In partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science

Department of Political Science

Haverford College

Let Them Mediate: uncovering the potential of traditionally ignored state mediators

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May 2021
# Table of Contents

Preface ............................................................................................... 3  
Acknowledgements ........................................................................... 5  

Chapter I: Introduction ..................................................................... 8  

Chapter II: Literature Review on the Field of International Mediation ................................................. 11  
What is international mediation? ....................................................... 11  
Major Streams of International Mediation Theory .................................................................................. 14  
Conceptualising the Mediation Process ................................................................................................. 16  
Context: Antecedent Conditions ....................................................... 18  
Process: Taxonomy of Mediation Strategies ......................................................................................... 21  
Who Is The Mediator? ....................................................................... 24  
Outcomes: Post-mediation ................................................................. 25  

Chapter III: Research Design and Methodology ............................................ 28  
Research Question ........................................................................... 28  
Universe of Cases ........................................................................... 28  
Research Design ............................................................................ 30  
Methodology .................................................................................. 30  

Chapter IV: An Indepth Examination of Mediator Identity ................................................................. 31  
Why Is Identity Important? ............................................................... 32  
Operationalization & Hypotheses .................................................... 35  
  Religious Identity .......................................................................... 37  
  Smallness/Largeness .................................................................... 43  
  Historical Identity ........................................................................ 29  
  Diplomatic Identity & Image ......................................................... 51  

Chapter V: Algeria Mediates the United States-Iran Hostage Crisis, 1979-1981 ..................................... 54  
Introduction .................................................................................... 54  
Case Study Selection ...................................................................... 54  
Background & Summary of the Conflict ......................................... 57  
Mediators Rejected/Failed Prior to Algeria ..................................... 63  
Research Hiccups .......................................................................... 65  
Hypothesis Testing: Does Algeria prove or disprove these hypotheses? ............................................... 66  
  Testing H1: Did Algeria’s religious identity matter? .............................................................................. 69  
  Testing H2: Did Algeria’s smallness play a role in this matter? .............................................................. 72  
  Testing H3: Did Algeria’s historical identity matter? .............................................................................. 74  
  Testing H4: Did Algeria’s diplomatic identity and image matter? ....................................................... 78  
What then? .................................................................................... 82  

Chapter VI: Conclusion ..................................................................... 83  
Summarising Findings .................................................................... 83  
Contributions & Significance ......................................................... 84  
Limitations & Weaknesses ............................................................ 86  
Future Steps ................................................................................ 86  

Works Cited .................................................................................... 88
Preface

The topic of mediation has occupied my mind for a long span of time. A span that I cannot accurately measure due to its longevity. My range of interactions with mediation have been personal, public, and intellectual. Within the personal and public, I have found myself resolving interpersonal disputes for my family, friends, and various other communities I have been a part of. The theme of mediation has heavily, and quite organically, found its way into most things that I did during my college career. Over time, the interest has only deepened, finding its way into my senior thesis - which is a culmination of my degree and four years at Haverford - and my postgraduate plans.

In its most apparent form, this thesis is a study about mediator identity, specifically when the mediating agent is a state. Simultaneously, and in a somewhat implicit fashion, the thesis is an academic intervention; it breaks ground into a dwindling and Eurocentric academic stream, and brings well-deserved state mediators who are seldom acknowledged. These include small, third-world, post-colonial, and non-Western states. The thesis is meant to serve as a spotlight for these agents, who have often resolved some of the largest and trickiest interstate conflicts in the world, though have lacked the recognition that their European counterparts have received. It is also meant to further our understanding of peacebuilding, which is often limited to seeing the Bretton Woods institutions and global superpowers as resolving forces towards global crisis.

I believe that this thesis does a lot. However, I also acknowledge that it doesn’t do all that it intended to do: my aspirations of producing a theoretically flawless and methodologically perfect thesis dwindled very fast in the face of mounting COVID-19 fatigue. As the year turned out to be both physically and emotionally challenging in a variety of previously unknown ways, my productivity and mental health felt increasingly vulnerable to those challenges. I express
these hardships because of two things I very strongly believe: the first, that our department and Haverford College at large should have discounted expectations of senior thesis this academic year¹ and the second, that this work will be a first step in the direction of producing work along these lines due to its imperfect nature². Additionally, the lack of scholarly sources and classified Central Intelligence Agency documents about the case study of this thesis complicated my research further.

For my readers, I hope that this thesis provides new grounds to reflect upon. It will serve you best if you read it with a mindset that is both critical and innovative. I discuss several new ideas, try to coin terms occasionally, and definitely theorise on issues that lack scholarly opinion and literature. All of this will be palatable and useful only if you approach the writing with an open mind. I am wishing you a happy reading and will always be more than willing to engage in questions and constructive criticism from any of my readers -- professors, colleagues, underclassmen, and whoever else reads this.

¹ It seemed like a step necessary to preserve students’ already languishing mental and physical states in the face of widespread COVID trauma, which included death and extreme financial instability due to widespread layoffs. My colleagues in all departments, and I myself, found it a struggle to meet unchanged expectations after an ongoing and year long + pandemic severely altered their capabilities.

² This thesis is a piece of work very close to my heart, though the circumstances of its production have left many flaws behind. I hope to revisit and revise it over the coming years, and hope that someday, some other student will find it useful and build upon it.
Acknowledgements

Somehow I have written almost a hundred pages before getting to this section, and I still believe that it may be my hardest one. Acknowledging my gratitude here seems to assign a finality to everything: it marks the end of this thesis, which marks the end of my undergraduate career, which in turn signifies adulthood and distance from all the people very dear to me. Alas, I must write it, both since that is what this process requires of me, and also because I am full of gratitude for all the people who have been crucial to this journey.

I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to Professor Craig Borowiak, my thesis advisor. In this year of hardships, low morale, and missed deadlines, he has been a constant source of support and cooperation. Craig’s reality checks and complex questions in the face of my various unhinged ideas were deeply appreciated throughout, for they are the only reason that this thesis looks like a political science study instead of a huge journal rant. Thank you so much, Craig, for your constant support and encouragement. I couldn’t have done this without you.

Additionally, I want to thank three of the figures who have been key to my intellectual development, critical thinking ability, and writing prowess over the past four years: Professor Nimisha Ladva, Professor Paulina Ochoa-Espejo, and Professor Barbara Hall. Thank you for teaching me to write, thank you for pushing me to always think on my toes and critically, and thank you for mentoring me in a variety of ways that I cannot possibly sum up in a few sentences.

I also most definitely have my family to thank. My parents, without whom I wouldn't be the person that I am, let alone attending Haverford College and producing a massive thesis at the undergraduate level. My mummy and my baba, whose incessant love has been delivered to me 8000 miles away for the past four years, sometimes via Whatsapp gifs, sometimes via prayers,
and sometimes via surprise mail. Also, I want to thank my sister Alina whose unparalleled ability
to diffuse my stress and endless bad jokes delivered via Whatsapp voice notes have made this
process a little more bearable each day. I love you all, and appreciate all that you have done for
me.

