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INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATION 19 (2014) 315–342

International Negotiation

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Leanings and Dealings: Exploring Bias and Trade Leverage in Civil War Mediation by International Organizations

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Received 4 February 2014; accepted 18 April 2014

Abstract

Two characteristics of mediators – bias and leverage – are discussed intensively in the research on international mediation. However, whereas bias and leverage have been examined in mediation by states, relatively little is known about their role in mediation by international organizations (IOs). This study provides new ways of conceptualizing IO bias and leverage and utilizes unique data to measure the impact of IO bias and leverage on mediation outcomes. Exploring all cases of civil war mediation by IOs

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 | DOI 10.1163/15718069-12341280

in the period 1975–2004, we find that IOs where member states provide support to both sides in a conflict outperform IOs whose member states remain disinterested. IOs with significant trade leverage also increase the likelihood of mediation success. The study demonstrates that IOs rarely have a neutral relationship to civil war combatants, that mediation by IOs is laden with member state interests, and that such interests shape outcomes.

Keywords

mediation – conflict resolution – international organizations – civil war – mediator bias

The systematic study of international mediation processes has grown rapidly in the last years.[3] Two characteristics of mediators – bias and leverage – are intensively discussed in the research on international mediation. Mediation *bias* relates to the degree to which mediators are relatively inclined towards one side in a conflict. It is disputed whether biased actors should be considered proper mediators and, if so, which type of bias enhances the prospects for settlements of armed conflicts. Mediator *leverage* refers to the power and influence that a particular mediator has over one side in a conflict, and it is seen both as a way of creating entry points into a mediation process and as a factor explaining outcomes. This study focuses on civil war mediation by intergovernmental organizations (IOs). As evidenced by data on conflict management (DeRouen et al. 2011; Regan et al. 2009), global and regional IOs are responsible for a growing portion of international conflict management efforts. It is often assumed – even desired – that IOs engaging in conflict management play an impartial role. The traditional view is that IOs, in carrying out any type of peacemaking intervention, must respect the core principles of impartiality and consent of the disputants (Weiss 1999).[4] In policy circles, this traditional view has come under scrutiny in the last two decades. As a consequence of the evolving landscape of IO conflict management – where the emphasis is now firmly on the resolution of intrastate armed conflict – there is greater recognition that full impartiality is neither a panacea for settling disputes, nor the

3 For recent overviews of the mediation research field, see Wallensteen and Svensson (2014) and Greig and Diehl (2012).

4 For example, chapters VI and VII of the UN Charter, which contain provisions for the "pacific settlement of disputes", including mediation, make it clear that such interventions "shall be without prejudice to the rights, claims or position of the parties concerned" (Article 40).

most ethically responsible approach in all contexts.[5] Building on the experiences of Rwanda and Bosnia, former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has argued that "impartiality does not – and must not – mean neutrality in the face of evil" and that in certain situations, "there can be no standing aside, no looking away, no neutrality" (UN 1998). In contrast with the debate among practitioners, large-n scholarship on IO mediation (e.g. Boehmer et al. 2004; Gartner 2011; Hansen et al. 2008; Peck 1998) has largely neglected to include analysis of bias and leverage in mediation processes. Likewise, scholars that focus on the role of bias in mediation have tended to exclude IOs (Favretto 2009; Savun 2008b) or follow the traditional view, conceptualizing IOs as neutral or non-biased (e.g. Menninga 2013; Svensson 2007b). Hence, in the large-n study of conflict resolution, we know many things about conflict management by IOs and an increasing amount about mediation bias, but relatively little about the combination of these two topics.[6]

This article seeks to measure and improve our understanding of bias and leverage in mediation by international organizations. It adds to our knowledge in at least three ways. First, it makes a theoretical contribution, linking together two important literatures, the research on IOs, on the one hand, and the research on mediation processes in civil wars, on the other. Hitherto, these fields have largely been treated separately. Yet, empirically and theoretically, this study shows the benefits of cross-fertilization between these areas of research. Drawing on theories of rational bargaining, credible signaling, and IOs as collective actors, we provide a new way of conceptualizing IO bias, setting out four general types: neutral IOs, pro-government IOs, pro-rebel IOs, and balanced IOs. Drawing on negotiation theory, we devise a trade-based concept of IO mediator leverage vis-à-vis civil war governments. Second, it makes a methodological contribution (devising theoretically grounded empirical measures for IO bias and IO leverage), presents a newly combined dataset on IO civil war mediation in the 1975–2004 period, and uses control variables drawn from a newly gathered dataset on IO institutional capabilities. Third, we contribute empirical results with clear implications for existent scholarship on mediation. Our study demonstrates that, contrary to what is often assumed

5 For an account of the evolution of ideas on IO impartiality, see Weiss (1999) and Mingst and Karns (2007). For principles of current UN and regional IO mediation, see UN (2009, 2011, 2013).

6 There is a case-based literature that discusses questions of IO politics, bias, and partiality in relation to IO civil war interventions. See, inter alia, S. Autesserre, *The Trouble with the Congo* (Cambridge University Press, 2010); B. Hettne and F. Söderbaum, 'Civilian Power or Soft Imperialism? EU as a Global Actor and the Role of Interregionalism', *European Foreign Affairs Review* 10/4 (2005), 535–52.

in large-n scholarship, IOs are rarely completely neutral. More often than not, political interests are present, and these interests appear to affect mediation outcomes. Our statistical analysis shows that variation in bias and leverage helps explain variation in how often IOs bring civil war disputants to negotiated settlements. By showing that bias is associated with mediation success, we extend a correlational relationship that has been shown to exist for other mediators (such as states) in the interstate domain to mediation by IOs in intrastate armed conflict. Our finding that "balanced" IOs are the most effective suggests that IOs that contain member states that support each side in a conflict may be able to draw on those relationships to address disputants' fear of exploitation and make guarantees more credible. We also find that IOs with significant trade-based leverage over civil war governments mediate more effectively than IOs lacking such leverage, confirming the view that external incentives may play a beneficial role in conflict management.

This study is a first step into novel terrain and we recognize that several theoretical and methodological improvements are possible. Our aspiration has been to bring one of the most frequent class of mediators today, IOs, more firmly into some of the key debates in mediation studies. We also hope that this study can help pave the way for a broader discussion within mediation and negotiation theory about the relationship between bias and leverage – concepts that are closely related but analytically and empirically independent from each other – and lay the ground for further insights into how IO mediation processes works.

