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A Supply Side Theory of Mediation[1]

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We develop and test a theory of the supply side of third-party conflict management. Building on Kydd's (2003) model of mediation, which shows that bias enhances mediator credibility, we offer three complementary mechanisms that may enable mediator credibility. First, democratic mediators face costs for deception in the conflict management process. Second, a vibrant global democratic community supports the norms of unbiased and nonviolent conflict management, again increasing the costs of deception for potential mediators. Third, as disputants' ties to international organizations increase, the mediator's costs for dishonesty in the conflict management process rise because these institutions provide more frequent and accurate information about the disputants' capabilities and resolve. These factors, along with sources of bias, increase the availability of credible mediators and their efforts to manage interstate conflicts. Empirical analyses of data on contentious issues from 1816 to 2001 lend mixed support for our arguments. Third-party conflict management occurs more frequently and is more successful if a potential mediator is a democracy, as the average global democracy level increases, and as the disputants' number of shared International Organization (IO) memberships rises. We also find that powerful states serve as mediators more often and are typically successful. Other factors such as trade ties, alliances, issue salience, and distance influence decisions to mediate and mediation success. Taken together, our study provides evidence in support of Kydd's bias argument while offering several mechanisms for unbiased mediators to become credible and successful mediators.

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Disputants often claim to prefer impartial mediators. They seem more willing to use mediators who are perceived to be unbiased and fair, and impartiality appears to undermine the mediator's ability to successfully negotiate a peaceful resolution to a dispute. Impartiality may make mediators more attractive, but it can also make them less successful. Biased mediators are more capable of achieving nonviolent outcomes, but how can they do so if disputants are unwilling to use them in the first place? How can potential mediators overcome this dilemma? How can they be both appealing to potential clients and able to deliver desirable results? These are the questions this paper seeks to answer.

Recent research yields two discordant claims: mediators are more attractive to disputants when they remain impartial (Wall and Lynn 1993), but that impartiality can jeopardize mediator credibility and, thus, their performance (Kydd 2003). Scholars also tell us that mediators derive many benefits from mediation—such as a boost in public opinion, heightened international prestige, influence over the disputing states, and the stability of economic and security ties—which give potential mediators a strong incentive to position themselves as neutral and impartial (Bercovitch and Schneider 2000). At the same time, an impartial mediator's single-minded focus on the agreement introduces the possibility of lying to disputants for the best of reasons (Kydd 2003). If disputants know that a mediator has incentives to provide false information, they are less likely to turn to that mediator in the first place. Thus, mediators face a dilemma: they need to offer impartiality to attract more customers, but their efforts at mediation may be less successful if they cannot credibly communicate information to disputants.

Kydd (2003) argues that a mediator biased in favor of one disputant is more likely to be successful than a neutral mediator because it has an advantage in credibly signaling information to its favored state. Biased mediators provide a partial, but incomplete, solution to conflict resolution because they offer success at the price of others' willingness to use them. We agree that bias serves as a source of credibility in mediation, and in this paper we find empirical evidence in support of this conclusion. Our approach also adds to the picture by offering a complementary explanation: the global democratic community, its institutions and its norms, can supply credible, neutral mediators.[2] Systemic and institutional democratic processes influence choices by potential mediators,[3] and transparency created by the global democratic community influences potential mediators' behavior. This democracy-based mechanism can discipline neutral mediators to be honest and credible, ultimately augmenting the supply of attractive mediators for disputants.

In this paper, we hope to identify sources of credibility in mediators and examine whether or not these sources, when present, result in increased mediation activity. In addition to focusing on democratic processes, we also focus on political and economic similarities between potential mediators and disputing states as biased sources of credibility (Werner and Lemke 1997). We also test the notion that conflicting parties prefer certain types of mediators, such as powerful and proximate states. Thus, we attempt to provide a comprehensive statistical model to explain the supply of mediation by acknowledging that mechanisms

[2] The systemic effects of democracy on global conflict management have been examined in other research. For example, Mitchell (2002) shows that as the proportion of global democracies has grown, nondemocratic states have adopted a norm for third-party conflict management even though they lack internal institutions and norms that would make them naturally amenable to outside mediation. For other research on the systemic democratic peace, see Huntley (1996), Gleditsch and Hegre (1997), Crescenzi and Enterline (1999), Oneal and Russett (1999), Kadera, Crescenzi, and Shannon (2003), and Harrison (2004).

[3] We use the term ''mediation'' interchangeably with ''third-party conflict management.'' Our data set includes third-party involvement in multiple forms: good offices, inquiry, conciliation, mediation, arbitration, adjudication, multilateral negotiations, and peace conferences. When we refer to decisions to mediate, we are using the term broadly to include all forms of third-party involvement in interstate conflicts.

exist to enhance the credibility of both biased and unbiased potential third-party mediators.

A Supply Side Theory of Mediation

Much of the third-party conflict management literature concentrates on when mediation occurs and the factors that make a mediator desirable, such as neutrality. Bercovitch and Schneider (2000), for example, develop an expected utility model of a potential mediator in a two-party conflict. The model focuses on the stage at which the disputants are both amenable to mediation and prospective third parties consider the value of mediation. It incorporates fixed and variable costs for mediation, as well as the distance between the mediator's ideal position and the preferences of the conflicting parties. A central deduction from the model is that ''potential mediators, if they ever want to be chosen by conflict parties, move rationally toward a neutral position'' (Bercovitch and Schneider 2000:152–153). Similarly, Young (1967) and Fisher (1995) find that successful mediators are fair and impartial. Parallel scholarship on democratic institutions suggests that the neutrality of courts involved in domestic disagreements builds citizens' confidence in their state's use of international courts (Caldeira and Gibson 1995). Nonetheless, based on their empirical analysis, Bercovitch and Schneider (2000:149) contend that a neutral stance is not the only variable making a mediator more likely to be selected; rather, the third party's ability to promote an agreement through the use of leverage, power, and influence also plays a compelling role. Thus, it is no surprise that the United States served as a mediator more often than any other state in the Cold War era.[4]

Many conflict management scholars view neutrality as an important factor for explaining mediation success.[5] However, recent work demonstrates that neutrality effectiveness may depend on the mediator's ability to provide credible information and the mediator's preference for the outcome of the dispute. Rauchhaus (2006), for example, focuses on the extent to which the mediator's preferences for avoiding war are lexicographic, which is modeled separately from the mediator's bias with respect to the two disputants. He concludes that ''both biased mediators and impartial mediators are expected to serve as effective mediators, and impartial mediators are generally expected to outperform biased ones'' (Rauchhaus 2006:208). Unbiased mediators can be a source of credibility when they are indifferent between two potential agreements. What drives the mediator's preferences away from a pure desire for peace, however, is not specified.

Building off of his initial research, Kydd (2006) argues that mediators with moderate levels of bias and long-run reputational concerns may be more effective. The possibility of repeated play (new disputants, same mediator) can cause unbiased mediators to adhere to honest revelation of private information. In contrast, Smith and Stam's (2003) model suggests that neither biased nor unbiased mediators will alter the intra-war bargaining process. Yet, mediators might be effective through offers of carrots and sticks, which mitigate the disputants' commitment problem.

Our model builds upon Kydd's (2003) theory of bias and credibility in mediation. We return to this cornerstone piece as a platform for our argument in part

[4] Many other factors have been identified in the academic literature on mediation as important for understanding the supply side of third-party intervention. These factors include conflict intensity and proximity (Regan 2000), conflict stalemate (Greig 2005), previous conflict management (Hensel 2001; Greig 2005), and conflict versatility (Terris and Maoz 2005).

[5] Beardsley and his colleagues (2006) focus on the effect of three mediation styles of success: facilitation, formulation, and manipulation. Empirical analyses of the ICB data set suggest that manipulation is the most effective strategy for helping the parties strike an agreement and abating a crisis. The timing of mediation efforts may also have an important effect on success (Greig 2001).

because the model is the simplest and clearest exposition of the problems generated by unbiased mediation.[6] Because unbiased mediators have incentives to avert war between the disputants, ''only mediators who are effectively 'on your side' will be believed if they counsel restraint'' (Kydd 2003:597). As such, his study poses an interesting dilemma. Impartiality improves disputants' confidence in a mediator, but may threaten the mediator's credibility and diminish its prospects for successful mediation. A mechanism for making impartial mediators credible would resolve this dilemma. In order to identify such a mechanism, we consider supply-side factors in the mediation marketplace as well as domestic institutional factors that influence the credibility and impartiality of particular mediators.

We begin by incorporating the democratic community's influence into Kydd's (2003) conflict mediation model. We argue that the global democratic community influences the supply of neutral and credible mediators through three primary mechanisms: (i) the mediator's regime type; (ii) the level of global democracy; and (iii) disputants' shared memberships in international organizations. We specify each of these mechanisms in the next section.

