The (Non-)Efficacy of Multi-Party Mediation in Wars Since 1990

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Abstract

Is a wartime mediation initiative more likely to lead to a peace agreement if it involves more than one and possibly many third parties? This paper contributes to this debate by analyzing an original dataset on conflict resolution in post-1990 wars. While multi-party efforts appear clearly superior to a mediator “going it alone” in a basic analysis, this correlation does not constitute a causal effect. I use past mediator involvement as an instrument for current levels of involvement, and find that once we adjust for the endogenous relationship between multi-party mediation and conflict settlement, the strongly significant positive effect of multi-party mediation relative to other types of mediation disappears. The apparent effectiveness of large groups of mediators is spurious: Additional third parties simply “pile on” when the time is ripe for a settlement to be signed.

1 Introduction

Mediation is the most frequent type of third-party intervention in armed conflict today, and a substantial body of scholarly work addresses the question of how mediation can be effective in bringing disputants to an agreement. But this research leaves relatively unexplored one feature of mediation missions that has been of particular interest to practitioners in recent years: Is conflict resolution a function of the number of mediating entities involved in a given peace process? For

\[^{1}\text{By most accounts, mediation is “by far the most common form of peaceful third-party intervention in international conflicts” (Bercovitch and Gartner, 2009: 5), and “third-party intervention in conflicts has increased significantly” since the end of the Cold War (Crocker et al., 2005: 21). It is the most commonly used technique of intervention in interstate disputes, accounting for more than one-fifth of all third-party actions between the end of World War II and the turn of the century (Frazier and Dixon, 2006: 395). In modern civil wars, the “most common outcome” is a peace process involving international mediators (Sisk, 2009: 1).}\]
some, multi-party mediation efforts are a way to share costs and pool resources in
the pursuit of peace, while others argue that a large number of mediators tend to
hinder negotiations by diminishing the cohesion of a third-party effort.

While practitioners are engaged in a lively discussion over the challenges and
pitfalls of multi-party mediation, virtually no statistical analysis exists that speaks
to this question, despite the fact that nearly half of all mediations in post-1990 wars
have involved more than one mediating entity. And the analysis that does exist does
not identify exogenous sources of variation in the composition and size of mediation
missions, even though decisions about how to move ahead in an attempt at conflict
resolution are almost certainly confounded by the strategic anticipation of likely
outcomes.

I provide an analysis of the impact of multi-party versus single-party mediation
that takes on this problem. First, I present a statistical estimate that does not adjust
for the endogenous relationship between the initiation of multi-party mediation and
the likelihood of a settlement, and which suggests that larger mediation missions
are more likely to produce an agreement. I then exploit the conflict-year panel
structure of the data used in this paper to construct (pseudo-)instruments for the
average number of third parties involved in mediation attempts in a given war, namely
the corresponding number of third parties involved in previous years. The
analysis shows that once we adjust for the endogenous relationship between multi-
party mediation and conflict settlement, the strongly significant positive effect of
multi-party mediation relative to other types of mediation disappears.

The paper uses an original dataset on conflict management events, which were
collected from newspaper and wire reports for 1990 to 2005. A total of approximately
15,000 articles were analyzed for 77 unmediated negotiation and 151 mediation
processes in 35 wars. I focus on wars, as opposed to crises or disputes, for two
reasons. First, wars are the toughest types of disputes that mediators could hope to
resolve. The incompatibilities that underpin warfare are particularly tricky to clear
away; otherwise, they might have been resolved at the dispute or crisis stage. If we
can find that multi-party mediation contributes to the settlement of wars, I would
not be surprised if this effect also carried to other, more tractable types of conflict
situations on lower rungs of the escalation ladder. Second, the marginal impact of
the additional resources and leverage that multi-party mediation can provide will
probably be largest in full-scale conflicts such as wars. Engineering a solution to
a war, from ceasefires to political agreement and demobilization, typically requires
capacity beyond what is essential in an instance of crisis negotiation, capacity that multi-party mediation efforts could presumably marshal most effectively. Wars are where the purported benefits of multi-party mediation should manifest themselves most conspicuously. If we find that multi-party mediation performs no better than single-party mediation in these cases, it would not be far-fetched to believe that the former will perform no better than the latter in instances of crisis or dispute resolution, either.

