among the disputants in which conditions are likely to deteriorate as a key force behind mediation. In this sense, mediation appears to operate as a form of triage in which the aim is simply to reduce the conflict that is currently underway before conditions further deteriorate. This logic suggests that mediation should be more likely to take place when there is an ongoing militarized dispute between the rivals.

An ongoing militarized dispute, in this view, functions to crystalize the fears and concerns of both rivals and potential mediators. Even in the most conflictual dyads periods of calm typically occur during which no militarized conflicts occur. During these periods, even if a mediator or the disputants wishes to improve the broader relationship between the rivals, it may be difficult to muster the political will to actually begin mediation. Instead, an ongoing militarized dispute may be necessary to create the sense of urgency for both disputants and potential mediators to stimulate mediation between the parties. This suggests the following hypothesis:

Conflict Triage Hypothesis 1: Mediation is more likely to be conducted during an ongoing militarized dispute.

In a similar way, a previous war can also function to crystalize the sentiment among disputants and third parties that a real danger exists between the disputants. The occurrence of a previous war can signal to disputants that they must do something to manage their conflict before conditions deteriorate. Previous warfare can also increase the willingness of third parties to intervene in a conflict because of a sense that the disputants are likely to return to conflict unless a third party assists in managing their dispute. This result suggests the following hypothesis:

Conflict Triage Hypothesis 2: Mediation is more likely to be conducted if disputants have previously gone to war with one another.

Research Design

The analysis in this article examines the population of enduring rivalries during the period from 1946 to 1992. Enduring rivalries are dispute dyads that last 20 years and experience at least six militarized disputes during that time-frame (Diehl and Goertz 2000). Diehl and Goertz identify 35 rivalries that meet this criteria during this period of time. The unit of analysis in this analysis is the rivalry-month. In assembling the data, I take a cross-section of the conditions surrounding the rivalry for each month in the life of the rivalry. After excluding rivalry-months with missing data, this process results in a database of 14,245 observations. In order to gauge the contextual conditions associated with the occurrence, offer, and request of mediation, three separate probit models are estimated. The first model focuses on the conditions that promote the occurrence of mediation. Using data from the Bercovitch (1997) International Conflict Management (ICM) data set, months in which at least one mediation effort occurs are coded as a "1" and months in which no mediation takes place as a "0." In the portion of the analysis where I focus upon whether or not mediation was requested by the disputants, months in which a mediation effort was requested by both disputants, whether or not a mediation takes place, are coded as a "1" and other months are coded as a "0." A similar procedure is used in examining the conditions that prompt third parties to offer mediation, whether or not the offer is accepted. Because mediation efforts are unlikely to be independent across time, I calculate the duration between mediations and generate cubic splines for inclusion in the models in the manner suggested by Beck, Katz, and Tucker (1998). Robust standard errors are reported in the analyses.

Conflict stalemate factors are factors that promote successful mediation and, by extension, could promote the occurrence of mediation. These factors include the costs and outcomes of previous conflict, threats to rivals, as well as the distribution of power. I use data from Diehl and Goertz (2000) to calculate the average severity scores of previous rivalry disputes. Diehl and Goertz calculate their measure of dispute severity as a term that incorporates measures of the highest level of hostility experienced during the dispute and the total number of military fatalities in the dispute into a scale that ranges from 0 to 200. The level of previously stalemated disputes is calculated using the dispute outcome variable in the MID 2.1 data set (Jones, Bremer, and Singer 1996). I include a variable in the model that describes the elapsed time in months between the first rivalry militarized dispute and the current rivalry-month. I use the MID 2.1 data set to code this variable. The power distribution is measured using the COW Utility program.

2The Beck, Katz, and Tucker correction for binary time-series cross-sectional data corrects for the temporally dependent nature of observations by fitting a series of cubic splines to the model. These splines are smooth estimators of a function describing the duration between spells within the model. In this analysis, the spells are equivalent to the duration between individual mediations within each rivalry. These splines are calculated within STATA 8 using Richard Tucker's (1999) Binary Time-Series Cross-Section Data Analysis Utility program.
composite index of national capabilities data set (Singer, Bremer, and Stuckey 1972) to create a rivalry power ratio variable. I create this variable by calculating the natural logarithm of the ratio between the larger power score in the rivalry and the smaller power score. In this respect, a rivalry with an even power distribution will have a power ratio of 0.