Transparency and Mediation

The study of strategic incentives and mediation is captured nicely by Kydd (2003) in a simple bargaining game between two players. Player 1 (P1) and Player 2 (P2) attempt to resolve a dispute over a one-dimensional bargaining space. Player 1 does not know P2's level of resolve, thus adding the key ingredient of uncertainty that breeds conflict. The role of the mediator (M) is to signal P2's resolve to P1. It does so after Nature determines P2's resolve and signals it to M. Kydd's model includes a parameter to capture the noise of the signal that the mediator receives from Nature, denoted as ε, which is assumed to lie between 0 and 0.5. Lower values of ε occur when Nature sends mostly correct information about P2's resolve, while higher values of ε imply greater noise in the information Nature sent to the mediator.[7] After receiving the signal from M about P2's resolve, P1 makes a take-it-or-leave-it offer to P2. P2 either accepts the offer or the two states engage in conflict.

Kydd concludes that the mediator must be biased toward P1 in order to convey credible information about P2's type. Only a friend's advice to cut a deal is credible. This is driven by the assumption that the mediator's payoff for a peaceful resolution is some proportion ($-1 < \beta < 1$) of P1's piece of the pie (x); that is, βx. When β is positive, the mediator is biased in favor of P1 and has an incentive to work to increase x. When β is negative, M is biased in favor of P2 and works to minimize x. When $\beta = 0$, M is unbiased, since it has no incentive to alter the agreement. M's payoff for a conflict outcome is $\beta x - c_m$, where c_m is the mediator's cost of war. No matter what the value of β, M prefers a peaceful outcome. Herein lies the problem in terms of the mediator's credibility. Kydd demonstrates that unbiased mediators ($\beta = 0$) always have an incentive to send the signal that P2 has low costs for conflict and thus high resolve. Only for certain levels of bias ($0 < \beta^* < \beta < \beta^{**}$) can M credibly signal high resolve to P1. The

[6] Rauchhaus' 2006 model is another alternative platform. In that case, we would have incorporated our thoughts into the mediator's preference function (λ) concerning the tradeoffs between peace and the terms of the negotiated settlement. We believe we would generate similar hypotheses and do not see these two approaches as strictly competitive. It is important to note that we do not believe that we have identified the *only* sources of credibility for unbiased mediation. Reputation and preferences over agreement details are two important additional mechanisms identified by Kydd (2006) and Rauchhaus (2006), and future empirical work should seek to test these mechanisms against the historical record.

[7] Kydd's assumption about the range for the signal error focuses on situations where the signal could be informative. His equilibrium results (as well as ours) hold for cases in which the error is informative, or ≤ 0.5.

implication is that unbiased (or P2-biased) mediators will be less successful in their endeavors because they cannot credibly signal P2's resolve. This lack of credibility means that players cannot solve the problem of private information. Only when a mediator that is biased in your favor tells you to cut a deal do you have an incentive to listen.

So how does the global democratic community influence this result, if at all? There are three transparency mechanisms at work that influence the credibility of unbiased mediators. First, the institutional features of the mediator's home state influence the reputational, electoral, and policy failure costs for deception in the mediation process. The second mechanism emanates from the aggregate effects of the global democratic community, which provides better and more frequent information about the dispute and the mediator to the disputants and the global audience. Because this effect is systemic, it raises the costs of deception for all potential mediators, regardless of their individual characteristics. The third mechanism begins with the supply of information provided by international organizations. As the supply of neutral information from international organizations increases, potential mediators face higher costs for deception.

We propose adding a simple cost function to Kydd's model that captures the effects of these transparency mechanisms. These effects can be represented as costs mediators incur for sending false information: $-b(S_n - S_m)$, where b is the probability that the mediator will be caught when sending an incorrect signal to P1 about P2's resolve, and $(S_n - S_m)$ captures the degree to which the signal sent by M differs from the signal sent by Nature. We can think about this cost term as representing the transparency of the mediator's environment or the extent to which the mediator's motives and behavior can be accurately discerned by the media, politicians, and citizens in its home state, and by the media, other governments, and international organizations in the international system. In other words, it is the degree to which transparency of the international environment and the mediator's domestic political structure promote or discourage dishonesty.

In the online appendix, we describe the equilibrium conditions for the revised model. By adding the cost of lying component to the mediator's utility function, we can derive a threshold, b^*, or the tolerable probability of being caught. As long as $b > b^*$, the mediator is motivated to stick to the true signal *even if it is impartial* and would otherwise only care about achieving peace ($\beta = 0$). As b^* increases, mediators will tolerate higher risks of getting caught. Anything that causes b^* to decrease disciplines the mediator to stick to the true signal revealed to it by Nature. The threshold is influenced in part by the degree of deviation from the true signal $(S_n - S_m)$. Smaller deviations from the true signal increase b^*. The mediator is more willing to venture sending a false signal if it is a white lie, or if $(S_n - S_m)$ is small. The mediator's costs for war, c_m, are positively related to b^* as well. As the costs of failure increase, the incentive to use any means necessary to achieve peace rises. On the other hand, the mediator is more likely to send a true signal as b increases because the truth telling equilibrium condition, $b > b^*$, is more likely to hold. All three transparency mechanisms (the regime type of the mediating state, the influence of the global democratic community, and the influence of international organizations), though somewhat distinct, increase b and raise the mediator's costs for sending false information. Higher values of b reduce the private information problem and allow P1 and P2 to find a bargain and avoid war. When the mediator's costs for deception increase, truth telling is more likely, even if the mediator is unbiased. In other words, transparency allows mediators to simultaneously be unbiased and truth-telling, meaning they are both more attractive to disputants and more capable of successfully producing peaceful settlements. We elaborate on each of the causal mechanisms in the following three sections.

Credibility Derived from the Mediating State's Domestic Institutions

Democratic states face greater costs for sending false information as mediators because their deceptive behavior is more likely to be uncovered in the process of public scrutiny. In other words, $b(S_n - S_m)$ is larger for democratic mediators than for autocratic mediators. One component, $(S_n - S_m)$, conveys that bigger lies represent bigger costs for the mediator. This difference allows us to capture the degree of deviation from the true signal as a choice for the mediator; when it tells the truth, it is zero. The other component, b, is larger for democratic states because the transparency of democratic institutional processes makes it harder for the mediator to fudge the signal in the interest of garnering peace. The process of public scrutiny makes it more likely that the mediator's deceptive actions will be revealed and that the mediator will pay a potentially greater audience cost for foreign policy failure. Because democratic mediators have larger values of b, they pay larger costs for sending false information to P1 about P2's resolve.

Numerous scholars argue that the transparency of democratic institutions, such as the free press, generates greater credibility for democratic states' foreign policy behavior and higher audience costs for foreign policy failure (for example, Fearon 1994; Downs and Rocke 1995; Smith 1996; Van Belle 1997; Schultz 1998). Democratic states suffer greater costs for deceptive mediation because the false information they provide to disputing states is more likely to be uncovered by the media and other domestic constituencies. When a leader is found to be untruthful, he or she may suffer a variety of domestic costs including a decline in approval, inability to push a domestic agenda, and removal from office in extreme situations. These higher costs translate into more truth telling by democratic mediators and greater confidence in their veracity. Not only should this produce higher success rates, it should also yield a higher likelihood for mediation by democratic states relative to nondemocracies.[8]

Even as far back as the early 1850s, American mediation efforts were checked by democratic institutions. In 1852, the US Senate demanded to know the details of R. M. Walsh's assignment as a special envoy charged with mediating a dispute between St. Domingo and Haiti. In compliance, President Fillmore submitted the communications between Walsh and the Department of State to the *New York Times*, which published them in full. The State Department directives to Walsh include specific instructions on the need to remain neutral, the conditions under which he should threaten Haiti with a blockade by France and the UK, and the level of naval force that was available to make good on these threats (*New York Times* 1852). Public access to these precise directions made it more difficult for Walsh to deal dishonestly with St. Domingo and Haiti.[9]

Scholars similarly demonstrate that when a state is caught lying, its international reputation and agenda-setting influence in interstate negotiations are reduced. As Sartori (2005:125) shows, repeated play in diplomatic settings pushes states toward honesty in diplomacy: ''States' leaders and diplomats often speak honestly in order to maintain their ability to use diplomacy in future disputes or negotiations.'' Mediators have an analogous incentive to behave as

[8] It is important to note at this point that we are not arguing that democratic institutions and norms inhibit lying on a moral level, nor are we arguing that mediators, individuals, firms, and governments associated with the democratic community are less dishonest by nature. The argument is driven more by the influence of the norms of institutional and economic behavior that have developed in Kantian environments. Transparency and reputation become important components of democracies for the sake of efficiency, contracting, profit, and dispute resolution. These norms then spill over into other aspects of political interaction, including mediation.

