Social and Political Cultural Effects on the Outcomes of Mediation in Militarized Interstate Disputes

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Abstract

The article investigates the relationship between cultural similarities and differences on the part of the representatives of contending states and mediators, and outcomes of mediation efforts in militarized disputes. A distinction is made between social culture, defined primarily in terms of religious identity, and political culture, defined according to the state’s political system. Analysis of 752 mediation attempts in militarized disputes occurring between 1945 and 1995 yields support for the hypothesis that mediation is more likely to succeed when the parties are from similar social cultures. The results, however, suggest that the relationship is more complex than that suggested by a simple categorization of states based on Huntington’s “clash of civilizations” thesis. We also find that mediation is more likely to succeed when the parties share democratic political cultures, a finding that is consistent with the cultural/normative explanation for the democratic peace.
Introduction

Despite an extensive body of recent research on international mediation, little empirical attention has been devoted to the cultural attributes of the disputants or mediating third parties, and their effects on mediation. It is a significant gap in light of the current interest in the influence of social (Huntington, 1993, 1996) or political (Doyle, 1986; Russett, 1993) cultural affinities or differences on the prospects for international peace, as well as impressionistic accounts of the effects of cultural misunderstandings on negotiation and mediation. This article narrows that gap by focusing on the association between social and political cultural similarities or differences and the outcomes of mediation in militarized disputes.

Mediation is a form of outside intervention in which a third party attempts to assist the parties to a dispute in settling the dispute by mutual agreement (Rubin, Pruitt, and Kim, 1994: 256). Because mediation often is chosen after a dispute has escalated to the point where bilateral negotiations have become stalemated, the same conditions that encourage parties to seek mediation make the likelihood of its success problematic. In disputes where coercive tactics exacerbate mutual distrust and insecurity, the noise to signal ratio is likely to be particularly high. Thus it is not surprising that international mediation is less likely to succeed in more intense disputes (see Bercovitch and Langley, 1993). This article investigates the extent to which certain cultural similarities and differences between participants, and between the participants and mediators, exacerbate or ameliorate the prospects for successful mediation in these circumstances.

We begin with a discussion of the role of political and social culture in shaping the outcome of mediation efforts, from which we derive five hypotheses. Following a
description of the research design and the operationalization of variables, we present the results from our analysis. In brief, the analyses indicate that, in general, mediation is more likely to succeed in militarized disputes when the participants have similar social cultures and when they share democratic political cultures; however, the social cultural attributes affecting the success of mediation appear to vary across cultural groupings. We also find that the social culture of the mediator is unrelated to the outcome of the mediation effort.

Culture and Mediation

Culture remains one of social science’s most elusive concepts, so much so that it would be fool-hardy to attempt a simple definition (see Avruch, 1998). The traditional view, broadly understood, is that culture refers to a quality associated with a society, and that individuals acquire their cultural attributes from society. Cultural attributes are expressed in a society’s rituals and symbols, its material creations, its organizations, and, most important for our purposes, the values, norms, and ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving that it transmits to its members (Kluckhohn, 1951:86). The societal culture encourages common patterns of interacting and reacting to the actions of others, by creating a set of imperfectly shared values and beliefs to guide individual behavior (Hofstede, 1984). Thus, it is reasonable to expect individuals from different cultures to attach different meanings to experience, and to react differently to signals from others.

More recently, some anthropologists have come to define culture even more broadly, as a “derivative of individual experience,” in which the sources of an individual’s culture include a wider range of settings, including one’s class, religion,
political system, and occupation or profession (Avruch, 1998:5-6, 17; Schwartz, 1992). The more complex and differentiated a social system is, the greater the number of potentially influential sources of individual cultural attributes. Viewed from this perspective, an individual’s culture is an amalgam of several different influences, with different individuals within society influenced to different degrees by different sources. Those sources provide the “software” for organizing and responding to the environment, which, in turn, affects the behavior of individuals in social transactions (Cohen, 1997:11-13).

This article investigates the putative influence of two of those sources on the outcome of mediation in militarized interstate disputes. The first, which we label social culture, refers to the culture associated with the communal group represented by the participants or mediators in a dispute. That social cultural differences find their expression in different approaches to mediation has been demonstrated in a wide range of studies of mediation at the inter-personal level (Kozan and Ergin, 1998; Ting-Toomey et. al., 1991; Singh and Singha, 1992; Callister and Wall, 1995; Patai, 1983; Lederach, 1991; Wall and Blum, 1991). There has been scant empirical research, however, at the inter-state level.

Mediation's effectiveness depends on the capacity of each party to understand and appreciate the interests of the other (Carnevale and Pruitt, 1992). Social and/or political cultural differences can make it more difficult to find common ground. Cohen (1996:108) argues that “in international disputes the 'rules' cannot simply be taken as common knowledge, and significant cultural differences between rivals may exacerbate conflict and complicate its resolution." By the same token, diplomats have written extensively
about the difficulties of effectively conducting negotiations between different political cultures, particularly between Western liberal democracies and revolutionary, or ideological regimes (Kissinger, 1966; Nicolson, 1963; Kennan, 1951). These problems are presumed to result from communication problems, broadly understood. But, others, most notably Huntington (1993, 1996), find a deeper problem in antipathies that develop between culturally distinct states.

Huntington (1993, 1996) posits that salient cultural differences originating in religious affiliations lead to what he calls “civilizational clashes.” Huntington (1996:41) defines a civilization as the largest possible cultural entity; it is “a culture writ large.” Huntington’s “clash of civilizations” thesis contains two propositions. The first is that cultural differences, primarily religious differences, represent the primary source of conflict in the interstate system. Because these differences are immutable and exclusive, Huntington argues, they are not amenable to compromise; consequently, they are more likely to lead to violent conflict. Conversely, countries that share cultures are more likely to be supportive of each other (1996:2-28).

Huntington’s second proposition is that cultural differences are most likely to promote conflict when particular pairs of cultures face each other across civilizational “fault lines.” Huntington sees fault line conflicts as particularly prevalent between Islamic and non-Islamic states, especially between Islamic and Western states (1996:110-120; 207-218).

Huntington’s thesis has been questioned on descriptive grounds for underestimating intra-cultural diversity, particularly in Islamic states (Ajami, 1996); on methodological grounds for reifying culture and ignoring variations in the effects of
different cultural influences on individuals, as well as variations over time (Avruch, 1998); and in the findings of empirical studies of intrastate (Gurr, 1994), and interstate conflict (Henderson and Tucker, 2001; Russett, Oneal, and Cox, 2000). Nevertheless, it remains the most prominent thesis regarding the relationship between culture and international conflict in contemporary discussions of international politics, and a logical starting point for an investigation of the influence of cultural on mediation.

