

Under What Conditions Does Preventive Mediation Occur in Self-Determination Disputes?

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Abstract

Mediation is a crucial instrument employed by external actors to resolve armed conflicts and mitigate violence. A large academic literature examines mediation in civil war, with analyses of which civil wars see mediation and what the effect of this mediation is. Many organizations express a commitment to conflict prevention, and engage in mediation to prevent the outbreak of armed conflict. There is much less research on when mediation is used as a tool of conflict prevention. We have collected new data on all mediation efforts in a random sample of 51 self-determination (SD) disputes from 1991-2015, which includes disputes that never experience armed conflict, as well as years before and after armed conflicts in disputes that do. We use these data to examine the conditions under which preventive mediation occurs in SD disputes. We develop a theoretical argument for when mediators are likely to offer mediation, and governments and representatives of SD groups are likely to accept it. We test this argument using our new data in two samples of SD dispute-years that are not in armed conflict. We find that mediation is more likely in dispute-years outside of armed conflict where SD groups are engaged in low-level violence and in disputes in countries that border other countries that are experiencing armed conflict and less likely in disputes in states that are permanent members of the UN Security Council or former French colonies. This analysis shows that mediators do engage in preventive mediation in disputes that they perceive as having a higher likelihood of escalation to armed conflict, but that they are constrained in their ability to do so by geopolitics.

Keywords: mediation, conflict prevention, self-determination disputes, civil war

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1 Introduction

Mediation can help resolve armed conflicts and reduce violence. Peace agreements such as the Good Friday Accords in the Northern Ireland conflict, the Oslo Accords in Israel-Palestine, and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in the southern Sudanese conflict were all facilitated by international mediators. Many organizations send mediators to intrastate disputes, including the United Nations (UN), regional organizations such as the African Union (AU) and Inter-Governmental Agency on Development (IGAD), and non-governmental organizations such as the Carter Centre, Center for Humanitarian Dialogue, Swiss Peace and the Community of Sant'Egidio.

Many of the most high-profile mediation efforts, including those in Northern Ireland, Israel-Palestine, and southern Sudan, occur in the context of intrastate violent conflict. A large academic literature examines mediation in civil war, with analyses of both which civil wars see mediation and what the effect of this mediation is. However, organizations such as the UN, AU, IGAD, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, etc., express a commitment to preventing violent conflicts before they break out, and preventive diplomacy is frequently lauded as a conflict prevention tool.

We know much less about the determinants of when and where mediation is used for conflict prevention and whether mediation is a successful tool of conflict prevention in intrastate disputes. In this article, we address this gap by focusing on the first question—under what conditions does preventive mediation occur? We examine this using new data on mediation efforts in a random sample of 51 self-determination (SD) disputes from 1991-2015. These disputes come from K. G. Cunningham ([2014](#)), who defines SD disputes as cases

where “an ethnonationalist group claims a right to greater self-rule based on its identity” (K. G. Cunningham, 2011, p. 278).¹ These disputes include secessionist conflicts, such as the Kurdish conflict in Turkey and the two north-south wars in Sudan. They also include groups, such as the Quebecois in Canada, that have made independence demands but have not experienced armed conflict, as well as groups like the Cornish in the UK and Lhotshampas in Bhutan that generally seek greater linguistic or regional autonomy, not independence. These data are, to our knowledge, the first cross-national data on mediation outside of the context of intrastate violence and they allow us to examine the determinants of where mediation is used outside of civil war.

We develop a theoretical argument that views preventive mediation in SD disputes as resulting from decisions by three actors—mediators, governments, and organizations representing SD groups. Mediators, we argue, want to target their efforts where they are most needed (Gartner & Bercovitch, 2006). In the context of conflict prevention, these are the disputes they perceive as most likely to escalate to armed conflict.

In these disputes, mediators both offer to engage in mediation and use leverage to pressure governments and organizations representing SD groups to accept it. This leverage can include rhetorical pressure, as well as economic carrots (for participating) and sticks (for not participating), such as promises of aid and/or threats of sanctions (Beardsley, 2010; Reid, 2017).² Organizations representing SD groups will generally be open to mediation,

¹We use the terms ‘SD groups,’ and ‘SD movements’ interchangeably. To describe organized and/or distinct branches within the same SD movement, we use the terms ‘SD factions’ or ‘SD organizations,’ and apply K. G. Cunningham (2013)’s definition of an “organization that represents the SD movement and makes demands related to self-governance” (p. 665).

²Not all potential mediators have the same ability to use leverage. Large international organizations (IO) and powerful states have greater capability to pressure disputants than NGOs. However, in some cases NGOs have the backing of more powerful actors that can use their leverage to pressure disputants to accept their mediation offers.

because they view mediated peace processes as most likely to give them what they want. In addition, they seek to avoid the costs that come from escalations to conflict, and so are most likely to accept offers of mediation when the potential for escalation is high.

Governments, on the other hand, are frequently very hesitant to negotiate with non-state actors, and thus need more pressure to engage in preventive mediation. While governments are conscious of the costs of escalation, preventive mediation efforts that bring governments and non-state groups together can suggest that governments cannot manage their internal politics without outside help. In addition, preventive mediation can grant legitimacy to SD movements by suggesting they are actors with legitimate political grievances who deserve a seat at the table with the government. These countervailing factors mean that governments often seek to avoid mediation efforts.

This theoretical framework leads to four hypotheses about the conditions under which preventive mediation is more likely in SD disputes. First, disputes with a higher potential for escalation will be more likely to have mediation, because this potential increases the incentives for mediators to offer mediation, and for governments and organizations representing SD groups to accept it. Second, disputes that are more visible will be more likely to have mediation, because visibility increases the willingness of mediators to offer mediation and means that there is already a perception that governments face a legitimate domestic dispute that they need help managing. Third, mediation is less likely in the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (UNSC), since those states can directly block the UN from authorizing mediation and/or using leverage to pressure them to accept it. Fourth, mediation is less likely in states whose governments have powerful allies, because these allies can similarly block mediation efforts and limit the leverage mediators can use to pressure

governments to accept them.

We test these four hypotheses using our new data on mediation in SD disputes. We limit the analyses to years outside of armed conflict, and use several measures to test the likelihood that the dispute will escalate to armed conflict, the visibility of the dispute to potential mediators, and geopolitical constraints. The analyses show that mediation is more likely in dispute-years where SD groups are engaged in low-level violence and when disputes occur in countries that border countries experiencing armed conflict. Mediation is generally less likely in disputes in countries that are permanent members of the UNSC and countries that were former French colonies.

The argument and analyses in this article make important contributions to our understanding of mediation and conflict prevention more broadly. Mediation has proven effective in bringing about resolutions to long-running violent conflicts.³ It is less clear what role it can play in conflict prevention, in part due to data constraints and a lack of systematic study of when preventive mediation is possible. Our analyses show that, while there are important constraints on where mediators can go, mediation can be and is used to try to prevent armed conflict in SD disputes.

2 Existing Explanations of Mediation Selection in Civil War

Mediation is, by definition, voluntary; mediators do not have to agree to mediate disputes, and disputants do not have to participate in mediated talks or abide by agreements reached (Svensson, 2020). In addition, mediation carries potential costs for both mediators and disputants. For mediators, the main costs are the time they devote to the mediation effort, and

³See, for example, Beardsley (2011), Duursma (2023), and Gartner and Bercovitch (2006).

the potential reputational costs they incur if talks fail. For disputants, accepting mediation implies that they cannot settle the dispute without outside assistance, a cost to which governments are particularly sensitive. In addition, mediated agreements, while voluntary, may require disputants to make some concessions they would rather not make.

Many studies examine which civil wars see mediation, often recognizing and attempting to account for the non-random assignment of mediation efforts (Beardsley, 2011; Gartner & Bercovitch, 2006). In general, these studies conclude that the civil wars where negotiations are least likely to be successful are most likely to see mediation and that, once this selection is dealt with, mediation makes settlement more likely (at least in the short term).