[9] Walsh's honest, open efforts paid off. Haiti agreed to continue the military truce and to establish a joint committee of representatives from Haiti and St. Domingo charged with the responsibility of finding a peaceful settlement and guaranteed by the United States, France, and Britain (New York Times 1852).

honest brokers, especially if the openness of their home government increases the chance that lies will be revealed, and particularly if they value the ability to mediate in future disputes. Alterman (2004) offers a good summary of the variety of costs associated with high-profile instances of dishonesty, using examples of various US presidents:

> Had FDR told the truth about Yalta to the country, it is far more likely that the United States would have participated in the creation of the kind of world community he envisioned when he made his secret agreements. John Kennedy's deception about the nature of the deal to which he agreed to insure the removal of Soviet missiles from Cuba also proved enormously detrimental to his hope of creating a lasting, stable peace in the context of Cold War competition. Lyndon Johnson's false assurances regarding the second Tonkin Gulf incident destroyed not only his ambitious hopes to create a ''Great Society'' but also his own presidency and most of his political reason for being. And Ronald Reagan, through his lies about Central America, created a dynamic through which his advisers believed they had a right to initiate a secret, illegal foreign and military policy whose aims were almost perfectly contradictory to the president's stated aims in such crucial areas as dealing with governments deemed to be terrorist. (Alterman 2004:314)

Democratic leaders run the risk of suffering costs for providing false information in diplomatic settings, regardless of the success or failure of the associated foreign policy itself. These costs are not necessarily represented by electoral punishment (we do not mean to imply that the leader incurs a widely imposed audience cost by the electorate), but may instead be related to foreign policy goals. The cost need not be extraordinary. What matters is the value of the potential cost relative to the expected gains from dishonesty.

If we consider the influence of a potential mediating state's political institutions on its decision about whether or not to manipulate private information, we see that the transparency and oversight of democratic political systems disciplines democratic mediators to remain honest, which means that even unbiased democratic mediators become an attractive option for conflict resolution and can successfully help the parties reach a peaceful settlement. We offer:

Hypothesis 1a: *As a potential mediating state's democracy level increases, it is more likely to serve as a conflict manager.*

Hypothesis 1b: *As a mediating state's democracy level increases, the likelihood that it will successfully manage disputes rises.*

Credibility Derived from the Global Democratic Community

The second source of credibility focuses on the systemic effect of the global democratic community. As the international system becomes more democratic, there is a larger information marketplace. These systemic effects generate costs for deception for all mediators because the probability of a revealed lie increases. Consider, for example, Norway's famous Back-Channel Negotiations in the early 1990s as it mediated the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations that led to the 1993 Oslo Accords. Norway went to great lengths to preserve the secrecy of the negotiations in the short run (including keeping them from their US allies), but they were never under the illusion that these negotiations would permanently remain secret (Waage 2005). Moreover, Norway intended to expand its global role as a peace mediator once it garnered an agreement between the two disputants. The Declaration of Principles was designed to be a starting point for mediation, not

the final product. One of the factors that disciplined the Norwegian team throughout the negotiations was the knowledge that their actions would soon attract the full attention of the global community, leaving little left to secrets. If, as the dust settled on the historic agreement, Norway was perceived to have misled the disputants in pursuit of an agreement, then Oslo's identity as the ''Capital of Peace'' would have been tarnished (Waage 2005). This is precisely the type of mediator cost we envision in our formal discussion above.

More broadly, with over half of the states in the world in the twenty-first century possessing democratic institutions (Mitchell, Gates, and Hegre 1999), the supply of free presses has increased substantially. Halim (2002:196) notes that, ''Good relations with the media, backed by a steady flow of information and explanation between the mediator and media, is crucial to projecting an image of the mediator's neutrality, rationality, and efficacy.'' At the monadic level, Van Belle (1997:409) reports that the presence or absence of a free press coincides with the presence or absence of democracy 86% of the time. In addition to reducing the likelihood of dyadic militarized conflict (Van Belle 1997), free presses generate greater information and potential costs for disingenuous diplomacy. The global supply of free presses has risen dramatically in recent decades, corresponding with global trends toward increased democratization. In 1980, 46% of countries had partly free or free presses; this increased to 65% of states with free presses in 2006 (Freedom House 2007). These trends suggest rising costs for deceptive mediators because the likelihood of being caught in a lie increases.

Less democratic states can also be constrained by the media. China and Russia's dishonesty in the Oil-for-Food scandal following the first Gulf War in Iraq was revealed by Fox News, Al-Hurra (a US-funded satellite television station in the Middle East), and other international news sources in the mid 2000s, which limited their ability to help manage and direct postwar settlements and rebuilding following the second Gulf War. Historical examples indicate that autocratic mediators who lie are likewise seen as less attractive options later on. During the 1853 dispute between Russia and Turkey over various ports and principalities, Austria's mediation efforts failed because it proved to be untrustworthy. Austria's initial claim of neutrality was called into question when it demanded payments from Turkey (New York Times 1853a), and then Austria's assertion that the United States was supplying Turkey was discounted precisely because it came from a dishonest information broker (New York Times 1853b). Austria's deceit regarding its impartiality undermined its reputation and its subsequent effort to provide information about the Russo-Turkish dispute.

One conclusion from this discussion is that as the democratic community grows, we are more likely to see democratically influenced mediators that are perceived as truthful and fair. The probability of getting caught lying is a function of the transparency of the mediation process and the systemic environment. Mediators that are integrated with the democratic community are more likely to get caught if they are lying, and a stronger democratic community brings more opportunity for transparency. In other words, a vibrant democratic community produces a greater supply of the preferred type of mediators: those that are credible as well as unbiased. As a result, there is a concomitant rise in the frequency of using mediators. The norms underpinning dispute resolution in democratic societies, as well as the transparency of democratic political processes, produce an important systemic phenomenon.

Critics might contend that we are conflating credibility with supply or that increasing costs for mediator dishonesty might instead produce a larger pool of credible mediators with a smaller group of actual mediators. We disagree with this premise. While our theoretical model focuses on factors that influence the costs for telling lies, it also recognizes that mediators gain benefits from successfully managing conflicts, which is the basis for Kydd's assumption that mediators always

prefer peaceful settlement to conflict. Mediators stand to gain a lot for successful efforts, including a boost in public opinion, influence over the disputing states, heightened international prestige, and the stability of economic and security ties. Mediators tied to the democratic community have specific interests in getting involved as conflict managers to help ensure the survival of other democratic regimes (Kadera et al. 2003) and to protect free and open markets. Because the global democratic influences all states to be more honest mediators and because such mediators are more likely to be put to use and to succeed, we propose:

Hypothesis 2a: *As the global community becomes more democratic, potential mediators are more likely to serve as conflict managers.*

Hypothesis 2b: *As the global community becomes more democratic, the likelihood that mediators will successfully manage disputes rises.*

Credibility Derived from International Organizations

We also expect an increasing presence of international institutions to enhance the supply of credible third-party conflict managers. When Kantian values become deeply internalized, ''states identify with each other, seeing each other's security not just as instrumentally related to their own, but as literally being their own'' (Wendt 1999:305; see also Caporaso 1992; Gelpi 1997). Conflicts involving others take on more importance as actors come to view security threats to one member of their community as threatening to all. This parallels a citizen's attitude toward crime in her neighborhood. Even if her home is not vandalized, she may be concerned because she views it as a threat to her community's security. One common reaction toward neighborhood crime throughout the United States is to form a Neighborhood Watch Program. These programs are institutions designed for the specific purpose of dissuading criminal activity through organized monitoring of the neighborhood. Similarly, states concerned by the magnitude or proximity of other states' violent interactions form regional or global institutions to alleviate international conflict.

Global IOs augment the supply of credible mediators in a variety of ways. Already established by previous research, IOs provide institutional mechanisms for third-party mediation, meaning that as the global number of IOs increases, IOs themselves are more likely to serve as conflict managers (Kadera and Mitchell 2005). Furthermore, as disputants' shared membership in IOs increases, they are more likely to use third-party mediators (Shannon 2009). Of special note are the more indirect, or environmental, effects that international institutions have on the provision of quality third-party mediators. Because IOs provide an alternative, independent source of information, they promote the transparency of states (Grigorescu 2003), which in turn become more reliable, honest mediators.