The second cultural attribute, which we label *political culture*, refers to the perspectives, values, and patterns of behavior that are generated by a state’s political system. Political culture is a term that has been used to represent several different concepts. In political science, the term has been used primarily by comparativists to describe civic attributes that influence the functioning of different political systems (see Inglehart, 1988; Putnam, 1993). Our interest lies rather in viewing the political system as a cultural influence on the approach to conflict resolution employed by its representatives.

To the extent to which the norms and practices associated with their political systems influence the ways in which their leaders view and interact with the governments of other states, one can speak of the effects of their state’s political culture on their diplomatic behavior. Russett (1993:31), for example, argues that a democratic political culture, based on the norm of peacefully resolving disputes through democratic processes, has contributed to the observed absence of war between democracies. Conversely, one might argue that authoritarian governments are more likely to attempt to resolve their disputes through the use of force. The cultural argument for the democratic peace proposition is that disputes between democracies are less likely to escalate to war
because each government is aware of the other’s inclination to settle disputes through negotiation and compromise (Oneal and Russett, 1997; Russett, 1993; Dixon, 1993, 1994; Doyle, 1986).

In sum, the prominence of the “clash of civilizations” and “democratic peace” theses have led us to focus our attention on two sources of what could be described as an individual negotiator or mediator’s “conflict resolution culture.” One is the social culture, understood primarily in terms of religion, of the negotiator’s state; the other is the state’s political system. We recognize that this approach runs the risk of ignoring not only other potentially important cultural influences on the behavior of negotiators; it also ignores the diversity that exists in the relative influence of the two variables across and within states, and over time. It does, however, provide the most direct test of the applicability of the two theses to the mediation of militarized interstate disputes.

Mediation is second only to negotiation as the preferred method of resolving interstate disputes. Thus, it is reasonable to suspect that the success of mediation would be influenced by the same cultural variables that putatively are associated with the peaceful resolution of interstate disputes or their escalation to war. The next section discusses how cultural differences or similarities may affect mediation in militarized disputes.

*Cultural Differences and Mediation Outcomes*

In negotiation between parties from different social cultures, problems may arise from misunderstandings generated by dissimilar negotiating or bargaining styles, or in the meanings attached to signals. That is, differences in meaning or emphasis across cultures can result in a shared misunderstanding of signals, preferences, and perceptions. Cohen
(1997:36-38), for example, finds "intercultural dissonance" in negotiations between representatives of social cultures with individualistic and collectivist cultures. Western negotiators, who want immediately to “get down to business” in negotiations may misunderstand and offend negotiators from more traditional societies, who place great importance on creating a proper interpersonal relationship before discussing sensitive issues.

Huntington’s (1996) thesis goes one step further by hypothesizing that the immutability of primarily religious differences makes it more difficult for states to find common ground. The problem is not that of communication, or not only communication, but the difficulty of achieving compromise when fundamental differences are at stake. Others argue that, although cultural and religious differences may not be the causes of interstate disputes, they often become major issues as disputes intensify (Hopmann, 1996:143; Avruch, 1998:47). Rivalries in the Middle East, the Balkans, and South Asia are notable examples. Moreover, there is some empirical evidence that as cultural issues become more salient, disputes become more difficult to resolve peacefully (Henderson, 1997; Brecher, 1993).

These propositions lead to our first hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 1.** Mediation is more likely to fail if the representatives of the contending parties are from dissimilar social cultures.²

Communication difficulties and inter-cultural antipathies may be problematic as well in attempts to mediate disputes between different political cultures. A state's political culture creates its own set of perceptions, norms, and practices related to conflict management. The communication problems likely to arise between parties with
dissimilar political cultures, as well as the ideological competition between political systems, make the mediator's task more difficult. Kissinger, who was the author of a 1966 essay on the difficulties associated with negotiations between leaders of radically different political systems, claims that he found personal confirmation of his theorizing during his efforts to negotiate an end to the Vietnam War. Bemoaning the “maddening diplomatic style” of his communist counter-parts, Kissinger (1979:263) complained that "each North Vietnamese proposal was put forward as the sole logical truth and each demand was stated in the imperative" in contrast to what he viewed as the more pragmatic approach of American negotiators. Doyle (1986:1161) argues that while there is a "presumption of amity" among democratic states, because of shared liberal institutions, there is a presumption of enmity between democratic and authoritarian states. Hypothesis 2 is a political version of Hypothesis 1:

Hypothesis 2. Mediation is more likely to fail if the disputants are from dissimilar political cultures.

The particular cultural attributes of democracies versus authoritarian states leads to a more specific variant of Hypothesis 2. It is that the empirical evidence of the virtual absence of war (Small and Singer, 1976; Doyle, 1986; Maoz and Abdolali, 1989) and the relative infrequency of militarized disputes (Bremer, 1993; Oneal and Russett, 1997) between democracies can be traced to a shared political culture, and that the same cultural attributes contribute to the success of mediation in disputes between democracies.

Shared structural as well as cultural attributes have been offered as explanations for the democratic peace findings. The structural argument is that constraints resulting
from checks and balances, opposition parties, and public debate will delay, if not prevent, decisions to go to war, and that democracies engaged in disputes with each other recognize those constraints. Hence, in disputes with other democracies, democratic states will feel less urgency to prepare for war in order to avoid a surprise attack. The cultural argument posits that in disputes with other democracies, democratic states will employ the same conflict resolution techniques that they use within their domestic systems, that is, negotiation, compromise, and the peaceful resolution of disputes. Distrust of the intentions of the governments of non-democratic states will make democracies less willing to rely on the same techniques of peaceful conflict resolution (see Russett, 1993:30-40).

It can be argued that either component of the democratic peace proposition – the mutual perception of added time provided by the structural attributes of democracies or of a shared willingness to seek peaceful settlements through negotiation and compromise -- could lead to greater willingness on the part of contending democracies to accept mediation. Our concern, however, is not with the willingness of the parties to accept mediation, but its success. In that case, the mutual perception of shared cultural attributes would be a more potent and a more consistently positive influence than shared structural constraints. After all, the same structural forces that may delay or prevent preparation for war – public opinion and opposition parties – may pressure a democratic government to adopt a more aggressive and unyielding policy toward its opponent.

Empirical evidence to support the cultural component of the democratic peace proposition has appeared in recent studies. Dixon (1993,1994) found that, during the post-World War II era, democracies were more likely than authoritarian states to settle
their disputes through some mode of third-party management. In a study of bargaining in interstate crises between 1816 and 1980, Leng (1993) found that democracies were more likely than authoritarian regimes to use bargaining strategies that reciprocate the bargaining moves their adversaries. Mousseau (1998), in a study of militarized disputes between 1816 and 1992, found that joint democratic dyads were about three times more likely to resolve their militarized disputes through compromise than were other pairings.

The democratic peace proposition is extended to mediation in Hypothesis 3.