Lastly, but surely not least: my friends. The people who have turned into family the last
four years, the people who have held my hand--both literally and metaphorically--through the
simultaneously beautiful and tumultuous journey that college has been. In no particular order
other than alphabetical, I want to thank: Matan Arad-Neeman, Tanisha Bansal, Raynor
Bond-Ashpole, Kelsey Chai, Noorie Chowdhury, Evan Moon, Louisa Stoll, and Sydney Woods
for their never ending faith and countless shared sighs & 2 ams in Lutnick as our senior theses
became the central axis of our universe. Thank you for being my rays of sunshine through all of
it. Here in, you are forever preserved in the political science departmental archive, and if you
know me, you know that this is the utmost expression of my love.
Chapter I: Introduction

The world as we know it today exists in fragments. It exists in the form of states, with these bordered states functioning as the main units of the international world order. Our understanding of the world relies on the idea of states and their autonomous function. The disciplines of international relations and political science also have this premise as one of their core assumptions, at least today.

One could trace the beginning of this world order to the end of feudalism in Europe in the 16th century or to the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. Alternatively, one could argue that the real fortification of the concept of states happened with the start of institutions like the League of Nations in 1920 and consequently, the United Nations in 1945. The latter assertion is rarer, but when made, it is done upon the premise that these institutions formally recognized the ideas of states and sovereignty in the 20th century. Having continued into the 21st century, these institutions have carried with them the premises that they were based on.

Regardless of the discrepancies of opinion over when states became the basic units of interaction within the international system, the objective truth as of today is that this is the state of the world today. With this establishment, one can look back and gaze upon the various things that a formalized state-based world order has done for us. It could be seen as a fortification of colonial legacy by virtue of who divided several parts of the world and it could also be seen as the basis of a world where conflict is endemic.

As of 2021, the world has a total of 195 sovereign states. If one’s imagination is let run loose, one could imagine this as having 195 people in a single household. Now as they all function together and have somewhat similar needs, conflict is bound to arise. Specifically, if these people are different: some strong and resourceful, the others not so much. When this
analogy is transferred back to the state system, one can easily predict that interstate conflict is bound to prevail in a world structured like ours. In fact, one doesn’t even need to predict -- interstate conflict has tainted the world since the longest time imaginable.

So, if conflict is prevalent and permanent, and its damages - both to life and material - irreversible, how do we counter this issue? The answer is simple: resolve them. An idealistic answer, perhaps, would be to prevent them, but looking back at the history of our world, the efficacy of that answer seems small. Consequently then, the question arises: how do we resolve them? Through mediation, is the simple answer. Containing losses and damages through mediation of sorts has worked in the past, and this thesis essentially advocates for it. More specifically, the thesis dives into the world of mediation to bring out how state mediators function, and how their identities intersect with them being chosen as mediators.

The literature surrounding mediation peaked in the latter half of the 1900s but seems to have declined since then. This scholarly research and interests seem to have directly followed the patterns surrounding the use of mediation, which in and of itself seems to have been highly prescribed to in the latter 1900s. With the start of the 21st century, however, we see international mediation become rarer as the practice of large scale interventions continue. This thesis is an attempt to 1) revive this dwindling scholarly conversation and 2) emphasise that mediation is our best bet to solve the issues that surround our modern world. Within that emphasis, the thesis emphasise that mediating actors are aplenty; it isn’t just our traditional state mediators - superpowers and large states with a large inventory of influence and resources - who can mediate. Instead, each state has the potential to be a mediator depending on its uniquely shaped characteristics and strengths. While the chances of the thesis having a broader audience than me
and my advisor are rare, I still posit it as an intervention into both the academic and practical worlds.

In order to do so, the thesis takes a systemic approach. In Chapter II, I distill the past scholarly literature about the world of international mediation, honing in briefly on all of its sub-foci. Next, Chapter III introduces the specific research question and the methodology used to answer that question in detail. Then, Chapter IV develops variables pertinent to mediator identity, operationalizes them, and through an expansive literature review, arrives at four distinct hypotheses. These hypotheses are then tested in Chapter V, through the case study of Algeria’s mediation during the Iran-United States Hostage Crisis in 1979. Finally, Chapter VI concludes the thesis, discussing main takeaways, limitations, and further steps.

The story of mediation is alas, a long and convoluted story. That length and convolution distill themselves into my thesis, as you will be able to see through the rest of this text.
Chapter II: Literature Review on the Field of International Mediation

This literature review is written with the aim of understanding the conceptual and practical complexities of international mediation as it stands today within the discipline of international relations. In developing this understanding, the goal is to situate my research question for my thesis - about non-traditional states acting as successful mediators of interstate conflict - within the landscape of international mediation. The existing literature that I have come across stands at the confluence of topics like international relations, conflict theory, conflict management, power politics, and mediation theory. In this literature review, I shall attempt to integrate all of them.

What Is International Mediation?

The concept of international mediation is embedded within that of conflict management. Whenever a conflict, roughly defined as a dispute at any level between or two or more actors erupts, conflict management and resolution are attempted. These measures are employed in order to reduce, limit, or eliminate the degree of violence and its after effects. Article 33 of the United Nations Charter outlines some of these measures: “The parties to any dispute, the continuance of which is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, shall, first of all, seek a solution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their own choice”. According to existing analysis by IR experts, these listed solutions could be categorised into four types: coercive, legal, formal/informal bilateral, and non-coercive third party. Mediation falls

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5 Gartner, Scott S. 2014 Third-Party Mediation of Interstate Conflicts: Actors, Strategies, Selection, and Bias, https://elibrary.law.psu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1063&context=arbitrationlawreview
into the last category, in that it is a non-coercive third party measure arranged in the face of conflict.

Literature around the issue of international mediation has now evolved for about 6 decades, starting with Oran R. Young’s 1967 publication *The Intermediaries: Third Parties in International Crises*. His text came as a breakthrough in a landscape where there was scant to no writing about international crises and third-party mediation, and was soon followed by John Burton’s *Conflict & Communication: The use of controlled communication in international relations* (1969) and Lars-Golan Stenelo’s *Mediation In International Negotiations* (1972). Since then, the field has seen an explosion of research work, both quantitative and qualitative, though there exists little which consensus has been found on. Be it the definition of mediation or theory surrounding mediation antecedents, processes, and evaluation, the academic debate is ongoing.

A reluctance on the part of many to define mediation has been a prevailing issue, which finally found a solution in expert Jacob Bercovitch’s definition -- highly prescribed to since its inception and referred to throughout the literature. According to Berkovitch, international mediation is "a process of conflict management, related to but distinct from the parties' own negotiations, where those in conflict seek the assistance of, or accept an offer of help from, an outsider (whether an individual, an organization, a group, or a state) to change their perceptions or behavior, and do so without resorting to physical force or invoking the authority of law". While Bercovitch’s work was considered a pioneering breakthrough by some after years of

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avoidance on researchers’ parts, others deemed it too broad and vague. All of the approaches and definitions have been subject to criticism over their perceived over-specificity or lack thereof. For the means and purposes of this literature review, however, I prescribe to Berkovitch’s definition in that wherever international mediation is referred to, I request that the reader keep his work in mind. In essence, we perceive international mediation as a reconciliatory tool that changes a dyadic conflict into a triangular dialogue by bringing in a third party who negotiates to no party’s favor and without physical violence and coercion.