Given the significant interest in questions of mediator bias and leverage among policy-makers (e.g. Smith & Smock 2008), a deeper understanding of the function of these factors may serve to make mediation processes more effective. One policy implication that flows from this study is that selection of IO mediators should be undertaken with greater attention to the configuration of member state interests, so as to exploit existing sources of bias and leverage with regard to the conflict parties. Institutionalizing a framework – and adequate capacities – for IOs to function as orchestrators of "contact groups" of states, as seen in civil war mediation in Tajikistan or Mozambique, is another suggested measure.

The article is organized in the following manner. In the next section, we present an overview of existing research on mediation bias and leverage, with a focus on empirical results on mediation outcomes. We then lay out a theoretical conceptualization of mediator bias for collective actors, drawing on bargaining theory and models of IOs as collective actors. The subsequent section presents the research design, giving the rationale for our choice of data, variables, and statistical models. Next we present the results of the study, again focusing on the relationship between bias and leverage and mediation outcomes. The last section concludes and sets out some areas of future research.

Mediation Bias and Leverage

The idea of mediator neutrality is pervasive, both in scholarly debates and among practitioners. As observed by Carnevale and Arad (1996: 41), it is often presupposed that peace brokers should behave like "eunuchs from Mars . . . distant and disinterested, indifferent to the conflict and issues at hand." In the scientific study of mediation of war, much of the early literature adhered to the 'neutrality narrative,' reasoning that "a meaningful role for a third party will depend on the party's being perceived as an impartial participant" (Young 1967: 81). Only an impartial mediator, the argument went, can maintain the fairness and trust necessary for moving disputants toward a settlement. As research into mediation has progressed, some studies have reaffirmed the value of mediator impartiality (Beber 2012; Nathan 1999) but the concept has gradually been subjected to increasing scrutiny and debate. The historical record has shown that mediators, more often than not, have a stake in the conflict they are seeking to influence. A line of game-theoretic work (Kydd 2003; Morrow 1994) suggests that biased mediators are more likely to promote efficient outcomes, a proposition that has received confirmation in a growing body of empirical work on mediation of international and civil wars (Favretto 2009; Savun 2008a; Svensson 2007b, 2009). Interested parties, it appears, are better at moving armed conflicts towards resolution.[7]

Several causal mechanisms for this relationship have been suggested. One mechanism emphasizes how biased mediators may encourage concessions by the disputant with which it is aligned (Gilady and Russett 2002; Zartman 1995). Since there is preference alignment between the mediator and one of the disputants, the mediator can be trusted to protect the latter's interest, increasing its willingness to revise its bargaining position. A second mechanism centers on how bias bestows credibility on the counsel provided by a mediator. It is argued that unbiased mediators – lacking a stake in the distributional aspect of the conflict – are incentivized to provide whatever information helps increase the chances of peace, rendering them untrustworthy in the eyes of the disputants (Kydd 2003; Savun 2008a). Only if the mediator's preferences align with either of the disputants will the mediator's counsel be trusted and have an effect on the outcome. A third mechanism is built around how bias functions to increase the credibility of mediator commitment. Bias may help strengthen

7 Some scholars argue that the impact of bias is conditional on other factors. Kydd (2006) finds that unbiasedness may sometimes help build trust, but the mediator cannot be completely indifferent to the issue of dispute. An experimental study of mediator bias by Eisenkopf and Bächtiger (2012) finds that bias has no independent effect on negotiations, but concludes that "bias does no harm."

expectations that a mediator will remain engaged, extending the "shadow of the future," making it a more trustworthy intermediary as a conflict moves from active warfare to post-conflict recovery (Flores & Nooruddin 2012; Walter 1997).

If conflict parties are to come to an agreement, they both need to be protected against exploitation, and they need to trust the advice and guarantees made by the mediator. But agreements may sometimes require that the parties be leveraged towards making genuine concessions. Scholarship suggests that leverage, the exercise of positive and negative inducements, is a key explanatory factor in mediation success (Jönsson 2002; Svensson 2007a; Touval 1982, 1996; Zartman 1995). Leverage allows a mediator to increase the value of a negotiated agreement, relative to continued war, in the eyes of the disputants.[8] By increasing the opportunity costs of war, through rewards and punitive measures, the mediator can incentivize the warring parties to entertain a negotiated solution. For example, a mediator may work to halt – or, depending on the situation, protect – the flow of a resource that allows a disputant to continue military operations.

Since leverage is often dependent on relationships, it is closely related to mediator bias. A recent UN report on mediation argues that "the most effective leverage is often the mediator's relationship with the parties" (UN 2009: 10), underlining how a mediator's ties to a disputant can be utilized to influence the dynamic in conflicts (cf. UN 2011, 2013). In this way, leverage gives some mediators the ability to 'deliver their side,' that is, bringing the party over which they have influence to the negotiation table and squeezing their arm so as to promote concessions.

The literature on bias and leverage in mediation is thus extensive and has contributed much to our understanding of the conditions of effective mediation. But it has so far failed to adequately adapt these concepts to IOs. While some studies of civil wars take into account external support by IO members (e.g. Bapat 2007), pooling of resources in mediation coalitions (Böhmelt 2011;

8 This understanding of mediation leverage draws on international negotiations theory, where the bargaining power of an actor is seen as "inversely proportional to the relative value that it places on an agreement compared to the outcome of its best alternative policy" (Moravcsik 1998: 62). In the standard case (e.g. Fearon 1995), the 'best alternative policy' (or 'best alternative to a negotiated agreement') available to a civil war disputant is continued warfare. The ability to alter a disputant's calculation of the relative values of agreement and warfare is what constitutes mediator leverage. Defined this way, leverage may be seen as one aspect of 'directive' mediation strategies (Bercovitch & Wells 1993). It overlaps well with how leverage is understood in practioners' mediation manuals; e.g., Smith and Smock (2008: 47), define it as the "mediator's ability to influence the parties' costs and benefits."

Crocker et al. 1999), the interests of interveners (Balch-Lindsay & Enterline 2000), and bias in multi-party mediation by states (Menninga 2013), there is so far no comprehensive study, as far as we are aware, that examines the effects of bias and leverage on IO mediation in internal armed conflicts. Rather, previous large-n research on mediator bias is dominated by studies of mediation by states in interstate disputes, despite the fact that this is becoming an increasingly rare phenomenon in world politics, where most wars are civil wars and an increasing amount of mediation is channeled via IOs (DeRouen et al. 2011; Themnér & Wallensteen 2013). Likewise, the few large-n studies that put mediation by IOs center stage tend to neglect issues of bias (e.g. Boehmer et al. 2004; Crescenzi et al. 2011; Gartner 2011; Hansen et al. 2008). This has left scholarship on mediation bias, and hence on mediation more generally, in a position where it cannot convincingly account for the effect of some of the most frequent mediators, IOs, in the realm where contemporary mediation is most prevalent, civil wars. Against this background, a systematic study of IO civil war mediation, with a clear emphasis on the role of bias and leverage, is a clear value-added to existing scholarship.