**Hypothesis 3.** mediation is more likely to succeed if the disputants both have democratic political systems.

**Culture and the Mediator**

Because mediation is a three-way process in which each party is attempting to influence the behavior of the others, similarities or dissimilarities between the mediator’s societal and/or political cultures and those of the two disputants would appear to be likely to influence the effectiveness of mediation. Participants and mediators alike begin their interactions with preconceived notions of what to expect from individuals from different cultures, and those expectations can influence their interpretation of each other's behavior. Presumably, there is a greater degree of rapport and trust when the mediator and parties are from the same social or political culture, as opposed to when they are not.

Moreover, different cultures assign different roles to mediation. Arab mediators see their main task as that of restoring a harmonious relationship between the disputants and preserving Arab unity, as opposed to finding common ground on which the dispute might be resolved (Patai, 1987:232-233; Cohen, 1996:141). Community harmony also is a principal goal of mediators in India (Singh and Singh, 1992) and China (Wall and Blum,
Callister and Wall (1997) have found the carefully non-assertive style of mediation practiced by the Japanese to be distinct from the more assertive style of Chinese Communist mediators.

If the assumptions of disputants regarding the role of the mediator are different from the mediator's own views, the latter may employ tactics that are ineffective, or even offensive. Similarly, when a mediator comes from a political system different from the disputants, the problems that attend negotiations between representatives from dissimilar political cultures may occur. Thus we would expect social or political cultural similarities to facilitate the effectiveness of mediation, and differences to have the opposite effect. These propositions are expressed in Hypotheses 4 and 5.

Hypothesis 4. Mediation is more likely to succeed if the mediator's social culture is similar to that of both disputants.

Hypothesis 5. Mediation is more likely to succeed if the mediator's political culture is similar to that of both disputants.

Hypotheses 4 and 5 presume that the conditions of the predictor variables in hypotheses 1 and 2 obtain, that is, that the disputants share similar political or social cultures.

The expected effects are more ambiguous when the disputants are from different cultures and the mediator shares the culture of one of the disputants. Conventional wisdom suggests that the disputant from the dissimilar culture would suspect mediator bias in favor of the other party, and become defensive and less acceptant of the mediator's efforts. But empirical studies on the effects of mediator bias have been inconclusive (Bercovitch and Houston, 1996:26) and there are historical examples that belie
conventional wisdom, such as the rapport that Kissinger (1982: ch.12, 13) and Jimmy Carter (1982: 319-403) were able to establish with Egypt's Anwar Sadat, while enduring a testier relationship with Israeli prime ministers. It may be that when a mediator shares the culture of just one of the participants, he or she is likely to bend over-backwards to reassure the party from the dissimilar culture. Or it may be factors other than cultural characteristics, such as the mediator's rank, or personal rapport, exert stronger effects on mediator acceptance than expectations of cultural bias.

Given the contradictory expectations with regard to cases in which the mediator shares the political and/or social culture of just one of the participants, and in the interest of parsimony, we do not distinguish those cases from instances in which the mediator shares neither the political or social culture of either participant.

**Counter-Views**

There is a blanket counter-argument to all of these hypotheses, which is based on the notion of a global diplomatic culture. The argument has been put forward most forcefully by Zartman (1993) and Zartman and Berman (1977). Winfried Lang (1993) makes a similar argument for a “negotiation culture,” based on his personal experience as an Austrian diplomat. There are two parts to the argument. The first is that negotiation is a “universal process,” which contains a finite set of practices that are commonly understood by practitioners (Zartman and Berman, 1977:226). Local cultures, it is argued, account for no more than differences in style and language. The second, related argument is that over time, a global diplomatic culture has evolved to over-ride local cultural differences in diplomatic interactions.
Modern anthropologists view the cultures associated with occupations or professions as sources of individual cultural attributes (Avruch, 1998:5). Presumably, those attributes are likely to exert their strongest influence on behavior when individuals are carrying out their professional duties. Most diplomats, in fact, come from the upper socioeconomic classes in their home countries, and they attend the same set of major Western universities where they read the same standard works on history and international affairs (Hopmann, 1996:143). The question is to what extent, and under what circumstances, that shared self-image is likely to over-ride local cultural differences. Hopmann (1996:144) believes that the influence of the shared diplomatic culture wanes as disputes intensify in severity. In militarized disputes local cultural differences not only can exert a strong influence on the course of negotiations, they often are at the heart of the dispute itself. The recurring militarized disputes in the Middle East, South Asia, and the Balkans are prominent examples. Critics of the global culture argument note that national leaders with little diplomatic experience often negotiate the most serious disputes; moreover, the representatives of new members of the interstate system are likely to be less socialized in a global diplomatic culture than more established members.

A more specific version of the common culture argument is put forward by realists, who contend that, especially in more intense conflicts, the rules of the game are understood by all, and that those rules are based on power. What Ashley (1981) has described as "practical realism," a shared informal understanding within a common tradition, is another argument for a global diplomatic culture, but one based on Realpolitik. From a realist perspective, everyone understands that international politics take place in an anarchic system of relative gains and they act accordingly. The difficulty
that arises in attempting to peacefully resolve interstate disputes is not the result of poor communication or cultural differences; it is because in a world of relative gains, competing interests often are irreconcilable.\(^3\) If, in fact, a global diplomatic culture guides negotiating behavior in militarized disputes, whether or not it is based on realism, we should find no support for Hypotheses 1-5.

**Research Design**

*Universe of Analysis*

To test our hypotheses we use data on 752 mediation efforts in militarized interstate disputes occurring between 1945 and 1995. The mediation cases have been drawn from a data set compiled by Bercovitch’s International Conflict Management (ICM) project. The cases in the data set include mediation attempts that occur in disputes in which at least one party threatens, displays, or uses force, and which are mentioned in public sources, such as *Kessing’s Archives* and the *New York Times* (see Bercovitch and Houston, 2000:184-85).\(^4\) The broader data set from which we draw our cases reflects the coding of various forms of conflict management – both bilateral and multilateral – in inter and intrastate disputes. The ICM data record information about the conflict, the disputants, and the mediators, if any. In all there are approximately 3000 individual observations in the data. Since we are interested specifically in mediation we select only cases using mediation and only those involved in interstate disputes.

Specifically, our unit of analysis is the mediation occurring within an interstate conflict. Each conflict can – and often does – have multiple mediation attempts over the course of the conflict, though the outcome is coded with regard to the individual
mediation effort. We are interested in examining the outcome of specific mediation efforts, not how individual mediation efforts influence the outcome of the broader conflict. Cultural characteristics, as we have outlined them, should exert greater on the individual mediation as opposed to the outcome of the conflict. When focusing on the conflict as the unit of analysis other factors such as relative capabilities, battlefield conditions, and allied participation may overwhelm the effect of the cultural attributes of the parties. That is, aggregating a sequence of mediations is not the same as the outcome of individual efforts.