Because the determinants of when mediators offer mediation and when these offers are accepted may be different, several studies have examined mediation offers and acceptance. Scholars have argued that potential mediators are more likely to offer mediation when they have some stake in the conflict and anticipate a chance of success for the process (Clayton & Gleditsch, 2014). Having a stake in the conflict means that the potential for resolution may provide a benefit to counteract the costs of providing mediation, while the chance of success means that it is less likely the mediator will bear reputational costs from a failed process. In addition, international actors are more likely to offer mediation when the potential for conflict escalation is high (Bercovitch & Houston, 2000), in part because they anticipate that escalation can create spillover costs and effects for the region and potentially beyond it (Beardsley, 2010).

To accept offers of mediation, disputants generally have to see the conflict as costly (Greig, 2005; Melin & Svensson, 2009). Governments are often reluctant to negotiate with rebel groups because they fear doing so will provide them with legitimacy and recognition

(Asal et al., 2019). Instead, governments look for other ways to deal with rebels, such as terror listing, an increasingly used tool since the September 11, 2001 attacks in the U.S. (Lundgren & Svensson, 2020). For governments to agree to mediation, they must perceive rebels as representing a clear threat to their power (Greig & Regan, 2008; Svensson, 2007).⁴

These studies have revealed important determinants of which civil wars experience mediation. However, they all focus on cases of mediation within and following armed conflict, and so do not directly examine mediation as a tool of conflict prevention. Scholars and practitioners alike, however, have advocated for the importance of early intervention and engagement in conflict prevention, including preventive diplomacy. In his 1992 *Agenda for Peace*, UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali (1992) placed preventive diplomacy as one of three key tools (along with peacemaking and peacekeeping) that the organization should use to promote peace and security. Bercovitch (1996) argues that mediation is a key component of preventive diplomacy. In the next section, we build a theoretical argument for the conditions under which mediation is used as a tool of preventive diplomacy.

3 Mediation and Conflict Prevention in SD Disputes

Our theoretical argument seeks to explain why some SD disputes that are not currently in armed conflict experience mediation while others do not. SD disputes occur when an ethnonationalist group inside of one country seeks greater control over the territory that its members inhabit. This can be greater political control, in the form of regional autonomy or even independence; greater economic control, such as over resources or control of land; or

⁴Other factors also affect governmental willingness to negotiate. Heger and Jung (2017) find that governments are more willing to negotiate with rebels that engage in service provision.

cultural autonomy in terms of the ability to have schooling in the local language, right to practice religion, and so on. Some SD groups are secessionist, but many are not.

SD disputes are an ideal setting in which to examine the determinants of mediation as a tool of conflict prevention. SD disputes are a leading cause of civil war (K. G. Cunningham, 2014), and many countries around the world experience armed conflicts over self-determination, including Turkey, Sudan, Ethiopia, India, and Myanmar. However, many disputes are primarily, or entirely, nonviolent, and disputes that do experience armed conflict often have periods in which they are not violent. Even disputes that do not become armed conflicts can be politically divisive, such as those over the status of Scotland in the United Kingdom, Quebec in Canada, and Catalonia in Spain. This means that outside actors, including mediators, are likely to see SD disputes generally as needing outside assistance.

In addition, preventive mediation is plausible in SD disputes because these disputes are generally visible to potential mediators. One of the challenges with engaging in preventive diplomacy (including mediation) is that it is difficult to identify disputes that are not currently violent but which have the potential to escalate. A second challenge is that when preventive diplomacy is successful (meaning that armed conflicts that otherwise would happen do not), this success is generally not visible. This can diminish the potential benefits to organizations of engaging in conflict prevention (Call & Campbell, 2018). However, the visibility of SD disputes can demonstrate both the need for potential mediation and also provide potential benefit if there is some resolution reached in these disputes and armed conflict does not occur.⁵

⁵The focus on SD disputes means the argument here is less generalizable to preventive mediation in disputes over control of the government. Armed conflicts over government often also follow periods of claims making and nonviolent contention, and preventive mediation can be used in these periods. However, they also often escalate quickly, and the window for preventive mediation may be shorter than for SD disputes,

There are several examples of preventive mediation in SD disputes that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union and former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. When the Soviet Union became fifteen independent states, almost over night, there were a variety of minority ethnonationalist groups in these newly independent states that were seeking greater autonomy or independence. Some of these disputes became armed conflicts, including in Nagorno-Karabakh. The dissolution of the former Yugoslavia was more violent, with armed conflict erupting in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

There were many other SD disputes in newly independent states where third parties perceived a risk of violence but which did not immediately break out in armed conflict. Organizations like the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), European Council, and European nations engaged in preventive diplomacy, including mediation, in several of these disputes.

When Ukraine became independent, there were two SD groups active in Crimea—Crimean Russians and Crimean Tatars. The Crimean Tatars are a minority population within Crimea, with a large diaspora across Central Asia resulting from forced displacement during the Soviet era. The group sought greater protection for their rights within Crimea and clashed with the Ukrainian government after independence. The OSCE High Commission on National Minorities (HCNM) mediated the dispute, and worked with the Ukrainian government to improve protections for Crimean Tatars. In 1994, the HCNM worked with the Ukrainian government and Crimean authorities to settle the status of the region more broadly, eventually leading to an agreement on the status of Crimea as an autonomous region

many of which persist for decades or even longer. Our focus on preventive mediation in SD disputes is consistent with other literature on conflict prevention in these disputes, including that examining the effect of UNSC resolutions (Beardsley et al., 2017) and economic sanctions (D. E. Cunningham et al., 2025).

in 1996 (Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe, 2014).

The OSCE has also engaged in mediation in the Gagauz dispute in Moldova several times since 1991, and worked with the Moldovan government to make legal changes that clarify the status of Gagauz autonomy and the relationship between the Gagauz authorities and the central Moldovan government (Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe, 2014). Similar activity was undertaken in Slovakia, where the Council of Europe and national governments worked to promote greater protection of Slovakian Hungarians to manage that dispute (Waterbury, 2018).⁶

3.1 Under what conditions does preventive mediation happen?

For mediation to occur in a SD dispute, a potential mediator must offer to mediate, and the government and at least one organization representing the SD group must accept that offer. We build our theoretical framework by focusing on the conditions under which mediators make offers to mediate in SD disputes and governments and these organizations choose to accept these offers.⁷ We begin with a set of assumptions about the preferences of these actors and then examine how these preferences interact to affect the likelihood of mediation.

For mediators, consistent with the literature described above, we assume that they want to mediate in the disputes where they are most needed and have some potential for

⁶There are examples of preventive mediation efforts outside of Europe in our data as well, including efforts by France to mediate in the Westerners dispute in Cameroon and South African President Thabo Mbeki's efforts to resolve the political dispute in Zimbabwe in 2008, which included the Ndebele SD group as a party to the dispute.

⁷The decisions that governments and organizations make regarding mediation can be influenced by civilian preferences toward negotiation processes generally, as well as toward specific agreement provisions. There is a growing literature showing that civilian preferences toward peace processes matter (Haass et al., 2022), and that civilians are important actors in influencing the provisions of agreements (García-Sánchez et al., 2023).

success. We argue that the major factor driving mediators' perception of the need for mediation is whether they view the dispute as likely to escalate to armed conflict. Armed conflicts are very costly for the country within which they take place and can create spillover costs on neighboring countries, as well as countries farther away. Organizations such as the UN, AU, and others that provide mediation have incentives to work to prevent disputes from escalating to armed conflict.

For governments and organizations representing SD disputes, we assume that they share a desire to avoid armed conflict. Armed conflict creates costs for both governments and SD groups (K. G. Cunningham, 2014; Fearon, 1995). In armed conflicts, when actors see high costs and little potential for winning the conflict, this mutually hurting stalemate creates an environment that is "ripe" for mediation (Zartman, 2001). While outside of armed conflict, a stalemate is not mutually hurting in the same way, the anticipation of the costs of potential armed conflicts incentivizes governments and organizations to find ways to avoid them.

However, while governments and organizations representing SD groups share a desire to minimize costs, they have very different preferences about the outcome of disputes. Governments generally prefer not to dissolve power away from the center, while SD groups seek greater control over the affairs in the territory they inhabit.

