

“European Union Mediation in Civil Conflicts”

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Abstract¹

Since the EU has expanded its common security focus in the 1990s, this important regional organization has become the most frequent mediator in low level civil conflicts worldwide. What factors explain the EU’s motivation for mediation? We examine four explanations related to mediator bias, leverage, and selection effects of international organizations: strategic interests, economic interests, disputed issue type, and intensity of the conflict. Overall, we argue that the EU is more likely to mediate in civil conflicts that are in strategic regions, where the EU has economic leverage based on trade flows, when the disputed issue is over territory, and when fatality rates are higher. We test our hypotheses using empirical analysis of the UCDP low level civil conflicts data from 1993 to 2004, and Civil War Mediation data from 1974-2005, and find strong support for the hypotheses, determining key factors that influence EU mediation.

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Introduction

In May 2015, representatives from the European Union (EU) and heads of state from six countries in Eastern Europe met in Riga for the Eastern Partnership Summit. The most important items on the agenda for the summit were a discussion of Russia's actions in the region and the ongoing civil conflicts in Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, and Ukraine. In the joint declaration from the summit, the EU made it clear that "the acts against Ukraine and the events in Georgia since 2014 have shown that the fundamental principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity within internationally recognized borders cannot be taken for granted in the 21st century on the European continent" (European Council, 2015). The joint declaration also affirmed "the need for the earliest peaceful settlement of the conflicts in the region on the basis of the principles and norms of international law" (European Council, 2015). Such actions by the European Union are emblematic of the increasing attention the EU has given security affairs in the last 25 years. Most notably during this time period, there have been the civil conflicts in Bosnia, Kosovo, South Ossetia, and Ukraine just within the European region itself.

The EU maintains a high level of institutional and personnel support in mediation of civil conflicts (Hill, 1993; Karreth and Tir, 2012). Since its founding in 1957, the EU has been explicit in its joint goals of establishing peace and prosperity throughout Europe. Still, for much of the early years of the EU, the policy and institutional focus rested squarely on economic concerns, such as the proliferation of trade agreements and the creation of the Eurozone. Then, in the 1992 Treaty on the European Union (TEU), the EU finally began turning its attention to building the institutional capacity and policy competence in the area of security. The TEU was an important first step in the EU's commitment to expanding its

mandate to security concerns by establishing the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) in 1993 as the third pillar of the European Union. The CFSP was further expanded in 1999 with the establishment of the High Representative (HR) for Common Foreign and Security Policy, a permanent political position designed to symbolize and shape a unified EU policy in this issue area. Then again, in 2010, the Council of the European Union expanded this area of EU policy by establishing the European External Action Service (EEAS) as a single, unified focal point for EU foreign policy.² Since its formal launch in 2011, the EEAS has served as the unified, comprehensive foreign policy office of the EU, managing the EU's response to international crises and to "strengthen the European Union on the global stage, give it more profile, and enable it to project its interests and values more efficiently" (EEAS Europa.EU, 2014). Thus, we have seen the EU emerge as an important actor in its own right apart from the individual actions of its members.

The EU has been mediating in civil conflicts with growing frequency, particularly in low-level intensity conflicts short of war. For example, of the 475 mediation efforts pursued by international organizations (IOs) between 1993 and 2004 in low-level conflicts, the EU engaged in 216 mediations, or 27.2 percent of the total (see Table 1).³ This frequency is only second to the 340 efforts made by the United Nations (UN), which is about 42.8 percent of the mediation efforts made by IOs. The next largest regional IO to pursue mediation in civil

² While the EU has a long history of intergovernmentalism, which might seem to complicate decision-making in the area of conflict mediation, recent scholarship has clearly demonstrated that the EEAS acts with great autonomy in the field of foreign affairs (Henökl and Trondal, 2015). This scholarship further confirms our decision to view the EU as a single actor and not to focus on multilateral mediation by EU member states.

³ These numbers are different from those presented in Bercovitch and Schneider (2000) for several reasons, but most importantly because the authors only examine IO mediation through 1990 whereas we examine IO mediation through 2004.

conflicts is the African Union (AU) with 65 attempts at mediation, followed by 53 mediation efforts pursued by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Therefore, given the frequency of EU mediation, it is crucial to understand the motivating drivers that determine EU mediation offers for both EU decision makers and also scholars and observers of civil conflict management at the broadest levels.

Table 1 here

What factors predict the likelihood that the EU will offer mediation in civil conflicts?⁴ Does the EU have preferences for mediation in conflicts mainly in Europe? The EU is a particularly important mediator to consider in its own right, because it fits many criteria that extant literature deems important for success in resolving armed civil conflict, mainly bias and leverage. Moreover, mediation efforts by both international and regional IOs account for an increasing proportion of conflict management (Regan et al., 2009; De Rouen et al., 2011). However, the EU is often overlooked in broader studies about how IOs approach conflict management and mediation (Bergmann and Niemann, 2015). In fact, the lack of attention given to the EU can partially be explained by a preference in extant literature to focus on larger IOs, like the UN, and a failure to examine mediation by regional IOs, like the EU (Gartner, 2011). Additionally, the EU has previously been overlooked due to the criticism it has received for failing to engage in some high-profile conflict mediation compared to other IOs, especially in Africa (Thomas, 2012; Cumming, 2015). However, we believe that the EU does play an

⁴ Because the focus of our research question is about the EU's motivation to engage in mediation in the first place, we examine mediation offer. Mediation onset involves dyadic acceptance of mediation (Grieg 2005; Hellman 2012), yet if onset occurs, this automatically implies an offer of mediation.

important role in conflict mediation and that determining when the EU is likely to mediate is an important piece of the broader conversation about how IOs approach conflict management in civil conflicts. Moreover, we assert that our results offer a complementary perspective to existing research on mediator bias, leverage, and selection effects in a research area that needs scholarly attention.