We started with ICM data on conflict management and systematically removed cases that involved: 1) at least one non-state actor, 2) cases of conflict management other than mediation, and 3) those cases where mediation was offered but not accepted by the disputants. The model that we employ posits that the outcome of a mediation attempt is a function of the social and political cultural attributes of the participants and the mediator, while controlling for the simultaneous effects of characteristics of the dispute, the strategy of the mediator, and systemic conditions.\(^5\)

**Variables**

**Outcome.** The mediation outcome is operationalized according to the relative success or failure of the mediation effort. In our cases there are four possible outcomes associated with each mediation effort: 1) mediation is unsuccessful; the mediation produces 2) a cease-fire, 3) a partial settlement, or 4) a full settlement.

We reduce these four categories to three by collapsing full and partial settlements into a single category. We do so on the premise that the signing of any agreement, whether full or partial, represents a significant advance over the status quo. A ceasefire,
on the other hand, may represent nothing more than immediate expediency, for example, to gain breathing space to regroup, or to appease a powerful third party. The result is a three-category distinction among settlements, ceasefires, and no agreement of any kind.

**Cultural Attributes**

Our primary explanatory variables are the social and political cultures of the participants in the mediation. We use the identification of the social and political culture of each of the actors and the mediator to create indices that reflect linkages among cultural traits (see below). Using a taxonomy for each of the types of political and social culture we create a series of dummy variables that reflect conditions where a specific cultural trait is dominant among the actors and/or the mediator. Because of our interest in the “clash of civilizations” and “democratic peace” thesis, we have chosen indicators based on putative sources of cultural influences, while “black-boxing” their behavioral manifestations in negotiating behavior.

**Social Culture.** It is one thing to describe the putative sources of cultural influences on mediation, as we have done above. It is another to identify operational indicators to distinguish among the cultural attributes of state governments and their diplomatic representatives. We have chosen to focus our attention on Huntington’s typology of civilizations, which is based primarily on religion.

Besides the practical advantages of a relatively reliable indicator and a more parsimonious model, there are two theoretical reasons for our choice. First, the prominence of the clash of civilizations debate provides a metric from placing our work in an influential body of literature, and is a logical starting point for an investigation of
the effects of cultural similarities and differences on the effectiveness of mediation. Second, Henderson (1997), who tested the relationship between several cultural indicators and war, found a positive association between religious differences and the incidence of interstate war between 1820 and 1989, an association that he did not find with any of the other cultural variables tested. Following the logic of Huntington’s thesis, one would expect the same religious differences that predict to war to make it more difficult to mediate disputes.

The results will provide a first cut at the rather complex question of the influence of social culture on the mediation of interstate disputes. Few anthropologists would be willing to argue that a single variable, such as religion, can trump all other cultural similarities or differences in relations among states, or even that the same cultural variables are the most significant across states. Patai (1973), for example, has found that Arab societies place a particularly strong emphasis on mediation in resolving disputes, a cultural phenomenon that is distinct from their Islamic identity. Holsti (1996) posits that legal norms with colonial origins may explain the “zone of peace” among South American states. We consider these theses, and others, when we take a closer look at the results of our initial tests.

Based primarily, although not exclusively, on the dominant religious orientation, Huntington (1996:45-48) identifies eight civilizations: African, Hindu, Islamic, Japanese, Latin American, Orthodox, Sinic, and Western. Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America are classified as cultural entities distinct from their religious orientations. Henderson and Tucker (2001) have categorized the members of the interstate system according to Huntington's eight categories plus two others: Buddhism, and an "Other” category for
those states that do not fit into one of the other nine categories. We have employed Henderson and Tucker's (2001:335-336) categories, with some modest revisions, in this study.\(^6\)

Cultural identification, of course, is not determined by citizenship; many states have more than one significant cultural group within them. But for our purposes the culture of interest is that of the official representatives of the government, that is, those who are engaged in negotiating or mediating the militarized disputes in the study. Consequently, we have classified several states according to the culture of the governing body, whereas Henderson and Tucker classify those states as "Other" because of the presence of more than one significant social culture within the state. In other cases, the categorization is changed from one culture to another when the politically dominant group is a minority, as in the case of the white minority regime in South Africa during the apartheid era.\(^7\) Huntington’s categorization of cultural identities according to distinct civilizations is, of course, a crude simplification of the variety of cultural identities in the world. Thus, we avoid referring to the governments of states within categories as sharing the "same" social culture in favor of "similar."

*Political Culture.* As with the indicator of social culture, and because of our interest in the “democratic peace” proposition, we consider just one component of a state’s political culture, that is, its political system. We identify three types of political cultures: democratic, communist, and non-communist authoritarian. As with the categorization of social cultures, we are well aware of the differences that can occur across our categories of regimes. The categorization of disputants' political cultures according to these types is drawn from the ICM data set.\(^8\)
Linkages across cultural attributes. Using the coding scheme for political and social culture we have created indicators that more closely reflect the operationalization of our theoretical argument. We employ dummy variables to identify when the parties in the dispute are from the same or different social cultures, from the same or different political cultures, or when both have democratic political cultures.

We recognize that there may be an interactive effect between social and political cultures. That is, following the logic of hypotheses 1 and 2, mediation may be most effective when the disputants are from similar social and political cultures. This variable is operationalized via a dummy variable equal to 1 if both the political and social culture of the actors in the dispute are similar.

Mediators’ social and political culture. The identification of mediators is drawn from the ICM data set. We have categorized each mediator's social and political culture by employing the same operational criteria used to identify the social and political cultures of the disputants. There are three exceptions: 1) when there is more than one mediator and the mediators come from different cultures 2) when the mediator is from a non-state actor, and 3) when the mediator is from an international or regional organization. Twenty percent of our cases involve mediations by either teams of mediators from two or more states with dissimilar cultures, or mediations by representatives from non-state actors. We code these two categories together as "mixed/non-state."

When mediators represent regional or international organizations, we make a distinction between individuals chosen for the particular task, and individuals who are regular members of the organization's staff. The former are identified with the social and
political cultures of their home states; the latter are identified with the social culture of their home state, but the political culture of the international or regional organization. During the Bosnian conflict, for example, the United States' Cyrus Vance, who represented the United Nations on an ad hoc basis, would be identified with the social and political cultures of the United States, whereas mediation by U. N. Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali would be coded as reflecting an Islamic social culture but with the political culture categorized as "international organization."

Control Variables

We place the hypotheses within the context of the larger mediation effort by controlling for four factors previously identified as important predictors of the outcome of mediation. They include three contextual variables, the outcome of the most recent conflict management effort, the issues at stake, and the intensity of the conflict, and one process variable, the mediation strategy. We enumerate them here and refer the interested reader to the appropriate sources.