Conceptualizing IO Bias and Leverage

It is relatively straightforward to conceptualize mediator bias for singular actors, such as states. Savun (2008a: 30), for example, argues that a "mediator is biased if its preferences are aligned with one party or the other", a definition that maps well onto the bargaining framework commonly used in the bias literature (Kydd 2003, 2006; Svensson 2007b, 2009). The location of the mediator's preferred policy outcome on the bargaining range determines its bias. But how do we understand mediator bias if we are dealing with non-singular mediators, such as international organizations with dozens of member states?

This study conceptualizes IO mediators as cooperative coalitions consisting of member states, each having a policy preference over the issue of dispute. Following standard bargaining models (Fearon 1995; Powell 2002), this may be illustrated as points on a bargaining continuum where two civil war disputants, a government and a rebel movement, have opposing ideal points (Fig. 1). The distribution of member state preferences defines the set outcomes that are politically feasible in a given mediation situation, setting the limits of an IO mediator's strategic behavior. However, the bias of an IO is not determined by a simple aggregation of the preferences of each member state, but from the way member state preferences are distributed across the bargaining issue. Put differently, it is the "shape" of the distribution of member state

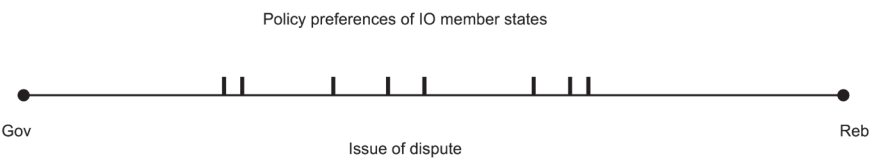

FIGURE 1 *Illustration of a simplified bargaining range with two disputants, Government and Rebels, bargaining over the distribution of a good. The conflict is mediated by an hypothetical IO with eight member states, the preferences of which are located across the bargaining continuum, marked by short vertical lines*

preference that matter. We may think of an IO as an instrument to pool individual relationships, or bias, vis-à-vis the civil war disputants in a given mediation engagement.[9]

We propose a typology with four different preference configurations, each translating into one type of IO biasedness. An IO is *neutral* if its member states have moderate and centered preferences over the issue of dispute. That is, the member states of a neutral IO have no clear stake in the outcome. An IO is *biased in favor of the government* if its member states have a stake in the outcome and there exist member state preferences closer to the ideal point of the government. An IO is *biased in favor of the rebels* if its member states have a stake in the outcome and there exist member states with preferences closer to the ideal point of the rebels. An IO is *balanced* if its member states have a stake in the outcome and their preferences are distributed in a way so there exist member states that align with either side in the dispute, "balancing" each other out.[10] Fig. 2 provides a stylized illustration of these four cases. Empirical examples of each type are mentioned in the "Data and Variables" section below.

How do we identify the preferences of IO mediators? We draw on two theoretical logics. First, following revealed preference theory (Samuelson 1948), we deduce IO member state preferences from their actual behavior. That is, IO member states are considered neutral unless "revealed" by actual behavior to

9 This is a parsimonious model of the IO biasedness, assuming that agency slippage – independent deviations by IO bureaucrats from the preferences of member states – is limited in civil war mediation. This is a reasonable assumption, since measures to mitigate agency slippage, such as staff screening, oversight mechanisms, and routinized reporting (Nielson & Tierney 2003; Hawkins et al. 2006) are often employed by IOs engaged in security issues (cf. UN 2009, 2011, 2013).

10 The term "balanced" mediation bias has been borrowed from Menninga (2013). Here, it does not imply that the bias has to be perfectly balanced, only that there exist member state actors that are aligned with either side in the conflict. It may also be thought of as "dual bias" or "opposing bias."

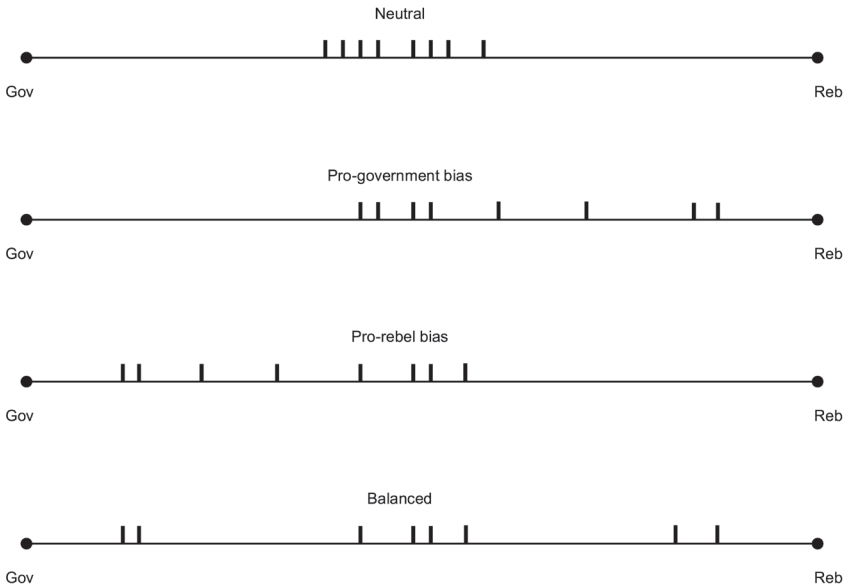

FIGURE 2 *Schematic illustrations of four types of IO bias based on the configuration of member state preferences over the issue of dispute*

be different. Second, the literature on signaling (e.g. Fearon 1997; Morrow 1994) suggest that only "costly" actions can credibly resolve uncertainties over an actor's preferences. Combining the two theoretical components suggests that, for an IO member state to credibly communicate its preference alignment with either of the parties, it needs to engage in some costly action that reveals a preference for the agenda of one disputant over that of the other. The direct provision of military or financial resources to one of the disputants is a good example of such an action.