For instance, following the June 2008 border attacks by Eritrea into Djibouti territory, the African Union and the League of Arab States sent fact-finding missions and made independent assessments of the hostilities. Their reports should serve as a basis of neutral information in the event that the two parties eventually agree to mediation by one of the several states that have offered their services (Qatar, France, and Yemen). The Iraqi example further illustrates how IOs promote the credibility of state efforts as conflict managers. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was integral in uncovering the false information provided by the Bush administration during its attempt to monitor and secure Iraqi compliance with postwar sanctions. In March 2003, IAEA chief weapons inspectors Hans Blix and Mohamed ElBaradei rejected the Bush administration's

claim that Iraq, an IAEA member since 1959,[10] had attempted to purchase uranium from Niger, an IAEA member state since 1969. After interviewing Iraqi and Nigerian officials and comparing correspondence from the Niger government with those provided by the United States, the IAEA concluded ''that these documents, which formed the basis for the reports of recent uranium transactions between Iraq and Niger, are in fact not authentic,'' and that ''these specific allegations are unfounded'' (ElBaradei 2003). The agency also revealed that several of the documents that the White House had used to support its claims were forgeries (Warrick 2003). The ensuing failure of conflict management, namely the United States' refusal to back down and its initiation of the second Gulf War, proved disastrous for Bush's approval ratings at home and American prestige abroad. This example demonstrates how IOs help augment credibility in interstate interactions by dispelling erroneous information and keeping conflict managers honest.

An IO's efforts toward reporting objective facts can also be used to further mediation by the IO itself. The Organization of American States (OAS), for example, sent a commission to visit Ecuador and Colombia to establish the particulars of a March 1, 2008, incursion of Colombian troops into Ecuador's territory in an effort to pursue and fight the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). The commission worked quickly, visiting the site of the incursion and with officials in both states from March 9–12. In its report on March 17, the OAS commission established the timeline of events, identified particular individuals who were killed, determined the extent of the use of aerial bombing, and other important details (Organization of American States 2008). Praising the OAS's fact-finding work and efforts at mediation, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon pronounced the OAS an ''impartial mechanism'' for resolving the militarized disagreement (Organization of American States 2008). Subsequent OAS mediation work produced a pledge to not violate Ecuador's territory again from Colombia and the establishment of measures to rebuild confidence between Ecuador and Colombia.

Not all IOs will be easily able to provide high quality information in every situation. We surmise that the IOs best situated to keep mediators honest by disclosing relevant facts and evidence to the public are those to which both disputants belong. In a sense, these are the IOs in the disputants' ''neighborhood,'' the ones most likely to develop a ''neighborhood watch'' role vis-à-vis the conflicting parties. As membership in these institutions grows, the supply of desirable and successful third-party conflict management efforts by these organizations and states should increase as well:

Hypothesis 3a: *As the disputants' number of shared memberships in international organizations increases, the likelihood that potential mediators will serve as third-party conflict managers rises.*

Hypothesis 3b: *As the disputants' number of shared memberships in international organizations increases, the likelihood that mediators will successfully manage disputes rises.*

Bias as a Complementary Source of Credibility

Because our model was built on Kydd's (2003) model, it maintains his prediction that biased mediators are more credible. The mechanism driving this original feature is that bias toward one disputant means the mediator has a stake in the

[10] Although Iraq did not fully cooperate with weapons inspections routines, it was quite forthcoming on the issue of the alleged purchase of uranium from Niger (ElBaradei 2003).

outcome of the disagreement and will not simply lie to get peace. In what sort of ways might mediators be biased or how might they benefit from the settlement outcome? We consider two potential types of ties between a potential mediator and a disputant: economic (bilateral trade) and political (alliance portfolio similarity with other states). According to our formal model (and Kydd's 2003 model), sources of bias should make mediation more successful. Because these two sources of bias have additional information features, traits distinct from the mediator's stake in the division of the issue under dispute, they also carry with them punishments for lying. In other words, these sources of bias might also be interpreted as truth-telling constraints which make biased mediators more attractive even though they are biased. In a sense, the information feature that produces honesty potentially offsets the bias inherent in dyadic relationships characterized by deep economic or political ties. Below we discuss the bias component that links trade and alliances to mediation success and address how these ties also have information characteristics that make prospective mediators more appealing.

Potential mediators often share interests with a disputant. If the issue in dispute threatens to disrupt their economic relationship, for instance, the mediator and disputant will both be keen to reach an outcome that protects their gains from trade, ensures market health, stabilizes currency, and fortifies domestic economic systems. In Savun's (2008) thorough examination of the role of various types of bias in mediation, she uses trade as a central component in a composite indicator of bias and finds that close ties make the mediator more credible and successful.[11] Teng (2008:56) provides a more specific example, demonstrating that despite a troubled history with North Korea, China's status as its top trading partner has made it an ''honest third party in maintaining the momentum of the six-party talks.''

Extensive economic ties also mean greater reputational costs of lying. Russett and Oneal (2001:130) argue that trade increases communication between states, thereby creating a shared sense of identity and shared values. As the volume of information and number of potential whistle-blowers increases, it is more difficult for a mediator to send a disingenuous signal. If a state proves to be distrustful as a mediator, that distrust may spread to threaten economic agreements with the disputing state. Potential mediators with strong trade ties to disputing states are apt to send true signals because they face greater costs for deception in the conflict management process, making them more attractive mediators.[12]

China's unique role in mediating the dispute between the United States and North Korea over the latter's nuclear weapons program provides one example of this expectation. With over $2 billion and $300 billion in annual bilateral trade with North Korea and the United States (respectively), China has been sought by both parties as a mediator. North Korea trusts China because of its historical military support and their ongoing economic relationship, while the United States is confident that China would be very unlikely to endanger its existing trading relationship by showing dishonesty in the negotiations (Lam 2002; International Crisis Group 2006). Meanwhile, China would benefit greatly from an end to the standoff because regional stability would improve. Overall, China's significant trade with both disputants enhances its ability to be perceived as a sincere mediator.

[11] Savun's (2008) theory focuses on more nuanced features of bias, and her measure is commensurately more complex than the ones we use here. Because our central theoretical focus is on transparency, we do not adopt her measure.

[12] While it is true that firms (rather than states) trade with each other, it is also true that states go to great lengths to establish friendly trading ties on behalf of these firms, which should result in the increased flow of information that we describe. For example, governments (not firms) sign preferential trading agreements, which significantly increase the amount of trade between member countries. This approach is similar to other arguments about the pacifying effects of trade (for example, Russett and Oneal 2001).

Overlapping political views are another way in which a mediator's preferences might be biased toward one disputant. As a mediator and disputant's views on defense, world order, common enemies, and peace become more alike, the mediator's interests will more closely mirror those of the disputant. Two states that share strong security concerns, for example, might belong to a multilateral alliance such as NATO, which institutionalizes mechanisms that assure the transfer of credible information (Risse-Kappen 1996). Or suppose that a potential mediator and a disputant share core ideological beliefs. They would be likely to both be aligned with additional states that also hold these beliefs (Lai and Reiter 2000), resulting in a network of states with a common ideology. Such communities produce a variety of connections in the form of joint summits, mutual systems for monitoring outside threats, joint defense efforts, and so forth. A potential mediator finds it more difficult to send a disingenuous signal to a disputant with whom it shares many overlapping connections with the rest of the international community. States with such ties are more attractive mediators.

In short, economic and political ties between a potential mediator and a disputant function both as a source of bias and as a source of information. We expect these ties to augment the frequency and success of third-party mediation, summarized in the following two hypotheses.

Hypothesis 4a: *As the ties between a potential mediator and a disputant increase, the likelihood that the potential mediator will serve as third-party conflict managers rises.*

Hypothesis 4b: *As the ties between a mediator and a disputant increase, the mediator is more likely to succeed.*

Research Design

To evaluate decisions by potential mediators, we need to identify the following: (i) a set of conflicts where mediation could have been offered; (ii) a subset of cases in which third-party conflict mediation occurred; and (iii) criteria for determining which states should be counted as potential mediators. To satisfy the first and second criteria, we use version 1.1 of the Issue Correlates of War (ICOW) project's data on contentious issue claims (Hensel 2001; Mitchell 2002; Hensel, Mitchell, Sowers, and Thyne 2008). The ICOW project identifies contentious issue claims based on explicit evidence of contention involving official representatives of two or more states over a particular issue. Three types of contentious issues are in the database: (i) territorial claims, where one state challenges sovereignty over a specific piece of territory that is claimed or administered by another state; (ii) maritime claims, which involve explicit contention between two or more states over the ownership, access to, or usage of a maritime area; and (iii) river claims, which involve explicit contention over the usage or ownership of an international river. This database is useful for our purposes because the universe includes all disagreements over these issues, regardless of whether they were resolved peacefully, violently, bilaterally, with third-party assistance, or not at all. For each contentious claim, ICOW records every distinct peaceful settlement attempt, distinguishing between bilateral negotiations and third-party efforts.

To date, the ICOW project has collected comprehensive data for all issue types on the Western Hemisphere alone. Work is underway to complete other regions, but there is quite a bit of variability in regions and issues currently available.[13]

[13] See the ICOW Web site at http://www.paulhensel.org/icow.html for updates on coverage by issue and region.

Given this, we focus the discussion of descriptive statistics and empirical results on tests of the Western Hemisphere because we are most confident that these results are not influenced by omissions in issue or regional data availability. We nevertheless present results for all available data alongside our primary findings as a robustness check on our results.