1. Outcome of the most recent preceding conflict management effort. We classify the outcome of the preceding conflict management effort as: settlement (either a full or partial settlement), a ceasefire, or failure. The data are drawn from Bercovitch's ICM data set.

2. Issue at stake. We also employ ICM data to operationalize the issues in terms of territory, ideology, resources, security, and independence (see Bercovitch and Houston, 1996:24; Bercovitch and Langley, 1993)
3. **Intensity of the dispute.** We employ a crude, but direct measure of intensity by distinguishing between mediation efforts occurring in interstate wars, and mediation in disputes that have not escalated to war. This measure offers two advantages. It is consistent with the conventional view that there is a significant change in the diplomatic relationship between states once they cross the threshold to war, and it allows us to use a dichotomous measure with considerable face validity.

4. **Mediation strategy.** We employ Bercovitch and Houston's (1996:29-30, 2000:175-76) three-category classification of mediation strategies: communication-facilitation, procedural, and directive (see also Touval and Zartman, 1985). We use dummy variables to record whether the strategy of the mediator was facilitative, procedural, or directive.

**Analysis**

To test the hypotheses we employ an ordered logistic estimation on a trichotomous outcome variable (settlement, ceasefire, failure). We use a Huber-White estimation of variance to control for heteroscedastically distributed errors. To check the sensitivity of our results to the coding of mediation outcome we test the same model using a logistic model on a binary outcome variable (failure versus either ceasefire or settlement).  

Because the unit of observation is the mediation effort, and the number of mediation efforts within disputes varies, there is some risk that multiple mediation efforts within a small number of disputes will dominate the overall findings. We tested for this
effect by clustering the data on the dispute to provide correct standard errors even when observations within disputes are correlated. We found, however, that the results of the clustering procedure provided no new information, with the coefficients and their standard errors virtually identical to those derived from the Huber-White estimation that is reported below. In effect we were concerned that some of the observations were not strictly independent, with concurrent or sequential mediations influencing the outcome of our analysis. Our empirical results demonstrate that this is not a problem, and we attribute this to the coding rules used by Bercovitch to distinguish among linked mediations. In his schema successive mediation sessions that are scheduled, and in which the prior meeting did not achieve some form of an agreement, are considered to be all part of the same mediation effort.

Results

The findings provide interesting insights into the role of political and social culture in the process of managing militarized interstate disputes. We present our results first through a descriptive analysis of the frequency of successful outcomes for social cultures, and second, via a multivariate logistic regression model. We use two multivariate models to present results of the ordered logit estimation of the likelihood of observing each of three outcomes, given certain values for our explanatory variables. The outcomes are ordered from a score of 1 for failed mediation to 2 for a ceasefire, to 3 for a settlement, so that a positive association represents an increasing likelihood of successful mediation and a negative association represents an increasing likelihood of failed mediation. Although we are dealing with what we believe to be the population of cases,
statistical significance tests are used as indicators of the extent to which the results depart from what might be found in a random distribution.

Distribution of the data by social culture and success or failure rates of mediation appears in Table 1.

TABLE 1 HERE

The overall success rate for mediation when the two parties are of similar social cultures is 42%; when dissimilar the success rate drops to 35%. The rates of success – operationalized dichotomously in terms of failure and at least a ceasefire -- vary considerably across cultural pairings. Latin American dyads, for example, have a success rate of 61%, nearly 20 percentage points higher than the average for other pairs sharing similar social cultures, and a 25% higher probability of a successful outcome relative to the overall average. Islamic dyads, on the other hand, have a success rate of 32%, not only less than the overall average, but 10% less than the average success rate for mediations between similar social cultures.

Another striking feature of Table 1 is the high proportion of cases (61%) involving an Islamic state as at least one of the participants. That Islamic states are involved in so many militarized disputes is not surprising when we consider the history of the second half of the twentieth century, but the prevalence of mediation efforts in those disputes is intriguing. We move next to the results of the multivariate analyses, beginning with Table 2.

TABLE 2 HERE
Table 2 presents the results of an ordered logistic regression including social and political cultural differences at the aggregate level (Hypotheses 1 and 2), and democratic dyads (Hypothesis 3), along with the control variables. Three results stand out. First, there is support for Hypothesis 1, which posits a negative association between differences in the participants' social cultures and successful mediation. The association between differences in social cultures and failed meditation is significant at the \( p < .05 \) level and the substantive effect turns out to be considerable. Second, the results indicate no significant association between shared political cultures and mediation outcomes in general (Hypothesis 2). Furthermore, the results suggest that mediation is more likely to succeed if both participants are from democratic political cultures. However, democratic dyads make up only 6% of the total cases; consequently the positive effect of joint democracy is not strong enough to affect the results for a general shared political culture. Taken together, our results suggest that there is little observable difference in the effects of different types of authoritarian political cultures.

The effect of a shared social culture among the mediator and both disputants remains indeterminate because there were two few cases in which the mediator came from the same social culture as both of the participants to permit a test of hypothesis 4. It is apparently rare for the mediator and both participants to the conflict to all come from the same social culture. We find, however, that there is no significant association between the mediator's political culture and the mediation outcome, which leads us to reject hypothesis 5. The results of our control variables are generally consistent with expectations, and with the exception of the effect of mediation strategy on outcomes, all of these results are consistent with the findings of Bercovitch and Houston (1996).
The results of our analysis using aggregate indicators of social culture point to the need to look more closely at different cultural pairing of states in militarized disputes. We next disaggregate social culture to take a closer look at the positive results lending support for Hypotheses 1 and 3.

Social Culture

The results in Table 2 provide only a first cut at the question of the influence of culture on mediation in militarized disputes. They suggest that cultural similarities or differences matter, but they offer no indication of why. Although we cannot answer fully that question in this paper, we can offer some insights that may prove useful in future investigations. To begin we go back to the distribution of the data presented in Table 1.

As Table 1 indicates, three cultural categories, Islamic, Latin American, and African, account for all but two of the cases of mediation in disputes between states with similar social cultures, and three-quarters of those cases occur in disputes between Islamic states. The absence of shared culture dyads for Hindu, Orthodox, Sinic, and Western states is related to the absence of militarized interstate disputes for pairings within those cultural categories. Those absences are a function of limited opportunities – there are none for the single Hindu state (India) and few for Orthodox and Sinic states – and, in the case of Western states, the ability to resolve disputes before they become militarized.

What is striking about Table 1, however, is the high proportion of mediated disputes involving two Islamic states, and the relatively low success rate compared to mediation in disputes between Islamic and non-Islamic states. That Muslim states have been involved in a high number of militarized disputes since the end of World War II is
well-documented; however, the absence of any significant difference in the success of mediation when both participants are Islamic states, as opposed to a pairing of an Islamic and non-Islamic state runs counter to not only Huntington’s basic thesis, but also counter to his claim that the most intense civilizational clashes will be between Islamic and Western states. 