This paper proceeds as follows: Section 2 argues that multi-party mediation is a phenomenon well worth studying, given its prevalence in contemporary conflict resolution and the relative dearth of scholarly attention paid to it in the past, and it outlines the advantages and disadvantages commonly associated with multi-party mediation efforts. Section 3 proposes and provides examples showing that third parties tend to join mediations once a settlement is likely, which explains why multi-party mediation appears to be an effective tool of conflict resolution. Section 4 describes the dataset on conflict management I constructed and use in this paper, and section 5 presents the statistical analysis.

2 The incidence, benefits, and drawbacks of multi-party mediation

The number of mediating entities that are dispatched to a conflict has been of significant interest to practitioners in recent years, and rightly so, given the fact that multi-party interventions make up a substantial portion of all wartime mediation efforts. Figure 1 shows that about half of all mediations involve more than one mediating entity (i.e. two or more countries, IGOs, or NGOs/private individuals). About half of these multi-party interventions involve two sender countries or organizations, about 15% involve three, about 10% four, and the remaining multi-party processes involve up to 11 entities (a group of ten states and the UN, which mediated in Colombia in 2002). On average, mediation efforts involve two third parties.

While it is commonly believed that multi-party mediation is on the rise (Crocker et al., 1999a: 9), I find that its incidence has not actually increased since the end of the Cold War, but declined in the early 1990s and has since remained fairly level. However, the average number of mediators rose between the late 1990s and 2005. Multi-party mediation has not necessarily become more common, but those mediations that do involve more than one third party involve increasingly large
Is this a positive trend? Few social scientists have offered their perspective on this question, but the debate among practitioners has identified several advantages and disadvantages of multi-party mediation efforts.\(^2\)

First, the involvement of multiple third parties means that each of them shoulders a smaller share of the fiscal burden and political risk associated with the mediation effort. Third parties can share not only the fixed costs of a diplomatic intervention (e.g. expenses for travel, meeting, and related security arrangements), but also—much more importantly—the potential costs associated with failure.

Second, groups of mediators can pool resources, skills, and leverage in trying to sway disputants. Consider the example of the efforts by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), an East African regional organization, to settle the decades-long war between Sudanese government forces and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A). IGAD took the lead in facilitating the 2005

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\(^2\)For a rich discussion of the challenges and pitfalls of multi-party mediation from the perspective of a diverse group of practitioners, see Crocker et al. (1999a). The following discussion draws heavily on this edited volume. For a critical view of multi-party mediation in the case of negotiations over Nagorno Karabakh, see Betts (1999). Iji (2001) argues that multi-party mediation was effective in Tajikistan in the late 1990s. See also Kriesberg (1996), Crocker et al. (2001), and Crocker et al. (2002) for a discussion of advantages and disadvantages of multiple mediators.
Naivasha Agreement, but it benefited greatly from the diplomatic weight, logistical support, and technical expertise provided by the United States in particular. Earlier mediation attempts by IGAD in the mid-1990s had failed to bring Ahmad al-Bashir’s government and John Garang’s rebel forces close to an agreement (El-Affendi, 2001), and when IGAD renewed its mediation effort in 2001, it was a group of Western countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, and Norway, that was “the engine needed to push the process forward” (Martin, 2006: 136).³

Third, a group of third parties can collectively be less biased than any individual member of the same group. The IGAD-led mediation in Sudan is again an instructive example. The U.S. was unambiguously biased in favor of the Christian SPLM/A against the Islamic government in Khartoum. U.S. President Bush had appointed former Senator John Danforth as his Special Envoy to Sudan, “an ordained minister,” as the President pointed out when he introduced Danforth to the press, in a move that pleased the President’s conservative Christian base.⁴ Danforth understood the war as “a clear conflict between Islam and Christianity” (Martin, 2006: 136) and left little doubt that the SPLM/A could expect his sympathy and active support against the NIF and Sharia law.⁵ A second, related reason for an American bias in favor of the SPLM/A was the Sudanese government’s past support for al-Qaeda. Operatives located in Sudan were allegedly involved in the bombings of the U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya, and although Sudan had ejected bin Laden in 1996 and begun to dismantle al-Qaeda bases in 2000, the U.S. continued (and still continues) to designate Sudan as a “state sponsor of terrorism” (Prendergast and Thomas-Jensen, 2007).⁶