Drawing on the existing literature on bias in conflict mediation (Kydd 2003; Savun 2008a; Svensson 2007b), we expect that the distribution of member state preferences will have implications for the comparative ability of IO mediators to facilitate negotiated agreement between disputants. While neutral IO mediators may benefit from some of the normative benefits associated with a non-interested position, the theoretical expectation is that this type of mediator will have a lower ability to communicate information credibly and greater difficulties in signaling that it will assist with long-term agreement implementation. This decreases the expected effectiveness of neutral IO mediators, compared with other types. Similarly, a biased IO mediator may suffer from some of the disadvantages associated with partiality, but the theoretical expectation is that it will have a greater ability to establish trust with "its" side than

non-biased mediators, yielding a mediation advantage over neutral IOs. As for balanced IOs, they may be able to draw on the advantages of both neutral and biased mediators (cf. Menninga 2013). The existence of a dual bias provides a source of credibility with disputants on both sides, increasing the mediator's ability to build trust and alleviate concerns about agreement implementation.[11] At the same time, a balanced IO mediator may present its ties to both parties as a form of even-handedness, potentially giving it an added normative benefit and "fairness from balance." Based on this reasoning, the theoretical expectation is that balanced IO mediators will outperform biased IO mediators and that both types will outperform neutral IO mediators.

> *Hypothesis 1: IOs containing member states aligned with both sides in a civil war are more likely to mediate effectively than IOs without such alignments.*

> *Hypothesis 2: IOs containing member states aligned with one side in a civil war are more likely to mediate effectively than IOs without any such alignments.*

When mediating civil wars, external intermediaries can rely on several sources of leverage, but for IOs, a central instrument of leverage is economic trade. Since civil war nearly always pushes a country closer to autarky, reducing gains from international trade and resulting in an overall welfare loss (Bayer & Rupert 2004; Collier 1999), the promise of re-instatement of peacetime trade levels – and its higher gains – can be used as an inducement by an IO to move parties toward agreement. Alternatively, an IO may threaten to impose economic sanctions on one or both disputants, so as to further increase the opportunity costs of war, leveraging them towards concessions. For both positive and negative uses of trade leverage, the expectation is that the greater the share of the disputants' trade with the IO member state, and the greater the weight of trade in the disputant's economy, the more leverage the IO will have. An example of IO mediation where leverage played a central role can be found in the peace process in Mozambique in the early 1990s. Smith and Smock (2008: 47) report that the UN-brokered General Peace Agreement of 1992 was made possible by the "exercise of significant leverage," stemming from trade rela-

11 This in many ways is analogous to a situation where an information-starved decision-maker solicits advice from multiple experts. In a formal model presented by Krishna and Morgan (2001), the existence of "opposing bias," similar to the "dual" or "balanced" bias discussed here, results in an information gain for the decision-maker (analogous to the disputant in a mediated civil war).

tions and development aid made available by "key embassies in Mozambique," including France, Portugal, and the United Kingdom.

Trade-based leverage likely has an asymmetric effect on the calculus of governments and rebels. First, since rebels typically finance their operations through the informal economy (Doyle & Sambanis 2000; Fearon & Laitin 2003), their opportunity costs of war are less amenable to outside manipulation. Second, in the typical intrastate negotiation process, governments need to make the largest concessions (Svensson 2007b), implying that leverage over the government may be particularly important for mediation effectiveness. Third, as shown by Elbadawi and Sambanis (2002), pro-rebel interventions tend to prolong civil wars. Based on the above, we hypothesize:

> *Hypothesis 3: IOs with high amounts of leverage over the government side are more likely to mediate effectively than IOs with no or low amounts of leverage.*

Data and Variables

In order to test the theoretical expectations empirically, we utilized a newly constructed and coded dataset on mediation by international organizations. The unit of analysis for this dataset is mediation episodes. Observations were sourced from two datasets: (1) Diplomatic Interventions and Civil War dataset (Regan et al. 2009); and (2) Civil War Mediation Dataset (DeRouen et al. 2011). Since the two datasets contain data on the same empirical phenomena but are not completely overlapping, a merger yielded a higher number of observations, with the added benefit of diminished coding bias. Merging works well since both datasets rely on an identical definition of mediation (based on Bercovitch et al. 1991; Bercovitch 1997) and are both compatible with UCDP data on civil wars. The merged data was restricted to observations for mediation by international organizations and matched to yearly dyadic data (government versus rebel group) on intrastate armed conflicts, drawn from the UCDP Armed Conflict dataset (Themnér & Wallensteen 2013), according to procedures described elsewhere (Lundgren 2012).[12] Defined in this way, the data contains 116 mediation episodes by 12 IOs in 41 civil wars between 1975 and 2004. The most frequent mediators are the United Nations (54 episodes),

12 Some cases received simultaneous mediation by several mediators. Of these, we have included only those where IOs functioned as lead mediators.

African Union (16 episodes), and Organization of the Islamic Conference (9 episodes).[13]

A mediation episode was coded as resulting in a *negotiated settlement* if the outcome was either a full or partial settlement, which is a common measure of mediation effectiveness (e.g. Bercovitch 1991; Rauchhaus 2006; Savun 2008a). While we recognize that mediated settlements may not always translate into durable peace – indeed, some scholars argue that they are particularly fragile (Beardsley 2011) – historical evidence indicates that settlements not only allow for short-term benefits, such as increased humanitarian access to conflict areas, but often provides a precursor to more comprehensive forms of conflict resolution. Therefore, negotiated settlements represent a valid and much-used measurement of success in mediation (Greig & Diehl 2012; Wallensteen & Svensson 2014).

Our main independent variables are whether an international organization is biased (*IO Bias*) and the degree to which it has leverage over the government side (*IO Leverage*). *IO Bias* is operationalized based on the incidence of external support by IO members to any of the disputants, as determined by data from the UCDP dataset "External Support in Armed Conflict 1975–2009" (Högblad et al. 2011). Forms of support include supply of troops and weaponry and access to territory, intelligence, training, and funding. An IO was coded as *neutral* if no IO member contributed support to the warring parties in the year of mediation or in the preceding year. IOs were defined as biased if at least one IO member provided support to either of the sides, resulting in either pro-government (*biasgov*) or pro-rebel (*biasreb*) bias. IOs were coded as *balanced* if members of the mediating IO provided support to both sides of the conflict. External support by non-IO members does not influence IO bias in this coding.