In fact, in Table 1 there is a slightly higher rate of success in mediations involving Islamic and Western states (38%) than in disputes between two Islamic states (32%). Those results complement findings by Russett, Oneal, and Cox (2000) that militarized disputes between Islamic and Western states were no more common than other state dyads.

There is, however, another cultural explanation worth considering, which is based on a regional distinction between Arab and other Islamic cultures. In an extensive study of Arab culture, Patai (1973) found that mediation plays a central role in the resolution of inter-Arab disputes at all levels. Patai argues that every dispute, from interpersonal to interstate, becomes a matter of honor for Arab participants. “Even to take the first step toward ending a conflict would be regarded as a sign of weakness which, in turn, would greatly damage one’s honor. Hence it is almost impossible for an Arab to come to agreement in a direct confrontation with an opponent” (p. 228). Mediators play a crucial role in the resolution of disputes involving Arab states by allowing for face-saving outcomes in which concessions are made not to the other side, but to a higher purpose, such as a relationship with a third party, or a higher cause. For example, when the 1978 Camp David Accords were completed, Egypt’s President Sadat claimed: “I conceded nothing to the Israelis, not even an inch; but I responded to the pleas of
President Carter, our friend and ally, an ally whose help we both need and receive.” (Dayan, 1981:163).

The distinction between Arab and other Islamic states suggested by Patai’s thesis is worth examining, not only because it offers a different cultural perspective on a major sub-category of Islamic disputes, but also because it provides a means of sub-categorizing the most extensive of Huntington’s categories on the basis of regional cultural differences. These cultural relationships can be seen most clearly by including specific pairs of cultures in a multivariate analysis, the results of which we present in Table 3. "Joint African," for example, represents those mediation efforts in which the representatives of both states were from African social cultures. For the reasons mentioned above, we also include a distinction between disputes between Arab states versus other Islamic dyads. The results of this analysis should be judged relative to the excluded category of the absence of a shared social culture between members of the dyad.

The results in Table 3 indicate a relatively high rate of successful mediation in joint Latin American and African disputes. Mediation also is more likely to succeed if both parties are Arab Islamic states, but the opposite is the case in joint Islamic disputes among non-Arab states. The inter-Arab results are consistent with Patai’s anthropological findings. We interpret the results associated with Islamic countries to raise questions about the adequacy of Huntington’s classification of all Islamic states as a single cultural entity.

TABLE 3 HERE
The significant positive association between mediation success and disputes between Latin American states is consistent with Huntington’s (1996:45-46) view of Latin America as a distinct cultural entity. But, as in the case of the Islamic results, other researchers have suggested a distinction between South America, which has been identified as a “zone of peace,” and Central America. As we noted above, Holsti (1996:169-71) has hypothesized that the positive effects of a South American “diplomatic culture,” based on a common historical and cultural framework, has created a normative consensus regarding the use of peaceful means of settlement, including arbitration and mediation. An extensive qualitative study of South America as a zone of peace by Kacowicz (1998) also is consistent with Holsti’s hypothesis. Within our data set, there are 15 cases of mediations of MIDs in South America, and, remarkably, mediation was successful in 12 of those mediations, that is, a success rate of 80% compared to roughly 50% for Central American cases.

Kacowicz suggests a number of additional potential explanations for the South American peace, including geographic isolation, a regional hegemonic role played by Brazil, and the continental hegemonic role of the United States. Geographical isolation would appear to be related more to the absence of war than to the success of mediation, and there are no instances of mediation by Brazil in militarized disputes in the period under study. As for the United States, whether it has played a predominantly pacifying or exacerbating role in Latin American disputes remains an open, and hotly debated. What the data can tell us is that there were no mediations of Latin American disputes conducted solely by the United States. In fact, the only mediations of Latin American disputes which did not contain Latin American mediators were conducted by Papal
representatives, who shared a religious cultural identity. United States representatives were members of mixed OAS delegations on 10 occasions. Those teams, however, were slightly less successful than OAS teams composed of only Latin American mediators. Moreover, one would expect the United States to exert stronger influence over those disputes that are closer to home, that is, in Central America, where the mediation success rate is significantly lower. In sum, the high success rate for joint Latin American disputes is consistent with Hypothesis 1, but the different mediation success rates for South American versus other Latin American disputes once again suggests that Huntington’s categories represent only a crude first cut.

The positive results in Table 3 for mediation in inter-African disputes also are consistent with Hypothesis 1, but here too there are reasons for a closer examination. Table 1 indicates that mediation also is quite successful in disputes between African and Islamic states, and African and Western states. What is not obvious from Table 1 is that almost all of these disputes have taken place in sub-Saharan Africa, that is, between Islamic and non-Islamic African states, and between South Africa and its neighbors. With the exception of disputes in which South Africa was one of the participants, mediation is successful more than half of the time in disputes between states from sub-Saharan Africa, regardless of their religious similarities or differences.

Different hypotheses have been put forward for the “zone of peace” in Africa, specifically West Africa. One, which is consistent with Gurr’s (1994) findings on the prevalence of ethnopolitical conflict within African states, is that African governments are too engaged in dealing with intrastate conflicts to be able to devote resources to interstate wars. Whether problems of coping with internal instability would lead
governments to be more inclined to accept mediation when they find themselves engaged in external disputes as well is an open question. A rough examination of the data suggests external and internal disputes in Africa are often linked to each other. Kacowicz provides a way to think about mediation success among African states.

In his discussion of the zone of peace in West Africa, Kacowicz (1998:159) argues that “the policies of the vast majority of African states reflect their respect for existing borders,” which has grown out of a norm enunciated by the Organization of African States in 1964. Kacowicz’s argument is intriguing because, like the democratic peace thesis, it is based on mutual recognition of a behavioral norm. There is, however, only one case of a militarized dispute in a West Africa dyad where both states fall into Huntington’s “African” category in which mediation was employed. But if one includes mediation in disputes between African and Islamic states in West Africa, mediation was successful in 8 of 9 West African cases, a success rate considerably higher than the overall high success rate for mediation of inter-African disputes. Taken together, the findings on the cases occurring within sub-Saharan Africa suggest regional attributes that are exerting stronger influences than the religion-based categorization suggested by Huntington. Whether these attributes are primarily cultural cannot be answered definitively by the data in this study; however, the pattern is consistent with Kacowicz's argument.

The results of our closer examination of the cases of mediation in Islamic, Latin American, and African disputes provide additional support for Hypothesis 1, but they suggest that the influence of social culture on mediation is more complex than that suggested by the crude categorization provided by Huntington. In fact, within those three
cultural groupings, our analysis suggests that cultural influences are more likely to break along regional lines than the religious orientation implicit in Huntington’s clash of civilizations.