I also examine how the characteristics of the disputants impact their propensity for mediation. I include a dichotomous variable in the model that describes whether or not the rivalry includes at least one major power. The Correlates of War (Small and Singer 1982) major power status variable is used to create this variable. The former colony of a major power variable is coded using the ICOW Colonial History data set (Hensel 1999b). The major power alliance variable that describes whether or not one of the disputants is allied with a major power was generated using the EUGene software program (Bennett and Stam 2000). The alliance data in EUGene is calculated based upon data from Gibler and Sarkees (2002). I also code a variable that describes whether or not disputants share a land border with one another. The contiguity data was generated using EUGene and is based upon data from Small and Singer (1982). I examine the effect of dyadic democracy upon the prospects for mediation by generating a variable that describes the level of democracy of the least democratic state in the rivalry. I do this by using the democracy—autocracy score contained in the Polity III data set (Jaggers and Gurr 1995) using EUGene. Because of the frequency of rivalries in the Middle East, their high conflict severity, and the high profile of conflict management activities in the region, I also include a dichotomous variable in the model that describes whether or not the rivalry takes place in the Middle East.

Polity changes are coded based upon data in the Polity 98D data set (Gleditsch 2000). A democratic polity is coded if political restructuring within a rival positively increased the autocracy-democracy score in the Polity 98D data set. Such a change signifies political restructuring that broadens political participation, increases political openness, or enhances political liberties. An authoritarian polity change is coded if a polity change decreases the rival’s autocracy-democracy score in the Polity 98D data set. For polity changes, I focus upon a 24-month window, suggesting that the most recent polity changes are the most likely to impact the propensity for mediation. I consider two forms of threats to enduring rivals, domestic and foreign threats. I use the COW Civil Wars (Singer and Small 1993) file to code a dichotomous variable that describes whether or not a civil war was taking place during each month in the database. The level of foreign threats is coded by gauging the level of participation in other enduring rivalries by the disputants. I code this variable by multiplying together the total number of enduring rivalries participated in by each rival at each rivalry-month. In this way, because each rival at least participates in the rivalry they share, the minimum level of rivalry participation for enduring rivals is one.

In order to test the effect of previous conflict management factors, I code three variables that describe the pattern and outcomes of previous conflict management efforts. Because mediation efforts can build upon one another, suggesting that past mediation encourages future mediation, I include a variable that describes the frequency of previous mediation between disputants. Successful mediation efforts, in particular, are likely to encourage future mediation efforts. In order to gauge this effect, I include a variable that describes the percentage of previous rivalry mediation efforts that resulted in an agreement. Cases that have not yet experienced mediation are coded as zeroes. I also include a variable describing the number of previous negotiation efforts between disputants in the model. A high frequency of negotiation efforts can signal a willingness to participate in conflict management by disputants. Data for each of these variables is coded from the Bercovitch (1997) ICM data set.

In order to examine the effect of conflict triage factors, I code two variables. I include a dichotomous variable in the model that describes whether or not previous rivalry disputes have escalated to war. Information on dispute escalation is taken from the COW Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID) 2.1 data set (Jones, Bremer, and Singer 1996). Despite the fact that it may be wise for prospective mediators to seize upon periods of peace between rivals that have experienced high levels of conflict in order to build a deeper, more lasting peace, both rivals and mediators may only be sufficiently motivated to engage in mediation when an immediate threat exists—when a militarized dispute is currently occurring. In order to capture this effect, I include a dichotomous variable in the model that describes whether or not a militarized dispute was ongoing at each rivalry-month in the data set. I use data from the MID 2.1 data set to code this variable. All analyses are conducted using Stata8 software.