Any mediated negotiation process could potentially result in some agreement, and this agreement is almost certain to include some concessions (even if very small) to the demands of the SD group.⁸ This means that mediated processes are likely to shift the status quo

⁸Many negotiations fail to produce agreement and even successful negotiations often carry out over multiple rounds (Duursma & Gamez, 2023). Governments and organizations representing SD groups may also enter negotiations without the intention of signing an agreement or to hold the other actor at bay. However, because any agreement reached would generally favor the SD group over the government, and

power distribution in the preferred direction of the SD group, all else equal. We therefore assume that organizations representing SD disputes are much more open to participating in a mediated negotiation process than the government.⁹

Governments often have additional reasons not to participate in mediated processes, particularly in cases outside of armed conflict. When SD disputes escalate to armed conflict, it is clear that governments are facing a political opposition that has some support base and that they may need help resolving the dispute with this opposition. When disputes are not violent, however, governments want to avoid admitting they need outside help to manage internal affairs. Additionally, governments often seek to avoid granting legitimacy to domestic actors (particularly those with the potential to use violence) by negotiating with them. As such, governments are very reluctant to participate in preventive mediation.

Although participation in mediation is voluntary, mediators can use leverage to try to convince actors to accept mediation offers. Leverage refers to pressure that mediators can use both to incentivize participation and to expand the bargaining range by manipulating the costs and benefits of that process.¹⁰ While mediators themselves may have little direct leverage, the organizations they represent, or other powerful states that back the mediation effort, can pressure governments to participate in this process.

Governments are not passive actors in this interaction, however. If governments seek to avoid mediated processes because they do not want to grant legitimacy to SD groups and

governments have concerns about conferring legitimacy on non-state actors, it is a reasonable assumption that organizations representing SD groups will be more open to negotiations than the government.

⁹Participating in a mediated process also allows these organizations to signal that they are legitimate actors in international politics. Non-state actors often sign agreements to signal their commitment to international norms (Jo & Yi, 2023). Appearing to be legitimate actors is particularly important for secessionist groups since international recognition is required for successful secession (Coggins, 2011).

¹⁰This conceptualization of leverage follows from Beardsley (2011). Reid (2017) argues that there are other types of leverage mediators can use to bring about longer lasting agreements.

want to avoid granting concessions to them, they can try to prevent mediators from using this leverage by blocking organizations and states from imposing these costs on them. Some states are powerful enough to do this on their own, but others have to work with allies to do so.

This discussion of the incentives that mediators have to offer mediation and that governments and organizations representing SD groups have to accept (or, in the case of governments, not accept) these offers, leads to four main empirical expectations about where preventive mediation will occur. Our first expectation is that SD disputes with the highest likelihood of escalation to armed conflict will be most likely to have mediation:

H1: Preventive mediation is more likely in SD disputes with a higher risk of escalation to armed conflict.

We expect mediation to be more likely in disputes with a higher likelihood of escalation because the potential costs of armed conflict provide direct incentives for mediators to offer mediation and for governments and SD groups to accept it. However, it is not just the risk of escalation that matters for offers of mediation, but also the perceived risk. One challenge of engaging in conflict prevention is that it can be difficult to identify which disputes have a higher risk of escalation. So, we anticipate that disputes that are more visible to potential mediators will be more likely to experience mediation:

H2: Preventive mediation is more likely in SD disputes where the potential for escalation is more visible.

Even in disputes with a high potential for escalation and where mediators have offered

to mediate, governments have incentives to avoid mediation by declining offers and limiting the pressure mediators can put on them. The states most able to do this are the five permanent members of the UNSC (P5), since they have the ability to block any resolutions within the UNSC. In addition, the UN often provides support to other actors (such as regional organizations) engaging in preventive diplomacy, and the P5 can potentially block this support as well.

H3: Preventive mediation is less likely in SD disputes in the P5 than in other countries.

While other countries may not be powerful enough to block mediation efforts or minimize leverage directly, some states have powerful allies with significant global influence. These governments can ask their allies to block mediation efforts and prevent organizations from using leverage to pressure them to participate in mediation, making mediation less likely in disputes in countries with powerful allies.

H4: Preventive mediation is less likely in SD disputes in countries with powerful allies.

4 Statistical Analysis of Preventive Mediation

4.1 New Data on Mediation in SD Disputes

These four hypotheses refer to the occurrence of preventive mediation, which we define as mediation taking place in disputes that are not currently or have not recently been in armed conflict. Examining preventive mediation requires data on a set of disputes with the potential for armed conflict where armed conflict has not occurred. There is no existing cross-national

data that allows for this, so we use new data we have coded for this purpose. This article is the first presentation of these data, so we describe them in some detail here.¹¹

There are many datasets that record information on mediation efforts during and after armed conflicts. The Civil War Mediation data set (CWM) (DeRouen et al., 2011) codes instances of mediation in all armed conflicts in the Uppsala Conflict Data Project/Peace Research Institute Oslo Armed Conflict Dataset (ACD) (Davies et al., 2024; N. P. Gleditsch et al., 2002). The Managing Low-Intensity Conflict (MILC) data set (Melander et al., 2009) codes information on a range of conflict management activities, including mediation, in low-intensity (less than 1,000 battle-related deaths) armed conflicts in the ACD. The Managing Intrastate Conflict (MIC) data set (Croicu et al., 2013) extends the MILC data and codes third-party activity on a state-rebel group dyad level and with a more disaggregated temporal unit of analysis. The African Peace Processes (APP) data set (Duursma & Gamez, 2023) codes information about all peace processes in armed conflicts in Africa in the ACD. The Peace Negotiations in Civil Conflicts (PNCC) data set (Ari, 2023) codes information on all negotiations (whether or not they were mediated) in all armed conflicts in the ACD.

Up to this point, no dataset has existed that records mediation events for a set of intrastate disputes, both during and outside of civil conflict. To address this gap, we created the Mediation in Self-Determination Disputes data set (MSDD). We argued in the theory section that SD disputes are a good area for examining theoretically the determinants of mediation, because they are visible to both potential mediators and researchers and they present clear challenges to bargaining that suggest diplomatic assistance may be needed. For

¹¹The MSDD data are available through Harvard Dataverse at <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/SA4KYD>.

similar reasons, these disputes offer an ideal empirical setting to code preventive mediation efforts. We identify a set of SD disputes (some of which experience armed conflict and some of which do not) and then code all instances of third-party mediation in those disputes.

The SD disputes in the MSDD data come from the data collected by K. G. Cunningham (2014).¹² As described earlier, the K. G. Cunningham (2014) data include secessionist groups, but also groups making claims for greater political, economic, or cultural autonomy. There are 146 SD disputes overall in her data, and we retained 133 of them that are active during the period of our data collection (1991-2015). We then generated a random sample and collected data on mediation efforts in the first 51 of these disputes, representing roughly 38% of the total number. Online Appendix Table A1 displays the list of disputes in our sample, the years those disputes were active (from 1991 to 2015), and whether the dispute ever experienced mediation or armed conflict.

We use a random sample due to the time intensity of this data collection effort, which in turn allowed us to capture a longer time frame (25 years per dispute) than would have been possible in the full set of disputes. Random samples from these data have been used before (K. G. Cunningham, 2013). Drawing a random sample means that we have a mix of disputes in different types of countries (democracies and nondemocracies, developed and developing), and involving groups making independence and other types of demands. Online Appendix Table A2 presents comparisons of our random sample to the full set of disputes in terms of armed conflict occurrence, regime type, P5 membership, and the presence of independence demands. The table shows that the proportions are generally similar between the random sample and the full set of disputes, suggesting that we can generalize from the

¹²Her data collection began with the list of SD movements in Marshall and Gurr (2003).

results in the random sample to all SD disputes in this time period.

Importantly, for the analysis of preventive mediation, our sample of 51 disputes includes those that experience civil war—such as the Tajik and Uzbek disputes in Afghanistan, the Moros in the Philippines, and Albanians in Yugoslavia—as well as those—such as the Bubis in Equatorial Guinea, Gagauz in Moldova, and Jurassians in Switzerland—that do not. In addition, within most of the disputes that experience armed conflict, there are periods with and without armed conflict. These data allow us to examine the determinants of mediation before, during, and after armed conflict, as well as in disputes that never become armed conflicts.