To illustrate these four coding rules, consider first an example of a *neutral* IO mediator, such as that of ECOWAS mediation in Liberia in 1995. Since no ECOWAS member state had provided direct support to either the Liberian government or the NPFL forces opposing it, neither in 1995 or the preceding year, ECOWAS is coded as neutral in this case. Mediation by the UN in East Timor in 1976 provides a case of a pro-government (*biasgov*) IO mediator. No UN member state provided support for the rebel side, the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor (Freitlin), but there was consistent and prolonged military support to the Indonesian government by the United States,

13 The other included IOs are Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), League of Arab States (LAS), Commonwealth of Nations (CON), European Union (EU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

a UN member. An example of a pro-rebel (*biasgov*) IO mediator is OIC, which in 1975 intervened as a third party in the civil war in the Philippines. Since one OIC member state, Libya, had provided direct support to the MNLF independence movement, but no other OIC states were involved on the other side, this IO mediator is coded as pro-rebel in this case.[14] For the *balanced* category, consider the case of UN mediation in Afghanistan in the late 1990s and early 2000s, where the dual support (and derived influence) of Iran and Pakistan – both UN member states – to competing factions on the Afghan battlefield played an important role in sustaining UN efforts in the lead-up to the 2001 Bonn Agreement. The utility of this dual support is underlined in the memoirs of former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan: "The role of Tehran and Islamabad as the hitherto main backers of the Northern Alliance and the Taliban respectively, would be essential for the outcome of the inter-Afghan negotiations" (Annan 2012: 339). Other examples of IO meditators coded as balanced include the UN in Nicaragua (several), OSCE in Azerbaijan in 1992, and UN in Tajikistan in 1992, where dual support by two external patrons, Iran and Russia, was exploited to the mediator's great advantage.

The second independent variable, *IO Leverage*, is a continuous variable, measured as a function of two components: (1) the influence of an "influential state" (the most powerful member) over a given IO and (2) the trade relationship between the influential state and the state in which the conflict is taking place. For each mediation episode, a leverage score was calculated for the mediating IO using $Leverage = \frac{S_{it}}{\Sigma_{i=1}^{N^t} S_{it}} \times \frac{T_{it}}{\Sigma_{i=1}^{N^t} T_{it}}$ where at the year of mediation (t), S_{it} is the proportion of global material capabilities possessed by the influential state; $\Sigma_{i=1}^{N^t} S_{it}$ is the total proportion of global material capabilities possessed by the IO's member states; T_{it} is the trade between the influential state and the conflict state; and $\Sigma_{i=1}^{N^t} T_{it}$ is the total trade for the conflict state. Data on material capabilities is drawn from the Correlates of War (COW) dataset National Material Capabilities (v. 4.0) (Singer et al. 1972; data expanded through 2007). Trade data was gathered from COW's dataset on bilateral trade (Barbieri & Keshk 2012). The calculations yielded leverage scores ranging from 0 to 0.19, with a mean of 0.018. A higher score can be interpreted as signifying a mediator leverage over the conflict state's dominant economic interests, which tend to be ensconced on the side of the government (Bates 2008). An example of a high-leverage IO mediator is found

14 This coding is further supported by the fact that OIC subsequently recognized the sovereignty of MNLF, giving it an observer seat at its organizational headquarter and conferences.

in mediation by the Organzation of American States (OAS) in the civil war in El Salvador in 1981. This observation receives the highest score in the sample (0.19), due to the effect that OAS is an organization highly dominated by one member state, the United States, which is also highly dominant in the foreign trade of the conflict country (trade with the US represented some 35 percent of El Salvador's trade in 1981). A high, but less extreme, leverage score (0.04) is yielded for the 2001 mediation by the EU in the Macedonian civil war that led to the Ohrid Agreement, where Macedonia's trade with EU's leading economy gave the latter a significant source of leverage. The validity of this coding is confirmed by case evidence, which suggests that the EU used both trade relationships and the promise of EU membership as "carrots" in pushing the Macedonian Government to agree to the terms (Ilievski & Taleski 2009). At the opposite end of the leverage continuum, there are a few cases of zero leverage scores, including the episode of African Union mediation in Chad in 1982 or ECOWAS mediation in Guinea-Bissau in 1998. In neither of these cases did the conflict country have meaningful trade relationships to the other member state of the mediating IO.

A set of control variables has been included in the empirical analysis. *Conflict intensity* is a variable coded using UCDP data (Themnér & Wallensteen 2013), and we follow the UCDP protocol of giving a score of 0 to conflicts that do not reach the UCDP threshold of 25 battle deaths per calendar year, a score of 1 for those that fall between 25 and 1,000 battle deaths, and a score of 2 for those with more than 1,000 battle deaths. *Conflict duration* measures the number of years since the civil war was initiated. To control for temporal effects, such as geopolitical shifts and institutional growth, we also include a categorical variable, *decade*, taking the value of 1 for mediation episodes in the 1970s and increasing by 1 for each decade thereafter.

Other control variables are utilized in robustness checks. *Previous mediation* is a dummy variable that indicates whether an IO is mediating in a conflict where it made prior attempts, controlling for dependencies over time as well as for conflict-specific learning effects. *Institutional fixed effects* are IO-specific dummy variables that capture institution-specific effects, such as reputation effects (Kydd 2006), institutional capabilities (Lundgren 2012), and other IO-specific correlates. *IO capacity* is a measure of the total power of an IO's member states, measured as the combined Composite Index of National Capability (CINC) score of its members in the year of mediation, taken from the COW dataset on National Material Capabilities. *Great power involvement* is a dummy variable that indicates whether any or both of the conflict parties received support from a great power, defined as the five members of the UN Security Council.

Results

We start this section by mapping the empirical pattern of IO bias and leverage in mediation of internal armed conflicts. Fig. 3 shows the number of mediation episodes attempted by different types of IOs. About one in four mediation episodes is carried out by neutral IOs, implying that IO member states have provided support for either or both combatants in three out of four mediation cases. Hence, it is more common that mediating IOs contain biased member states, but the even distribution across types indicates that no particular type of IO predicts the incidence of IO mediation.

Tables 1 and 2 present weighted statistics on mediation outcomes across IO types, along with the unweighted number of cases in each group. A tabular examination yields some important empirical observations. First, while mediation is sometimes successful, this is the exception rather than the rule: only one third of IO mediation attempts results in a negotiated settlement. However, there appears to exist variation in effectiveness across different kinds of IOs. Examining the relationship between IO bias and negotiated settlement in Table 1, we can see that, on average, balanced IOs are more likely to achieve negotiated settlements (45 percent of cases) compared with other IOs. Neutral IOs perform relatively poorly, reaching negotiated settlements in only 21 percent of cases. Further, as illustrated in Table 2, our data suggests that there is variation in outcomes depending on which degree of leverage available to the mediating IO. IOs with high leverage scores (above 0.05) are more likely to broker a settlement between disputants (39%) than IOs with lower leverage scores.