These efforts aimed at obscuring or avoiding seem to be characteristic of the whole field in its early days. Renowned international relations experts and theorists, Arthur Meyer in 1960 and William Simkin in 1971 made statements that echo this sentiment that is prevalent throughout the field.⁹ In his article “Functions of the Mediator in Collective Bargaining”, Meyer dramatically proclaims that the mediator “has no science of navigation, no fund inherited from the experience of others. He is a solitary artist recognising at most a few guiding stars, and depending on his personal powers of divination”.¹⁰ Meanwhile, Simkin’s work echoes the fear of many in that he believes that there are too many variables to be looked at, and any exercise trying to study mediation mechanically would prove to be futile.¹¹ While these sentiments still seem to linger a little, I have gleaned immense progress from my examination of the literature that has been produced in the last thirty to forty years. There has been a tackling of the bull by its horns so to say as, and academics, scholars, and practitioners have launched into inquiry instead of shying away from it. While there is still no consensus on the best or most successful way to

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study a strand of international mediation, several theories and empirical research are present for the reader to continue researching and pondering upon the issue.

**Major Streams of International Mediation Theory**

As I move ahead, it is important to distinguish between the main streams of theories and studies that are coming out of work being done in this realm. According to Bercovitch in his essay “Mediation in International Conflict: An Overview of Theory, A Review of Practice” three major types of literature is being produced: prescriptive studies laid out to offer strategy and counsel to those negotiating, economics and game theory based studies that construct predictable mathematical models of negotiation behaviour and lastly, the empirical approach which aims aims to use results based on case studies and experiments to find concrete guidelines towards mediational success. Bercovitch prefers the latter, which is reflected in his contributions to the field throughout his life, some of which shall surface again during the literature review. After his attempt to typify the scholarship being produced in the realm of international mediation, efforts seemed to have been limited. The drawing of connection to existing schools of thought and theoretical families is rarely visible.

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However, this landscape shifts with Kleiboer’s (1996) excellent contribution. Having performed an extensive survey of existing literature, she uses Burrell and Morgan’s (1979) metatheoretical framework in the context of international relations and conflict management. She identifies four major streams of thought or “proto-theories” and describes them as varying across two dimensions: “assumptions about the nature and valuation of conflict (conflict as a challenge to order versus as an opportunity for social change)” and “assumptions about the ontological status of conflict and its implications for theorizing about conflict (realist/objectivist versus nominalist/subjectivist epistemologies)”. She shares the table on the right for easier comprehension and then goes on to further explain the categories she has crafted:

A. Mediation as power brokerage: The most common way of thinking about international mediation, where predictive theory is applicable. The view is from the neo-realist perspective about international politics, as reflected in the works of Waltz 1979, Keohane 1984, 1986 and Krasner 1979.

B. Mediation as political problem solving: This stream also stems from the realist perspective of international relations wherein an international conflict is a “threat to be averted or controlled” through “systematic efforts” which can include mediation. This type of work can be found at the confluence of international relations and political psychology as visible in the works of Kelman 1965 and Jervis 1976.

C. Mediation as re-establishing social relationships: The third perspective, entirely different from the above two in that it sees international conflict and consequent mediation as a chance for social change. This perspective is grounded in critical theory and a human needs approach in

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international politics, which are visible in the works of Burton 1972b, Hoffman 1987; Brown 1994.

D. Mediation as domination: The fourth and final perspective, wherein international mediation is seen as a tool of dominion by the rich and powerful states to subjugate others and keep conflicts from altering the world order. Grounded in structuralist theory about international politics, these themes can be explored in the works of Frank 1969, Galtung 1971, Wallerstein 1974.

Kleiboer’s categorization of international mediation within the international relations and politics world is exceptionally helpful in contextualising how dominant schools of thought characterise it. Since she uses a massive amount of literature and past studies, the studies cited in the four categories have not yet been reviewed by me, though her explanations make for good predictors of the work that I may be able to see. More recent literature seems to have lacked the effort to situate international mediation within and in the context of the prevalent schools of thought in international relations.

**Conceptualising The Mediation Process**

A wide range of literature has consensus on the stages of the international mediation process. Simply put, these stages could be characterized as the past, present, future phases of any given
cyclical process. Put more sophisticatedly, these can be divided into antecedent conditions which prevail prior to mediation, current conditions including the mediation strategy and behaviour, and finally, consequent conditions which include post-mediation outcomes. Jacob Bercovitch describes the mediation and this cycle as “a dynamic process taking place within a political context, which affects, and is in turn affected by, the practice of mediation”.\textsuperscript{14} Berkovitch characterizes his understanding for the readers in a graphical, visual form as well which I attach here (top-left). A similar three stage breakup of the mediation process is pretty common throughout the existing literature, even if different scholars characterize it in different terms.

A different use of language within the literature has seen the antecedent phase be characterised as the “context of mediation” and the current conditions be portrayed as the “process of mediation”.\textsuperscript{15} The contextual factors are believed to influence both the appointment of a certain mediator and the strategy and behavior that they display after appointment. This language has appeared in the work of Berkovitch\textsuperscript{16} himself repeatedly, but also in the work of Daniel Druckman, who has conducted innovative and groundbreaking theorisation around the socio-psychological phenomenon that contribute to a mediation succeeding or failing.

Like I mentioned before, this theoretical sub-stream of international mediation is relatively squibble free, wherein scholars are in agreement about the mediation process being broken down into three. In fact, an overwhelming amount of the literature references Berkovitch’s stages and uses them as a theoretical base to build on. Likewise, I also rely on his use of terminology and this diagram as an organizational mechanism to structure this literature review around the theory embedded in each phase of international mediation.


Context: Antecedent Conditions

Scholars have paid a great deal of attention to how the antecedent or contextual conditions of a mediation process affect its outcome. Through qualitative and quantitative testing, they have developed a plethora of theories, which I shall attempt to group and discuss here.

Multiple of Jacob Bercovitch’s studies identify three antecedent factors that affect meditation: a) the disputing parties motivation and commitment to the process of mediation, b) conflict ripeness i.e. how the circumstances of existing hurt or disaster are changing attitudes and urgency, and c) the availability of an appropriate mediator. To most scholars in the literature, a good mediator is one with intellect, technique, experience drafting formal proposals and legal documents, and an in-depth understanding of the conflict at hand. This typology, while useful, isn’t comprehensive enough or prescribed by many within the field, so I looked at other scholars and the factors they are analysing.

Upon this research, it became clear that three main contextual characteristics are looked at by scholars when assessing the effect on mediating outcomes. These include a) conflict ripeness, b) degree of conflict intensity, and c) nature of the issues at hand.

Conflict ripeness was also identified by Berkovitch above and remains one of the most discussed antecedent factors. It essentially refers to the phases or stages that a certain conflict is in, and the theory in the arena attempts to test if a certain phase is better for the mediator’s entry into the picture. What is a ripe moment for mediation has been a question that the answer to has

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yet to be found as debates in the literature continue. Scholars have been at odds about the “ripest” time to intervene since the inception of the field.\textsuperscript{20} An example of an argument between two of the most revered scholars in the field is where Bercovitch, Anagnoson, and Wille (1991) use their dataset to contend that the longer a given dispute lasts, the less chances it has of being resolved through mediation.\textsuperscript{21} However, contrary to this, Zartman (1983, 1985) outlines that regardless of the duration of a conflict, it is the disputing parties analysis of the situation - characterised by various interactions between disputing actors and with violence - that influence a moment’s ripeness.\textsuperscript{22}

The second contextual characteristic, conflict intensity, is also widely discussed. Interestingly enough, there is a severe lack of consensus on what intensity entails and scholars have theorized and defined it in their own ways in their research. Kleiboer (1997) after having conducted an intensive literature analysis thinks that it may refer to one or a combination of the following: level of threat, scale of violence, number of deaths.\textsuperscript{23} Polarized debates have also characterized this discussion wherein some theorists like Young (1968)\textsuperscript{24} argue that the more intense a conflict, the higher the chances of a mediation effort to succeed. On the other end of the spectrum, the argument that the higher the intensity of a conflict (i.e. more violence, more deaths), the lesser the chances of success is being contended by Brockner (1982)\textsuperscript{25} and Berkovitch (1991)\textsuperscript{26}.