³For an overview and assessment of the Sudan peace process, see for example Morrison and de Waal (2005).
⁴A transcript of the President’s remarks is available at http://transcripts.cnn.com/transcripts/0109/06/se.01.html. When CNN’s White House correspondent Major Garrett was asked “why John Danforth,” he responded that Danforth “has a good deal of trust with many who are advising the president on this issue,” including Senator Brownback, who “has worked long and hard on this issue. There are others in the religious community throughout the United States who’ve been working this issue very hard, Chuck Colson, Franklin Graham, who is Billy Graham’s son. The Reverend Billy Graham’s son talks to the White House frequently about this issue. They also know Jack Danforth very well, trust him immensely.”
⁵See Danforth’s first report to President Bush on the situation in Sudan (Danforth, 2002), in which he notes his consultations with the Vatican and the Archbishop of Canterbury (4) and describes an “open air Episcopal service near a bombed out church” in Sudan’s south as one of the “most memorable experiences” of his visits to Sudan (3). On the American approach to Sudan, see also Woodward (2006: 175–6).
⁶The Department of State’s list of state sponsors of terrorism is available at http://www.state.gov/s/ct/c14151.htm. Sudan received this designation in August 1993.
But when U.S. bias threatened to become a roadblock in negotiations, the involvement of IGAD and its Kenyan lead mediator Sumbeiywo kept negotiations on track. When the U.S. pushed for the capital Khartoum to be Sharia-free, in contradiction to what had been agreed on in the 2002 Machakos protocol, Sumbeiywo “threatened to shoot the American envoy, Jeff Millington [who was appointed as the U.S. charge d’affaires for Sudan in 2002], and then threw him out of his office” (Martin, 2006: 148).

The disadvantages of multi-party mediation have been summarized by (Crocker et al., 1999b: 19) as “problems of leadership,” by which they mean problems of “managing complexity, coordinating the use of comparative advantages, maximizing leverage, avoiding crossed wires and conflicting agendas, and maintaining focus and coherence.” I will highlight three of these drawbacks in particular.

First, third parties can have divergent interests with respect to how and under what conditions a conflict is resolved. In Burundi, for example, “the profusion of players . . . , each with its own agenda and favored solution, has undermined the coherence of the international community’s response” (Hara, 1999: 135). Hara writes that Boutros-Ghali’s special representative in Burundi counted no fewer than seventy government delegations that passed through the country between the end of 1993 and the beginning of 1995 in the hope of contributing to a peaceful resolution of the conflict (157). In addition to these formal diplomatic efforts, no fewer than 35 non-governmental, governmental, and multilateral groups engaged in Track II conflict resolution activity between 1995 and 1998 (153).

Second, mediation missions that incorporate a number of third parties can suffer from unclear divisions of responsibility and a lack of transparency over the allocation of decision-making power within the group of third parties (or the absence of such an allocation entirely). In the best case, this can be a logistical nuisance; in the worst case, disputants can try to exploit this situation for their own gain at the risk of increasing the likelihood with which negotiations will fail. Alvaro de Soto, for example, argues that in the case of UN mediation in El Salvador “one of the keys to the success of the effort was precisely that . . . there was never any question about the unity and integrity of the third-party mediation and who was in charge of it” (1999: 349).

7The protocol stated that “[n]ationally enacted legislation having effect only in respect of the states outside Southern Sudan shall have as its source of legislation Sharia and the consensus of the people.” The text is available at http://www.issafrica.org/AF/profiles/Sudan/darfur/compax/c1.pdf.
Third, even if decision-making structures are well-defined, the involvement of multiple mediators makes it more difficult to reach decisions quickly and respond swiftly to changing conditions on the ground or to reach certain decisions at all. Barbara McDougall recalls Canada’s involvement in Haiti prior to Aristide’s return in 1994 by noting that the “need to achieve consensus [in a multi-party mediation mission] often precludes the possibility of rapid response, leaving the aggressor more time to consolidate,” even if “action taken in the long run with consensus can be a mighty force” (1999: 401).

This paper does not attempt to provide systematic empirical support for any of these specific links between multi-party mediation and the likelihood of a settlement. It asks more generally whether the positive or negative effects of involving more than one third party in a mediation effort dominate, and it points to an important selection process that has been largely ignored in the literature on multi-party mediation: Conflicts due for a settlement are significantly more likely to attract large numbers of third parties hoping to become involved in negotiations. The next section discusses this selection dynamic in greater detail.

3 Effective conflict resolution as a cause of multi-party mediation

The leaders of states and international organizations think carefully about where and how to expend political capital, and it is not controversial to think that they consider the likely consequences of engaging in mediation before deciding to do so. An already existing mediation and peace process that has come close to fruition should be an alluring point of intervention in this strategic perspective. While the costs of involvement are relatively low, the reputational benefits of helping to push a peace agreement over the finish line are tangible.