In the MSDD, we define a mediation event as a meeting between one or both parties to an SD dispute (the government and at least one organization representing the SD group) and a third party in which (1) the dispute is discussed and (2) the third party shows a clear intent to have the dispute resolved peacefully, either via proclamation or action. Third parties acting as mediators may be individuals, state governments, international or non-governmental organizations, or other political entities. This mediation can comprise bilateral mediation, in which the mediator meets with only one side to try to resolve the dispute; shuttle diplomacy, in which the mediator meets with each side individually but there are not direct talks; and direct diplomacy, in which the mediator and representatives of both parties discuss the dispute.

In the main analyses presented in the next section, we only include instances of direct mediation. We only include direct mediation because our theoretical argument focuses on the conditions under which potential mediators make offers for mediation, and both governments and organizations representing SD disputes accept these offers. A variable measuring the

presence of a mediator and representatives of both sides is the clearest test of this argument. In further analyses, described after the main analyses and presented in the Online Appendix, we re-run our statistical models using less restrictive measures of mediation (which include bilateral mediation and shuttle diplomacy).

To identify mediation events, we coded English-language news articles after processing search results from NexisUni with a machine learning (ML) model trained on hand-coded news articles. The model assigns labels to individual news articles that reflect the probability of their containing meetings of disputants with third parties. Only news articles with a probability greater than 50% were retained for manual coding, drastically reducing the number of articles human coders have to read through while, on average, retaining a more than 80% overlap with events coded by hand only. After ML processing, human coders searched through news articles, entering events in the data set that met part (1) of the aforementioned definition (i.e., dispute is discussed). In the second step, events were coded as either mediation or not, using part (2) of the definition (i.e., intent to resolve the dispute). To code mediation, coders looked for either explicit statements during or after meetings or actions like shuttle diplomacy as evidence of a third party's interest in peaceful conflict resolution.

With this methodology, we identified 1,285 mediation events for 51 disputes spanning 1,131 dispute-years.¹³ This is a substantially higher number of mediation events than is found in any existing cross-national data set. This is true because the MSDD identify mediation events in disputes such as the Flemings in Belgium, Hungarians in Slovakia, Muslims in Sri Lanka, and indigenous groups in Mexico and Colombia that never experience armed conflict.

¹³For four of the 51 disputes in the data—Croatia - Serbs, South Africa - Zulus, Ukraine - Crimean Russians, and Pakistan - Baluchis—we coded the occurrence of mediation on an annual basis, rather than coding all mediation events in the year. These disputes are included in the empirical analyses (which use a dichotomous measure of mediation as the dependent variable).

Table 1: Cross-tabulation of Direct Mediation and Armed Conflict Incidence per Year

Mediation	Armed conflict		Row total
	No	Yes	
No	826	101	927
	89.1%	10.9%	85.9%
Yes	85	67	152
	55.9%	44.1%	14.1%
Column total	911	168	1079

In addition, the MSDD identify greater numbers of mediation events in years during and after armed conflict than other data sets that also code these periods.

In this article, we focus on whether or not preventive mediation occurs in a SD dispute-year that is not in armed conflict, so we do not include information about the number of mediation events in each year. In Table 1, we compare the number of dispute-years with mediation in, and not in, armed conflict. We find that a majority of years with mediation take place outside of the context of armed conflict. Table 1 shows the importance of the MSDD data, since it allows for examining a range of mediation efforts that are left out of existing civil war mediation datasets.

4.2 Measuring Preventive Mediation

We define preventive mediation as mediation that takes place outside of armed conflict. One challenge with studying preventive mediation is that mediation efforts often continue for years after armed conflicts have ended. At what point does post-conflict mediation become an effort to prevent the outbreak of a new conflict, as opposed to managing the resolution of a previous one? There is no clear answer to this question, as any coding rule focused on

a specific increment of time is essentially arbitrary.

To deal with this, we create two samples of SD dispute-years that are not currently in armed conflict. The first sample only excludes years in active armed conflict, as defined by the ACD. This means that sample includes all years preceding and following armed conflicts in SD disputes between 1991 and 2015, as well as all years for disputes that did not experience an armed conflict in that time period. This first sample has 939 dispute-years, as compared to 1,131 when years of armed conflict are included. The second sample is more restrictive, and only includes years in the SD dispute before an armed conflict occurs, or in disputes that have not experienced an armed conflict. We measure armed conflict in the dispute since 1960, meaning that even if a dispute only experienced one year of armed conflict in the 1960s all dispute-years from 1991-2015 would be excluded from this sample. This second sample has 732 observations.

Within each of these samples our dichotomous measure of direct mediation is the dependent variable in the analyses. In Sample One, there are 85 dispute-years with at least one direct mediation effort. In Sample Two, there are 53.

4.3 Independent Variables

Our theoretical framework led to four hypotheses about the conditions under which preventive mediation occurs in SD disputes. We use a set of variables to test each of these hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1 is that mediation is more likely in SD dispute-years with a higher chance of escalation to armed conflict. We use three variables to measure the potential for escalation.

First, we draw on the Strategies of Resistance Data Project (SRDP) (K. G. Cunningham et al., 2020) to create a variable measuring the ratio of factions representing the SD group that used violent tactics in a given dispute-year. When more factions are using violence but the dispute is not in armed conflict, this increases the risk that the dispute will escalate to civil war. Second, we include a logged measure of the number of organizations active in the group in each year from K. G. Cunningham (2013), as she finds that civil war is more likely when SD groups have a greater number of organizations making claims on their behalf. The third variable measures whether the government has previously given concessions (either cultural or political) to the SD group at any prior point in the data (which begin in 1960). K. G. Cunningham (2013) finds that a history of concessions makes civil war in these disputes less likely. A history of concessions could indicate that governments are interested in peaceful resolution of disputes.

Hypothesis 2 is that mediation will be more likely in SD disputes that are more visible to potential mediators. We include four variables that could impact the visibility of these disputes. The first two measure whether another armed conflict is taking place in the same state or the region, respectively. Armed conflicts generally attract international attention. This attention can lead mediators to pay attention to other disputes that appear to have characteristics making escalation more likely. The variable measuring the presence of another conflict in the same state takes a value of “1” if there is an armed conflict in the country that does not involve the SD group in the year, and “0” otherwise, coded from the ACD (Davies et al., 2024; N. P. Gleditsch et al., 2002). We use the ACD together with the CShapes dataset (Schvitz et al., 2022) to create a neighboring conflict variable in line with Gleditsch (2007). This variable is binary, receiving a “1” if any country with a 950 km or

less capital distance to the country engaged in an SD dispute experiences intrastate conflict in a given year, and “0” otherwise. As an example, the Slovakia-Hungarians dispute is coded as having a neighbor in armed conflict in the 1990s because of the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia.

The presence of a peace operation in the country can also affect the visibility to mediators. When the UN or another actor is leading a peace operation, they have access to more information about disputes in the country and the potential for armed conflict. Having personnel on the ground can also make it easier to identify potential mediators and so increase the likelihood of mediation. We include dichotomous variables measuring whether there is a UN peace operation or non-UN peacekeeping mission in the country in the year. The data on UN peace operations is taken from the Peace Mission Mandate Database (Hellmüller et al., 2024), and takes a value of “1” if the UN had a Peacekeeping Operation or Special Political Mission in the country in the year. The data on non-UN peacekeeping is taken from Bara and Hultman (2020) and takes a value of “1” if there is a non-UN led peacekeeping mission present in the country in the year.¹⁴

Hypothesis 3 expects that mediation will be less likely in the P5 countries. We test this expectation with a dichotomous measure of whether the country is one of the five permanent members of the UNSC (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States).