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The third and final category identified by scholars in the field is that of the nature of the issue in the conflict. Bercovitch, Anagnoson, and Wille (1991) provide a very comprehensive set of categories and outline five types of issues behind a conflict: (1) territorial and endangering sovereignty, (2) ideological and grounded in political or belief and value systems, (3) security issues stemming from border or territorial dispute, (4) self-determination and national sovereignty grounded in independence struggles, and (5) a miscellaneous combination of types of conflict. Using their expansive database, they argue that type 1 and 3 are much more prone to mediational success than type 2 and 4. Seemingly comprehensive and sensible at the surface, their theorization isn’t without fail as arguments prevail about the inability of a single type to encapsulate a whole issue.

Moreover, scholars like Azar (1986)\(^{27}\) have argued that disputes arising from type 2 issues are bound for complete failure when offered mediation based solutions. Azar specifically calls them “zero-sum” issues where the losses incurred have already surpassed or will match the gains made through mediation, decreasing incentive to engage. With a similar game theory type analysis, Druckman (1993)\(^{28}\) has argued that “positive-sum” issues are more likely to succeed with international mediation.

All in all, antecedent or contextual conditions of a mediation have generated an excessive amount of debate and research within the field. Both empirics and qualitative research have been employed to not only identify the most important contextual factors, but also how and what makes for a conflict being most amenable to mediation. Consensus is lacking, as the discussion above demonstrates, however, the theoretical stream is very rich.


Process: Taxonomy of Mediation Strategies

When it comes to discussing stage two “mediation strategy and behaviour” portion of the mediation cycle, the literature around it is massive and ever-compounding. What seems to have started out as an attempt to assign roles to mediators eventually turned into a more nuanced realization that mediators will play many roles over the course of a given mediation. Instead of assigning them roles, it would be much more useful to focus on the mediation strategies that dictated their behaviour and the roles they morphed in and out of.

When the focus was on developing a taxonomy of roles, Jeffrey Rubin’s scholarship was prominent. He discerned between the following mediator roles by creating dichotomies of: formal/informal, individual/ representative, invited/uninvited, advisory/directive, content/ process, permanent/ temporary, and conflict resolution/conflict prevention roles. Writing around the same time, Stulberg (1981) lists the mediator roles as being a catalyst, an education, translator, resource-expander, bearer of bad news, agent of reality, and a scapegoat. Several other attempts to classify mediators as acting one of these parts have emerged, but overtime, their efficacy has been challenged. After all, it is evident to any third party reading the proceedings of any international mediation that a mediator plays several of these roles at any given time and so trying to correlate behavior through role isn’t useful. Empirical validity is also found for these claims in the work of Bercovitch and Rubin (1992). Since this realization, the focus has shifted to a discussion of mediation strategies instead.

29 Rubin, Jeffrey 'Introduction' in Dynamics of Third Party Intervention (New York: Praeger, 1981), pp. 7-41;
Traditionally, mediation strategies have been seen as either content or process strategies, with both the terms altering exactly what they are titled. One changes the content and material of the deal and deal making process, while the latter is more logistical. Scholars have come up with parallel typifications: contingent and noncontingent strategies\textsuperscript{32}, dealmaking and orchestration strategies\textsuperscript{33}, and incremental v. comprehensive strategies\textsuperscript{34}. The literature has evolved and a plethora of non-dichotomous typologies have also erupted. Of these efforts, two demand discussion due to the high scholarly agreement they have transpired.

One widely embraced attempt at this mediation strategy and behavior typology seems to have been made by William Zartman and Saadia Touval in 1985, in their article “International Mediation: Conflict and Power Politics”. They categorize mediation strategy and mediator roles into their main types: communicative, formulative, and finally, manipulative.\textsuperscript{35}

Here, the mediator as communicator plays an important but minimalist role, contacting the disputing parties, helping with the exchange of messages, building trustworthy rapport, and clearing misinformation and filling information gaps. The second type, which revolves around the mediator following a formulation strategy entails a slightly more involved role which controls and commands the logistics: setting protocols and agenda, maintaining punctuality and focus, and suggesting compromises and settlements. These first two types are deemed to be facilitator roles by the authors, and are more or less working to resolve “perceptive issues” by playing “neutral hyphens in a dyadic relationship” without any motives at all.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{33} Kolb, D. The Mediators (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1983).
\item \textsuperscript{34} Stein, J.G. 'Structure, Strategies and Tactics of Mediation: Kissinger and Carter in the Middle East', Negotiation Journal, 1 (1985) pp. 331-47
\end{itemize}
In contrast to these two strategies, the third one takes a much more active role, and involves power politics and self-motives. In acting as the “manipulator” the mediator essentially leaves behind the principle of neutrality and becomes a full party in the process, actively mobilizing resources and lobbying the disputing parties. Here, the mediator makes the use of manipulation tactics with the aims of keeping the parties in the process, pressuring them into being flexible, filtering and limiting informational exchange, incentivising with benefits or threatening with punishments, and finally, through the threat of withdrawal. According to their analysis, the choice of strategy and mediator role must depend on the nature of the conflict and the disputing parties.  

Building on and polishing this taxonomy according to their own analysis, Jacob Bercovitch, Jeffrey Rubin, and Allison Houston provided the realm of international mediation with a revised categorization of mediation strategies in 1992 and 2000, respectively. Their work also presents three types of mediation strategies-roles, all of which are set out on a spectrum of low to high intervention. The categories include communication-facilitation, procedural-formulative, and directive strategies. The first category posits the mediator as a passive vessel through whom information is transmitted and co-operation built while the second one sees the mediator as the manager of environmental and logistical factors. While the second category i.e. a procedural-formulative mediator takes a higher degree of active control over the process of mediation, the communication-facilitation type mediator is primarily a passive influence who exists to reduce abrasion between two already antagonistic parties. Grouping these

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together, Berkovitch et al. call them “non-directive” strategies and provide clear outlines of tactics for each group too.\(^{38}\)

Lastly, the third category of directive strategies in this taxonomy refers to an interventionist form of mediation. Here, the mediator has a set motive and wants to broker peace with substantial incentives and ultimatums. The mediator also influences the substance and process of the peace significantly, moulding it in whatever way seems most stable and effective in terms of behaviour alteration for the disputing parties.

In their 1992 publication, Berkovitch and Rubin built on Hartman and Touval’s taxonomy from 1985, which was previously highly prescribed in the literature. Upon this polishing and the addition of more clarity, the newer taxonomy seems to have replaced the previous one as being dominantly used in the literature. The two theories stand as stepping stones to each other, instead of as opposing bodies of work. In tandem, they provide the audience with a very clear categorization of passive and active mediation roles and strategies, or as Bercovitch classifies them, non-directive and directive strategies.