Consider two examples. First, Table 1 shows the incidence of mediation in Mozambique from 1990 to 1992, when a comprehensive peace agreement was signed on October 4. Each row identifies a separate mediation process. As the table shows, the mediation that eventually led to a peace agreement was sponsored by Italy and Sant’Egidio throughout 1990 and 1991. But as the peace agreement drew near, the ranks of the mediators swelled. The U.S. abandoned a separate (but friendly) effort

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8Tables 1 and 2 are based on the data described in some detail in the following section.
in June 1992 and joined Italy and Sant’Egidio’s process. The UK and France, both important senders of foreign aid to Mozambique, also did not become partners in the mediation until mid-1992, as did Portugal, Botswana, and Zimbabwe.

A similar picture emerges in the second example, the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, in which a peace agreement was signed on December 12, 2000. This (rare) instance of interstate warfare spurred a flurry of diplomatic activity and spawned several distinct mediation processes. Negotiations facilitated by the African Union (AU), which was represented primarily by Algeria, eventually led to a settlement, but not before the U.S., the EU, and the UN had joined this particular mediation process.

In both cases, the ground for peace agreements was lain by relatively small mediation missions (Italy and Sant’Egidio in one case, and the AU in the other), even though the large number of third parties involved when the agreements where signed could lead the casual observer to think otherwise. This is not to say that there is no merit to involving additional countries and organizations when an agreement has already taken shape, for instance in order to organize a state’s post-war finances (as in the case of France’s and the UK’s late involvement in Mozambique) or to build guarantees of an agreement’s military provisions. Portugal’s then-deputy foreign minister Barroso justified the country’s late involvement in Sant’Egidio’s Mozambique mediation by saying that it is only “logical [Portugal] should take part in the

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The UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset describes Zimbabwe as having fought on the FRELIMO government’s side from 1985 to 1990, but not after that, which is why Zimbabwe is listed as a mediator, albeit surely not an unbiased one. Zimbabwe’s Mugabe arranged for the first face-to-face meeting between Chissano of FRELIMO and RENAMO’s Dhlakama.
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1 IGAD’s mission was led by the President of Djibouti.
2 The Community of Sahel-Saharan States was known as COMESSA in 1998.

Table 2: Mediation between Ethiopia and Eritrea, 1998–2000
next phase, dealing with military aspects of the accord, since these required international guarantees (Reuters, 13 February 1992). Perhaps multi-party mediation at the time of a peace agreement indicates that the agreement is more likely to last. But it does not necessarily indicate that multi-party mediation is the reason why an agreement was reached in the first place. I now turn to a statistical analysis of this issue, after presenting the dataset I will use in the next section.

4 An original dataset of conflict management events

In order to assess the impact of mediation in the post-Cold War period, I created an original dataset of conflict management events, which provides information about negotiation and international mediation in large-scale violent conflicts between 1990 and 2005. A conflict is included if it generated at least 1000 deaths in any one calendar year between 1990 and 2005, where the list of conflicts and their corresponding fatality levels were drawn from the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflicts Dataset. More specifically, a conflict was included for all calendar years from 1990 to 2005 in which it occurred if it reached an intensity level of 2 (variable Int) in the UCDP/PRIO dataset for any one calendar year between 1990 and 2005. The locations of conflicts included in this dataset are mapped in figure 2.

Mediation encompasses any event where a third party from abroad is in non-coercive contact with representatives of both sides in an apparent attempt to help resolve the conflict. More specifically, mediation is the non-coercive involvement of a third party from abroad between two or more parties to a dispute, where the third party communicates with the disputants and the disputants communicate with the third party about the issues that are stake in the dispute, and where one of the third party’s stated objectives of this communication is to help resolve the dispute. There are several issues that this definition touches on:

- Does the third party’s intervention need to be aimed at resolving the disagreement? Many researchers make this part of the definition (e.g. Pruitt and Kressel, 1989: 1), but it is difficult to know whether a mediator is secretly trying to stoke rather than resolve a conflict. I did not try to figure out the true intentions of the mediator, nor did I require that the mediator’s sole objective was the resolution of the conflict. I simply required that one of the stated aims of the intervention was conflict resolution.