**Empirical Results**

The results of the analysis suggest that mediation is driven by a combination of factors, some of them related to the history of the rivals and some of them related to the characteristics of the disputants. Considerable support was found for the conflict stalemate factors, suggesting that some of the factors that promote the occurrence of
mediation also promote its success. Yet, there were also important departures from the hypothesized conflict stalemate factors, particularly in the conditions that promote third parties to offer mediation. Conflict triage factors had the most consistently strong effect upon the likelihood that mediation would be offered, requested, and conducted. These results are summarized in Table 1 and the predicted probabilities are summarized in Table 2. Because the analysis focuses upon the probability of mediation occurring during any particular month, the probabilities obtained from the analysis are quite small.3

Conflict triage factors suggest that mediation will be most directly motivated by the presence of a current threat in the relations between disputants. The results of the analysis bear this expectation out, an enduring rivalry is more than five-and-a-half times more likely to experience mediation during a month in which a militarized dispute is ongoing than when a dispute is absent. Indeed, the presence of an ongoing dispute represents the strongest influence upon the likelihood of mediation. Although not surprising, this finding suggests that a current militarized dispute serves as a focal point for conflict management, encouraging disputants and third parties to participate in mediation before conditions spiral out of control. In this respect, an ongoing militarized dispute seems to represent a precipice in the sense described by Zartman (2000). Indeed, not only is mediation more likely to take place during an ongoing dispute, but it is also more likely to be requested by both disputants and more likely to be offered by a third party during a dispute. Rivals are more than 44% more likely to request mediation during a militarized dispute than when a dispute is absent. Third parties are particularly drawn to ongoing militarized disputes. The likelihood of a third-party offer of mediation increases by nearly 15 times when a dispute is ongoing.

Disputants and third parties, however, appear to only have rather short memories, only sensing a precipice when a dispute is underway, not just when they have previously gone to war with one another. Contrary to expectations, previous warfare between rivals was not significantly related to the likelihood of mediation taking place.4 A previous war also did not significantly increase the likelihood that mediation would be requested or would take place. Although previous war does not seem to impact the propensity for mediation, the broader history of relations between enduring rivals does appear to impact the likelihood of mediation in a manner similar to that hypothesized above.

The logic described by the conflict stalemate factors suggests that mediation should take place when conflict has occurred for a long period of time, a hurting stalemate prevails, disputants are challenged by other pressing threats, and power is evenly divided. In many respects, the pattern of mediation follows this argument well. Disputants, for example, are significantly more likely to request mediation as the duration of the rivalry increases and as the average severity level of the rivalry increases. A one standard deviation increase in the level of each of these variables increases the likelihood that both disputants will request mediation by nearly 35% and 42%, respectively. The conditions that promote the onset of mediation, not surprisingly, follow a similar pattern. Mediation is significantly more likely to take place the longer a rivalry persists and the higher its level of dispute severity.

Recent political changes are also significantly related to the request, offer, and occurrence of mediation. The type of political change, however, varies considerably. The simple occurrence of a polity change within one of the rivals within the last 24 months, regardless of the direction, increases the likelihood that enduring rivals will request mediation. A recent authoritarian polity change increases the likelihood that both disputants will request mediation by more than 65% while a recent democratic polity change increases the likelihood of a request by more than 51%. This suggests that it is the rethinking of foreign policy that accompanies regime shifts, rather than the direction of the shifts that increase the likelihood that disputants will call for mediation.

Third parties, however, appear to be drawn only to democratic polity changes in selecting their cases for mediation. This result may suggest that third parties are drawn more toward the perception of the development of a norm of compromise that accompanies democratization than they are to the general opening for new thinking that can accompany any form of political restructuring. Third parties are twice as likely to offer mediation to a rivalry in which a disputant has experienced a democratic polity change within the last 24 months than to a rivalry in which no political shift has occurred. As a result, mediation is more than twice as likely to take place following a recent democratic polity change. Neither the occurrence nor the offer of mediation, however, appears significantly related to recent authoritarian polity changes. These results

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3 The probability that mediation will take place during any particular month of an average enduring rivalry is approximately .4%. In this respect, a factor that doubles the probability of mediation taking place only raises the probability to less than 1%.