**Who Is The Mediator?**

As I move on from broader theoretical situations into the nitty gritty examinations within the field itself, the question of who this mediating role can be played by is inevitable. The role of this third party mediator can be played by a number of different actors including individuals, states, institutions, or other organizations. On the individual level, conflict researchers and Quakers through the ages have served as informal mediators meanwhile states have served as mediators by appointing senior officials and experienced decision makers.\(^{39}\) On the institutional


and organizational level, groups with international, transnational, and regional power bases like the United Nations, Amnesty International, Red Cross, American Friends Service Committee, European Union, Arab League have helped serve as mediators within their scopes of influence. The organizational and institutional category can be further distilled into NGOs, religious affiliates, and civic/humanitarian foundations. The presence of such a variety of actors with a large variety of incentives and motives has complicated the work of international relations experts and international mediation theorists. The grievance about this heterogeneity and the consequent lack of coherence about the role of the mediator are worries expressed repeatedly by the scholars in their work.

**Outcomes: Post-mediation**

When it comes to determining if an international mediation has been successful or not, the attempts are dwindly and polarizing at best. While some researchers refuse to define a successful mediation, those like Bercovitch, Anagnoson, and Wille (1991) have provided a broad definition entailing "By successful outcomes we mean producing a cease fire, a partial settlement or a full settlement". However, the definition’s all-encompassing nature comes at the cost of lack of specificity, for which it has been amply criticised. It has been alleged that such loose definitions allow for several different “outcome assessments” and results from the same kind of mediation. In lieu of these criticisms, a third group has come up with a “goal-based” approach

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which surveys success according to the mediating and disputing parties’ starting goals and expectations in tandem with the end outcomes and compromises.\textsuperscript{44} Within this realm of definitional theorization of successful mediation, consensus is hard found.

After the definition comes the question of evaluation. Throughout the literature, several pieces of criteria have sprung up, and with it an account of all the difficulties involved in developing a coherent and uniform criteria. Since mediation can vary so much on a case by case basis and involve such different types of contexts, actors, and strategies, arriving at a single criteria is a difficult task.

With the simultaneous acknowledgement that 1) these issues of inconsistency will exist in the background and 2) that some kind of evaluative criteria still needs to be drawn up for success and progress within both the academic and praxis worlds of international mediation, some theorists have taken a leap of faith in crafting evaluative criteria. The most cited and widely embraced of these works is that of Bercovitch where he evaluates success in a post conflict environment with two broad evaluative criteria: subjective and objective, aimed at gauging the overall level of impact and consequences of any given mediation process.\textsuperscript{45}

The subjective criteria are meant to measure the mediating and disputing parties satisfaction and perception of the mediation process. It is aimed at gauging if they believe that goals and expectations at the time of starting out have been met at the end of the process. The judgement on success is measured through four criteria: parties’ satisfaction, fairness, efficiency, and effectiveness.\textsuperscript{46}

\begin{itemize}
\end{itemize}
On the other hand, the objective criteria empirically measure the extent of change in situation and parties’ behaviors in the aftermath of the mediation process. Judgements of success rely on the degree of change i.e. if parties and situations return to pre-mediation markers, then the mediation has failed and vice versa. The prospect of partial success also stands depending on if the markers are met halfway for example, violence is dampened relatively if not completely diminished.47

In conclusion, Berkovitch’s two-pronged strategy offers both qualitative and quantitative measures to evaluate if an international mediation trial has resulted in improvement or not. Not only are these evaluative criteria crucial in developing a post-mediation strategy for the conflict and region in question, it is also invaluable in providing guidance for future mediations.

Chapter III: Research Design and Methodology

Research Question

The previous chapter created a succinct model of the world of international mediation. The rest of this thesis relies on the reader having read that section and having a baseline understanding of the way mediation works. The research question I pose in this thesis is as follows:

In interstate conflicts marked by power asymmetries, how are mediators chosen? If given the chance to select, who do the states on the lower end of that power spectrum choose as a mediator? What aspects of the potential mediating state’s identity are most pertinent or salient?

Figure 3.1: Spectrum demonstrating state power; used to illustrate the research question

Universe of Cases

The universe of cases for this thesis is very large. Put simply, it is all the cases of international conflict where between two sparring disputants, there is a difference of power and might, and the conflict is mediated by another state. The universe includes all two-party interstate conflicts in the 20th and 21st centuries, with the caveat that the thesis is reflecting on past cases, so anything that is ongoing does not qualify for the study.

This data is exceptionally hard to compile in its entirety due to the case universe’s expansiveness and a dearth of data collection within the academic field. The last comprehensive
data collection that was done in the fields of international mediation and conflict was about twenty years ago, by Professor Jacob Bercovitch. In a dataset titled the “Bercovitch International Conflict Management Dataset”, he compiled a comprehensive set of both qualitative and quantitative variables surrounding all international conflicts that have taken place between 1945 and 2003. Since then there has been no concerted effort to update this data set or add the multiple international interstate conflicts that have erupted. I share this state of the field to make clear that I will not be attempting to compile every single case that is part of this massive universe of cases. The time and resource based constraints make that an impossible task for now.

For the sake of clarity, however, I will point to some examples of intrastate conflicts that loosely fall within the universe of cases for this thesis. These cases include but aren’t limited to: China vs Taiwan (1949-1953), Egypt vs the United Kingdom (1952-1956), USSR vs. Hungary (1956) United States vs. Libya (1986), United Kingdom vs. Argentina (1982), USSR vs. Afghanistan (1979-1989), People’s Republic of China vs. Vietnam (1979), Russia vs. Georgia (2008) and so on. This list is by no means exhaustive, and there is the added caveat that my universe of cases was restricted to cases where there were state mediators, a criteria which most of these don’t fulfill. Additionally, it is important to remember that multi-party conflicts dealt with through alliances, such as the ongoing conflict in Yemen are beyond the scope of this thesis.

This description of the universe of cases is deeply imperfect, however, I am constrained by time and energy shortage. In a more systematic version of these thesis, I would like to generate a definite list of cases that apply to the situation. For now, the three crucial aspects to remember are: two party conflicts, time bound by the 20th & 21st century, and marked by power asymmetry between the disputants.
**Research Design**

In the literature reviews from both Chapters II and IV, I generate four distinct independent variables and hypotheses. These variables include religious identity, smallness/largeness, historical identity, and finally diplomatic identity and image. These variables are operationalized, discussed, and hypothesised upon in the next chapter. Since the chapter delves into the issue of state mediators and their identities very deeply in order to present the generated variables and hypotheses, I will keep the discussion regarding them brief over here. The four hypotheses are then tested using the case study of Algeria’s mediation in the United States-Iran Hostage Crisis of 1979. The choice to use a case so old and allegedly idiosyncratic was a tough one, though my long enduring interest in the case and its suitability within the framework of this research question led me to decide upon it in the end. I further elaborate upon my reasons behind making this choice in the beginning of Chapter V.

**Methodology**

To test each of the four hypotheses, I use qualitative data in the form of primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include newspaper articles, radio broadcasts, diplomatic statements, and first-hand accounts produced and circulated during the 444 days of the hostage crisis. Newspaper archives have proved to be an invaluable resource on an issue which otherwise seems to have a lot of classified information still under the covers, specifically the Algerian foreign ministry. The secondary resources I use include a variety of scholarly works: books, journal articles, and dissertations. Surprisingly, the latter of the three - dissertations - have discussed the issue in most detail while discussions of it in published scholarly work are rare at best.
Chapter IV: An Indepth Examination of Mediator Identity

Mediator activity can be carried out by various kinds of actors including influential individuals, organizations, institutions, or states. Since the focus of this thesis is mediating states, this section will focus on the examination of mediator identity in conjunction with state identity. Literature in these two fields and at their nexus will be used to construct a comprehensive base for the discussions ahead.