**Political Culture**

The positive and significant relationship between joint democracies and the success of mediation found in Table 2 becomes insignificant in Table 3, although the association remains positive. The difference in the significance level is almost certainly the result of the small number of joint democratic cases relative to the other variables included in Model 3. As we noted above, joint democracies account for only 6% of the cases, a factor that reflects the small number of militarized disputes between democracies. In an earlier test of the Huntington thesis, Russett, Oneal, and Cox (2000) found few militarized disputes between democratic states, but they left open the question of whether the result reflected shared democratic cultural norms, or the shared economic interests of advanced Western free-market economies. With that in mind, it is important to note that *none* of the cases of mediation between joint democracies in our study occur between Western states with advanced free-market economies. While the results of the tests for Hypothesis 3 cannot be considered conclusive, the positive association between mediation success and joint democracy, coupled with the small number of cases of militarized disputes between democracies, are consistent with the hypothesis.
**Predicted Probabilities**

Table 4 highlights our substantive interpretation of some of the results by transforming the statistical coefficients into estimates of the change in the probability of observing particular outcomes, given changes in explanatory variables.\(^1\)

**TABLE 4 HERE**

For example, if a dyad is comprised of two Latin American cultures the probability of a full or partial settlement through mediation is 57%, with a failure rate of only 32%. Similarly, with an African dyad, the likelihood of observing a successful outcome is about 55%. Holding all else constant, if the dyad in the dispute is comprised of two democracies the probability of a full or partial settlement is 39%, whereas a non-democratic dyad has only a 25% chance of a settlement.

The control variable with the strongest effect on the likelihood of a successful mediation is the intensity of the dispute. If mediation takes place in a dispute that escalates to war, the probability of observing a full or partial settlement is only 17%; in a less violent dispute the probability is 32%. We turn now to a discussion of the implications of our analysis with an eye to further theoretical development.

**Discussion**

We draw four general inferences from the results of our analysis: 1) Social cultural similarities and differences do affect the outcomes of mediation in militarized disputes; 2) those observed differences, however, do not support Huntington’s clash of civilizations thesis; 3) the cultural variables most likely to influence mediation outcomes

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\(^1\) Predicted probabilities were calculated in STATA 7.0 using the Predict command.
vary across cultural groupings; and 4) Mediation is more likely to succeed when the participant governments share democratic political cultures.

Our first cut at Hypothesis 1 supports the general proposition that mediation is significantly more likely to succeed in militarized disputes when the parties share the same cultures as defined by Huntington’s categories. But a closer look at the data suggests an important distinction within the largest category of culturally similar dyads, Islamic states. When a distinction is made between Arab-Islamic, and other Islamic states, we find that mediation is positively associated with success in intra-Arab disputes, but that the opposite is the case in other joint Islamic disputes. The significance of this distinction, which is based not on sectarian differences, but on regional cultural factors related to the use of mediation, raises questions about Huntington’s (1996:452) identification of religion as the most significant cultural attribute, and points toward a more complex notion of culture than heretofore considered in the empirical literature. Moreover, the other two categories in which cultural similarities significantly contributed to the success of mediation, Latin America and Africa, are categorical exceptions, which Huntington (1996:47-48) did not select on primarily religious grounds. In fact, if African-Islamic disputes occurring in sub-Saharan Africa were included in the joint African category, the positive association between mediation success and joint African social cultures would be even stronger. Nor do the results support the notion that disputes involving Islamic states – especially with Western states – will be comparatively more difficult to resolve peacefully, a point stressed in Huntington’s analysis. We found no significant difference between disputes in which Islamic states were participants with
other pairings, nor did we find a significant difference in the outcome of mediation efforts when Islamic states were engaged in disputes with Western states.

That we find no systematic support for an extension of Huntington’s clash of civilizations thesis to mediation in militarized disputes, does not mean that religious differences never play a significant role in affecting mediation. The high failure rate in disputes between Islamic and Hindu states (Table 1), for example, is primarily a function of the Indo-Pakistani rivalry, a rivalry in which religious differences have played a major role. What becomes apparent, as we examine the data in greater detail, is that the social cultural variables that have the strongest effect on mediation are likely to vary from one cultural pairing to another. As we noted above, a closer look at the joint Arab-Islamic, Islamic, Latin American, and African cases produces observations that, while by no means definitive, are consistent with social cultural hypotheses suggested by Patai (1973), Holsti (1996), and Kacowicz (1998). These hypotheses represent just a few of the possibilities that might be considered in future research.

For example, one intriguing aspect to the pairings in Table 1 is the absence of any mediation in militarized disputes between two Western social cultures. Western cultures apparently are sufficiently adept at conflict management that their intra-cultural disputes rarely become militarized. Consequently, we may be underestimating the positive effects of shared social cultures by excluding mediated disputes that do not become militarized. For example, to make it into our data set two important events must occur: 1) a pair of countries must have a disagreement that escalates to the level of militarized activity, and 2) given this military dimension to their dispute, they must choose to accept third party mediation, something that generally happens only after bilateral efforts have failed
(Bercovitch, 1997). Neither step is inconsequential in the dispute process. Our results identify the putative effects of culture once a pair of countries has crossed those two hurdles. If shared culture plays a role in the outcome of conflict management, then it also may provide a mechanism to abbreviate the sequence that starts with a dispute and ends with a mediation attempt. If shared cultural attributes matter, then they should influence the onset as well as the management of militarized disputes. In effect there is a selection process – based primarily on cultural factors – that is determining the distribution of our data.

Given the considerable overlap between Western states and democracies, it is not surprising that joint democracies account for such a small percentage of the cases. The small number of cases weakens the statistical grounds for accepting Hypothesis 4, but the same fact strengthens the intuitive argument. Taken together, the small number of democratic dyads using mediation, the relatively small number of disputes between democracies that become militarized, the success of mediation in those disputes that do become militarized, and the absence of any democratic disputes escalating to war, strongly support the proposition that democratic dyads are more likely to settle their disputes peacefully through negotiation, mediation, and compromise. By limiting our cases to militarized disputes, we might be underestimating the potency of the predictor variables when particular social or political dyads were more effective at resolving their disputes before they became militarized. Consequently, disputes involving those dyads that did become militarized should be more difficult to mediate successfully. Bearing that in mind, the high rate of success for mediation in democratic dyads is all the more impressive, and it offers strong support for the democratic peace proposition.
We also would argue that these results strengthen the case for the democratic culture explanation of the democratic peace versus the structural argument. As we noted in the initial discussion of Hypothesis 3, it is possible that the time afforded by mutual knowledge of the constraints against a hasty decision to go to war caused by the institutional structure of democracies indirectly encourages states to accept mediation. But it is harder to make a case that the same factors are likely to lead to the success of the mediation efforts. Opposition parties are just as likely to push a government to take a tough stand during negotiation or mediation as to encourage compromise. It is more plausible to presume that the propensity of democracies to resolve their differences through negotiation or mediation before reaching the level of a militarized dispute, and to resolve through mediation those conflicts that do become militarized, is related to a shared political culture that encourages compromise and the peaceful resolution of disputes.