4 Because of the large number of variables in the model, collinearity between variables was a concern in the analysis. There was relatively high collinearity between the previous war and average dispute severity variables. Although multiple specifications of the model and the variables were attempted, previous war was never significant, and there was virtually no effect upon the overall model. As a result, both variables are included in the model as originally theorized.
### Table 1 Probit Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict Stalemate Factors</th>
<th>Mediation</th>
<th>Third-Party Offer</th>
<th>Rival Request</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elapsed rivalry time</td>
<td>0.012**</td>
<td>-0.006</td>
<td>0.010*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous dispute severity</td>
<td>0.003*</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.004**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stalemated dispute percentage</td>
<td>-0.006***</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td>-0.003*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power distribution</td>
<td>0.066</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td>-0.115**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enduring rivalry participation</td>
<td>0.050***</td>
<td>0.027</td>
<td>0.035***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil war</td>
<td>-0.073</td>
<td>-0.008</td>
<td>-0.153</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disputant Characteristic Factors</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major power</td>
<td>-0.421**</td>
<td>-0.450*</td>
<td>0.232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major power alliance</td>
<td>0.033</td>
<td>-0.112</td>
<td>0.145**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former colony</td>
<td>0.070</td>
<td>0.198</td>
<td>-0.259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contiguity</td>
<td>1.099***</td>
<td>0.846***</td>
<td>1.153***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low democracy level</td>
<td>0.020**</td>
<td>-0.010</td>
<td>0.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>-0.300***</td>
<td>-0.334**</td>
<td>-0.628***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent authoritarian polity change</td>
<td>0.088</td>
<td>0.124</td>
<td>0.195**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent democratic polity change</td>
<td>0.250***</td>
<td>0.227**</td>
<td>0.159**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Previous Conflict Management Factors</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of previous negotiations</td>
<td>-0.023***</td>
<td>-0.028***</td>
<td>0.008***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of previous mediations</td>
<td>0.017***</td>
<td>0.035***</td>
<td>0.006*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediation success percentage</td>
<td>-0.369*</td>
<td>-0.377</td>
<td>-0.444*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict Triage Factors</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Previous war</td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing militarized dispute</td>
<td>0.644***</td>
<td>0.921***</td>
<td>0.141*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time since last mediation</td>
<td>-0.027***</td>
<td>-0.020***</td>
<td>-0.010***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-3.219***</td>
<td>-3.294***</td>
<td>-3.545***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| N                                        | 14,245    | 14,245           | 14,245        |
| Wald Chi-square (23)                      | 547.07    | 342.96           | 417.74        |
| Prob > Chi-square                         | .000      | .000             | .000          |

Robust standard errors in parentheses.

*significant at 10%; **significant at 5%; ***significant at 1%.