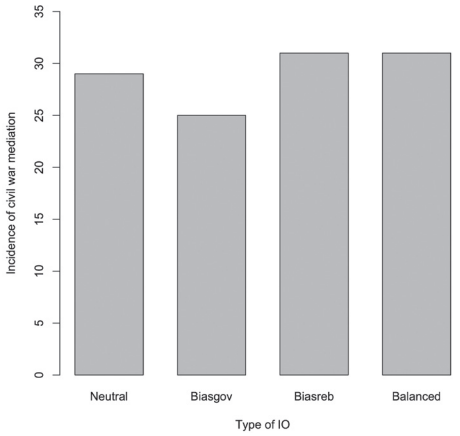

FIGURE 3 *Distribution of IOs by type of bias, mediation episodes 1975–2004*

TABLE 1 *Mediation outcomes by type of IO (bias)*

	Type of IO				
	Neutral	**Biasgov**	**Biasreb**	**Balanced**	***Total***
Negotiated settlement	6	8	11	14	*39*
	(21%)	(32%)	(35%)	(45%)	(*34%*)
No negotiated settlement	23	17	20	17	*77*
	(79%)	(68%)	(65%)	(55%)	(*66%*)
Total	*29*	*25*	*31*	*31*	*166*
	(*100%*)	(*100%*)	(*100%*)	(*100%*)	(*100%*)
Average conflict intensity (0–2)	1.14	0.92	1.32	1.42	*1.22*
Average conflict duration (years)	9.12	10.50	11.23	7.09	*9.44*

TABLE 2 *Mediation outcomes by type of IO (leverage)*

	Type of IO			
	No leverage (0)	**Low leverage (0–0.05)**	**High leverage (0.05–)**	***Total***
Negotiated settlement	4	13	22	*39*
	(21%)	(28%)	(39%)	(*34%*)
No negotiated settlement	23	17	20	*77*
	(79%)	(68%)	(65%)	(*66%*)
Total	*29*	*25*	*31*	*166*
	(*100%*)	(*100%*)	(*100%*)	(*100%*)
Average conflict intensity (0–2)	1.14	0.92	1.32	*1.22*
Average conflict duration (years)	9.12	10.50	11.23	*9.44*

Hence, our data reveal trends and relationships that correspond to theoretical expectations. But they also indicate variation in conflict characteristics across IO types. For example, Table 1 tells us that IOs biased in favor of a government intervene in relatively low-intensity conflicts, whereas balanced IOs mediate relatively high-intensity cases. Similarly, as can be seen in Table 2, depending on leverage, IOs tend to intervene in conflicts of varying intensity. Further, in both tables, we note that there is variation in the timing of intervention, measured in the number of years from conflict onset (*duration*). For example, IOs biased in favor of rebels intervene later than neutral or balanced IOs. Since both intensity and duration may be confounders (Fearon 2004; Regan & Stam 2000; Zartman 2000), we need to turn to multivariate models to control for them – and other possible confounders – before we can draw any conclusions about the correlations between mediator-type and mediation outcome.

In Table 3, we present three logistic regression models of negotiated settlement following mediation by IOs.[15] In Model 1, we model the effect of *IO bias* on the probability of negotiated agreement, with neutral IO mediators functioning as the reference category. As we can see, there is a strong and positive association between balanced IOs and negotiated settlement, when compared against neutral IOs. That is, if a mediating IO contains member states that support both sides in the conflict, it is more likely that the mediation efforts will be successful than if the mediation is carried out by IOs where member states have no revealed policy preference. Yet, IO mediation interventions carried out by mediators neither biased for the government side nor biased for the rebel side are more likely get the parties to a settlement. This holds after controlling for the influence of structural (duration and intensity of the conflict) and temporal effects.

In Model 2, we use *IO leverage* as the main explanatory variable. We can see that the greater sources of influence that IOs have over a government involved in intrastate conflict, the more likely that a mediation effort will result in a negotiated settlement. The combination of a positive and negative coefficient for the two leverage variables indicates that the relationship is curved downwards, with a decreasing marginal effect of leverage.

In Model 3, we model the probability of attaining a negotiated outcome utilizing both *IO Bias* and *IO Leverage*, to check if there are co-dependencies that may affect the robustness of the results of Models 1 and 2. As is evident,

15 Logistic regression assumes the independence of errors. We hold this assumption to be unlikely in this study and address it by clustering the standard error on conflict identity.

TABLE 3 *Logistic regression models of negotiated settlement*

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
IO bias			
Biasgov	0.61		0.57
	(0.68)		(0.75)
Biasreb	1.12		1.50*
	(0.80)		(0.84)
Balanced	1.46**		1.47**
	(0.65)		(0.84)
IO leverage			
Leverage		38.7**	46.6***
		(17.3)	(14.6)
Leverage^2		−217.1**	−265.7
		(100.9)	(82.7)
Controls			
Conflict intensity	−0.64**	−0.56**	−0.81***
	(0.26)	(0.29)	(0.30)
Conflict duration	−0.037	−0.045**	−0.054**
	(0.024)	(0.022)	0.022
Decade	0.22	0.0056	0.19
	(0.31)	(0.29)	(0.33)
Constant	−1.55	−0.11	−1.64
N	116	116	116
Pseudo-R^2	0.119	0.128	0.206
AIC	141.7	140.9	133.4

Clustered standard errors in parenthesis. * significant at p < .10; ** p < .05; *** p < .01. Two-tailed tests.

the effect of either cluster of variables is largely independent from the other. The results for balanced IOs and leverage remain positive and highly significant.

The results in Models 1 through 3 are robust to a range of different model specifications, including the addition the additional regressors mentioned above; changing the regression models from logit to ordinary least squares (OLS); splitting the data into UN and regional organizations; and modeling

inter-observation dependencies differently, by clustering standard errors on the identity of IOs. Tests for multicollinearity proved negative.[16]

Since it might be the case that biased mediators have an effect, on an aggregated level, regardless of the side to which the bias is directed, we created a dummy variable that took on the value of one if either of *biasgov, biasreb*, or *balanced* was one. The result confirmed our expectation: biased IO mediators are more likely to be associated with negotiated settlements than neutral IO mediation interventions (statistically significant on the .90 level), regardless if mediator IO leverage is controlled for or not.