Hypothesis 4 is that mediation will be less likely in SD disputes in countries with powerful allies. We test this hypothesis with two variables. The first measures whether the country has a defense pact with any member of the P5 in the year, and is coded from

¹⁴While UN missions are more common than non-UN peace operations, in our data, there are non-UN peace missions present at some point in the 1991-2015 period in nine of our disputes, including those taking place in Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Georgia, and the former Yugoslavia.

the Alliance Treaty Obligation and Provisions Project (ATOP) (Chiba et al., 2015). The second is a measure of whether the country is a former French colony (from the COW Colonial Contiguity dataset (Correlates of War Project, 2017)). After independence, France maintained ties with governments in its former colonies, particularly in Africa. This has included a willingness in some cases to intervene militarily to support these governments (such as in Gabon in 1964 and Mali in 2012). These close ties mean that France may work to block mediation efforts in its former colonies, even if they do not have a formal alliance. We do not include controls for other colonial empires (such as the United Kingdom) because they have comparatively weaker ties with the governments of their former colonies.

We also, in all models, include a one-year lagged measure of direct mediation, because mediation efforts often continue for more than one year and disputes that experience mediation at one point are more likely to experience it in the future. Online Appendix Table A3 provides summary statistics (from Sample One) for preventive mediation and all variables in the analyses.

4.4 Results

Table 2 reports the results of logistic regression analyses across our two samples. Models 1 and 4 include just the independent variables testing Hypothesis 1 (with the lagged measure of mediation), Models 2 and 5 add the variables testing Hypothesis 2, and Models 3 and 6 include all independent variables.

The analyses in Table 2 show some support for Hypothesis 1. In particular, the measure of SD organizations using violent tactics is always positive and statistically significant.

Table 2: Logit Models of Direct Mediation Incidence in State-SD Movement Dyads, 1991–2015

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Violent tactics (lag)	0.981*	1.340**	1.361**	1.006*	1.387***	1.234**
	(0.499)	(0.461)	(0.489)	(0.464)	(0.417)	(0.443)
Number of factions (log, lag)	0.228	0.368	0.151	−0.013	−0.164	−0.165
	(0.290)	(0.283)	(0.226)	(0.332)	(0.337)	(0.330)
Previous concessions (lag)	0.155	0.251	0.392	0.300	0.463	0.335
	(0.475)	(0.404)	(0.481)	(0.584)	(0.612)	(0.614)
Neighboring conflict (lag)		0.791*	1.138***		1.568***	1.566***
		(0.397)	(0.344)		(0.353)	(0.361)
Other civil war in state (lag)		−1.067*	−1.010*		−0.842	−0.843
		(0.447)	(0.508)		(0.592)	(0.658)
UN peace mission (lag)		0.654	0.947		1.240	1.175
		(0.569)	(0.667)		(0.800)	(0.820)
Non-UN Peace Mission (lag)		0.145	0.112		−0.209	−0.215
		(0.725)	(0.713)		(0.858)	(0.827)
P5 member			1.552*			−14.697***
			(0.720)			(0.658)
P5 Ally			0.041			−0.250
			(0.419)			(0.439)
Former French colony			−14.504***			−15.887***
			(0.406)			(0.438)
Direct Mediation (lag)	3.816***	3.523***	3.284***	3.710***	3.144***	3.124***
	(0.487)	(0.485)	(0.579)	(0.579)	(0.683)	(0.673)
Intercept	−3.805***	−4.502***	−4.891***	−3.731***	−5.128***	−4.848***
	(0.513)	(0.478)	(0.477)	(0.558)	(0.560)	(0.570)
Num.Obs.	811	811	811	656	656	656

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses, clustered on the self-determination dispute. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

That suggests that mediation is more likely in dispute-years outside of armed conflict when there is a higher level of violent activity in the dispute. Neither the variable measuring the number of SD factions nor the measure of previous concessions is near statistical significance. This may be because the use of violence is the most obvious sign that disputes are at risk of escalation to armed conflict, while these other factors might increase the risk of armed conflict overall but not pose as direct a threat of escalation in the short term.

The results on the variables included to test Hypothesis 2 are mixed. The neighboring conflict variable is positive and significant in all four models. This suggests that mediation is more likely in disputes which are not in armed conflict when a neighboring country is in armed conflict; this is consistent with the finding in White et al. (2018) that the UNSC is more likely to issue resolutions related to SD disputes when those disputes border countries in armed conflict. The measure of other armed conflict in the state is negative (and statistically significant in Models 1 and 2), which is contrary to our expectations. It may be that violent conflict has some limiting effect on the willingness of mediators to mediate in other disputes in the country not directly involved in the armed conflict.

The UN peace operation variable is positive across all models in which it is included, but not quite statistically significant in any. The non-UN peacekeeping variable has a coefficient that is very close to zero and nowhere near significance.

The P5 member variable, which tests Hypothesis 3, has opposite effects across the two models, and a nonsensical coefficient in Model 6. These differences occur because the only case of mediation in a P5 member in either sample is the Northern Ireland dispute in the UK, which sees direct mediation in most years in the data. Since that dispute has only experienced armed conflict in 1991 and 1998, there are 17 years in the first sample

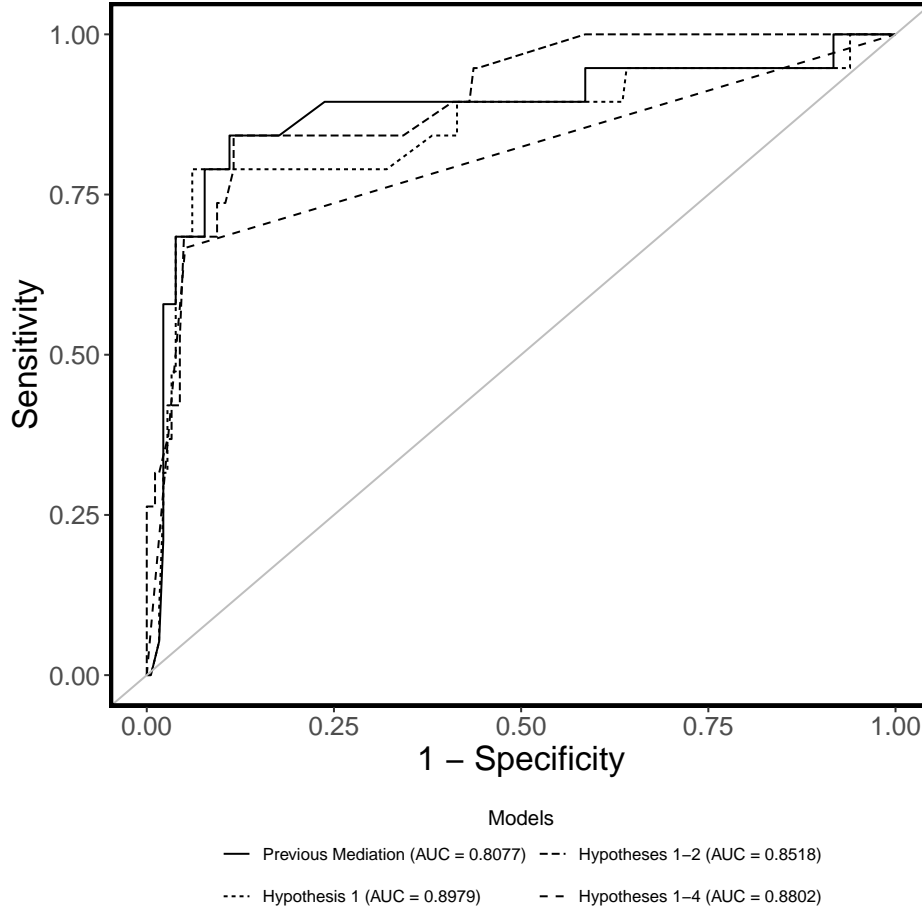
with a “1” on mediation and a “1” on the P5 member variable, which explains the positive and significant effect of that variable. That dispute, however, is excluded from Sample Two, leading to the nonsensical coefficient on the “P5 member” variable, because being a permanent member of the Security Council perfectly predicts no mediation in that sample. We see this as general evidence that powerful states can resist mediation efforts in their disputes, with the exception of the case of Northern Ireland.

The results on the two variables included to test Hypothesis 4 are mixed. The P5 ally variable is positive in Model 3 and negative in Model 6, but never statistically significant. The former French colony variable is negative and statistically significant with a nonsensical coefficient in both models. This occurs due to complete separation with this variable, as there is no instance of mediation in a former French colony in either sample. This is consistent with the expectation of Hypothesis 4.