We propose four explanations for predicting when the EU will offer mediation in civil conflicts, two of which reflect EU bias and leverage and two of which are indicators of a selection effect of EU mediation. For bias, we use the definition that the mediator state or institution has an affinity toward the conflict state or a preference in a particular outcome that is similar to one of the disputants, whether government or rebel group (Kydd, 2003; Svensson, 2007; Savun, 2008; Lundgren and Svensson, 2014). For leverage, we use the definition of economic, political, or security power or influence that one state or an institution has over the conflict state due to trade relations, military balance, or similar imbalanced relationships (Beardsley, 2008; Lundgren and Svensson, 2014; Reid, 2015). Selection effects refer to the choice of potential mediators to pursue mediation in conflicts that are particularly intractable and difficult for the disputants to resolve on their own.

For bias and leverage, we first examine whether strategic interests can explain EU mediation offers, since the EU is assumed to have strong interests in disputes within the areas of the world it has designated as strategically important. Second, we examine whether EU mediation offers can be explained by economic interests, since civil conflicts are likely to disrupt trade relations. For selection effects, we examine whether the issue type, specifically disputes over territory and the intensity of armed conflict play a role in EU mediation offers. While these arguments may be intuitive, they have yet to be tested in the context of the EU

thereby making our study an important contribution to existing literature.

We conclude that strategic interests, economic interests, issue type, and higher levels of fatalities all act as drivers for EU mediation in civil conflicts. Therefore, even though the EU mediates in a large number of civil conflicts, we are less likely to see mediation when the EU has less bias or leverage, specifically in a state lacking strategic or economic interests, when the disputed issue is over government control and not disputed territory, and when the conflict is less intense. Thus, our study fills an important gap in the conflict mediation literature and helps to explain when and where the EU makes a strategic choice to engage in conflict mediation.

A Theory of EU Mediation

International organizations, both global and regional in membership and scope, are increasingly involved in conflict management of civil conflicts (Pevehouse, 2002; Regan, Frank, and Aydin, 2009; DeRouen, Bercovitch, and Pospieszna, 2011; Gartner, 2011; Lundgren and Svensson, 2014; Lundgren, 2016). Yet, there are a limited number of studies that focus on the growing role of IOs in mediation, particularly with regard to bias and leverage. This gap in the literature is particularly troubling given the growing role of IOs, and especially the EU, in conflict mediation.

Existing studies mainly argue and confirm that IOs have a strong influence on the likelihood of states offering third party assistance in dispute resolution by focusing primarily on the effects on mediation outcome. At the same time, for regional organizations like the EU, there are particularly important selection effects that make mediation more attractive, while process effects make it less likely that regional organizations will succeed in ending civil conflicts (Gartner, 2011). For our study, we extend these findings by examining the case of

the EU as a mediator in civil conflicts. Theoretically, it is important to apply these existing arguments and findings to the case of the EU as this actor seemingly fits many of the criteria extant literature deems important in predicting IO mediation and yet it is often excluded from more general studies of conflict mediation.

Mediation Bias and Leverage

The results from existing studies are quite mixed when it comes to whether biased third parties are more likely to intervene in a dispute in the first place and whether they are more or less likely to be successful in achieving dispute resolution through mediation (Kydd, 2003; Smith and Stam, 2003; Greig, 2005; Beber, 2012). These mixed findings are particularly evident in the case of international organizations (Boehmer et al., 2004; Svensson, 2007b; Lundgren and Svensson, 2014). Most studies focus on the bias of states, arguing that states with biased interests in the dispute or conflict are more likely to attempt mediation or be more effective (Kydd, 2003; Svensson 2007a, 2009; Favretto, 2009).

A recent study by Lundgren and Svensson (2014) demonstrates that IO mediators can also have bias, and not necessarily impartial as often assumed, because the IO itself and member states can have a stake of interests in the state where they mediate. IOs that have bias toward the government or rebel groups are more effective at mediation success (Lundgren and Svensson, 2014), but it is not clear whether an IO would be more likely to offer mediation. Though this study focuses on mediation by the EU, our approach adds further clarification to the debate about bias and mediation likelihood by IOs by considering mediation offers. We contend that when the EU has particular interests at stake in civil conflicts, they will be more biased about the outcome of the conflict, influencing the decision to mediate or not.

In addition to mediator bias, we argue that when the EU has stronger leverage, the EU is more likely to mediate in armed conflicts. IOs that have strong leverage over the government are more successful in mediation outcomes (Lundgren and Svensson, 2014), but it is not clear if leverage makes IOs more likely to initiate mediation. We theorize that when EU member states maintain political, economic, or security leverage over the conflict state, the EU will be more likely to act as a mediator for the conflict in that state because it can better influence or even pressure at least one of the disputant sides to consider compromise in bargaining.

Building on extant literature, we focus specifically on mediation by the EU, a powerful regional IO that maintains both bias toward and leverage over a large number of states that experience civil conflict. We specifically examine strategic interests and economic interests, which we believe to be indicative of possible biased relationships and possible leverage between a potential mediator and disputants.

Strategic Interests

First, we consider a clear indicator of mediator bias and leverage, which is whether the EU's regional strategic interests explain mediation. The EU identifies a few regions of the world as strategic priorities. First, states located within the continent of Europe that are potential EU members are considered a strategic priority (Bergmann and Niemann, 2015; Visoka and Doyle, 2015). Clearly, the EU should be biased to resolve all conflicts within its borders and the geographical region of Europe first, as those issues are likely to disrupt cooperation within the Union at-large (Coppieters et al., 2004; Diez et al., 2008; Bergmann and Niemann, 2015). This strategic interest is likely related to the potential political, economic, social and cultural features shared with conflict states, which helps a regional organization such

as the EU understand the root causes of civil conflicts and build trust between disputants and third party mediators (Bercovitch and Houston, 1995; Gartner, 2011). Thus, we believe mediation in European states to be the EU's top priority.

Next, the 16 countries that directly border the EU, known as the states that are members of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) agreements, are considered a strategic priority given their relative close proximity to the borders of the EU. The ENP emphasizes political, economic, and security cooperation between EU member states and these regional neighbors, which includes states in the Caucasus, North Africa, and the Middle East. While these states are unlikely to become members of the EU, they are considered of great strategic importance due to their proximity to the EU and the fact that they border potentially hostile states such as Russia and Iran. Previous research has shown that regional organizations like the EU are more motivated to initiate mediation in neighboring states in conflict where the organizations have more to lose, which would predict more mediation offers in the ENP states (Gartner, 2011; Wallensteen and Svenson, 2014).