10 An extended version of this section is contained in Beber (2010).
Figure 2: Locations of wars
• A related issue is whether mediation needs to actually address what is at stake in the disagreement between disputants (whether or not that is one of the third party’s aims). I code as mediation only those interventions that address what is actually at stake, i.e. conflict management events that deal with a particular issue only and where the particular issue is discussed independently of the conflict in general are excluded. For example, I exclude solely humanitarian interventions (e.g. POW visits by the Red Cross), talks about talks (although they often precede mediation proper), or tactical negotiations (e.g. about the surrender or transfer of a particular unit or ransom negotiations for the release of hostages).11

• Not all definitions say something about communication between the third party and the disputants, but I include this requirement in order to distinguish mediation from advising (communication with only one side) and from appeals (communication from the third party to the disputants). At the same time this allowed me to include shuttle diplomacy (because there is no meeting requirement) and include events even if disputants refuse to call the third party’s involvement mediation (e.g. the involvement of the Clinton administration in the India-Pakistan conflict).12

• Mediation must not be coercive, which implies that e.g. sanctions, military aid, and peacekeeping events are excluded. A more subtle implication of this requirement is the exclusion of arbitration events, because a non-coercive intervention is one in which any decision about the resolution of the disputants’ disagreement lies at all times with the disputants themselves, not with the third party. (Of course one could also include the non-judicial nature of the intervention in the definition of mediation.) Trying to figure out whether negotiations that involve a third party are coercive in nature because the third party will impose costs if negotiations fail or provide rewards if they succeed can be thorny. (The Rambouillet talks are one example.) I decided to include

11For example, the following event is not included in the dataset: “Leftist guerrillas holding at least 200 hostages at the Japanese ambassador’s residence in Lima on Wednesday asked Spain to mediate to get medical supplies inside to treat wounded people, the Spanish foreign ministry said” (Reuters News, “Peru rebels ask for medicine for ‘wounded’ - Spain,” 18 December 1996).

all events that are taking place in the shadow of coercive action, but try to think about this issue at the estimation stage, e.g. by verifying that results are robust to the exclusion of events that involved the United States.

- Some researchers require that mediators have no direct interests in the conflict (e.g. Princen, 1992: 3), but I leave this condition out of the definition. However, countries or groups that are party to a dispute (e.g. Rwanda in the Democratic Republic of the Congo) cannot be mediators. More concretely, any group or party listed as a participant in a war in the UCDP/PRIO dataset was disqualified from being a mediator in that conflict.

- In a related issue, it is sometimes hard to know whether a third party is actually a third party. For example, the Marxist-Leninist wing of Nepal’s Communist Party of Nepal at one point self-described as a mediator between the monarchy and the Maoist wing of the Communist party.\(^\text{13}\) I simplified this decision by looking only at foreign mediators.

Talks about whether or not mediation should be initiated do not count as mediation, but are considered part of an offer of or request for mediation. Negotiations (i.e. non-mediated talks) are constituted by the targeted communication of offers and counter-offers. This does not include the announcement of offers or demands to the media or the general public, but it does include e.g. phone negotiations or messages relayed by a domestic liaison.

An event is ongoing if there is no lapse in activity of six months or longer and the event has not explicitly been concluded (e.g. by way of one side withdrawing from negotiations or declining a mediation offer). For example, if mediation was offered, but declined, and then offered again five months later, the latter is coded as a separate event. If talks are temporarily or conditionally suspended but resumed within six months, they are coded as a continuous event. “Rounds” of talks count as one event.

The analysis in this paper will focus on the incidence of mediation and direct negotiations, which I will refer to below as conflict resolution events. For convenience and purposes of estimation, I also created two aggregate datasets, which collapse event information by conflict and/or year: (a) A panel dataset with conflict-year observations, which contains data on whether mediation or negotiation occurred and

\(^{13}\) Agence France-Presse, “Unprecedented peace talks between Nepal government and rebels begin,” 27 October 2000.
average characteristics of these processes, among other things; (b) a cross-sectional
dataset with one observation per conflict, where information on conflict resolution
is similarly aggregated.