We also considered the possibility that our results were influenced by selection bias. There is a risk that the decision to mediate is correlated with factors determining its outcome (*negotiated settlement*), causing skewed estimates. Existing studies of the issue suggest that selection bias in mediation by IOs is likely to be negative; i.e., regression coefficients would underestimate the effect of IO mediation. As has been shown by (Gartner 2011: 332), the involvement of IOs tend to "take place in tough, high intensity and complex conflicts," with negative implications for the expected rate of mediation success.[17] A similar pattern was found in our data, indicating that the above results may underestimate the effectiveness of IO mediation, across the entire population of post-1975 civil war cases.[18] Further, since our statistical models correct for imbalances on the most important covariates linked to selection bias, namely conflict intensity and duration (Gartner 2011), it seems unlikely that selection effects provide a credible explanation for the key result found here, that there is variation between different types of IOs. Since our primary ambition is inference regarding the effect of bias on IO mediation outcomes, rather than the general effect of IO mediation, the above controls are arguably sufficient, as long as conclusions generalize only to the type of civil wars that typically receive mediation by IOs.

16 For the main models, the highest correlation was between *biasgov* and *conflict intensity* (−0.22), and in the robustness models, between *neutral* and *great power* (0.50). Variance inflation factors (VIFs) are all well within conservative limits (smaller than 5) (cf. O'Brien 2007).

17 For similar arguments about IO involvement in "hard" cases, see Beardsley et al. (2006) and Fortna and Howard (2008).

18 Using data from the UCDP Armed Conflict dataset, we assigned a status as "IO mediated" and "not IO mediated" for each civil-war-year since 1975 and calculated the average conflict intensity of each group. We found that the average intensity of civil wars that receive IO mediation was 1.42, versus 1.26 for non-mediated, a difference that is statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level.

In order to make the logit results more tangible, we ran a series of stochastic simulations using R.[19] Simulation allows us to calculate predicted probabilities for different values of IO bias and IO leverage, taking into account several dimensions of uncertainty.[20] Fig. 4 illustrates how the predicted probability of reaching a negotiated settlement varies over different categories of IO bias, holding all other variables constant at their mean. For example, whereas mediation by a neutral IO will produce a negotiated settlement 21 percent of the time, in expectation, a balanced IO reaches the same outcome 42 percent of the time. This difference is statistically significant at the 95 percent level.

Thus, all forms of IO bias contribute to mediation effectiveness. IOs with a balanced bias outperform IOs with "single" bias, which in turn outperform neutral IOs. These results suggest general support for hypotheses 1 and 2. However, the results indicate differentiation in effects across the two types of single bias, with pro-rebel bias associated with a somewhat higher likelihood of mediation success. This is a counter-indication, albeit weak, to the general expectation that relationships with the government side give particular benefits.

Based on simulations of *IO leverage*, Fig. 5 displays the predicted probability of negotiated settlement as a function of leverage. Consistent with the expectation in hypothesis 3, higher IO leverage is associated with a higher probability

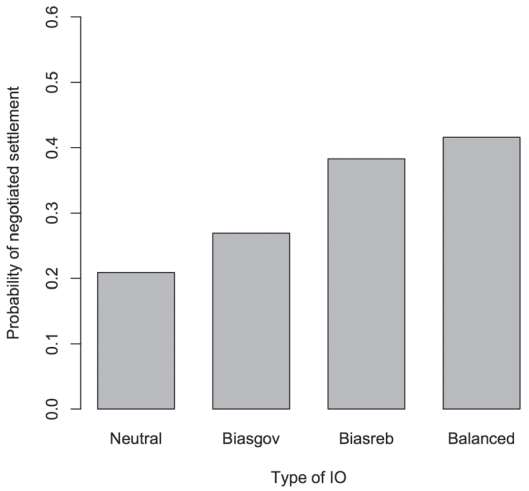

FIGURE 4 *Predicted probabilities of reaching negotiated settlement, IO mediation episodes 1975–2004*

19 All simulations are based on 10,000 iterations; model specification as in Table 3.

20 For a discussion of the benefits of simulation of substantive quantities of interest, see King, Tomz, and Wittenberg (2000).

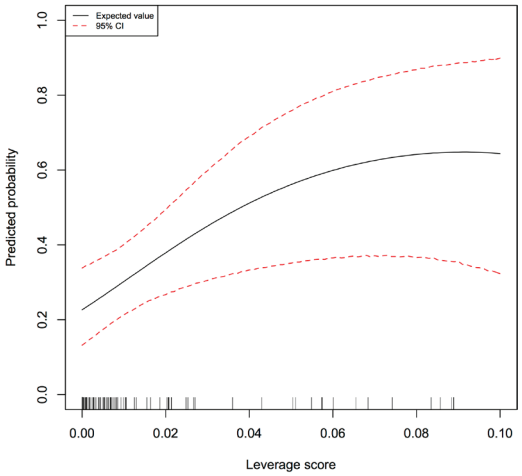

FIGURE 5 *Impact of IO leverage on predicted probability of negotiated settlement, IO mediation episodes 1975–2004. The "rug" indicates individual observations*

of getting the disputants to a negotiated settlement. Moving from a leverage score of zero to the average leverage score in the data (0.038) represents an increase by some 35 percent points. The graph also illustrates how the impact of added leverage matters less – and may even be counterproductive – beyond a certain level, as seen in the leveling off of the curve representing predicted probabilities. Simultaneously, on account of the fewer observations with high leverage scores, predictive uncertainty is increasing, as is made evident by the broadening of the higher range confidence intervals.

Conclusion

The purpose of this article has been to study the effect of IO member state bias and leverage on mediation outcomes. The question of bias is at the center of several debates in contemporary mediation research. However, whereas the role of mediation bias has been discussed extensively in relation to mediation performed by countries or individuals, relatively little is known about the role of bias in mediation by international organizations. Large-n studies of civil war mediation have excluded IOs completely or simply assumed their neutrality, despite the fact that IOs represent a major actor in contemporary mediation and frequently have member states with clear stakes in mediated disputes. Based on a novel conceptualization of IO leverage and bias, and drawing on a combination of existing and new data sources, we examined 116 cases of IO

mediation interventions in the period from 1975 through 2004, evaluating the ability of IOs to facilitate negotiated settlement between civil war disputants.