Additionally, the EU has designated many of its former colonies in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific (ACP) as a strategic priority. Previous research shows that states with colonial linkages tend to demonstrate a greater interest in mediation, because there is generally a higher level of commitment credibility by the mediator (Greig and Regan, 2008). The 70 former colonies in the ACP region were identified as a priority in the early 1970s due to the high potential value of trade and investment for the EU, and those partnerships have continually been renewed as part of the Cotonou Agreement. Therefore, we believe the EU will continue to be biased toward the ACP regions.

In all, we expect that the EU would be biased toward conflicts that are located within

one of these three regions in this order—Europe, the ENP region, and then the ACP region. For the EU, strategic interests should be an especially important consideration for the reasons we have identified here. Given these considerations, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: The European Union is more likely to mediate in civil conflicts located in states considered to be of strategic interest.

Economic Interests

EU mediation offers are also more likely in civil conflicts where the EU has bias and leverage in the form of economic interests at stake. Even though there has been an increased focus on security concerns within the European Union, the fact remains that economic policy has historically been the policy focus of the EU. Foreign economic policy developed faster than other policies as is evidenced in the number of trade agreements, financial investments, and development projects that the EU has continued to promote throughout the world (Toje, 2008; Cumming, 2015). Even so, previous research on mediation has found that strong trade ties with a potential third party mediator influences the likelihood of mediation offers in both interstate and civil conflicts (Frazier, 2006; Regan and Aydin, 2006; Greig and Regan, 2008). We believe the same will be true in the case of the EU.

For over 10 years, the EU has held the largest share of world trade in goods and services, including trade within and outside the borders of the EU. Moreover, if the EU were to conclude all trade talks currently in progress, the total value of that trade would add 2.2 percent or €275 billion to the EU's GDP (European Commission, 2015b). Thus, given the importance of these economic relationships, we argue that the EU will be biased to mediate in conflicts that have the potential to disrupt trade interests. Additionally, the EU can use economic leverage over states involved in civil conflicts as a tool to persuade disputants to potentially agree to or offer

concessions, leading to possible settlement. Thus, we expect that the EU will be more likely to mediate in civil conflicts where there is the potential for disruption of key trading relationships and when the EU has economic leverage over disputants.

H2: The European Union is more likely to mediate in civil conflicts located in states considered to be of economic interest.

Selection Effects

In a similar way that bias and leverage make EU mediation more likely, we argue that certain attributes of the conflicts themselves will make EU mediation more likely. Research on selection effects argues that “mediation is not randomly distributed among disputes,” and that “mediators are involved in the most challenging cases” (Gartner and Bercovitch, 2006, p.822). Moreover, previous research has shown that potential mediators select into conflicts that are more intractable and more intense, because these factors make conflicts less amenable to bilateral negotiations and rebel agreement to conflict resolution (Beardsley, 2006; Gartner and Bercovitch, 2006; Gartner, 2011). Therefore, we consider two key attributes of civil conflicts—the nature of the issue disputed between rebels and governments and the intensity of conflicts as represented by the level of fatalities—and argue that the EU is more likely to mediate in these conflicts that are more intractable and more intense.

Disputed Territory

First, we argue that the EU will be more likely to mediate in civil conflicts that involve disputes over territory. Since its founding, the EU has placed a strong emphasis on promoting and protecting the principles in the United Nations Charter, such as self-determination, respect for human rights, and the promotion of peace. Therefore, it was no surprise when Article 21(c) of the Treaty on the European Union made it explicit that the newest branch of EU foreign

policy, the EEAS, must “preserve peace, prevent conflicts and strengthen international security, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, with the principles of the Helsinki Final Act and with the aims of the Charter of Paris, including those relating to external borders” (EUR-LEX, 2012).⁵ The European Union is thus legally bound to close cooperation with the United Nations and to uphold the same principles of self-determination and respect for human rights (Bergmann and Niemann, 2015; Visoka and Doyle, 2015). Moreover, these ideas are further embedded in the EU’s Charter for Fundamental Rights, which guarantees protection for cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity in Article 22 (European Parliament, 2000). For the EU specifically, compared to other IOs, we argue that these fundamental principles should be translated into a preference for mediation in disputes involving a violation of the right to self-determination and equal rights of minorities, which are many times tied to the intangible salience of territory as seen in conflicts such as Northern Ireland and Kosovo.

Armed civil conflicts fought over territorial control often overlap with ethnic conflicts, and the issues at stake are highly salient for intangible reasons. Consequently, these conflicts are more difficult to resolve bilaterally without third party involvement in dispute resolution. Several studies about mediation likelihood have argued that when the disputed issue is highly salient territory, third party attempts to mediate in the dispute are more likely. As Kacowicz (1994) notes, “the importance of the territory in question might make a substantial difference upon the prospects to resolve peacefully or not the territorial issue,” suggesting that the salience of the disputed territory has a direct impact on whether third parties choose to mediate (p. 55). Similarly, Bercovitch, Anagnoson, and Wille (1991) demonstrate that conflicts involving

⁵ This deference to the United Nations is also mentioned in the 2009 Concept on Strengthening EU Mediation and Dialogue Capacities.

disputed territory are much more amenable to third party mediation compared to conflicts over other disputed issues. We also know that mediation is more successful when the disputed issue is about territory or security (Gartner, 2011; Kleiboer, 1996).