In addressing the third criterion, we use a potential mediator for each year of a dyadic claim as the unit of analysis. To construct a set of such observations, we first consider every ongoing year of a dyadic claim. Because ICOW distinguishes between the challenger, which seeks to change the status quo, and the target, which seeks to preserve it, each case is a unique challenger-target-year combination. Including three issue types (territory, maritime, and river), there are a total of 7,801 claim dyad-years from 1816 to 2001. Next, we create a case for every potential mediator in each ongoing dyad-year of each claim. The set of potential mediators includes all states in same region of the dispute plus the major powers as defined by the Correlates of War Project (Small and Singer 1982).[14] While this strategy for creating a universe of analysis makes positive values for our dependent variables extremely rare (occurring in <1% of the cases), it has three key advantages. First, it eliminates the selection bias problem associated with analyzing only cases in which at least one mediator intervenes. By considering third parties that attempt settlements as well as those whose potential services were not rendered, we can identify the factors that determine when outside management will occur and which actors are prone to intercede. Second, it allows us to capture temporal variation in our independent variables. Third, we can examine the individual characteristics of each potential mediator, such as the mediator's regime type and its relationship with the disputing states, which provides the most direct test of our hypotheses possible.

As we discussed earlier, examining mediation success as well as the decision to mediate is important because selection effects may be at work. In addition, our hypotheses stipulate factors related to both the supply and the success of mediation. The first dependent variable, *Mediation Attempt*, equals one for each potential mediator-claim-dyad-year if the potential mediator served as a third-party conflict manager at least once in that dyadic claim in that year, and zero otherwise. A potential mediator's services were used in 474 of 187,946 cases.[15] The second dependent variable, *Mediation Success*, is coded 1 if the mediation resulted in an agreement between the two parties, and zero otherwise. Around two-thirds (322) of the mediation attempts successfully resulted in agreements.[16]

Our theory specifies that three primary theoretical variables should affect the likelihood of mediation attempts and success. The first independent variable, *Mediator's Polity*, captures the regime type of the potential mediating state. Scores

[14] In reality, all states could be considered potential mediators. However, some selection rule is necessary to limit the set of potential mediators in order to avoid inflating our data with zeros for the dependent variable. Our decision rule (all states in the region plus major powers) aligns with similar selection rules in the literature, such as those who used politically relevant dyads to analyze interstate disputes (for example, Russett and Oneal 2001).

[15] One potential problem with our ''mediation attempt'' variable is that it captures both limited conflict management activities, such as facilitating communication and providing good offices (that is, ''light mediation''), with more forceful means of mediation, such as setting the agenda, crafting settlements, and arbitrating the dispute (that is, ''heavy mediation'') (Rauchhaus 2006:224). This is problematic because our theory focuses primarily on information, which is best captured with light mediation. To be sure, we reran our analyses after recoding all cases of heavy mediation (arbitration and adjudication) to zero, which included 96 mediation attempts. This approach yields substantively identical results as those presented in Table 1, except that *Average global democracy* drops from significance in the Agree stage of Models 2 and 4.

[16] Our usage of agreements includes all agreements, regardless of whether they ended all or part of the dispute. We also ran analyses after limiting agreements to cases where the agreement ended the entire dispute, which reduced the number of agreements to 107. This approach yielded substantive identical results to those presented in Table 1, except that *Shared IO memberships* significantly decreases the likelihood of mediation success for the more restrictive definition of agreements.

are calculated with data from the Polity IV project (Marshall and Jaggers 2000). This variable captures the difference between a state's democracy and autocracy scores, with a mean of 0.317 and a range from −10 to +10. The second theoretical variable, *Average Global Democracy*, represents the intensity of the global democratic community. This variable is calculated as the average Polity IV democracy score per year for all states in the international system.[17] This variable has a mean of 3.45 and ranges from 0.83 to 5.13. Our third theoretical variable, *Shared IO Memberships*, assesses the information provided by global institutions. This is measured as the count of global multilateral treaties and institutions calling for the peaceful settlement of disputes that both disputants have signed and ratified. Membership in qualifying institutions is measured through the ICOW Project's Multilateral Treaties of Pacific Settlement (MTOPS) data set, which records the signature and ratification of all multilateral treaties and institutions that explicitly call for the pacific settlement of political disputes among members (Hensel 2005). We focus on this smaller set of IOs because they have an explicit mandate for managing conflicts among member states and they are more likely to provide the kind of neutral information we described theoretically. This variable has a mean of 1.54 and ranges from 0 to 4.

Beyond our primary independent variables, we also recognize that bias may serve as a complementary source of credibility and information, thereby increasing the likelihood and success of third-party mediation. To test this argument, we examine a measure called ''Trade bias,'' which equals the absolute value of the difference in total trade between potential mediator-challenger and potential mediator-target.[18] We also test the influence of strong political ties by drawing on Signorino and Ritter's (1999) measure of alliance portfolio similarities (global and weighted), or *S*, which we refer to as ''Alliance bias.'' As Signorino and Ritter (1999:115) point out, the similarity in two states' obligations to other states is commonly assumed to reflect the extent to which ''they'' have common or conflicting security interests. Akin to trade bias, this measure is constructed by taking the absolute value of the difference between the potential mediator-challenger portfolio similarities and those of the target.[19]

We now turn to placing our analysis within the context of a broader understanding of mediation activity. We include several control variables that should affect the costs of mediation and disputants' demands for external involvement. Some mediators are more attractive than others due to their power and mediation skills (Bercovitch and Schneider 2000). To control for this, we include a variable for the potential mediator's capabilities as indicated by its Composite Index of National Capability (CINC) score (Singer, Bremer, and Stuckey 1972). Ranging from 0 to 1, *Mediator's CINC Score* measures a potential mediator's average share of global military, economic, and demographic power. We also expect states farther away from conflicts to be less willing to mediate because the cost of mediation increases with distance. Thus, we include a variable calculating the distance between each potential mediator and the target state ($Distance_{PM\text{-}T}$) based on

[17] This variable is similar to the democratic community variable developed in Kadera et al. (2003). Here, we use a reduced form of their variable by removing the power capabilities dimension of the measure because our theory does not specify the role of capabilities tied to the democratic community.

[18] Trade values are taken from version 1.1 of Barbieri's (2002) data set. Her dyadic variables sum the total value of imports to state A from state B and the total value of imports to B from A. We make one very important modification to Barbieri's measures for dyadic trade, recoding missing data as zero. This is one of the steps Gleditsch (2002) advocates in improving such measures due to the enormous amount of missing data. Values are logged to correct for skewness in the data.

[19] Kydd's (2003) formal model finds that only bias between the mediator and the challenger should have an impact on mediation success. Given that Kydd's discussion focuses on bias more generally, we read this as a technique to simplify the formal model and therefore analyze bias toward either the challenger or the target.

the ''great circle'' formula (Fitzpatrick and Modlin 1986).[20] Next, we anticipate that some types of conflicts should generate more outside management efforts than others. Conflicts over highly salient issues will draw more outside attention than less salient issues (Hensel 2001). Taken from the ICOW data, *Issue Salience* taps a variety of issue attributes, each of which is thought to increase the issue's value to one or both sides.[21] Conflicts between states with vastly different military and economic capabilities may generate less interest from potential mediators than those between relative equals. Potential mediators are apt to view highly asymmetric conflicts as situations where their services are more likely to be rejected. Thus, we should observe fewer mediation efforts in such cases. *Relative Capabilities*$_{Ch/T}$ captures the relative power asymmetries between the challenger and target state by dividing the challenger's composite CINC score by the combined CINC score of the dyad. Higher values indicate more pronounced advantages for the challenger, which should diminish the likelihood of outside mediation. Finally, we suspect that salience between issue types might affect the likelihood of mediation. We might suspect territorial disputes to capture external states' attention more so than maritime disputes, for instance, because they are more apt to become militarized (Hensel et al. 2008). Thus, we include dummy variables for *maritime disputes* and *river disputes*, leaving territorial disputes as the excluded category.

Empirical Analyses

We present our primary empirical analyses in Table 1. The first set of tests comes in Model 1, where we use probit regression with *Mediation Attempt* as the dependent variable. Beginning with this earlier step in the mediation process provides the best test of our theory because it eliminates potential selection bias that may arise if we focus exclusively on the success of mediation. To follow through, in Model 2 we explicitly examine selection effects with a Heckman probit model (Heckman 1979). As noted earlier, we are most confident in our results for the Western Hemisphere due to the completeness of the data. We therefore focus the following discussion on the Western Hemisphere (Models 1–2) only and present identical analyses for all available data (Models 3–4) as robustness checks.