1 Splines excluded from table due to space limitations.
### Table 2 Predicted Probabilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict Stalemate Factors</th>
<th>Mediation</th>
<th>Third-Party Offer</th>
<th>Rival Request</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Value</td>
<td>Pred. Probability</td>
<td>% Change from Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elapsed rivalry time</td>
<td>min</td>
<td>0.0021</td>
<td>−51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+.5 s.d.</td>
<td>0.0052</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+1 s.d.</td>
<td>0.0063</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>max</td>
<td>0.0102</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous dispute severity</td>
<td>min</td>
<td>0.0024</td>
<td>−44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+.5 s.d.</td>
<td>0.0051</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+1 s.d.</td>
<td>0.0059</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>max</td>
<td>0.0092</td>
<td>1134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stalemated dispute percentage</td>
<td>min</td>
<td>0.0146</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+.5 s.d.</td>
<td>0.0033</td>
<td>−23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+1 s.d.</td>
<td>0.0028</td>
<td>−35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power distribution</td>
<td>min</td>
<td>0.0022</td>
<td>−49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+.5 s.d.</td>
<td>0.0064</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+1 s.d.</td>
<td>0.0093</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>max</td>
<td>0.0802</td>
<td>1,765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0012</td>
<td>−72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contiguity</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0017</td>
<td>−61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low democracy level</td>
<td>min</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
<td>−98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+.5 s.d.</td>
<td>0.0005</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+1 s.d.</td>
<td>0.0057</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent authoritarian polity change</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0104</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent democratic polity change</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0088</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediation success percentage</td>
<td>min</td>
<td>0.0056</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+.5 s.d.</td>
<td>0.0029</td>
<td>−33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+1 s.d.</td>
<td>0.0052</td>
<td>−54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>max</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>−100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of previous negotiations</td>
<td>min</td>
<td>0.0034</td>
<td>−21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+.5 s.d.</td>
<td>0.0055</td>
<td>−21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+1 s.d.</td>
<td>0.0007</td>
<td>−54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>max</td>
<td>0.038</td>
<td>784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of previous mediations</td>
<td>min</td>
<td>0.0034</td>
<td>−21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+.5 s.d.</td>
<td>0.0055</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+1 s.d.</td>
<td>0.0057</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediation success percentage</td>
<td>min</td>
<td>0.0051</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+.5 s.d.</td>
<td>0.0037</td>
<td>−14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+1 s.d.</td>
<td>0.0032</td>
<td>−26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>max</td>
<td>0.0017</td>
<td>−61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing militarized dispute Probability at means</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0237</td>
<td>451</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conflict Triage Factors**
suggest that disputants focus upon the opportunity for the reconsideration of rivalry relations that can occur following political restructuring in requesting mediation while third parties, in deciding when to offer mediation, focus upon the perceived increased amenability to mediation that accompanies democratic political shifts.

Rivals faced by high levels of other threats are also more likely to call for and participate in mediation. Enduring rivals that participate in multiple enduring rivalries are more likely to attract mediation and are more likely to request mediation of their conflict. A one standard deviation increase in the number of rivalries disputants participate in more than doubles the likelihood that mediation will take place in their rivalry and increases the likelihood that the rivals will request mediation by more than 64%. The likelihood of a third party offer of mediation, however, is not significantly associated with the level of participation in other enduring rivalries of disputants, suggesting that third parties focus more on the pattern of relations between a pair of rivals than the broader international context in which the rivalry exists.

Interestingly, only the presence of international threats appears to be associated with the occurrence of and request for mediation. Civil wars, which certainly represent a significant threat to disputants, are not significantly related to the offer, request, or occurrence of mediation efforts between enduring rivals. At first glance, this null finding seems odd—particularly given the impact that participation in other enduring rivalries has upon the propensity for mediation among disputants. This null finding, however, may represent the mixed effect that a civil war has upon a rivalry relationship. On one hand, a disputant engaged in a civil war may seek to improve its external relations in order to de-ship. On one hand, a disputant engaged in a civil war

Although these observations fit the general picture described by the conflict stalemate factors, the results do differ in one important aspect. Fundamental to the logic of the hurting stalemate is the idea that stalemated conflict promotes increased amenability to mediation. Greig (2001) finds that as the percentage of disputes ending in stalemates increases, the likelihood of mediation success among enduring rivals also increases. Stalemated disputes, however, not only do not encourage the onset of mediation, they dampen the likelihood that mediation will take place or will be requested by the disputants. A rivalry in which all previous disputes have ended in stalemate is nearly 81% less likely to experience mediation than a rivalry in which no disputes have ended in stalemate. Third-party offers of mediation are not significantly associated with the percentage of previous disputes ending in stalemate. Disputants, however, are significantly less likely to request mediation as the level of stalemated disputes mounts. Disputants in a rivalry in which all previous disputes ended in stalemate are 54% less likely to request mediation than a rivalry in which no disputes have been stalemated. In this respect, it seems that stalemated disputes function to dissuade disputants from mediation, rather than push them toward it.