Disputed territory, particularly in civil conflicts, often holds intangible salience due to strong nationalist, ethnic, religious or other identity connections to the disputed land. In the European context, there are clear examples of such territory, as in the case of Northern Ireland or the Balkans (Visoka and Doyle, 2015). Outside of Europe, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is an obvious example, and this conflict has long been a strategic priority for the EU. We argue that warring parties involved in civil conflicts over territory should be more stubborn about resolving the conflicts, less likely to pursue bilateral negotiations, and more likely to stand firm in their territorial claims or defense of self-determination. We believe that because of the commitment to the institutional principles the EU promotes and the intractability of certain civil conflicts, the EU will prefer to attempt mediation in conflicts where there is a clear violation of the right to self-determination, demands for secession, or demands for territorial autonomy, often based on intangible salience of territory related to ethnic or other identity claims. Therefore, in these cases, we expect the EU to be more likely to offer mediation when the disputed issue is over territory.

H3: The European Union is more likely to mediate in civil conflicts where the issue disputed is territorial rather than over government control.

Intensity of Conflict

Lastly, we examine whether mediation offers by the EU can be explained by concerns over the intensity of conflict violence. Intensity of a conflict in this case refers to the degree of fatalities throughout the conflict; the higher the number of battle deaths, the more intense an

armed conflict is considered to be. Actors like the EU are generally more willing to mediate in conflicts that are more intense, because these conflicts are also highly salient. As Gartner and Bercovitch (2006) note, “high casualties reflect highly salient, largely intractable conflicts and represent a strong selection effect” (p. 824). The higher number of fatalities there are in a conflict, the less likely that the disputants can consider achieving peace through their own negotiations. Research has shown that third parties are more likely to consider mediation when the costs of conflict are higher, and in those cases, mediation is more likely to occur (Mitchell, 1995; Bercovitch and Houston, 2000; Regan and Stam, 2000; Greig, 2005). We also know that IOs in particular are more likely to intervene in conflicts that are intractable, which can be evidenced by the high number of fatalities (Beardsley, 2006; Gartner, 2011). Therefore, we expect the EU to attempt mediation in higher intensity conflicts due to selection effects common among potential mediators, particularly IOs.

H4: The European Union is more likely to mediate in civil conflicts with higher fatalities.

Research Design

To test our hypotheses, our empirical analysis utilizes two datasets that cover civil conflict. First, we use the UCDP dataset Managing Intrastate Low-level Conflict (MILC), version 1.0, which comprises event data for all low level armed conflicts from 1993 to 2004 (Möller and Heldt, 2007).⁶ We analyze low-level armed conflicts because for many regional organizations like the EU, preventing conflict escalation is a critical issue (Möller and Heldt, 2007; Greig, 2015). Second, we use the Civil War Mediation (CWM) dataset as a robustness

⁶ UCDP defines minor conflict as “contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory” in which the use of force results in at least 25 battle deaths per year (Möller and Heldt, 2007).

check, which includes data from 1974-2005 (DeRouen, Bercovitch, and Pospieszna, 2011). Together, these two datasets provide a broader picture of mediation in civil conflicts.

The unit of analysis in both datasets is the event-year, including all years of the conflict between a government and a non-state actor, as well as the first non-active year, regardless of whether a third party attempted mediation or good offices. There are 127 total dyads involved in 76 low-level civil conflicts, 70 percent of which involved a third party intervening in the conflict through mediation, and 173 dyads in 133 civil wars. Table 1 provides frequencies and percentages for international organizations that mediated in armed civil conflicts from 1993-2004. As noted at the start of the paper, the EU offered mediation in low-level conflicts in 46 percent of the total mediation offers by all international organizations.

The dependent variable for this analysis is a dummy variable that measures the offer of mediation—whether the EU offered mediation or good offices, or not. The data in both the MILC and CWM measure onset of mediation by a third party. This study examines the supply side of mediation—the likelihood of the EU offering mediation to resolve a civil conflict. Even though there is a distinction made in the literature about onset and acceptance (Grieg, 2005; Hellman, 2012), we are focused on the independent decision of the EU to make an offer of mediation, and the onset of mediation measured in the data automatically means that an offer was made. The acceptance of the mediation is implied in the data, but we are not examining the strategic relationship of acceptance or whether the mediation offer was successful, a topic worthy of research, but beyond the scope of this particular study.

Our hypotheses include four factors of mediator bias, leverage, and/or selection effects that could influence the EU's decision to mediate in low-level civil conflicts. To test for strategic interests, we coded a variable for the region of *Europe*, another for states that are

members of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) region, and a third variable for the former colonies in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific (ACP) region. All of these variables are dichotomous indicating whether the state where the armed conflict occurred is a member of that strategic region.⁷ We also use a number of variables for sensitivity tests. First, we include regional dummies of all regions from the MILC data set. Then, we include distance in kilometers (km) from the EU capital of Brussels to the capital of the conflict state, which we coded and is provided in an online appendix. We posit that the EU is more likely to intervene in conflicts within the Europe region, or in conflicts located closer to Brussels.

The second primary independent variable, used to test Hypothesis 2, is *Trade*. This variable captures the total value of all imports and exports in millions of US dollars between Germany and the government involved in the civil conflict. We use Germany as a proxy for trade with the EU, since Germany represents the largest economy in the EU and data for the EU is not available for our entire time period.⁸ These data are borrowed from the Correlates of War International Trade data, version 3.0 (Barbieri and Keshk, 2012). The prediction is that the higher the amount of total trade, which reflects both strong economic interests and economic leverage over the conflict state, the more likely the EU will mediate in a civil conflict.

The next primary independent variable, to test Hypothesis 3, is *Territorial Dispute*. This is a dummy variable that refers to a disagreement over the status of a specified piece of territory disputed between a government and a non-state actor who is seeking secession,

⁷ We test these variables separately to avoid multicollinearity.

⁸ Lundgren and Svensson (2014) argue that the delegation of IO mediation should consider whether key member states like Germany have interests at stake with the civil conflict state. Moreover, data limitations do not allow us to consider bilateral, total EU trade volume for the period from 1993-2004; Eurostat data only have Extra-EU imports available since 2010 (European Commission, 2017).

autonomy, or some other territorial control. If the armed conflict is not about disputed territory, then it is over the type of political system, replacement of the government, or a change in the government's composition (Möller and Heldt, 2007). These data are coded as “incompatibility issue” in both the MILC and CWM data sets. Of all the low level civil conflict observations, 61 percent of them involve territorial incompatibility, while the remaining observations are over government control of the state. Almost 90 percent of civil wars are about territorial incompatibility.