We find split support for the first pair of hypotheses, which link the probability of mediation efforts and their success to the potential mediator's democracy level. The positive and significant coefficients for *Mediator's Polity* in Model 1 ($p < .001$) and in the mediate stage of Model 2 ($p < .001$) suggest that increases in a potential mediating state's democracy score significantly augment its likelihood of being acceptable to the disputants. However, the insignificant coefficient for the same variable in the agree stage of Model 2 ($p < .403$) suggests that higher levels of democracy do not augment a mediator's chances for gaining a successful agreement. Beyond statistical significance, the substantive effects for the independent variables are gauged by calculating each variable's marginal effect on a dependent variable when holding all other variables constant at their means or modes. The *Clarify* program was used to estimate predicted values for the transparency and bias variables in Table 1 (King, Tomz, and Wittenberg 2000; Tomz, Wittenberg, and King 2003). The results from these calculations are presented graphically in Figures 1 and 2. These figures displays how we should expect the likelihood of mediation attempts (Figure 1) and mediation success

[20] Results remain substantively identical when controlling for the distance between the potential mediator and the challenger.

[21] The salience index combines six dichotomous dimensions, with each dimension contributing up to two points to the salience index, one point per claimant state for which the indicator is present, producing a range from 0 to 12 (Hensel et al. 2008:130–131).

TABLE 1. Mediation Attempts and Success

	Western Hemisphere			*All Cases*		
	Model 1	*Model 2 (selection)*		*Model 3*	*Model 4 (selection)*	
	Mediate	*Mediate*	*Agree*	*Mediate*	*Mediate*	*Agree*
Transparency Variables						
Mediator's Polity	0.015	0.015	−0.003	0.011	0.011	−0.024
	(0.003)***	(0.003)***	(0.014)	(0.002)***	(0.002)***	(0.010)**
Avg. Global	0.121	0.121	0.267	0.008	0.008	0.120
Democracy	(0.019)***	(0.019)***	(0.095)**	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.063)*
Shared IO	0.105	0.105	−0.034	0.062	0.062	0.050
Membership	(0.016)***	(0.016)***	(0.077)	(0.013)***	(0.013)***	(0.068)
Bias Variables						
Trade Bias	0.056	0.056	0.002	0.041	0.041	0.061
	(0.012)***	(0.012)***	(0.059)	(0.011)***	(0.011)***	(0.045)
Alliance Bias	0.441	0.445	1.858	0.115	0.115	0.833
	(0.063)***	(0.063)***	(0.371)***	(0.051)*	(0.051)*	(0.195)***
Control Variables						
Distance $_{PM\text{-}T}$	−0.225	−0.225	−0.039	−0.201	−0.201	0.040
	(0.012)***	(0.012)***	(0.054)	(0.010)***	(0.010)***	(0.041)
Relative Cap. $_{Ch/T}$	−0.001	−0.001	−0.013	−0.001	−0.001	−0.010
	(0.000)**	(0.000)**	(0.004)***	(0.000)**	(0.000)**	(0.003)***
Mediator's CINC	4.625	4.604		4.480	4.484	
	(0.210)***	(0.215)***		(0.162)***	(0.162)***	
Issue Salience	0.113	0.114		0.077	0.076	
	(0.009)***	(0.009)***		(0.006)***	(0.006)***	
Maritime Dispute	−0.260	−0.266		−0.201	−0.199	
	(0.038)***	(0.040)***		(0.034)***	(0.035)***	
River dispute	−0.682	−0.679		−0.367	−0.371	
	(0.159)***	(0.158)***		(0.089)***	(0.089)***	
Constant	−3.791	−3.800	−1.151	−3.072	−3.071	0.039
	(0.096)***	(0.096)***	(0.578)*	(0.072)***	(0.072)***	(0.383)
Observations	187,946	187,946	187,946	237,335	237,335	237,335
Chi-square	919.01***	54.59***		1376.06***	51.75***	
Pseudo R2/Rho	0.156	0.246		0.135	−0.097	
		(0.157)			(0.138)	

Robust SE in parentheses. * significant at 0.05; ** significant at 0.01; ***significant at 0.001 (one-tailed).

(Figure 2) to vary when each of the primary independent variables is allowed to vary from its minimum to maximum values while holding all other variables constant at their means (for continuous variables) and modes (for dichotomous variables).[22] Moving from the minimum to the maximum values on the potential mediator's polity score raises the likelihood of mediation from 0.0008 to 0.0022, which represents a 171.7% increase in the likelihood of mediation.[23] Overall, these results indicate that states are more likely to mediate as their democracy level increases (H1a supported), though democracy level has little impact on whether or not the attempt will be successful (H1b not supported).

Hypotheses 2a and 2b predict that the supply of impartial mediators, and hence mediator use and mediator success, will increase as the average

[22] While Figures 1 and 2 are calculated similarly, we opt to show the substantive effects from the mediate stage as first differences in Figure 1 due to space limitations (most variables in the mediate stage are significant). In contrast, in the success stage we show the impact of the primary independent variables across the entire range of the variable of interest because only two of the primary variables are significant.

[23] We should note that while the substantive effects seem large, the rareness of the dependent variable produces small predicted probabilities in general. This is similar to other dyadic analyses of international conflict.

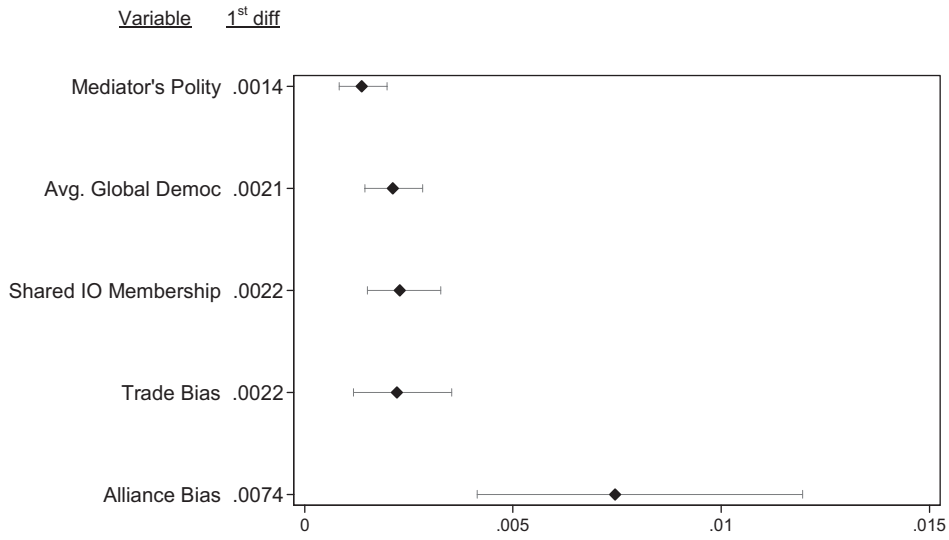

Fig 1. Impact of Transparency and Bias Variables on Mediation Attempts. Values Reveal First Difference (FD) Estimations (◆) with 95% Confidence Intervals (|—|)

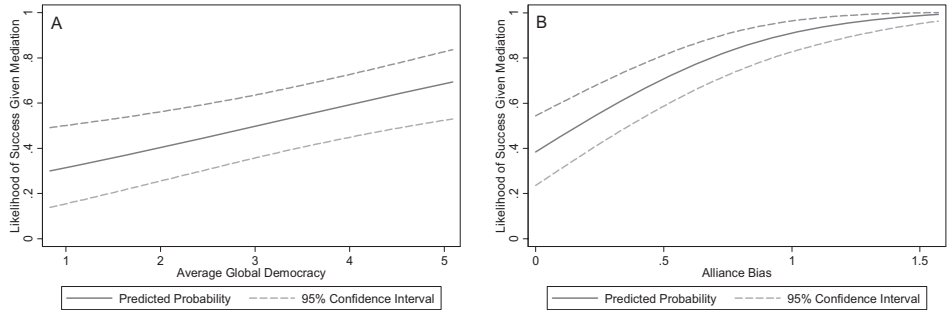

Fig 2. Impact of Transparency and Bias Variables on Mediation Success

democratic level in the international system grows. We find strong support for both hypotheses with positive coefficients for *Average Global Democracy* in Model 1 ($p < .001$) and both the mediate and agree stages of Model 2 ($p < .001$ and .003, respectively). The substantive effect shown in Figure 1 is much larger in magnitude than that for the mediator's level of democracy, with a 448.7% (0.0005–0.0021) increase in the likelihood of mediation attempts. A slightly weaker impact is shown for mediation success in Figure 2a. We should expect a 129.2% (0.303–0.695) increase in the likelihood of mediation success when the average global democracy value shifts from its minimum to its maximum values.