This conclusion runs directly counter to the logic suggested by the hurting stalemate. One possibility may be that enduring rivals, as they continue across time, are by definition stalemated, making the general impact of the outcomes of individual militarized disputes negligible. Yet, Greig (2001) finds that high levels of highly stalemated disputes significantly improve the likelihood that mediation will be successful between enduring rivals. In other words, enduring rivals appear to avoid mediation under a condition that directly encourages its success, undercutting the likelihood that mediation will be successful when it actually takes place. This suggests that high levels of stalemated disputes function to embitter disputants more than encouraging them to move toward more conciliatory actions like mediation.

Despite the observation that disputants avoid mediation as they experience frequently stalemated disputes, they do become more drawn to mediation as their ability to unilaterally impose their own settlement to the issues under dispute wanes. Disputants in a rivalry in which power is evenly divided among the disputants are significantly more likely to request mediation than a rivalry in which power parity is nearly 65% more likely to request mediation than a rivalry in which there is a 5-to-1 power ratio. This result suggests that enduring rivals focus more upon their calculus of power than the outcomes of militarized disputes in deciding when third-party conflict management is desirable. Neither the occurrence or offer of mediation, however, were significantly associated with the distribution of power between rivals, suggesting that third parties place more emphasis upon the pattern of relations...
between disputants than their distribution of power in deciding when to offer mediation.

Although the history of relations between rivals impacted the likelihood that mediation would take place, their previous conflict management experience also had an important impact upon the likelihood mediation would be offered, requested, or would take place. High levels of previous mediation success, contrary to expectations, reduced the likelihood that mediation would either take place or be requested by disputants. This finding, however, is likely due to a selection effect in which successful mediation undercuts the need for subsequent mediation. The previous pattern of mediation efforts themselves, however, was positively related to the likelihood of future mediation.

As conventional wisdom suggests, mediation tends to lead to future mediation. A one standard deviation increase in the frequency of previous mediation increases the likelihood of mediation in any particular month by nearly 63%. Similarly, high levels of previous mediation also function to increase the willingness of third parties to offer and of disputants to request mediation. Interestingly, however, third parties appear to be most significantly influenced by the frequency of previous mediation. A one standard deviation nearly triples the likelihood that a third party will offer mediation to a rivalry. A similar increase only increases the likelihood that both disputants will call for mediation by about 18%. This suggests that once a mediation process begins between rivals, third parties quickly develop a commitment to the process—making them more likely to push for future mediation. These findings also point to the nonindependence of mediation attempts within a dyad. If past mediation efforts spur future mediation efforts, then empirical analyses of mediation outcomes must account for this nonindependence. Unfortunately, empirical analyses of mediation more often than not assume independence across mediation efforts.

Not only does previous mediation encourage rivals to request future mediation, but previous negotiations between disputants also makes them more likely to request mediation in the future. A one standard deviation increase in the number of previous negotiations between enduring rivals makes them nearly 27% more likely to request mediation. Thus, it appears that any form of previous conflict management activity between enduring rivals, whether strictly bilateral or involving third parties, makes them more amenable to mediation in the future. Third parties, however, appear to take a different view of previous negotiation efforts between enduring rivals. Rather than seeing disputants who are open to conflict management, third parties appear to view disputants that have engaged in frequent negotiations with one another as capable of managing their conflict without intervention. As a result, a one standard deviation increase in the frequency of previous rivalry negotiations makes third parties nearly 67% less likely to offer mediation to the disputants. In general, previous negotiations between disputants appear to make mediation less likely to take place between them, despite their increased willingness to request mediation. Increasing the number of previous rivalry negotiations between disputants by one standard deviation reduces the likelihood that mediation will take place by more than 53%. In this sense, mediation appears to be driven not only by the perceived openness of the rivals toward conflict management but also by the degree to which third parties believe that there is a need for intervention.