For Hypothesis 4, we use a variable called *Fatalities*, which is the best estimate of the number of battle deaths in the armed conflict annually and is included in the MILC and CWM datasets. We argue that the higher the number of battle deaths, the more intractable and more intense a conflict is. In the MILC dataset, the mean number of battle deaths per conflict is 748. In the CWM data, there is a mean number of 2,341 of fatalities.

We also include a number of control variables that might impact whether or not the EU mediates in conflict. First, we include an indicator of whether there has been *UN involvement* in the dispute. The Treaty on the European Union and the Treaty of Lisbon both explicitly state that the EU is to be a partner to the UN. Therefore, we believe that in cases when there is already UN mediation as the primary third party, the EU is less likely to mediate as those efforts might be seen as duplicative to the UN's efforts.

Second, we include a dummy variable called *Alliance* to control for whether the government involved in the civil conflict is allied with one or more of the EU member states. The alliance data are borrowed from the Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions (ATOP) data set version 3.0 (Leeds, Ritter, Mitchell, and Long, 2002).⁹ The expectation is that the EU

⁹ To account for missing observations in the ATOP data from 2003-2004, we self-coded all

will be more likely to initiate mediation if an alliance exists between the EU, or an EU member state, and the government involved in a civil conflict.

Next, we include a variable called *Treaty obligations*, which is borrowed from the Multilateral Treaties of Pacific Settlement Data Set - Issue Correlates of War (ICOW) Project (Hensel, 2005). These data measure the actual number of pacific settlement commitments—global and regional treaties—in which the government involved in the civil conflict is a member. Previous findings suggest that mediation is more likely when one of the disputing parties has a higher number of commitments to pacific settlement.¹⁰

Finally, we consider the need to control for an attempt by an *EU member state* to pursue mediation in a civil conflict. Since we are focusing on mediation offers by the EU as a single actor, it would be important to see if there are joint effects between the EU itself and any of its individual member states. There are 607 cases of EU member states offering mediation, which is higher than the number of offers made by the EU, but in the MILC data there are no cases where EU member states mediate in the same year as the EU mediates.¹¹ Moreover, because there are no cases of mediation by both the EU and an *EU member state*, we omit this control

alliances between dyads in our data set for this year.

¹⁰ We originally intended to include an indicator of whether there has been *NATO involvement* in the dispute as another control variable, but there are only two observations in the MILC data where NATO intervened through a mediation attempt. This is not surprising given NATO's primary role as a military force. Moreover, the EU is not legally bound to cooperate with NATO in the same way that it is legally bound to cooperate with the UN. So, we believe that NATO involvement is less likely to deter EU mediation than UN involvement, and therefore, we did not include this variable.

¹¹ It may be the case that mediation offers by EU member states were coded as mediation by the EU in the MILC dataset. It is also possible that mediation onset by the EU was actually mediation support or more limited efforts, such as in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Bretherton and Vogler, 2006). However, confirming coder reliability is beyond the scope of this study. Moreover, as we use both the MILC and CWM datasets, we are still confident in our joint results.

from our analysis. The relationship between mediation by the EU as an independent institution and mediation by member states is worthy of further investigation, but is beyond the scope of this study where we are focused on IO mediation.

Findings and Analysis

To test our hypotheses, we used logistic regression models, presented as Tables 2 and 3, and predictive margins in Figures 1 and 2. Overall, the models suggest that the EU does mediate in civil conflicts according to bias, leverage, and selection effects as we predicted. All four hypotheses receive strong support with low level conflicts, but the specific outcomes do vary depending on the exact model specifications (see Table 2). With civil war mediation, the EU is overall much less frequent of a mediator, and some of the factors examined are not as influential on the likelihood of EU mediation (see Table 3). The most influential factors for both low level conflicts and civil wars are whether the civil conflict is in Europe and the amount of trade flow, both indicative of bias and leverage. The number of fatalities and territorial control as the main disputed issue are also quite influential for low-level conflicts, but not for civil wars. All results for EU mediation in civil wars remain the same when we clustered by dyad and conflict, and the results remain the same for EU mediation low level conflicts clustering by conflict, thus ensuring our results are not inflated due to numerous observations of the same mediation over a number of years in the same conflict (see online appendix).

Tables 2 & 3 here

The decision to mediate in low level conflicts is strongly influenced by the strategic interest of alleviating civil conflicts within the European region. We find a statistically significant and a positive relationship between mediation offers by the EU and low level conflicts located in Europe, providing support for Hypothesis 1 (see Table 2, Model 1).

Compared to all other regions of the world, European low-level conflicts are 73 percent more likely to experience EU mediation (see Figure 1, Model 1).

To test for the EU's strategic interests through the ENP and ACP initiatives, we examine EU mediation in these specific countries and find mixed support. With states involved in the ENP program, there is statistical insignificance for low-level conflicts, so there appears to be no effect of membership in this partnership program in these types of conflicts (Table 2, Model 2). However, for civil wars, EU mediation is positively related to ENP state membership (Table 3, Model 2). More interesting is that, for the low-level conflicts, ACP countries have a significant and negative coefficient implying that the EU is actually less likely to mediate in ACP states, which are largely made up of former European colonies (Table 2, Model 3). Therefore, using these measures, any bias or leverage the EU has over ENP or ACP countries is either irrelevant or the opposite of what we expected for low level conflict and only ENP states are more likely to experience EU mediation in civil wars.