Data was drawn from a list of geographically diverse, English-language newspa-
pers and newswires that provide comprehensive coverage of international events and
for which coverage was available for the years 1990 to 2005. The list included the
following publications: New York Times, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, Lon-
don Times, Sunday Times, Guardian, Sidney Morning Herald, Straits Times, Times
of India, Agence France-Presse, Associated Press, Reuters, and BBC Monitoring.14

These publications were searched (using Factiva)15 for any news items/articles
that contain in headline, abstract, or lead paragraph all of the following: (a) the
name of at least one actor on side A of the conflict (as identified by the UCDP/
PRIO dataset), which is usually a country name, or any commonly used synonym
for that name; (b) the name of at least one actor on side B of the conflict, or any
commonly used synonym for that name; (c) any one of the terms mediation or
negotiation or words of the same family (e.g. mediator, mediating, mediate, etc.).
Events were coded—with the help of several research assistants—on the basis of
the articles returned by this search. Coverage of conflict management events was
substantial: A total of 15,101 articles were returned by the archive.

The fact that this dataset relies on media reports raises the issue of the exclusion
of confidential processes, but news wires appear to report on the existence even of
secret processes: 13 of the 151 mediation events in the dataset were reported to
have been secret or were at some point denied by the disputants, and 24 mediation
events were coded as unofficial or exploratory. (Despite the wire coverage, few of
these events were reported in any of the newspapers included here.) I also asked
a representative of a non-governmental organization with access to key mediator
networks to list confidential processes that could be missing from the dataset, and
only one of the dozen or so processes that were named to me is in fact missing from
the dataset.16

The analysis presented in this paper focuses on two outcome measures. The
first is binary and captures whether a full or partial settlement was reached. The

14For the Times of India, only selected coverage is available until 22 May 1991, and there is a
gap in coverage from 22 May 1991 to 2 April 1997. Coverage for Agence France-Presse begins on
9 September 1991.
16Interview, April 29, 2008.
second outcome variable is multinomial, with its values corresponding to no progress, a procedural agreement (which typically involves agreement on an agenda and/or agreement on how final status negotiations should be organized), a ceasefire, and a full or partial settlement. Events and conflict-years can have several of these outcomes occur simultaneously or sequentially; the multinomial outcome variable in that case gives the highest applicable value. Table 3 provides summary statistics.

I coded as settlement any written agreement that either partially or fully addresses the incompatibility at stake in a given war. For example, the 2002 Machakos Protocol signed by the Sudanese government and the SPLM/A would be coded as a settlement. The reason why I focus on conflict settlements and not terminations is that the former can generally be linked more clearly to a specific conflict management event. In some cases, a conflict does not technically end (in terms of its inclusion in the UCDP/PRIO dataset) for several years after mediation brought about a settlement, even if the mediation effort is generally considered a success. For example, the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement, which was signed between warring parties to Burundi’s civil war in 2000 and which was facilitated by Nelson Mandela with the support in particular of Tanzania, was and is considered a step toward peace and hence an example of effective mediation (Group, 2003; Bentley and Southall, 2005; Lieberfeld, 2003). But Burundi’s war did not technically
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>95% C. I.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict resolution events (N=228)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediation</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>[60%, 72%]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multi-party mediation</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>[17%, 28%]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mean number of mediators is 1.2</td>
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<td>Conflict-years (N=290)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mediation</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>[27%, 38%]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multi-party mediation</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>[14%, 23%]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mean number of mediators is .6</td>
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<td>[.4, .8]</td>
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<td>Conflicts (N=35)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mediation</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>[62%, 92%]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multi-party mediation</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>[49%, 82%]</td>
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<td>Mean number of mediators is 1.4</td>
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Table 4: Descriptive statistics for explanatory variables

terminate until 2007 (in the sense that this was the first calendar year since the agreement with fewer than 25 battle-related deaths).\(^{17}\)

Even so, one might be inclined to think that agreements that are temporally close to the termination of hostilities indicate relatively more effective conflict management. But that is not necessarily the case. For example, the war in Somalia was technically suspended in 1996, the same year Kenya facilitated a ceasefire between the three key warlords Hussein Mohamed Aidid (a former U.S. marine and son of warlord Mohamed Farrah Aidid, who was killed in battle in the summer of 1996), Ali Mahdi Mohamed, and Osman Hassan Ali Atto. But key incompatibilities between the warring factions remained unresolved, Somalia was left without a functioning central government, and large-scale violence erupted again in 2001, so it is difficult to see why Kenya’s effort in Somalia should be coded as having been more effective than Mandela’s mediation in Burundi.

Settlements and conflict terminations are clearly related phenomena, and the former typically precede the latter (although some conflicts in the database ended in one-sided victories or had not ended by 2005). But linking specific conflict management events to an end of hostilities is fraught with ambiguity, and I prefer to use a more transparent benchmark: Did talks result in a signed agreement that partially or fully addresses what is at stake in the conflict?