Across all six models, the variable measuring the one-year lag of mediation incidence is positive with a large coefficient and highly significant. This is as expected, given that mediation efforts within disputes often continue for many years.

Taken together, the analyses in Table 2 show several patterns consistent with our theoretical expectations. Generally, mediation is more common in disputes outside of armed conflict when SD organizations employ violent tactics, when the dispute country neighbors countries experiencing armed conflict, when the country is not a permanent member of the UNSC (with the exception of the Northern Ireland dispute), and when the government lacks powerful allies (as measured by the former French colony variable). To examine how the sets of variables measuring each hypothesis generally affect our ability to predict mediation, we follow Ward et al. (2010) and conduct k-fold cross validation, and examine the area under

Figure 1: ROC Plot of Sample One



the curve of a ROC plot of four models. The first model only includes the mediation lag, and so shows the baseline predictions we generate just by predicting whether or not mediation occurs in a dispute-year based on whether it occurred in the prior year. The second model adds the variables to test Hypothesis 1, the third adds the variables testing Hypothesis 2, and the fourth includes all the variables testing Hypotheses 1-4. We do this for both of our samples. Figure 1 and Figure 2 show the ROC plots and report the AUC for these four models in Sample One and Sample Two, respectively.

The ROC plots show that the baseline model, which includes the lag of mediation, does quite well in predicting mediation occurrence on its own, with an AUC of 0.81 in Sample

One and 0.95 in Sample Two. In Sample One, adding the variables that test Hypothesis 1 increases the out-of-sample predictive power by quite a bit (the AUC increases to 0.87), while adding the remaining variables increases it over the baseline model with just the mediation lag, but actually leads to a decrease relative to the model that only includes the variables testing Hypothesis 1.¹⁵ For Sample Two (shown in Figure 2), the predictive power of the model increases each time we add additional variables to test the hypotheses, reaching an extremely high 0.98 when all variables are included. We generally view these ROC plots as showing that the variables testing the theoretical arguments in this article do improve the ability to predict the occurrence of mediation out of sample.

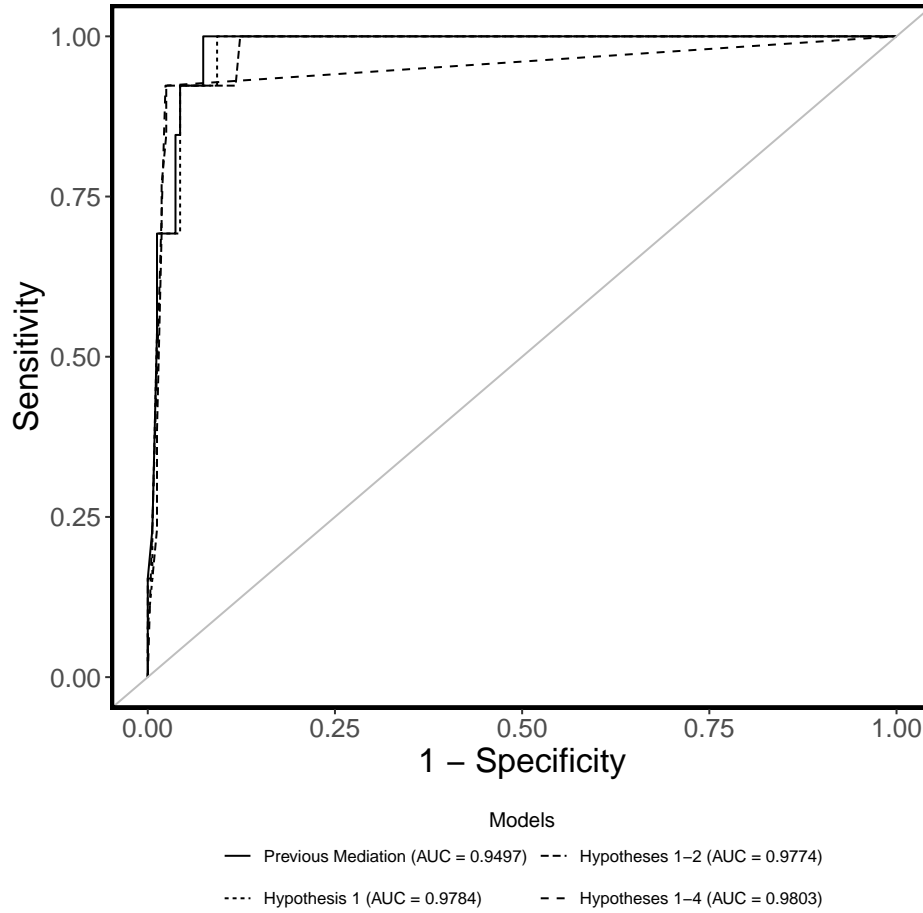
5 Further Analyses

We conduct a series of further analyses to examine the robustness of these results. We describe them briefly here and include tables in the Online Appendix.

The first additional analyses examine whether the results are driven by our measure of mediation. The analyses in Table 2 use our most restrictive measure of mediation—direct mediation. In additional analyses, we re-run the models from Table 2 with two less restrictive measures of mediation. In Online Appendix Table A4 the measure of mediation includes both direct mediation and shuttle diplomacy. Using this measure of mediation, there are 96 years with mediation in Sample One and 72 in Sample Two. The measure of mediation in Online Appendix Table A5 includes direct mediation, shuttle diplomacy, and bilateral negotiations. Using that measure, there are 144 years of mediation in Sample One and 111 in Sample Two.

¹⁵Because these ROC plots are out of sample, the AUC can go down even when additional variables are added.

Figure 2: ROC Plot of Sample Two



The results in Online Appendix Tables A4 and A5 generally show the same patterns as Table 2 but with less statistical significance. In Table A4, the measure of neighboring conflict is positive in all models and significant in three, the P5 member variable remains negative and significant with a nonsensical coefficient in Model 6, and the former French colony variable is negative and significant with a nonsensical coefficient in both models. The measure of violent tactics is no longer statistically significant at conventional levels. In Table A5, only the P5 member, former French colony, and mediation lag variables are significant. These additional analyses suggest that our theoretical argument provides a better explanation of direct mediation than bilateral mediation or shuttle diplomacy, although they also suggest

that geopolitical constraints prevent all types of mediation, not just direct mediation.

The second additional analyses examine the effect of the variables included in Table A5 in the full set of SD dispute-years, including those that are in active armed conflict (we add a variable measuring whether the SD group is involved in armed conflict in the year). The results, presented in Online Appendix Table A6, show that, as expected, the group civil war variable is positive (and significant). The measures of SD group violent tactics and the former French colony remain significant in the same direction, but the neighboring conflict and P5 member variables are no longer significant. These differences suggest that, in the full sample of years, the presence of violence (which is picked up both by armed conflict and by the organizational violence measure) is the main driver of whether or not mediation occurs. However, the former French colony variable continues to show complete separation, because there are no instances of mediation (of any type) in a former French colony either inside or outside of armed conflict in our data.

The third and final additional analyses (Online Appendix Table A7) add additional controls to Models 3 and 6 in Table 2. Models 1 and 3 include a measure of whether the country is a democracy drawn from the VDEM data, creating a binary indicator of electoral democracy from the Regimes of the World indices (Coppedge et al., 2024). That variable is not statistically significant and has a coefficient near zero. Models 2 and 4 replace the one-year lag of direct mediation with a measure of whether mediation has ever occurred previously in the dispute. That variable remains positive and significant with a large coefficient.¹⁶

¹⁶The measure of violent tactics remains positive but loses significance in Model 4 in Online Appendix Table A7. This is potentially due to the small set of cases with mediation following previous mediation efforts in disputes that have never experienced armed conflict.

6 Conclusion

Mediation is a key tool of international conflict management. Academic studies have shown that mediation can contribute to shorter civil wars, reductions in violence, and longer-lasting peace agreements. This literature broadly suggests the world would be a more violent place without international mediation.

Yet mediators do not go everywhere. Scholars have examined how characteristics of armed conflicts affect whether or not they see mediation. Our analysis contributes to that literature by looking beyond civil war and examining the occurrence of preventive mediation in SD disputes. Studying conflict prevention in these disputes is important because they often persist for decades and result in a substantial share of global civil wars.