We made two main discoveries. First, we found that member state bias is associated with a higher probability of IO mediation success. The most striking finding is that "balanced" IOs, incorporating member states biased in favor of both governments and rebels, outperform IOs lacking such member states, in terms of bringing civil war disputants to negotiated settlements. In expectation, mediation by balanced IOs delivers a negotiated outcome twice as often as neutral IOs, all other things equal. This suggests that the negative aspects of bias, such as difficulties in building trust with both sides, may be ameliorated if the mediator's bias in favor of one side is balanced out by bias in favor of the other. At the same time, a balanced mediator may still enjoy the benefits of bias, which has been demonstrated to enhance the ability of third parties to address problems of information and credible commitment. An IO that contains member states that support each side in a conflict may be able to draw on those relationships to address disputants' fear of exploitation and make guarantees more credible. This result is consistent with some prior empirical findings on the role of bias in mediation, indicating that non-neutral mediators may, on average, have certain advantages (Savun 2008a; Svensson 2007b). We extend these results to IOs. In particular, our results overlap with the only existing study of bias of non-singular mediators (Menninga 2013), which finds that "balanced mediation teams have unique advantages" and are more likely to result in a negotiated agreement. While there are differences between the multinational "mediation teams" studied by Menninga and the IOs examined here, they both consist of groups of states and have other comparable traits. Hence, the results of our study and Menninga's may link up, giving further weight to the theoretical logic of how balanced mediators may retain the benefits of bias while reducing its disadvantages.

Second, we found that IOs with significant leverage over the government side raises the probability of successful mediation. In substantive terms, moving from no leverage to the median level of leverage for the IOs in our data increased the predicted probability of success from around 20 to 45 percent. This is further testament to the values of a mediator's ability to push one of the disputants towards making concessions through the exploitation of dependencies existing between them (Jönsson 2002; Touval 1996), and, as has been suggested in the literature (Svensson 2007b), that leverage over the government side is particularly valuable. Our evidence also confirms prior findings that IOs intervene in more intractable conflicts (Beardsley et al. 2006; Fortna & Howard 2008; Gartner 2011). Consequently, models of overall mediator effectiveness need to take conflict characteristics into account, to avoid the risk that the true causal effect is obscured by selection bias. Here, such controls were used

to control for imbalances among different types of IOs, rather than between mediated and non-mediated conflicts, with the consequence that the results generalize only to conflicts that typically receive mediation by IOs.

Beyond the empirical results, the most central contribution of this article is to bring IOs into the research on mediation bias. This article is the first to conceptualize bias for IOs, suggest appropriate empirical measures, and report an advantage for balanced IOs in mediation of civil wars. Since IOs represent one of the most important mediator actors in the contemporary world – and becoming ever more important, by most accounts – we hope that our study helps open theoretical and empirical terrain that can be further explored by other scholars.

Further research should be undertaken to investigate more exactly how bias affects IO mediation. This study has suggested that the preference heterogeneity of collective actors can be a benefit and that IOs can function as orchestrating agents, pooling resources and relationships of their members in ways advantageous for mediation effectiveness. However, one would imagine that there exists something like a "pooling-coordination dilemma," in which the benefits of preference heterogeneity and bigger numbers are weighed against the coordination costs of collective action. Similar ideas have been discussed in the literature on multiparty mediation – for example, Crocker et al. (1999) characterize it as "herding cats" – and they may find fruitful application on the topic of IO mediation. An illustration of this dilemma is provided by the Syrian civil war, where two external patrons, United States and Russia, with clear bias in either direction, have had a conflicting impact on the UN's mediation process. While American and Russian support have sometimes made each respective disputant more stubborn, it has on several occasions provided the impetus and leverage necessary to move UN-led negotiations forward (Lundgren 2013). This "dilemma" calls out for more concerted attention to the causal mechanisms of IO-led mediation. Since large-n data may obscure underlying causal processes – in particular if they are of different signs – it would be beneficial to explore the above dynamics in case studies. For example one could imagine a study comparing a set of cases where IO-coordinated mediation efforts have functioned relatively well, such as in Guinea and Mauritania, with cases where this approach has had more ambivalent results, such as in Syria. What explains the difference?

A theoretical contribution of this article was to suggest a way of conceptualizing IO bias and leverage, based on a merging of bargaining frameworks with the notion of IOs as collective actors and components from theories of revealed preference and credible signaling. We believe that this preliminary model of IO bias could benefit from deeper integration of principal-agent theory, which has been fruitfully employed in

other policy domains (cf. Hawkins et al. 2006) or at other levels of aggregation (Thompson 2006). Such research would benefit from more specific data on the preferences of IO principals (member states) across conflicts, so as to cross-validate the robustness of our results, which relied on data concerning external support to disputants. A related question is to what extent IO bureaucrats/agents express independent preferences in mediation situations and, if so, how disputants weigh their preferences against those of IO principals. Further, in terms of theory, one may conceive of several extensions of principal-agent models, for example by taking into consideration the impact of IO decision-making mechanisms. It is reasonable to assume, given variation in the institutional design and authorization mechanisms of IOs, that there may be variation in how member state biases affect the strategic calculations of civil war disputants.

Since a growing share of such conflict management is channeled via IOs, we want to end this article by sketching out a few policy implications that flows from this study. First, we know that international conflict management is a collective effort, in which many types of actors are coordinating to promote security, the most central global public good. One aspect of such burden sharing is the selection of mediators for a given conflict. The results of this study suggests that the selection of IO mediators, to the extent it is practically possible, be carried out with more attention to the configuration of member state relationships, so as to exploit existing sources of bias and leverage with regard to the conflict parties. It is unlikely that such processes can be engineered with any accuracy; but, at the least, the results suggest that the international community should seek to avoid channeling mediation tasks to IOs where member states do not have an explicit stake or policy preference in the conflict at hand. Second, the results indicate that IO officials should institutionalize methods for exploiting the relationships and leverage of member states. These may include "contact groups" consisting of interested state parties to coordinate the exercise of bias and leverage for maximum effect on the conflict parties. There are some examples from recent history where such cooperative efforts have proven very valuable, such as the International Contact Group that was instrumental in the Mindanao peace process in the Philippines or the role played by similar groupings in the mediation in Mozambique. The ability of IO secretariats to identify and coordinate such constellations should be enhanced through institutionalization of capacities for political analysis and mediation coordination. The aspiration would be that through such arrangements, IO-led mediations deliver on Kofi Annan's insight that interested countries, when confronted with a civil war, can be orchestrated to "exert the necessary joint pressure for diplomacy to succeed" (Annan 2012: 369).

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