Explanatory variables of interest include whether mediation occurred (as op-

\(^{17}\) A conflict has to have generated at least 1000 fatalities in order to be considered a war, but need not generate 1000 battle-related deaths in every calendar year in order to be considered ongoing.
posed to direct negotiations), whether it was carried out by multiple entities, and how many mediators were involved. Table 4 summarizes this set of variables.

I define multi-party mediation as any mediation effort that includes more than one third party in either a primary or secondary role. Each third party must separately meet the definition of a mediator. For a given event, the number of mediators refers to the number of third parties involved in that particular conflict resolution effort, not the total number of third parties involved in mediating the conflict at that time. Similarly, the average number of mediators in a conflict-year refers to the average size of mediation missions in that year, not the total number of mediators involved in that year.

In other words, I focus on the size of specific mediation missions and do not count sequential or contemporaneous diplomatic efforts as multi-party mediation. This stacks the deck in favor of finding a positive effect of multi-party mediation on settlement probabilities, because I count those mediation missions as multi-party efforts that were at least ostensibly coordinated joint interventions. In the case of Guinea-Bissau’s civil war, for example, the “confusion” of “rival” efforts by the France-sponsored Francophone bloc of ECOWAS and the Portugal-sponsored CPLP hindered a swift resolution of the conflict (Massey, 2006: 83), but such competing initiatives are not coded as multi-party mediation.

Conflict characteristics are likely to confound any causal estimation of the relationship between mediation and conflict settlement. Using data from the PRIO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>95% C. I.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conflict resolution events (N=228)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict intensity</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>[60%, 72%]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>[65%, 77%]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internationalized</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>[9%, 18%]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conflict-years (N=290)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict intensity</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>[42%, 54%]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>[79%, 88%]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internationalized</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>[8%, 15%]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conflicts (N=35)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict intensity</td>
<td>1 (by construction)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>[59%, 90%]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internationalized</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>[26%, 60%]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Descriptive statistics for control variables
Armed Conflicts Dataset, the analysis presented below therefore includes indicators for conflict intensity (has the conflict generated at least a 1000 fatalities in a given year?) as well as internal and internationalized conflict. These three variables are time-varying, although only conflict intensity varies significantly across years. Table 5 presents summary statistics. Note that a conflict is either internal, internationalized, or interstate, which means interstate wars are the (small) residual category. In summarizing the variables by conflict, each indicator shows whether the relevant attribute held in any year. Since a number of conflicts are internal at first and internationalized later, these numbers add up to more than 100%.

5 Estimation results

As a first cut at the question whether multi-party mediation improves the chance of talks ending in an agreement, figure 3 shows the frequencies of different outcomes for single- and multi-party mediations. Multi-party efforts appear clearly superior to a mediator going it alone: 34% of them end in a full or partial settlement, as compared to 9% of those mediations that involve just one third party.

This result persists in regressions that adjust for key conflict characteristics, shown in tables 6 and 7. The second column in table 6 indicates that negotiations that involve several third parties appear to end in a settlement 21% more often than other types of talks. We find a positive and significant, albeit smaller effect also if we include region or conflict indicators. However, this analysis raises questions of causal identification: Perhaps the positive effect associated with multi-party interventions is the result of an endogenous or otherwise confounded relationship? If we look at the results of the multinomial probit models in table 7, it seems suspicious that multi-party mediation appears to increase the likelihood of a settlement by between 17% and 24% in expectation, while having no impact on the likelihood of a procedural agreement or a ceasefire. Perhaps additional mediators simply “pile on” when the time is ripe for a settlement to be signed?

We can try to answer this question by looking at the data in terms of a panel, where the unit of observation is now the conflict-year and our explanatory variable of interest is the average number of third parties mediating a conflict in a given year. I use lagged levels of third-party involvement as (pseudo-)instruments of the current level of involvement. While these instruments are valid in the sense that

18For a discussion of this approach, see Sovey and Green (2010). For examples, see Rosen and
Figure 3: Mediation outcomes by number of mediators
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multi-party mediation</td>
<td>.92*** (.21)</td>
<td>[.06, .40]</td>
<td>.79*** (.21)</td>
<td>[01, .36]</td>
<td>1.07*** (.30)</td>
<td>[.01, .32]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region indicators</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict indicators</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obs.</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unit of observation is conflict resolution event. Probit regression includes constant and indicators for conflict intensity, internal conflicts, and internationalized conflicts. Standard errors in parentheses adjusted for clustering on conflict, except when conflict indicators are included. For first differences, all other variables are held at their median. Significant at the *** 99% level.