The statistical analyses reveal some interesting patterns. First, they show that, even outside of armed conflict, violence is still a driving force behind where mediation occurs. In our first sample, which only excludes years of armed conflict, this could be picking up lingering violence after conflicts have de-escalated, and where peace processes are still continuing. But the results still hold in the second sample, which excludes any post-armed conflict years as well. Violence, even low-level violence, can signal to mediators, governments, and SD groups that mediation is needed to resolve disputes.

Second, the results show that mediation is more likely in disputes in countries that border other countries in armed conflict. Civil conflicts often spread beyond their borders (K. S. Gleditsch, 2007), and the pattern we find here suggests mediators pay attention to the potential for conflict diffusion when deciding where to offer mediation, and governments and representatives of SD groups take it into account when deciding whether to accept it.

This pattern of international actors acting proactively to prevent the spread of civil war happened with preventive diplomacy (and peacekeeping) in Macedonia in the early 1990s. It is particularly important now given that there is a well documented trend that civil conflicts are becoming increasingly internationalized (Davies et al., 2024).

Third, our analysis shows that there are significant geopolitical constraints on preventive mediation. In our data, 21 of the 51 disputes experience at least one year of direct mediation. Five disputes take place in permanent members of the UNSC; the only one that experiences mediation is the Northern Ireland dispute in the UK. There are no instances of mediation in our data in former French colonies.

Finally, all our analyses showed that mediation efforts are substantially more likely in disputes that have experienced prior mediation. Negotiations often proceed over multiple rounds (Duursma & Gamez, 2023), and many peace processes carry on for many years. Starting engagement in preventive mediation can be challenging, but once the initial barriers are overcome and mediation efforts begin, they are likely to continue.

Overall, then, the analyses and argument in this paper show that mediation is used as a tool of conflict prevention in SD disputes, but that there are significant constraints on when and where mediators can go. There are a number of avenues of further research that could add to our understanding of the role of mediation in conflict prevention and resolution.

First, future research could examine whether certain types of mediators are more likely to mediate in certain types of SD disputes. The MSDD data contain information on which third parties were present in these mediation efforts, and they comprise a range of actors representing international organizations, regional organizations, national governments, NGOs, or working as individuals. These different types of actors vary in terms of their

experience with mediation, the specific mediation strategies they use (Lundgren, 2020), ties to the disputants, and ability to apply pressure, such as through sanctions. Examining who mediates in which kinds of disputes could contribute to our understanding of these patterns.

Second, further research could examine the effect of mediation efforts on a variety of outcomes, both inside and outside armed conflict. While in this article our analyses use a dichotomous measure of whether or not mediation occurs in a SD dispute-year, our data contain information on all of the mediation efforts that take place. Many dispute-years in our data experience multiple mediation events. Existing studies of the effect of mediation tend to examine large macro-outcomes such as civil war termination or peace agreement duration. Our data allows for analyzing the impact of specific mediation efforts on more micro-outcomes, such as limited ceasefires or specific instances of cooperation, providing a fuller examination of their overall effect.

Third, while the analysis in this article shows important patterns in the conditions under which preventive mediation occurs in SD disputes, there are other intrastate disputes that can develop into armed conflicts. Civil wars typically are fought either over control of the central government or over specific territories within the state. The SD disputes examined represent a set of potential territorial civil wars. The recently released Governmental Incompatibilities Data Project (White et al., 2025) contains data on governmental incompatibilities in all countries in the world from 1960-2020, but there is currently no information on mediation (or other conflict prevention) efforts in these disputes. Future data collection to identify mediation efforts in these disputes would allow for comparing whether the determinants of preventive mediation in territorial and governmental disputes is similar.

Finally, the MSDD data could be used to study whether and how mediation plays

a role in preventing the outbreak of violent conflict. Many of the same organizations that deploy mediators to active armed conflicts express a commitment to conflict prevention. Our analysis here shows that, in some cases, they are able to overcome constraints and engage in mediation in disputes without a recent history of armed conflict. A next step is to examine whether and how these efforts are effective at preventing those armed conflicts from happening at all.

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Author Contribution

David E. Cunningham: funding acquisition, project administration, supervision, formal analysis, investigation, methodology, validation, writing – original draft, writing – reviewing & editing.

Leo Bauer, Sloan Lansdale, and Megan Lloyd: data curation, formal analysis, investigation, methodology, validation, visualization, writing – original draft, writing – reviewing & editing.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare none.

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Data Availability

The dataset and do-files for the empirical analysis in this article, along with the Online Appendix, are available at <https://www.prio.org/journals/jpr/replicationdata>. All analyses were conducted using R.

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Under What Conditions Does Preventive Mediation Occur in Self-Determination Disputes?

Online Appendix

Table A1: Sample Disputes and Date Ranges

KGCID	Dispute	Mediation	Civil War	Range
101	Afghanistan - Tajiks	0	1	1991 - 2015
235	Afghanistan - Uzbeks	1	0	1991 - 2015
102	Algeria - Berbers	0	0	1991 - 2015
402	Belgium - Flemings	1	0	1991 - 2008
104	Belgium - Walloons	0	0	1991 - 2015
141	Bhutan - Lhotshampas	0	0	1991 - 2015
403	Cameroon - Westerners	1	0	1991 - 2015
404	Chad - Southerners	0	1	1991 - 2005
107	Colombia - Indigenous Peoples	1	0	1991 - 2015
306	Congo-Kinshasa - Bakongo	0	1	1991 - 2015
406	Congo-Kinshasa - Lunda and Yeke	1	0	1991 - 2005
307	Croatia - Serbs	0	1	1991 - 2015
108	Cyprus - Turkish Cypriots	1	0	1991 - 2015
308	Equatorial Guinea - Bubis	0	0	1991 - 2005
207	France - Bretons	0	0	1991 - 2004
310	Georgia - Adzhars	1	0	1991 - 2005
311	Georgia - South Ossetians	1	1	1991 - 2015
410	India - Assamese	1	1	1991 - 2015
210	India - Reang (Bru)	0	0	1996 - 2015
313	India - Tripuras	0	1	1991 - 2015
413	Indonesia - Acehnese	1	1	1991 - 2005
214	Laos - Hmong	0	0	1991 - 2005
118	Mexico - Indigenous Peoples (non-Mayan or Zapotecs)	1	0	1995 - 2015
119	Moldova - Gagauz	1	0	1991 - 2015
121	Myanmar - Kachins	1	1	1991 - 2015
120	Myanmar - Rohingyas	1	1	1991 - 2015
217	Myanmar - Shan	1	1	1991 - 2015

KGCID	Dispute	Mediation	Civil War	Range
219	Nigeria - Ibos	0	0	1991 - 2015
422	Pakistan - Baluchis	0	1	1991 - 2015
139	Pakistan - Sarakis	0	0	1991 - 2015
424	Philippines - Moros	1	1	1991 - 2015
223	Russia - Buryat	0	0	1991 - 2010
326	Russia - Kumyks	0	0	1991 - 2005
327	Slovakia - Hungarians	1	0	1992 - 2013
427	Somalia - Puntland Darods	0	0	1998 - 2015
129	South Africa - Afrikaners	0	0	1993 - 2015
329	South Africa - Zulus	0	0	1991 - 2015
130	Sri Lanka - Muslims	1	0	1991 - 2015
330	Sudan - Southerners	1	1	1991 - 2015
430	Switzerland - Jurassians	0	0	1991 - 2005
228	Tanzania - Zanzibaris	1	0	1991 - 2015
431	Thailand - Malay-Muslims	1	1	1991 - 2015
134	Ukraine - Crimean Russians	0	0	1991 - 2015
229	Ukraine - Crimean Tatars	1	0	1991 - 2015
230	United Kingdom - Catholics	1	1	1991 - 2015
333	United Kingdom - Cornish	0	0	1991 - 2015
335	Yugoslavia - Albanians	0	0	1991 - 2015
336	Yugoslavia - Montenegrins	1	0	1991 - 2006
436	Yugoslavia - Sandzak Muslims	0	0	1991 - 2015
138	Zambia - Lozi	0	0	1992 - 2015
234	Zimbabwe - Ndebele	1	0	1991 - 2005