Figures 1 & 2 here

As a sensitivity test of strategic interests in different regions of the world, we tested for EU mediation in the regions of Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. Results of logistic regression models in the online appendix show that the EU is more likely to mediate in civil conflicts in the Middle East, but less likely to do so in Asia and Africa. These findings are consistent with other research that shows that the UN is less likely to send peacekeeping troops to Asia and Africa than to other regions of the world (Gilligan and Stedman, 2003). The results are also consistent with the negative influence of ACP states that we found in our own statistical analysis (Table 1, Model 3), indicating that prior colonial ties of EU member states has a negative influence on the likelihood of mediation, with the exception of states in the Middle East. Preference for mediation in the Middle East is likely due to the

priority given to the resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as “a fundamental interest of the EU” (EEAS Europa.EU, 2014). Compared to civil conflicts in Europe, EU mediation is 79 percent less likely to occur in Asia and 89 percent less likely in Africa. On the other hand, mediation efforts by the EU are 34 percent more probable compared to other regions of the world, but compared to European conflicts, EU mediation is still 53 percent less likely in the Middle East, demonstrating a clear bias toward European civil conflicts.

As a further sensitivity test, provided in an online appendix, we also tested distance (in kilometers) from Brussels, the EU capital, to the capital cities of the states experiencing civil conflicts. Not only is this variable statistically significant and positive, but the effect is also quite strong. Moving from the minimum distance of 321 km to the mean distance of 4,420 km makes EU mediation 60 percent less likely. When the conflict is the farthest distance from Brussels, at 14,299 km, the probability of EU mediation drops by 97 percent. Thus, these sensitivity checks confirm our logic that the EU is a strategic mediator with a preference for mediating in the European region.

Overall, our results suggest that the EU is largely focused on resolving issues in its own backyard of Europe, most likely due to the potential future membership of these states and the relative lower cost of mediation. These finding may be intuitive, but this intuition had not yet been tested and confirmed as we have done in this study. Additionally, we have provided a causal explanation for preference of mediation in Europe based on notions of bias and leverage in mediation.

For Hypothesis 2, our results demonstrate that the EU is more likely to mediate in low level civil conflicts in states that have higher amounts of trade with Germany (Table 2, Model 1). The variable is statistically significant and positively related to EU mediation, meaning that the likelihood of mediation increases with the dollar amount of total trade between Germany and the state experiencing civil conflict. With regard to substantive

effects, EU mediation is 74 percent more likely with the highest amount of total trade, \$11,620 million, compared to the lowest amount of trade, \$1.35 million, and 33 percent more likely moving from the minimum to the mean of \$2,013 million (see Figure 1, Model 2). For EU mediation in civil wars, the highest amount of total trade makes it 80 percent more likely the EU will mediate compared to the lowest amount of trade with the conflict state (Table 3).

Together, these findings suggest that the EU has both bias and leverage in its mediation offers in low level conflicts and civil wars. Stronger trade flows act as a means of leverage that the EU, and Germany in particular, has over its trading partners. As the most powerful state in the EU, it is logical that Germany would have significant influence on EU decisions to mediate. Economic interests clearly influence EU decisions when considering whether the institution should attempt mediation as we predicted.

For Hypothesis 3, the effect of territory as a disputed issue is also a fairly strong influencing factor. Territorial control as the primary disputed issue is a positive and statistically significant indicator of mediation offers by the EU, although not quite as influential as strategic and economic interests. EU mediation is 26 percent more likely to occur in civil conflicts over disputed territory compared to civil conflicts over government control (see Figure 1, Model 3). This finding supports the argument that civil conflicts over disputed territory are given priority by the EU in keeping with its central principles expressed in several of its treaties. This finding also confirms that findings in previous research about territorial disputes being more salient and intractable also apply in the case of EU mediation.¹² With civil wars, there is perfect correlation with EU mediation and

¹² It is possible that civil conflicts over territory have higher fatalities and are therefore more in need of EU mediation, which is the focus of Hypothesis 4. However, a correlation matrix shows a low negative relationship between these two variables (-.24), which gives us confidence in our theoretical predictions.

territorial conflict, given that all observations of EU mediation involve territorial incompatibility. As a result, this factor drops out of the model, but the 100 percent frequency suggests that territorial conflict matters significantly for EU mediation in civil wars as well as low level conflicts (Table 3). Therefore, we are confident that the EU is more likely to offer mediation in conflicts over territorial control.

Turning to Hypothesis 4, which tests the effect of higher intensity of conflict as a selection effect, we find confirmation of our prediction that EU mediation offers are more likely to occur as the number of battle deaths increases in low level civil conflict, but not in civil wars. In all three models in Table 2, there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between higher levels of battle deaths and the likelihood of EU mediation offers in low level civil conflicts, with probability 64 percent more likely with the highest number of fatalities—5,061 in Afghanistan—compared to the lowest number of fatalities—25 in Ethiopia (see Figure 1, Model 4). Moreover, there is a 62 percent increased probability of EU mediation when moving from the least number of fatalities to the mean number of 748. With such probabilities, there is no doubt that the EU is more invested in mediating in more deadly low-level conflicts.

As with territorial disputes, we believe this finding demonstrates a selection effect, whereby the EU selects mediation in civil conflicts involving higher fatalities that are more intractable and difficult to resolve bilaterally among the disputants themselves. At the same time though, there is no statistical significance of fatalities for EU mediation in civil wars. This may suggest that the EU is hesitant to involve itself in full scale wars with much higher fatalities.

Conclusions

The European Union is one of the most influential international organizations in the

world today. It is a powerful force in trade, investment, cooperation, and diplomacy. In recent decades, its influence has extended to security issues, particularly mediation efforts in armed civil conflicts. In this study, we have provided a causal explanation for EU mediation in these conflicts by highlighting the importance of bias, leverage, and selection effects as key factors that influence the institution's decision to mediate. In this paper, we examined four explanations of EU mediation derived in part from extant literature on mediator bias and leverage: a strategic interests argument and an economic interests argument, and a selection effects argument about disputed issue type and intensity of conflict. We tested these four hypotheses using an empirical data analysis of civil conflicts from UCDP from 1993 to 2004 and CWM data from 1974-2005. We find strong support for most of our primary expectations, most importantly with low-level conflicts.

We see these findings as a crucial first step in determining when such an important IO is likely to offer mediation in civil conflicts. From a theoretical perspective, we engage the extant literature that discusses the factors that predict mediation bias, leverage, and selection effects by examining an IO that is often overlooked in more general studies. Moreover, our study suggests that mediator bias, leverage, and selection effects have a stronger aggregate influence on decisions to mediate in civil conflicts than previously expected.