Finally, our overall findings indicate that neither the social nor the political culture of the mediator significantly affects the outcome of mediation. It may be that other mediator attributes simply over-ride the influence of cultural attributes. For example, Bercovitch and Houston (1996) find the mediator’s status or rank to be an important predictor of success. That would be consistent with some of the most prominent successes, such as the mediation efforts of Kissinger, Carter, and Clinton in Middle East negotiations. Realists might argue that status or rank is simply an indicator of the power and resources that a mediator can bring to bear on the participants, but that is not suggested by the data in this study. American mediators have not enjoyed notable success in mediating Latin American disputes, nor have Western mediators been
particularly successful in mediating disputes in Africa. The negative legacy of Western imperialism might outweigh the positive benefits of the resources that the Western mediators can bring to bear in those regions. A second possibility is that the cultural identity of the mediator does matter, but that the critical appraisal of the personal attributes of the mediator comes at the time when the parties agree to accept the mediation. Once the mediation begins, the mediator’s effectiveness may be more dependent on the mediation strategy and the impartiality and skill of the mediator than on his or her personal attributes. A third possibility is that shared religion is not always the key cultural attribute. For example, the success rate for mediation in inter-Arab disputes almost doubles when the mediator is from an Arab state, but the presumed cultural advantage is not based on a common religious identity.\textsuperscript{12}

**Conclusion**

We used data from 752 mediations in militarized interstate disputes to test predictions about the relationship between social and political cultural similarities and differences and the outcome of the mediation efforts. Our statistical tests yield significant support for the hypothesis that mediation is more likely to succeed when the disputants are from similar social cultures. These results, however, indicated that the relationship between the social cultures of disputants and the success of mediation is more complex than that suggested in a simple categorization of states based on Huntington’s civilizational categories. We also found that mediation was more likely to succeed in disputes in which the parties shared democratic political cultures, a finding that is consistent with the already robust findings regarding the avoidance of war in disputes between democracies.
Future Research

The findings are the result of a first look at the relationship between culture and the outcome of mediation in militarized interstate disputes. Many questions remain, such as whether particular social and/or political pairings of states more or less likely to accept mediation. If they are more likely to reject mediation, are they more likely to have their disputes escalate to war? Further, questions regarding the role of other forms of outside intervention may influence and be influence by the cultural dimension. For example, cross-cultural affinities have been show to influence behavior in interstate conflicts (Davis and Moore, 1997), and Henderson (1997; and with Tucker, 2001) has explored the relationship between cultural linkages and dispute involvement. Although it is beyond the scope of this project, the role of outside actors in shifting the balance of capabilities through alliances or joining the MID on the side of their culturally similar participant may provide some mileage in our understanding of culture, mediations, and the outcome of MIDs. That is, outside parties can act either diplomatically or militarily in an effort to alter the course of a conflict.

Other logical extensions of the research would require major data generation efforts. First, we have considered an important, but not necessarily representative, temporal domain in our consideration of mediation efforts between 1945 and 1995. Second, we have considered mediation only when it is offered in militarized disputes. Although it would be a difficult undertaking, it makes sense to consider generating data on the use and effectiveness of mediation in disputes that do not escalate to the threat, display, or use of force. Third, at several points the findings suggest that our identification of social culture on the basis of Huntington’s typology is not adequately
tapping key cultural attributes that may affect the success of mediation. Future investigations may benefit from a closer look at regional attributes (Kapowicz, 1998; Holsti, 1996), or variations in approaches to negotiation (Cohen, 1996, 1997; Patai, 1973) that can affect the quality of communication. Finally, states often turn to mediation only after negotiation has failed. Although much has been written in impressionistic accounts and case studies with regard to the relationship between culture, politics, and negotiation, those relationships have not been the subject of an extensive empirical investigation.

As it stands, the research illustrates the complexity of the meaning of social cultural differences and similarities as it demonstrates their empirical relevance. It also adds to the robustness of findings in support of the democratic peace proposition, while adding weight to the cultural, as opposed to structural, explanation of that phenomenon.
References


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1 We have paraphrased Rubin, Pruitt, and Kim to present the broadest possible definition of mediation.

2 The hypotheses refer to "similar" social or political cultures, rather than the "same" cultures because the social or political culture of every country is to some extent unique. Nevertheless, "similar" should be understood to mean that the social or political cultures of the two states both fall into the same social or political category in the typologies below.


4 The ICM definition is essentially the same as that for the Correlates of War Militarized Interstate Dispute data set. There is considerable overlap in the disputes included in the two data sets. The unit of observation -- the mediation effort versus the dispute -- is different.

5 We limit our cases to mediation in militarized disputes because of our theoretical concern with the proximate causes of war, as well as more the practical constraint of available data. We note, however, that our inferences could be influenced by this coding decision. We explore this issue more fully in the discussion of the findings.

6 The Philippines, for example, is a predominantly Catholic state, but although its religion would place it in the Western category, we have classified it as Other because of its non-Western attributes.
There also are some instances in which we disagree with Henderson and Tucker’s classifications. We have changed the classification of Bosnia-Herzegovina from Orthodox to Muslim, Israel from Other to Western, Singapore from Buddhist to Sinic, and Belize from Latin American to Other.

Bercovitch's totalitarian, military, monarchy, and authoritarian categories have been collapsed into a single authoritarian category.

All analyses employed STATA 6.0 software.

The findings also are contrary to the traditional Islamic distinction between *dar al-Islam* (abode of Islam) and *dar al-harb* (abode of war), which implies a greater Islamic receptivity to resolving disputes peacefully when both states represent Islamic cultures. The *dar al-Islam* versus *dar al-harb*, distinction, however, is based on whether or not a society is governed by *shari’a*, that is, Islamic law, as opposed to a secular legal regime (Denny, 1987). Thus, according to the *dar al-Islam* versus *dar al-harb* distinction, cultural differences between say, Turkey and Iran, may be only slightly less significant than between Turkey and a Western state, or between Iran and Iraq. In fact, very few Islamic states are governed by *shari’a*, and there are even fewer instances of militarized disputes between them.

During the 1980’s, for example, the United States publicly supported the “Contadora” efforts to mediate the an ongoing Central American conflict involving Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador at the same time that it was supplying covert military aid to rebel forces attempting to overthrow the Nicaraguan government.

The success rate when the mediator is also from an Arab state is 43%, whereas it is 24% with a non-Arab mediator.