In the case of mediators as states, it is important to understand that when a state undertakes a mediation effort, the whole state isn’t part of the effort per se. Different mechanisms, institutions, and individuals serve as representatives for the state and carry out these mediation efforts on behalf of the state. This whole repertoire is made up of diplomats, politicians, public service officials, religious leaders etc etc, all of who are amongst the state’s top decision makers. When a state is chosen to mediate on the international stage, however, it isn’t these internal representatives that matter. States remain a popular mediating agent despite fragmentation of state power over the years. While this view is disputed by some scholars, however, the prevalent view is that despite this fragmentation of states and state power, a “state” is the most enduring form of a socio-political organization. This thesis functions on a similar premise: states are key mediating agents, in that they are often the most popular choice for mediating inter-state conflict.

Building on that, the thesis examines identity as it relates to state based mediation. In this chapter, a comprehensive literature review is used to construct a theoretical framework and four

49 Ibid
distinct hypotheses. These hypotheses examine different facets of identity salient to mediator selection and are examined in the next chapter through a case study.

**Why Is Identity Important?**

To start the discussion core to this study, it is essential to answer the question of how identity matters within the realm of mediation. While literature surrounding the issue has become more scant lately, several authors were writing about it as the Cold-War dwindled to an end. Their efforts were aimed at understanding the shifting international landscape and the simultaneous change in mediation actors and strategies.

In a 1999 publication, *Herding Cats: Multiparty Mediation in a Complex World*, Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall discuss mediation identity in-depth. While highlighting the different capacities of different actors, they assert very clearly that any given mediator’s capability to solve a conflict or enhance dialogue and negotiation is deeply dependent on who they are.\(^{50}\) Prior to their scholarly contribution, another seminal text entered the field in 1967 and discussed mediator identity. Titled *The Intermediaries: Third Parties in International Crises* and written by Oran R. Young, the book dedicates a full chapter to discussions of identity and makes it exceptionally clear that character traits or identity markers of any given mediator are strong predictors of success or failure.\(^{51}\) Hence, showing us that earlier conversations in the field were already reaching an agreement about the pertinence of identity in mediational efforts.

More recently, Jacob Bercovitch’s work has made the same assertions about mediator identity and success. He draws the link between these two variables by identifying mediator “influence, trust, and legitimacy” as crucial to the resolution process, while simultaneously

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making clear that mediator identity is essential to attaining these attributes in the eyes of the disputing parties. Empirical evidence and analysis has supported this claim, wherein data demonstrates that mediators with higher levels of perceived credibility are the ones who succeed in resolving disputes. So essentially, this section demonstrates to us that 1) identity is crucial and 2) it is crucial because it gives rise to the mediator’s trustworthiness, credibility, legitimacy, and leverage in the eyes of the disputing parties as table 4.1 explains.

![Figure 4.1: Pertinence of Mediator Identity](image)

Since the focus of the thesis is states, now this section will discuss what identity factors manifest themselves when states serve as mediators. The pertinence and importance of identity remain the same if not heightened in the case of state based mediation. The tangible identities that wield said leverage are economic, military, and political might. On the other hand, some scholars have emphasised upon the intangible identity factors that play a role in establishing mediator legitimacy. These intangible identity facets have been theorised and listed in multiple ways and a comprehensive yet non exhaustive list would include: conflict knowledgeability, empathy for all disputants, listening/communication skills, procedural skills, ideological

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positions, and cultural capital amongst others.\(^\text{55}\) Hence, making clear that there is scholarly consensus on the importance of identity even in situations of state based mediation.

Enhancing this analysis further, some scholars have illustrated how this leverage is created for the mediator through more inherent and constant identity facets. Consensus is that it emerges from the mutual sharing of traits: Saadia Touval and William Zartman have argued in several of their works that mediators are appreciated when they possess something that one or more of the disputants value.\(^\text{56}\) This value being manifested in shared values and/or identity facets. More recently, Emir Yazici’s work has illustrated the same phenomenon through an empirical study. Ethnic, lingual, or religious identity ties between the potential third party mediator and one of the disputant states heightens the chances of mediation by that specific mediator.\(^\text{57}\) In conclusion, disputing states sharing identities with the mediator is what makes identities pertinent. The rest of this thesis relies on this conclusion to further illustrate more specific phenomena and assertions.

After an expansive literature review spanning thousands of pages, it is clear that this niche research area has had a very small amount written about it. While occasionally scholars have contributed to the issue of state identities and their salience in the mediation process, these contributions are by no means enough. While writing in 1967, Oran R. Young made the same assertion regarding the minimal attention given to the concept of mediator identity. Fifty-five years later, I believe that the progress has been minimal. While that is saddening in its own way,


it is also a strong reason to further enhance this thesis since it will be a contribution to a field heavily ignored in the arenas of international relations, conflict studies, and mediation studies.

**Operationalization & Hypotheses**

Thus far, the literature examined for this thesis has been simultaneously rich and scant. The conundrum exists due to the blatant overlooking of some issues related to mediation identity while others are severely overlooked. As a combination of extensive research and intellectual interests, I have generated four independent variables for this thesis. In the following sections, I aim to first operationalize them. Then, using a comprehensive literature review and long-time intellectual pursuits, I draw hypotheses connected to each independent variable. These variables and their operational definitions as related to state mediators are as follows:

- **Religious identity**: The variable includes the religious faith, belonging, and affiliations of a state mediator. This can be gauged from officially declared state religion(s). Additionally, it can be understood from the practices, beliefs, and values that generated from being part of a religious tradition are also part of this identity facet.

- **Small/Large identity**: Here, the variable of smallness/largeness doesn’t just mean physical size. Instead, it is a culmination of physical size and international might, since the latter more often ends up determining if a state is perceived as small, large, or something in between. Most studies in the international studies realm focus on superpowers and large states, hence, there is a widespread consensus around what and who they are. For the means and purposes of this study, the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council are assumed to be “superpowers” and/or “large” states. Inversely, smallness is less discussed and less-consented upon in the literature. For this thesis, a small state is one that is small both in size and might on the international level. Hence, I
operationalize “small” as any state which is widely designated and seen as “Third World”, “developing”, or “underdeveloped”.58

- Historical identity: This refers to the historical character of a given mediator. Including traditions of post-coloniality and post-revolutionary sentiments, this variable is essentially gauged through the mediator’s historical identity within systems of domination on the international stage.

- Diplomatic identity & image: This variable refers to the diplomatic identity of any given state mediator. It is essentially constituted of three factors: diplomatic image and standing on the international stage, diplomatic relationship with disputing state A, and diplomatic relationship with disputing state B. Together, all of these factors demonstrate the diplomatic capabilities of the state mediator and make up this variable.

Lastly, the dependent variable in this case is acceptability to the disputing parties, and specifically acceptability to the disputant who is on the lower end of the power asymmetry.