Hypotheses 3a and 3b expect that the provision of credible third-party conflict management and the rate of management success should increase as global institutions expand their reach. We find strong support for this argument in the attempt stage. The coefficient for *Shared IO Memberships* is positive and significant in Model 1 ($p < .001$) and in the mediate stage of Model 2 ($p < .001$). International institutions securely tied to the democratic community provide a trustworthy source of information through enhanced transparency and higher costs for lying. As shown in Figure 1, substantive effects for global institutions are similarly strong as the other transparency variables. As we move from the minimum to the

maximum value for shared institutions, the probability of third-party mediation increases by 290.5% (0.0007–0.0030). These results parallel prior research, which finds that increases in the claimants' joint IO memberships make institutional third-party conflict management more likely (Kadera and Mitchell 2005). However, the insignificant coefficient in the success stage of Model 2 ($p < .328$) suggests that the added transparency matters exclusively for mediation attempts, not success.

Beyond our primary hypotheses, we also predicted that increasing levels of economic and political biases should increase the supply of credible mediators and their chances for producing agreements. We find that both trading relationships and alliance portfolio biases significantly enhance the likelihood of third-party mediation. As shown in Figure 1, increasing levels of trade bias increase the likelihood of mediation by 319.5% (0.0007–0.0022), but the effect of the same variable is insignificant in regard to mediation success ($p < .486$). Increasing levels of alliance bias also spur potential mediators into action, raising the probability of third-party management by 765.9% (0.0010–0.0083). As shown in Figure 2, the measure for alliance bias also has an important impact in the agreement stage ($p < .001$), increasing the likelihood of success by 157.9% (0.3836–0.9893).

We probed the bias measures further by analyzing whether ties between the potential mediators had a strong impact for the challenger or the target states. Our results (not shown) indicate that ties with the target state compel the mediator to intercede, whereas ties to the challenger do not.[24] Why might this be the case? Regarding trade connections, one might speculate that third parties trading with the target have more incentive to mediate a dispute in order to prevent disruption of the status quo trade partnership. Third parties trading with the challenger, on the other hand, may have less incentive to mediate given that they, like the challenger, would likely benefit from a revision of the status quo. They may prefer to let the crisis play itself out in hopes that the challenger succeeds in revising the status quo. The same logic suggests that potential mediators with strong political ties to the challenging state may also prefer the same type of revisions that the challenging state seeks, giving them little incentive to bring a quick end to disputes.

We also identified several variables that affect the supply and success of mediation, including those that may alter the costs of mediation and disputants' demands for external involvement. Several of the measures meant to capture these concepts are found to have significant effects on decisions by potential mediating states to intervene in contentious issue claims. First, long distances between the potential mediator's and the claimants' capitals are found to diminish chances for intercession. Substantively, we find that distances between the potential mediator and the target ($\text{Distance}_{\text{PM-T}}$) decrease the likelihood of mediation by 93.9% (0.0111–0.0007). A similar effect is found for this measure when considering mediation success in Model 2, though the measure is insignificant ($p < .236$). As expected, we also find that large power imbalances between the challenger relative to the target ($\textit{Relative Capabilities}_{Ch/T}$) decrease the likelihood of mediation ($p < .001$) and mediation success ($p < .001$). Consistent with Bercovitch and Schneider's (2000) work, we find that strong states (those with a high value for *Mediator's CINC Score*) are much more likely to mediate than weak ones. In fact, the effect of the potential mediator's strength dwarfs that of any other independent variable. The strongest state (the United States) is 9629% (0.0009–0.0892) more likely to mediate than the weakest (St. Kitts and Nevis). We next see that the salience of the specific issue under contention (*Issue*

[24] All analyses mentioned (but not shown) in the text can be replicated using our data available at http://www.unc.edu/~crescenz/data/ckmtISQ2011.zip.

Salience) is important in attracting mediation. Claims with the highest salience level are 8550% (0.0001–0.0094) more likely to undergo mediation than those with the lowest salience. Finally, compared to territorial disputes, we find that both *maritime disputes* and *river disputes* are significantly less likely to receive mediation attempts (−58.3% and −89.6%, respectively). This is unsurprising given that these issues are the least likely to become militarized and affect other potential mediators (Hensel et al. 2008).

Robustness and Extensions

While the first two models provide the most direct tests of our hypotheses, several issues should be considered to assure the robustness of our results. First, we noted earlier that examining *Mediation Attempt* and *Mediation Success* in separate models might produce questionable findings because mediators are likely to intentionally select themselves into cases where they expect to be successful. If so, our analyses would likely suffer from selection bias if we analyzed only cases prone to successful agreements. In other words, separate analyses for mediation attempts and success would not tell us whether the increased volume of credible information has more to do with decisions to mediate or with the *a priori* likelihood of mediation success. We explored this fully in Model 2 where we use a Heckman selection model to jointly estimate the likelihood of mediation and agreement. These results yield two important clarifications to our results. First, once state decisions to mediate are estimated jointly with the success of those efforts, several variables exhibit significant effects only on the first stage of decisions to mediate. These findings imply that mediators are forward-thinking in anticipating the likelihood for success when making offers to disputants for conflict management assistance, and disputants are likewise forward-thinking in choosing mediators that are likely to settle the dispute. For instance, the transparency provided by shared IO membership yields *a priori* predictions of success, which yields a positive and significant coefficient in the mediation stage only. Similar conclusions hold for mediator's polity, trade bias, and distance. Second, we see particularly exciting findings for average global democracy and alliance bias, which maintain their positive and significant coefficients across all models. These findings imply that increases in these measures not only make mediators more attractive, but they have an additional impact on mediation success even after the selection process is taken into account.

Second, scholars have long recognized the dominant role that the United States has played in the Americas. The same might be true for Great Britain in Europe. We ran two additional analyses to examine how this dominance affects our results. First, we dropped the United States and UK as potential mediators. Second, we included dummy variables for each state. Neither alteration made an appreciable difference in our findings. These results are unsurprising because the variance due to the US and UK dominance is already captured with the measure for ''Mediator's CINC score.''

Third, we considered alternative ways to capture the dissemination of credible information provided by international organizations. Our primary findings provide strong support that disputant membership in international organization significantly increases the likelihood of mediation attempts. However, it is also likely that IOs will spread credible information for non-member states as well. Relying again on the MTOPS data set, we examined this possibility by replacing the variable for shared IO membership with a measure counting the number of global and regional IOs in the system that call for peaceful settlement of disputes. This measure is more consistent than our measure for average global democracy, suggesting that the spread of both global democracy and peace-inducing IOs will increase mediation attempts and success. This alternative

specification yields nearly identical results to those presented in Table 1. In substantive terms, however, we find that a move from the minimum to maximum value of total IOs results in a 108.6% increase in the likelihood of mediation attempts (0.0011–0.0024), whereas the IO membership measure resulted in a 290.5% increase (0.0007–0.0030). Thus, while the number of total IOs calling for peace indeed matters for mediation, the substantive findings reveal that membership has its privileges in providing credible information.

Fourth, our argument and theoretical model indicate that the transparency added by increasing levels of democracy, average global democracy, and shared IO memberships should increase the credibility of potential mediators. Our empirical tests remain consistent with this by examining how these factors affect mediation while holding bias constant. However, one might also argue that transparency replaces bias as a credibility mechanism. If so, we would expect the transparency variables to play very little role in promoting credibility among biased potential mediators. The effect of transparency should increase as bias diminishes. Evidence of this interactive effect would provide an important extension of our empirical findings by pointing to a fruitful path for future theoretical development. We examine this by adding interactive terms to Models 1 and 2 to capture interactions between the three transparency variables and the two bias variables. Instead of presenting the 12 total models (three transparency × two bias × two dependent variables), we consider whether the effect of the three primary variables on the likelihood of mediation attempts might be conditioned on trade bias.[25]

Brambor, Clark, and Golder (2006) explain many potential problems with simply analyzing interactive coefficients in a table, arguing instead that interactions are best analyzed graphically. We follow this advice by plotting the marginal effect of the primary independent variables versus the conditional variable (trade bias) using Boehmke's (2006) *grinter* data utility. In Figure 3a, for example, we see that the marginal effect of mediator's polity on the likelihood of mediation attempts decreases as trade bias increases (while holding all other variables in Table 1, Model 1 constant). This conclusion holds as long as the lower bounds of the confidence interval remain above the horizontal ''0'' line, which holds true for the majority of observations in Figures 3a,c. The general conclusion is the same when analyzing alliance biases (results not shown). Taken together, these figures show support for our intuition—credibility derived from the level of global democracy has the strongest effect when bias is low. The transparency measures become less important as bias comes to replace democracy as a truth-compelling mechanism.

Our final extension considers potential interactive effects among the primary independent variables. We recall that our theory suggests that democratic states should be particularly sensitive to information that may reveal their dishonesty in mediation. Meanwhile, we expect the growth of the global democratic community to substantially increase the availability of information. Taking these two arguments together, we might expect a rise in the global levels of democracy to have a particularly strong impact for democratic mediators. We test this conditional expectation in Figure 3d. As expected, we see that the impact of the potential mediator's democracy score on mediation attempts indeed strengthens as global democracy increases, which indicates that the supply of credible mediators is heightened dramatically by the combination of these two forces.