From the perspective of foreign policy, our study makes a contribution to examining the efficacy of a relatively young policy area of the European Union. As we have highlighted here, the EU has great potential to continue making a significant difference in resolving several long-standing civil conflicts both within and outside the continent of Europe. Yet, our findings also suggest that the future of EU mediation might be more mixed than its past. In many ways, the preference for mediation in territorial conflicts and those with higher fatalities, which

demonstrates selection effects, suggests that the EU is poised to play an important role in several critical civil low level conflicts like those in Eastern Europe. However, our findings also demonstrate that the EU is less likely to intervene in conflicts in Asia and Africa, and at a greater distance from Brussels. Likewise, we should not expect the EU to mediate in civil conflicts where there are less obvious economic interests, which further suggests that many ongoing civil conflicts in places such as Africa are likely to be overlooked by the EU (Cumming, 2015). Therefore, while the EU has demonstrated a strong preference for mediation in the time period we investigate, our findings also suggest that EU bias and leverage might eventually cause the organization to unnecessarily limit its scope of mediation.

In short, our research helps to fill an important gap in the understanding of IO mediation by focusing squarely on the EU. We revisit four distinct logics of IO mediation and offer a new theoretical and empirical explanation of how those general logics apply to the EU context. Our findings confirm that the EU has the potential to continue to be a significant player in conflict mediation and security affairs more generally.

Table 1: International Organization Mediation in Low-Level Civil Conflicts (MILC Data), 1993-2004

Name of Organization	Frequency	Percent
African Union/ Organization of African Unity	65	8.19
Arab League	12	1.51
Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation	1	0.13
Association of South East Asian Nations	7	0.88
Central European Cooperation Process	1	0.13
Commonwealth of Portuguese Speaking States	4	0.50
Economic Community of West African States	53	6.68
Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group	1	0.13
European Community / European Union	216	27.20
Inter-Governmental Authority on Development	12	1.51
International Organisation of the Francophonie	1	0.13
Non Aligned Movement	1	0.13
North Atlantic Treaty Organisation	19	2.39
Organisation of American States	3	0.38
Organisation of the Islamic Conference	10	1.26
Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe	14	1.76
South African Development Community	23	2.90
Southeastern Europe Cooperation Process	1	0.13
The Arab Maghreb Union	1	0.13
The Commonwealth	2	0.25
The New Partnership for Africa's Development	1	0.13
United Nations	340	42.82
World Bank	6	0.76

*Percentage of total IGO mediations.

Table 2: Logistic Regression Results for EU Mediation in Low-Level Civil Conflicts (MILC Data), 1993-2004

Variables	Model 1 Europe	Model 2 ENP States	Model 3 ACP States
Europe	1.83*** (0.32)		
ENP states		0.13 (0.18)	
ACP states			-2.14*** (0.38)
Territorial Dispute	0.37 (0.32)	1.30*** (0.23)	0.52** (0.24)
Trade	0.00024*** (0.000064)	0.000093** (0.000044)	-0.000052 (0.000051)
Fatalities	0.00029*** (0.000086)	0.00064*** (0.000075)	0.00042*** (0.000078)
Pacific Settlement Treaty	-0.077 (0.082)	-0.034 (0.082)	0.0082 (0.086)
Alliance	-0.18 (0.25)	1.22*** (0.22)	0.81*** (0.21)
UN Involvement	-1.52*** (0.39)	-1.54*** (0.39)	-1.60*** (0.39)
EU Member state = o,	-	-	-
Constant	-3.62*** (0.29)	-4.16*** (0.32)	-2.72*** (0.40)
Observations	2,502	2,502	2,502
Log likelihood	-645.24483	-661.62629	-643.76825

Robust standard errors in parentheses; *p<.05, **p<.01

Figure 1: Probability of EU Mediation Offer in Low-Level Civil Conflicts, 1993-2004