Although the history between disputants had a significant effect upon the likelihood of mediation, the characteristics of the disputants themselves also had an important influence. The more democratic a dyad is, even without a recent polity change, the more likely a rivalry is to engage in mediation in any particular rivalry-month. Increasing the level of democracy of the least democratic state within the dyad by one standard deviation increases the likelihood of mediation by nearly 33%. This finding fits Dixon’s (1994) observation that democratic dyads are more likely to accept mediation than nondemocratic ones. Interestingly, although recent democratic polity changes increased the likelihood that mediation would be offered by a third party, the level of democracy was not significantly related to either the likelihood of a disputant request of or a third-party offer of mediation. This finding suggests that mediators look to recent democratizing shifts in selecting their cases for mediation rather than the overall level of democracy within a dyad. The null findings for more democratic dyads, given the absence of democratic enduring rivalries, may suggest that only truly democratic dyads, as the Kantian argument would suggest, are more likely to request mediation, not just nondemocratic dyads that have higher levels of democracy.

Other disputant characteristics besides the level of democracy also influence the likelihood of mediation. Rivalries containing at least one major power, for example, are more than 72% less likely to engage in mediation than those not involving a major power. Third parties appear to actively avoid mediating rivalries containing major powers; they are nearly 78% less likely to offer mediation to a rivalry containing a major power than a rivalry without one. Surprisingly, the presence of a major power within a rivalry is not significantly related to the likelihood that both disputants will call for mediation. In this respect, it does not appear that major powers necessarily seek to protect their freedom of action by resisting the intervention of a mediator in their conflict. These findings suggest
that the lack of mediation of major power rivalries is due to the selection of cases by third parties, not the resistance of disputants.

Two particularly surprising results emerged in examining the effect of disputant characteristics on mediation. Contiguous rivals, the modal category in the analysis, were significantly more likely to attract mediation than non-contiguous rivals. Indeed, a noncontiguous rivalry was nearly 98% less likely to engage in mediation than a contiguous rivalry. Contiguous rivals are also significantly more likely to be offered and request mediation. This tendency of contiguous rivals to request, be offered, and experience mediation may reflect both the increased divisibility and danger of conflicts between contiguous rivals. Wilkenfeld et al. (2003) note a similar relationship, finding that contiguous crises are more likely to be mediated. Such conflicts often involve territorial disputes which tend to be more amenable to conflict management efforts than issues that are less divisible like ideology. In addition, disputes between contiguous states are more likely to escalate to the offer of mediation by a third party and 84% less likely to request mediation by a third party. This finding is particularly surprising given the geopolitical significance of the Middle East and the close relationships between major powers and states in the region. This result suggests that once the level of conflict and the level of stalemate in the Middle East are controlled for, the Middle East, as a region, is actually undermediated, attracting fewer than its fair share of mediation efforts.

One possible explanation for this finding is that the intractability inherent to conflict involving Middle Eastern enduring rivalries effectively poisons the well for mediation, making disputants unwilling to accept mediation and third parties unwilling to run the risks of offering mediation to the disputants. In this respect, the effect of the Middle East parallels the relationship observed between mediation and the level of stalemated conflict in a rivalry. It is also possible that because most rivalries in the Middle East involve Israel, the close Israeli relationship with the American superpower tends to make third parties less willing to mediate these conflicts or to do so behind the scenes informally when the do attempt to intervene.

Discussion

The results of this project demonstrate that mediation is driven by a combination of forces. Although factors associated in the literature with successful mediation are important influences upon the likelihood that mediation will take place, the conflict management history, the characteristics of the disputants, and the presence of ongoing disputes also impact the occurrence of mediation. In this sense, none of the four sets of factors discussed in the previous sections of this article provide a complete picture of mediation individually. These significant factors are summarized in Table 3.

The preceding analysis points to some encouraging and discouraging conclusions regarding the occurrence of mediation. Although the ultimate goal of third parties may be to terminate rivalries, Greig (2001) operationalizes successful mediation more broadly as the ability of mediation to stimulate agreement between the disputants and reduce the frequency and intensity of future conflict. Following this operationalization of mediation success, on the positive side, the request for and the occurrence of mediation appear to be related to many of the conditions that promote successful mediation. The willingness of enduring rivals to call for mediation appears to be related to some of the conditions under which mediation has been found to be most likely to be successful. Yet, enduring rivals also avoid mediation as more disputes end in stalemate, a condition associated with successful mediation in much of the literature. Furthermore, although conflict stalemate factors were significantly related to the occurrence of mediation, the existence of an ongoing militarized dispute had a stronger effect than any of the stalemate variables in the study, suggesting that, when push comes to shove, mediation tends to be most directly driven by a focus on what is occurring now, rather than upon the conditions most directly tied to its success.