Conclusion

In this paper, we argue that a vibrant international democratic community and a vast web of global institutions supply a healthy stock of credible mediators. The

[25] Trade was chosen among the bias variables somewhat arbitrarily. The results are generally consistent when using alliance bias.

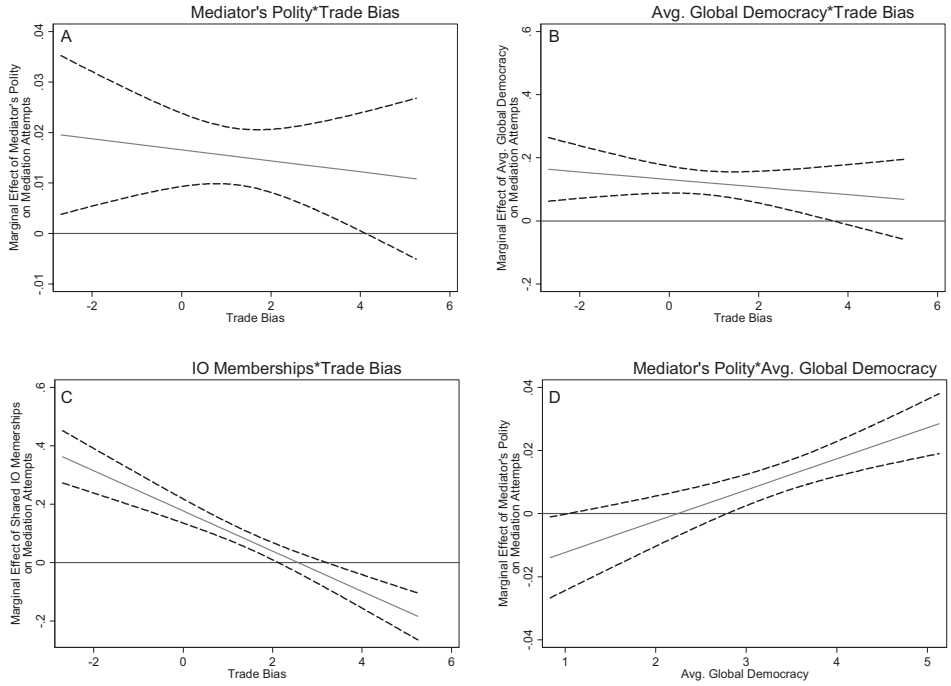

Fig 3. Impact of Transparency and Bias on Mediation Attempts: Conditional Effects. (A) Mediator's Polity*Trade Bias. (B) Avg. Global Democracy*Trade Bias. (C) IO Memberships*Trade Bias. (D) Mediator's Polity*Avg. Global Democracy. Dashed Lines give 95% Confidence Interval

democratic community influences the supply of honest mediators in three ways. First, the number of potential democratic state mediators increases as the international system becomes more democratic, which produces a higher likelihood of mediation attempts. Democratic states face greater audience costs for deception in the conflict management process because they face greater scrutiny in the free press and because they pay domestic costs for foreign policy failure. Democratic mediators are more attractive to disputants because their domestic institutions enhance their transparency and credibility.

Second, we show that the global democratic community influences the amount and quality of information available for all potential mediators, whether they are democratic or autocratic, which produces a greater likelihood of successful mediation attempts. As global democracy levels increase, the amount of global media coverage for interstate disputes also rises because there is an extremely high correlation between democracy and the free press (Van Belle 1997). Mediators have much better information about the issues at stake and the capabilities and resolve of the disputing parties in an international system populated heavily by democratic states. This increased marketplace of information makes it more difficult for mediators to be deceptive, generating additional audience costs.

Third, democracies have a tendency to create and join international organizations, so the number of global international organizations increases as the system becomes more democratic (Russett and Oneal 2001). International organizations often overcome collective action problems by providing fair and neutral information. When disputing states jointly belong to a larger number of IOs, this provides an additional source of objective information for mediators, clarifying the issues at stake and the preferences and resolve of each side in the dispute. This could happen both when IOs actively get involved in disputes as conflict

managers or through a more passive effect of shared memberships in IOs, which increases frequency of interaction and opportunities for information sharing (Mitchell and Hensel 2007). Again, this enriched information environment generates greater costs for mediators who do not tell the truth because false information is more likely to be uncovered by these neutral organizations, producing higher likelihoods of mediation attempts and mediation success. Beyond these systemic effects, we also find that strong alliance and trade biases augment the supply of credible mediators.

In short, while unbiased mediators may be more attractive to disputants hoping for a fair hearing, the global democratic community offers a mechanism for them to also appear credible. Unlike other functions of the democratic community (Kadera et al. 2003), these effects need not be tied to material capabilities because the domestic and global institutional forces instead affect the quality and quantity of information, which may rely less on the military, economic, and demographic sources of power that are common indicators of actor (especially state) strength.

The theory and analyses in this paper provide many links to the extant literature on mediation. Our most innovative insight is to demonstrate how credible information can be spread by unbiased mediators. Rauchhaus (2006) and Savun (2008) find that impartial mediation can be effective in resolving disputes. Our study shows that the conditions of impartiality are more likely to occur when the international system is more democratic and when system members belong to more international organizations. Our findings for global democracy add additional insights to Van Belle's (1997) discussion of the importance of a vigilant free press, while our result for the effect of IOs on mediation aligns well with Shannon's (2009) finding that IO membership increases the likelihood that states will use third parties to manage interstate disputes. Meanwhile, our third transparency variable, mediator's polity, adds additional evidence that democratic leaders face audience costs for foreign policy failure, which pushes in the direction of wiser mediation efforts in the international arena (Fearon 1994; Smith 1996; Schultz 1998).

Regarding bias, we find at least partial support for Kydd's (2003) original notion that bias enhances mediator credibility, which concurs with previous work from Touval (1982), Carnevale and Arad (1996), Savun (2008), and Maoz and Terris (2006), while refuting claims that bias hinders mediation efforts (Young 1967; Stulberg 1987; Fisher 1995). Our primary extension here is in looking at the selection process involved with mediation attempts and success. When modeling both processes, we find that economic biases matter only in the original decision to mediate, while political biases enhance both mediation attempts and effectiveness. The latter finding supports Greig and Regan's (2008) study, which finds defense pacts to increase the likelihood of mediation offers in civil conflicts, but runs counter to their findings for trade interests, which were found to decrease the likelihood of mediation offers. Our empirical findings for several control variables also add additional insight to the mediation literature. We find that strong states are more likely to become involved as mediators in disputes, for example, which adds support to previous findings from Morgan (1994), Bercovitch (1996), and Smith and Stam (2003). On the other hand, geographic distance is likely to hinder mediation efforts, a finding that is consistent with Greig and Regan's (2008) study.

Our study reaches beyond the mediation literature as well. Most importantly, we demonstrate the benefits of bridge-building efforts between constructivist and rationalist approaches (Katzenstein, Keohane, and Krasner 1998; Fearon and Wendt 2002). Our contribution to this emerging literature is to take a rationalist mediation model and demonstrate that changes in the systemic environment, most notably the democratic community, alter the decisions mediators make

about when and where to get involved. The vast majority of game theoretical models, including Kydd's mediation model, focus on strategic interaction in dyadic settings. Yet, constructivists have demonstrated that systemic environments and systemic norms can alter states' preferences and identities and, thus, the choices they make in strategic settings. Our research project shows that a global environment with more democratic states and norms for conflict management, as well a greater media marketplace, matters at the dyadic level. Disputants are able to seek out credible and trusted mediators more readily in a global system that is democratic and transparent. Potential mediators do not shirk away from opportunities to resolve conflicts, but rather see the benefits that can accrue from more peaceful interstate and intrastate environments, including safer economic markets, improved diplomatic reputations, and improved agenda-setting influence domestically and internationally. Our theoretical model and empirical findings show that the systemic context within which diplomacy and mediation occur influences both the supply of mediation attempts and the success of those efforts.

Taken together, our results suggest one plausible causal mechanism by which systemic democracy fosters peace. The greater supply of mediators provided by the democratic community and its institutions helps diffuse contentious issues before they reach the stage of deadly violence. In addition to augmenting the supply of quality mediators, the democratic community's and global institutions' pacific efforts seem to be fairly effective at persuading the parties to reach an agreement. The democratic peace has an important top-down effect that assists third parties in the resolution of conflicts in world affairs. The transparent nature of democratic regimes and global institutions enhances their abilities to market credible mediators, opening up greater possibilities for resolving conflicts and pushing the system closer to a Kantian peace.

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