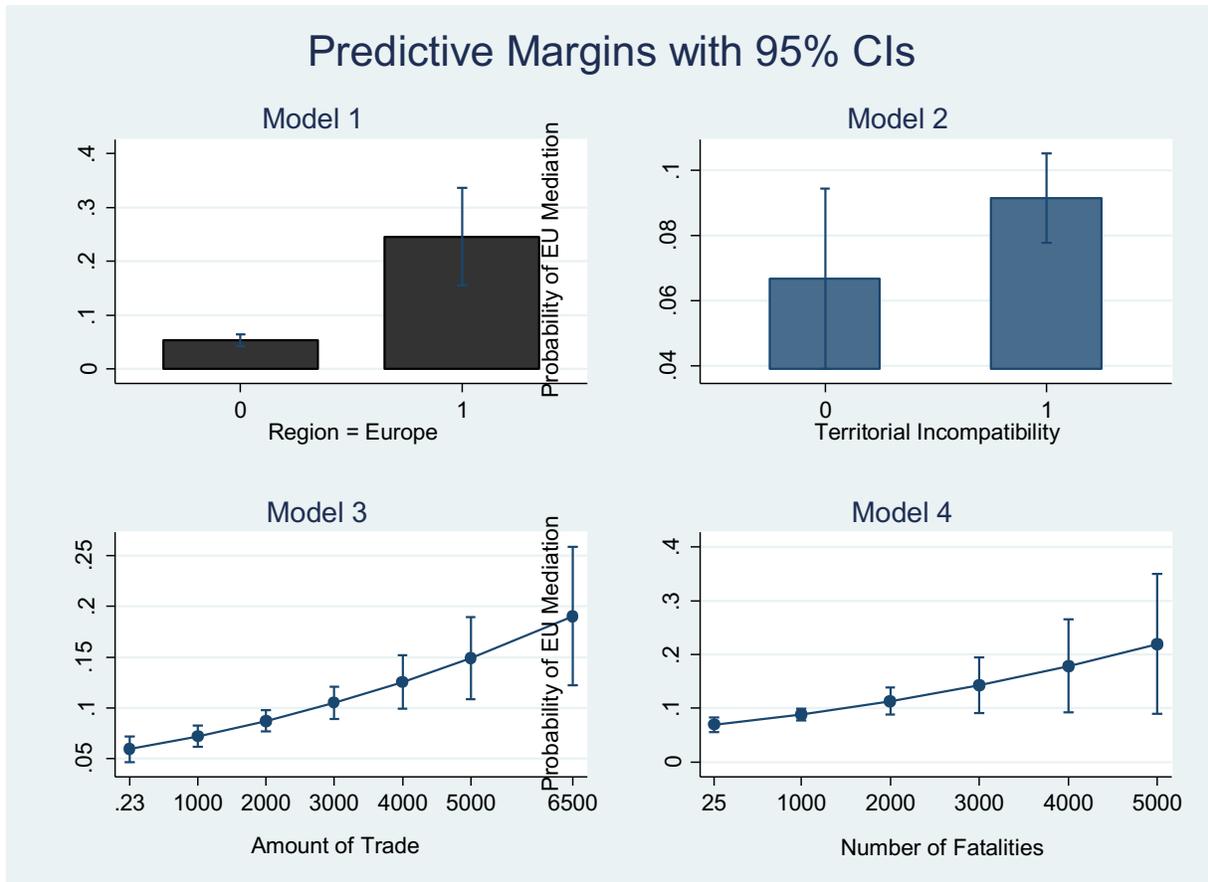
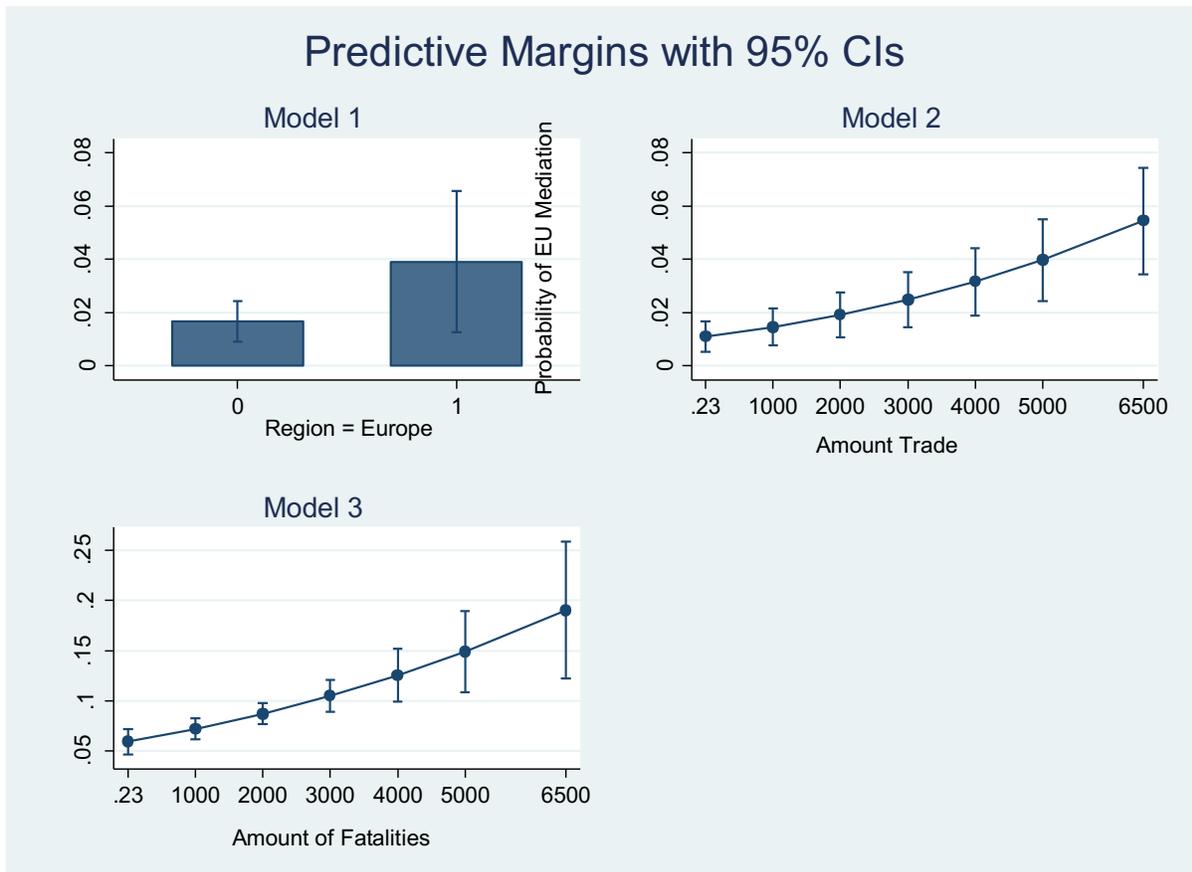


Table 3: Logistic Regression Results for EU Mediation in Civil Wars (CWM Data), 1974-2005

Variables	Model 1 Europe	Model 2 ENP States	Model 3 ACP States
Europe	1.24* (0.63)		
ENP States		2.62** (0.77)	
ACP States = o,			-
Territorial Dispute = o,	-	-	-
Trade	0.00034** (0.000073)	0.00031** (0.000072)	0.00050** (0.00011)
Fatalities	0.000031 (0.000044)	0.000061 (0.000061)	0.000083 (0.000048)
Pacific Settlement Treaty	-0.37* (0.16)	-0.62** (0.21)	-1.01* (0.40)
Alliance = o,	-	-	-
UN Mediation	3.98** (1.15)	3.91** (0.99)	7.45** (1.51)
EU Member State	0.17 (1.03)	0.82 (1.42)	11.1** (2.03)
Constant	-5.54** (0.94)	-5.52** (0.81)	-5.71** (1.70)
Observations	1,018	1,018	551
Log-Likelihood	-53.347552	-53.347552	-46.586511

Robust standard errors in parentheses; ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Figure 2: Probability of EU Mediation Offer in Civil Wars, 1974-2005



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