Table A2: Covariate Comparison Between the Random Sample and All Disputes

Covariate	Random sample	All disputes
Armed conflict	32%	37.2%
Democracy	58.8%	56.4%
P5 member	9.8%	12%
Independence demand	51%	56.4%

Table A3: Summary Statistics for Variables Used in the Analysis
(from Sample One)

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.
Direct mediation	911	0.093	0.291	0	1
Violent tactics (lag)	842	0.097	0.242	0.000	1.000
Number of factions (log, lag)	843	0.770	0.766	0.000	2.639
Previous concession (lag)	898	0.488	0.500	0	1
Neighboring conflict (lag)	898	0.596	0.491	0	1
Other civil war in state (lag)	888	0.316	0.465	0	1
UN peace mission (lag)	874	0.268	0.443	0	1
Non-UN peace mission (lag)	874	0.109	0.311	0	1
P5 member	911	0.098	0.297	0	1
P5 ally	911	0.313	0.464	0	1
Former French colony	911	0.052	0.221	0	1
Direct mediation (lag)	878	0.096	0.294	0	1

Table A4: Logit Models of Shuttle and Direct Mediation Incidence in State-SD Movement Dyads, 1991–2015

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Violent tactics (lag)	0.818 (0.585)	0.817 (0.618)	0.636 (0.626)	1.058 (0.558)	0.582 (0.607)	0.399 (0.610)
Factions (log, lag)	0.333 (0.235)	0.465* (0.231)	0.382 (0.203)	0.167 (0.255)	0.139 (0.283)	0.168 (0.285)
Previous concessions (lag)	0.339 (0.459)	0.340 (0.385)	0.434 (0.434)	0.538 (0.519)	0.832 (0.568)	0.737 (0.593)
Neighboring conflict (lag)		0.667 (0.361)	0.935* (0.371)		1.025* (0.460)	1.022* (0.440)
Other civil war in state (lag)		−0.862 (0.448)	−0.699 (0.469)		−0.507 (0.597)	−0.387 (0.667)
UN peace mission (lag)		0.750 (0.610)	0.811 (0.644)		1.513* (0.749)	1.373 (0.792)
Non-UN peace mission (lag)		−0.127 (0.803)	−0.080 (0.807)		−0.566 (0.891)	−0.560 (0.905)
P5 member			0.964 (0.722)			−15.171*** (0.756)
P5 ally			0.110 (0.461)			−0.231 (0.509)
Former French colony			−14.992*** (0.383)			−16.321*** (0.560)
Direct mediation (lag)	3.645*** (0.672)	3.375*** (0.536)	3.207*** (0.567)	3.521*** (0.873)	2.813*** (0.645)	2.770*** (0.645)
Intercept	−3.698*** (0.510)	−4.174*** (0.468)	−4.466*** (0.497)	−3.664*** (0.547)	−4.682*** (0.620)	−4.432*** (0.621)
Num.Obs.	752	752	752	607	607	607

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses, clustered on the self-determination dispute. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Table A5: Logit Models of Bilateral, Shuttle and Direct Mediation Incidence in State-SD Movement Dyads, 1991–2015

	<i>Sample one: No active war</i>			<i>Sample two: No war post-1960</i>		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Violent tactics (lag)	0.816 (0.546)	0.867 (0.579)	0.835 (0.590)	0.917 (0.636)	0.813 (0.662)	0.654 (0.682)
Factions (log, lag)	0.304 (0.220)	0.335 (0.205)	0.318 (0.192)	0.144 (0.262)	0.102 (0.256)	0.102 (0.257)
Previous concessions (lag)	0.047 (0.349)	0.021 (0.318)	0.037 (0.339)	0.291 (0.410)	0.340 (0.407)	0.258 (0.444)
Neighboring conflict (lag)		0.226 (0.356)	0.318 (0.348)		0.393 (0.416)	0.363 (0.420)
Other civil war in state (lag)		−0.652 (0.376)	−0.564 (0.376)		−0.510 (0.451)	−0.364 (0.485)
UN peace mission (lag)		0.311 (0.621)	0.237 (0.637)		0.800 (0.719)	0.676 (0.764)
Non-UN peace mission (lag)		−0.140 (0.787)	−0.106 (0.791)		−0.472 (0.825)	−0.497 (0.864)
P5 member			0.201 (0.694)			−15.506*** (0.602)
P5 ally			0.010 (0.433)			−0.247 (0.470)
Former French colony			−14.806*** (0.356)			−16.076*** (0.462)
Mediation (lag)	3.205*** (0.479)	3.099*** (0.399)	3.031*** (0.400)	3.080*** (0.570)	2.847*** (0.428)	2.715*** (0.446)
Intercept	−2.950*** (0.383)	−2.953*** (0.407)	−2.965*** (0.426)	−2.926*** (0.428)	−3.145*** (0.492)	−2.826*** (0.521)
Num.Obs.	752	752	752	607	607	607

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses, clustered on the self-determination dispute. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Table A6: Logit Models of Direct Mediation Incidence in State-SD Movement Dyads
1991–2015, Full Sample (Including Armed Conflicts)

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Violent tactics (lag)	1.297*	1.427**	1.439**
	(0.532)	(0.490)	(0.475)
Factions (log, lag)	0.226	0.342	0.226
	(0.281)	(0.241)	(0.217)
Previous concessions (lag)	0.246	0.291	0.337
	(0.405)	(0.372)	(0.400)
Group civil war (lag)	0.848*	0.982*	1.110**
	(0.415)	(0.410)	(0.382)
Neighboring conflict (lag)		0.425	0.489
		(0.344)	(0.334)
Other civil war in state (lag)		−0.544	−0.492
		(0.363)	(0.367)
UN peace mission (lag)		−0.063	−0.010
		(0.481)	(0.500)
Non-UN peace mission (lag)		0.755	0.709
		(0.647)	(0.609)
P5 member			0.576
			(0.618)
P5 ally			0.247
			(0.399)
Former French colony			−15.254***
			(0.317)
Direct mediation (lag)	3.590***	3.509***	3.384***
	(0.385)	(0.380)	(0.408)
Intercept	−3.761***	−4.114***	−4.193***
	(0.495)	(0.437)	(0.434)
Num.Obs.	967	967	967

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses, clustered on the self-determination dispute. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Table A7: Logit Models of Direct Mediation Incidence in State-SD Movement Dyads, 1991–2015, with Additional Controls

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Violent tactics (lag)	1.348** (0.492)	1.053* (0.429)	1.234** (0.442)	0.202 (0.457)
Factions (log, lag)	0.171 (0.225)	0.143 (0.292)	−0.169 (0.323)	0.007 (0.368)
Previous concessions (lag)	0.454 (0.519)	−0.539 (0.421)	0.310 (0.677)	−0.307 (0.531)
Neighboring conflict (lag)	1.083** (0.372)	0.992* (0.459)	1.596*** (0.429)	1.758* (0.776)
Other civil war in state (lag)	−1.077* (0.519)	−1.368 (0.744)	−0.823 (0.670)	−0.800 (0.870)
UN peace mission (lag)	1.037 (0.680)	2.533** (0.776)	1.137 (0.843)	2.600** (0.821)
Non-UN peace mission (lag)	0.046 (0.721)	−1.459 (0.779)	−0.184 (0.866)	−1.931* (0.838)
P5 member	1.678* (0.760)	2.808*** (0.813)	−14.750*** (0.706)	−13.263*** (1.100)
P5 ally	0.013 (0.410)	0.530 (0.423)	−0.237 (0.422)	0.301 (0.494)
Former French colony	−14.530*** (0.411)	−11.913*** (0.962)	−15.882*** (0.443)	−13.734*** (1.164)
Democracy	−0.220 (0.450)		0.073 (0.528)	
Direct Mediation (lag)	3.273*** (0.582)		3.126*** (0.677)	
Previous mediation		3.906*** (0.773)		3.343*** (0.900)
Intercept	−4.819*** (0.510)	−6.843*** (0.924)	−4.881*** (0.640)	−6.936*** (1.090)
Num.Obs.	811	752	656	607

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses, clustered on the self-determination dispute. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.