

Abstract

A specific set of factors, which are related to the belligerents, any third parties that (anticipate to) intervene or both of them, determine among other influences whether a conflict is likely to see mediation efforts in the first place and ultimately the prospects for successful mediation outcomes. However, although there is an extensive body of literature, qualitatively and quantitatively, on all these issues, the previous research rarely addressed the interaction between these actors in conflict and mediation attempts, i.e. how both belligerents and/or mediating parties are tied to each other and how they coordinate an intervention. Hence, *inter alia*, questions like “which kinds of relationships and ties between antagonists determine the likelihood of mediation onset” or “how does the interaction between multiple mediators affect successful conflict resolution” have not yet been entirely clarified – despite the fact that answering these questions not only helps to have a more precise understanding of mediation from an academic point of view, but is also likely to produce significant policy implications. In order to address these shortcomings, this book presents substantial chapters on four interrelated, albeit different issues of actors’ interactions in international mediation as a tool for settling conflicts peacefully.

Relying on a rationalist framework of conflict and actors as well as employing quantitative methods, the book demonstrates several important findings. First, mediation occurs according to the complex patterns of direct and indirect relationships between the disputants. While direct links, i.e. bilateral ties between the warring parties, are unlikely to facilitate mediation onset, indirect links that involve various intermediaries in a conflict seem to increase the chances that a dispute finally sees third-party mediation. However, depending on the type of these ties, the predicted effect of those interactions may not be that straightforward. More precisely, the book theoretically argues and empirically demonstrates that bilateral trade flows between antagonists significantly increase the chances of mediation occurrence, while trade links to parties outside this dyad actually decrease them. Second, most mediation attempts do not see one intervener, but a coalition of mediators instead. The following manuscript shows that this “multi-track diplomacy” or “multi-party mediation” and the interaction between those mediating parties is generally able to positively influence mediation outcomes, but as soon as a coalition of mediators is disaggregated into its

distinctive micro foundations, it may well be that “too many cooks spoil the soup,” making mediation eventually less effective.

Accounting for these links and interactions between the conflicting and/or mediating parties, the findings demonstrate that – depending on the circumstances – the chances of mediation onset may be higher than originally anticipated and also that mediation can be an effective instrument towards the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Also, while taking steps to mitigate selection problems and omitted variable bias, the results emphasize that traditional predictors of both mediation onset and effectiveness, such as dispute intensity or belligerents’ incentives, may play a far minor role than the previous literature may have suggested.