*Hence, the overall hypothesis here is that in inter-state conflicts marred by power asymmetries, the weaker state will choose a state mediator who shares more identity facets with it, since they act as a source of affinity.*

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58 I operationalize in this manner since these labels are in turn based on markers like size, population, military might, poverty, GDP etc etc. Measured separately, these variables would essentially distinguish a small state from a non-small state (superpowers, large, medium states).
Religious identity

The potential of religion in the world of mediation is underexplored at best even though religion can play out in a multitude of ways. It can serve as both a major source of conflict and a source of peacebuilding due to its abilities to 1) create affinity and 2) serve as a force for political mobilization. There are conflicting opinions on the mediational potential of religion, wherein some scholars have strongly asserted that conflicts are actually never religious in nature.\(^{59}\) Instead, economic or social issues of marginalization may be very often presented as religious or

appear as such on the surface. Others have asserted that religion actively creates conflict by introducing unbridgeable differences and inflexible values into the conflict. While the opinions presented are put forth with certainty, they are scarce in number. This scarcity in number has more or less translated into a lack of new ideas in regards to the mediational role of religion and a hyperfocus on its conflict creating tendencies.\textsuperscript{60} This thesis seeks to step forward from that and flesh out the resolving potential that religion can have in situations requiring mediation, specifically as it relates to identity and mediating states.

The previous paragraph discusses religion as an object. For the purposes of this thesis, that discussion must be advanced into visualising and understanding religion as identity. Specifically, what does a mediator’s religious identity have to do with their mediation or them being chosen as mediator? Literature indicates that the main issue here is of commonality and how a mediator’s religious identity can both create and diminish common ground.\textsuperscript{61} When present as a commonality between disputant and mediator, religious identity can very uniquely posit a mediating actor to build relationships grounded in mutual trust.\textsuperscript{62} Essentially, religious identity acts as a source of unmatched leverage and credibility.\textsuperscript{63} Hence, here the literature establishes that religious identity - if shared - can strengthen the relationship between disputant and mediator.

Upon research, I found that the academic conversations in this realm discuss something called “faith based mediation”. This approach seems to combine the use of religion both as an object and as an identity to further move ahead a mediation process. According to Jacob Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana’s seminal work in this vein “Religion and mediation: The role of faith based actors in international conflict resolution” explains that faith based mediation is any third party intervention where faith plays an important role.\textsuperscript{64} Additionally, it is where religious symbolism becomes a key player during the mediation process through faith based values, objects, and institutions.\textsuperscript{65} Lastly, it is also when two disputing parties share the same religious identity and are brought together through either overt religious appeals or subtle references.\textsuperscript{66} All in all, the literature expands upon the processual ongoings of faith-based mediation and uses the shared identity part as a premise to bounce off. However, the discussion around how that affects the choice of mediator is somewhat limited.

To solve this issue, I turn to look at past traditions of religious actors mediating. Data indicates that a variety of religious actors have mediated conflicts before, both interpersonal and at the larger scale, such as interstate disputes. This variety of actors seems to have historically included global and local religious leaders; the global including figures like the Pope and the Dalai Lama and the local including saints, priests, imams, rabbis and so on.\textsuperscript{67} The literature frequents two examples of these actors’ mediation efforts constantly, so I believe that discussing


\textsuperscript{67}Ibid
them is crucial to advancing this discussion further. The first one of these is that of the ethnic and territorial conflict during the Crusades, wherein the Sultan and Saint Francis were eventually only able to find resolution via Saint Francis using religious mediation centered on Abrahamic tradition. The second example that is overprescribed is that of Pope John Paul II mediating between Chile and Argentina in 1985, during their interstate and territorial conflict over the Beagle channel. Hence, illustrating to us that religious identity has been used in the past to assign credibility to a mediator and end an otherwise prolonged dispute.

Additionally, another religious actor that seems to be involved in the mediation process is religious organizations. Several organizations functioning on faith driven peacemaking principles partake in the process. One example that the literature resorts to infrequently is that of the American Friends Service Committee and Quakers in Nigeria, where they put their mediational potential to use during the 1967-70 civil war. Hence, demonstrating that religious identity can be leveraged to assign legitimacy to a mediator, not only at the individual level, but also at the organizational level.

While we see this discussion detailing the interplay between religious identity and how it manifests in various kinds of conflicts to assign legitimacy to both individual and organizational actors, this is the farthest reach of the literature itself. A discussion of states as mediators with salient religious affiliations and identities seems to be completely ignored. Not only does this leave a gaping hole in the literature, it also impedes the progression of this thesis.

Instead of allowing it to stunt the discussion of how religious identity intersects with mediating states, I shall try to distill the existing literature into a framework that is also

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applicable to states. This is a hard task for more than one reason: firstly, individuals function at a very different level than a state, both in terms of bureaucracy and image projection. One could argue that trusting one religious figure like the Pope is not the same as trusting a whole other state due to its religious affiliation.

However, one could counter with the assertion that the religious affiliation itself is what grounds the relationship in mutual trust; it doesn’t matter who holds that identity. In fact, the presence of that religious affinity continues to serve as a common value that heightens trust between the disputant and mediator. Essentially, as per Bercovitch and KO, religion is a major source of leverage for a given mediator above other potential ones. If that principle is objectively true, then the changing of entities - from individual to state - shouldn’t undermine the leverage that the mediator receives from it. One could also use the literature’s breadth on individuals and organizations to allege that since these function under the same framework in this vein of religious identity, organizational expansion and functioning on a larger level are both possible. Hence, this thesis functions on the premise that as far as religious identity-based leverage is concerned, state mediators benefit from it as much as individual or organizational mediators.

With the establishment of this premise, it is important to consider how the religious identity of a state might play in differently to an individual actor’s. An individual is one person who can express a cohesive set of values and faith while a state is an amalgam of people and institutions organized in hierarchical bureaucratic structures. So theoretically speaking, assigning a religious identity to a whole state seems like a path full of hurdles. However, when one considers the fact that as of 2017, around 22% of the world’s total states had an official religion, and then another 20% had a favored tradition, we see that religion continues to be a binding and
cohesive identity at the state level. With this chunky majority, it is clear that religion is instrumental to the functioning of approximately half of the world’s countries, grounding its importance to the identity of a given state. Transitionally, if a state is so concerned with its religious identity, that concern and affinity will be visible to others as well.

Additionally, one could raise the concern that religion isn’t important in state based mediation since the academic conversation completely ignores it. However, the reason behind this ignorance might be due to religious identity’s mellowed presence. Though even if religion isn’t being evoked continuously and overtly, it doesn’t mean that it isn’t present as a source of leverage for the mediator. In fact, it could mean that the presence of religious affinity has grounded the relationship in mutual trust, and it doesn’t need to be evoked repeatedly.

While by no means theoretically perfect, this literature review and discussion makes clear that 1) religious identity plays an important role in establishing a given mediator as credible and the 2) this role is played for all mediating agents, then be it individuals, organizations, or states. Based on this literature review, and in response to the research question of this thesis, I present the following hypothesis:

_Hypothesis 1: Religious identity is crucial to the mediator due to its ability to create affinity with the disputant(s). In the case of asymmetrical power distribution in cases of inter-state conflict, the weaker disputant will choose someone who shares a religious identity or affinity with them._

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Smallness/Largeness

The role of smallness/largeness in state mediation has been a popular topic of discussion. Scholars have taken a variety of approaches to understanding this concept and what it connotes. More often than not, scholars have taken a factual-observational approach instead of taking an analytical approach that discusses why and how this variable matters in terms of any given state mediator’s identity. In this literature review, I try to 1) bring together this variety of opinions and 2) bridge the analytical gap that seems to exist in the literature. Since smallness/largeness connote both size and power driven from it, this variable is especially pertinent to this study; after all the thesis focuses on understanding mediation in interstate conflicts marked by asymmetric power structures.