Table 6: Basic probit analysis of the effect of multi-party mediation

they correlate well with the current number of mediators involved, strict exogeneity to the outcome equation is not easily justified. In effect, we assume that the impact of multi-party mediation on the likelihood of a settlement does not linger. Having a large number of mediators involved today can mean having a large number of mediators involved tomorrow, which could increase or decrease the chances of a settlement, but we assume that multi-party mediation today does not directly affect the likelihood of a settlement tomorrow. While it is not obvious that this is true, it is still less strict than assuming that today’s multi-party mediation is strictly exogenous to today’s likelihood of a settlement.

Table 8 displays results from a non-IV panel probit regression and a panel probit model in which the current number of mediators is instrumented for by the lagged mediator count. As before, the simple model in the first column suggests a strong, positive relationship between the number of mediators involved in conflict resolution and the likelihood of a settlement. However, this effect goes away entirely once we instrument for multi-party mediation, which lends some support to the idea that more mediators do not necessarily make for a more effective mediation effort. Note in particular that the coefficient on the number of mediators does not lose statistical significance in the instrumental variable specification because of an increase in its standard error, but because the coefficient itself is substantially attenuated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DV: Event outcome</th>
<th>Coeff. (S. E.)</th>
<th>First diff. (95% C. I.)</th>
<th>Coeff. (S. E.)</th>
<th>First diff. (95% C. I.)</th>
<th>Coeff. (S. E.)</th>
<th>First diff. (95% C. I.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multi-party mediation on proc. agreem.</td>
<td>.28 (.27)</td>
<td>-.00 [-.06, .07]</td>
<td>.43 (.34)</td>
<td>.01 [-.00, .10]</td>
<td>.36 (.46)</td>
<td>.00 [-.01, .00]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-party mediation on ceasefire</td>
<td>.06 (.27)</td>
<td>-.06 [-.16, .04]</td>
<td>.08 (.30)</td>
<td>-.04 [-.15, .09]</td>
<td>.22 (.35)</td>
<td>-.04 [-.16, .10]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-party mediation on settlement</td>
<td>1.22*** (.28)</td>
<td>.23 [.11, .37]</td>
<td>1.07*** (.29)</td>
<td>.17 [.06, .32]</td>
<td>1.37*** (.36)</td>
<td>.24 [.12, .42]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Region indicators:  
Conflict indicators: ✓ ✓
Observations: 226 226 226 226 226 226

See table 6 for notes.

Table 7: Multinomial probit analysis of the effect of multi-party mediation
Table 8: Panel probit analysis of the effect of multi-party mediation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DV: Settlement</th>
<th>Panel probit regression</th>
<th>IV panel regression</th>
<th>Panel probit regression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Second stage:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediator count, t</td>
<td>0.38***</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.30***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on settlement</td>
<td>(0.08)</td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td>(0.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First stage:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediator count, t − 1</td>
<td>0.14*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on mediator count, t</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediator count, t − 2</td>
<td>0.21**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on mediator count, t</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediator count, t − 3</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on mediator count, t</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observations 285 154 154

Unit of observation is conflict-year. Regression includes constant, indicators for conflict intensity, internal conflicts, and internationalized conflicts, and random effects for conflicts. Significant at the *** 99% level, ** 95% level, * 90% level.

For the third column, I re-compute a basic panel probit model on the restricted sample that was used in the instrumental-variable estimation. For a given conflict-year, the IV estimation includes a variable for the number of mediators involved three years ago, which implies that the analysis does not include any observations for the first three years of a conflict’s inclusion in the dataset. We may therefore be concerned that the IV estimate is not directly comparable to the estimate shown in the first column. However, the results shown in the last column confirm that multi-party mediation appears effective in a basic analysis (although the coefficient on the number of mediators is slightly smaller than in the full sample), in contrast to the estimate obtained if we instrument for current with past mediator counts. Additional mediators appear to simply bandwagon as a settlement draws near. As Paul Arthur notes about the peace process in Northern Ireland, “[s]uccess breeds many children”: when ‘the Agreement’ reached in multi-party negotiation was signed in Belfast on April 10, 1998, there was no shortage of those who sought the mantle of progenitors” (Arthur, 1999: 471).
References