Most discouraging, however, were the results obtained in the analysis of the conditions under which third parties decide to offer mediation to enduring rivals. In general, third parties generally do not offer mediation when it is most likely to be successful. Indeed, none of the stalemate variables were significantly associated with the offer of mediation. Instead, third parties appear to be most directly influenced by the presence of an ongoing dispute in selecting cases to offer mediation. The
tendency of third parties to offer mediation in the midst of an ongoing dispute seems to fit the cost-benefit framework described by Princen (1992). Third parties appear to offer mediation when, although the chances of success may be small, the costs of nonintervention seem high.

The tendency of third parties to engage in mediation when it is least likely to be successful is discouraging for two reasons. First, it suggests that third parties spend considerable time and energy offering mediation to disputants when it is unlikely to yield positive results. Such offers may be less likely to be accepted and, even if they are accepted, are certainly less likely to result in successful mediation. Such failure, however, may not only have a benign effect. Instead, offers of mediation during periods of time unfavorable for success may be rebuffed by the disputants, making the third party less likely to offer mediation when it is truly favorable to do so. In addition, even when a third party is able to get the disputants to the negotiating table, because conditions are unfavorable, the mediation may not only be less likely to be successful but it may even poison the well for future mediation by convincing the disputants that successful management of their conflict is unlikely. Second, because third parties do not offer mediation when it is most likely to be successful, the rivalries that need third-party assistance the most may not receive the mediation they need unless they ask for it. This is particularly problematic in the most difficult cases where dangerous conflict continues but other factors reduce the willingness of disputants to ask for mediation. Rivalries in the Middle East, for example, are significantly less likely to request mediation than other rivalries. If third parties tend to offer mediation under unfavorable conditions, then Middle Eastern rivalries are less likely to experience mediation when it is most likely to be productive.

The factors that influence the likelihood that mediation will take place, be offered by third parties, and requested by disputants provide some basis with which to explain why, although mediation is a frequent conflict management tool in the international system, it fails so often. Obviously, the context under which mediation occurs is not fully determinant of its success. The manner in which mediation is conducted and the skill and resources of the mediator certainly impact the likelihood of successful mediation. Beyond that, however, the avoidance of mediation as stalemates mount, a key influence upon mediation success, pushes mediation efforts toward conditions under which they are more likely to fail. The lack of third-party willingness to mediate under conditions favorable for mediation provides a further drain upon the success rate of mediation. Finally, the overemphasis in the use of mediation as a bandage to ongoing militarized
disputes without attention to the broader context under which the mediation occurs further siphons off mediation efforts toward conditions under which they are less likely to be successful. In this respect, the results of this study suggest that disputants and third parties alike must devote more careful attention to the broader conflict context in deciding when to participate in mediation. Otherwise, mediation will represent little more than a stop-gap attempt at conflict management with little hope for broader improvement in the relations between enduring rivals.

Although the results of this study cast the conditions under which mediation takes place between enduring rivals in a rather dim light, these results may not necessarily apply to other types of conflictual relationships in the international system. Enduring rivalries are unique phenomenon marked by a distinct pattern of previous conflict that impacts the nature of their future relations. As a result, mediation in other types of dyads is unlikely to face the same set of obstacles that are present in enduring rivalries. Indeed, enduring rivalries, because of their long conflict legacy represent the worst-case scenario for international mediation. Because nonrivalry conflicts tend to be less deeply rooted, disputants may be more willing to engage in mediation and third parties may be willing to offer mediation even before conflict appears to be on the brink of spiraling out of control. In this sense, although the results in this study provide a window to the conditions under which mediation takes place among the most dangerous dyads in the international system, mediation may offer more promise for other types of conflicts in the international system and different sets of conditions are likely to be associated with the occurrence of mediation within these conflicts.

References