First off, it is important to understand what smallness/largeness means, something that is done in the above section on operationalization. To sum it up once again, size can be measured through two broad categories. It can be materially or tangibly expressed through factors like population, economic markers like GDP and GNP, military might, or reliance on the institutions of other states. Inversely, it can also be gauged via somewhat intangible factors like international image or might. Better put in scholarly vernacular, it can be expressed as “clout on the international stage”, which essentially means how much power this given state can assert on the international stage. Hence, smallness/largeness stand as identity facets that can be understood in a variety of ways.

Functioning in line with these expressions of smallness/largeness, states divided into each category tend to use different lines of mediating, which shapes their perceived identity as

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mediator. Larger states and superpowers are seen as having coercive power, bringing in strategic strengths and interests which make the mediation a competitive, zero-sum game and lend to their identity as an active, assertive, and threatening mediator.\textsuperscript{75} This hegemonic positioning can make the disputant(s) undergo the psychological effects of “siege mentality” wherein they feel compelled to do whatever is asked of them and feels threatened instead of feeling included.\textsuperscript{76} Hence, the literature here establishes that superpowers and large states are characterized by a hegemonic mediator identity.

Smaller states, on the other hand, tend to be relatively flexible mediators. Their “strategic weaknesses” translate to “moral superiority” according to Randa M. Slim’s excellent work in “Small-State Mediation in International Relations: The Algerian Mediation of the Iranian Hostage Crisis.”\textsuperscript{77} This moral superiority translates to them changing the mediation into a cooperative framework and joint party problem instead of being assertive and controlling, hence, diffusing stakes for the disputants.\textsuperscript{78} For the sake of clarity, it is important to make clear that these small powers have vested interests too, it is just that their interests are minor enough to keep the disputing parties from hiring and keeping them.\textsuperscript{79} In conclusion, smallness as a facet of the mediating state’s identity translates to a global image of it as a non-disruptive and non-hegemonic mediator.

Additionally, some scholars have deliberated upon other miscellaneous advantages that

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid, 207
smallness in mediator identity correlates with. These include lesser bureaucratic constraints and consequently higher efficiency and speed alongside their capability to keep mediation efforts more private. In contrast, larger states/superpowers are seen lacking in these attributes but seen to bring a lot of resources to the mediation process.

Next, I examine the more factual-observation based vein of the scholarly discussion around smallness/largeness. While compilation based bird’s eye view studies are rare in this realm, a 1989 study by Jacob Bercovitch presents data on Cold-War era mediations by states.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number of Mediations</th>
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<td>USA</td>
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<td>Syria</td>
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<td>UK</td>
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<td>Iran</td>
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<td>Soviet Union</td>
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<td>Sri Lanka</td>
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Table 4.3: Breakdown of state mediation between 1950 to 1989


While this table is not a representation of post Cold-War or twenty-first century mediation patterns, it is a snapshot of what the field has traditionally looked like. The table illustrates several things: firstly, the sheer quantity of mediations shows that state mediation might be much more prescribed to than is apparent at the surface level. Secondly, if disputing states choose to move towards conflict resolution, the chances of the United States - a superpower - being chosen as a mediator are approximately one in three. Lastly, we can see that permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council has a visible impact on the number of mediations performed by a given state. Theoretically, the phenomenon of superpowers and large states single handedly dominating the mediation realm can be explained by hegemonic stability theory; essentially, a benevolent hegemon takes charge of international affairs and peacemaking in totality. These understandings of Western domination, and specifically of the United States as global mediator are not far off from popular understandings of the international diplomatic and mediational realms.

At the same time, the data allows for an inversion of these traditional narratives where the world is centered on and run by one benevolent hegemon who preserves order and stability. The data makes clear that small states have made significant contributions to the world of mediation. And while a singular small state hasn’t made a contribution as big as the United States or United Kingdom, cumulatively, they have helped resolve a lot of conflict.

The literature, however, hasn’t kept up with this tendency, and focus on small states is rare. Holsti has pointed out how international relations’ conception of the world as a “polar model” has systematically ignored the various roles that small states play on the international


scale. Instead, it just posits small states as pawns that are used in the rivalry and power competition between superpowers and large states. This lack remained apparent throughout the time that I conducted research for this thesis.

Even when scholars have focused on small states, a selective coverage has prevailed: only the Scandinavian neutral states are appraised and acknowledged for their work. In his dissertation titled “Punching Above their Weights: Small States in Key Mediation Roles” McKeown James has pointed this issue out, and alleges that small states other than European ones play key mediating roles too. However, it is just the Scandinavian states that are highly focused upon in this realm. The field is replete with this selectivity, where texts deemed to be the most seminal discuss Scandinavian states exclusively. One example of this is Jacob Erikkson’s *Small State Mediation in International Conflicts*, one of the most highly cited texts in this academic realm, and simultaneously one that discusses Sweden solely. While these texts’ selectivity and Eurocentrism undermines their legitimacy to some extent, they still do make some important contributions to the overall field.

Using the example of Sweden, Erikkson ruminates upon smallness and how it connects to mediator identity. He emphasizes upon the bridging capabilities of state mediators characterised by smallness, specifically between the “wealthy aligned” and “poorer non-aligned” states. Using Sweden as a case study, Erikkson emphasises how through mediating between Israel and

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86 Ibid
89 The aligned and non-aligned in this situation refers to Cold War-esque structure of the world, where most states functioned within the structure of aligning with a superpower, namely the US or USSR.
Palestine and several others, Sweden exemplified bridging.\textsuperscript{90} Essentially, due to its smallness, non-threatening poise, and claimed neutrality, it was able to mediate with states that were vary of superpower, hegemonic, large state mediators. Inversely, even superpowers did not want to actively engage with these states due to their involvement with terrorist groups, hence, the conflict could have only been mediated by a small state.

Major mediating contributions by Sweden have included mediating between the United States and North Vietnam (1965-68) and during the Iran-Iraq war (1980-88) via Olof Palme and the United Nations, amongst others. Similarly to Sweden, other Scandinavian small states have left a mark on the mediation world. Norway’s contributions include: the Oslo Accords being signed between Israel and Palestine (1993), in the Philippines’ civil conflict (2001), amongst Guatemala and others including the US, Mexico, Spain, Venezuela, Colombia (1996), mediating civil war in Sudan (2005, 2015, 2019), between factions in Myanmar (2006), in Sri Lanka’s civil conflict (2000-08), helping Colombia reach peace with its guerilla factions (2012-16), and finally conducting talks in Venezuela between opposing political forces (2019).\textsuperscript{91} Lastly, Finland also has a similar repertoire of experiences with protracted mediations in: Western Balkans, Northern Ireland, Aceh, the Horn of Africa, and South Caucasus.\textsuperscript{92} Through these examples (which are by no means exhaustive accounts of Scandinivian mediation) it is clear that smallness has encouraged mediation in spaces where larger states or superpowers would have faltered.

What the literature and data on this small mediating state forgets is that smallness as a facet of mediator identity remains salient outside of Europe too. Which is the niche that this thesis aims to add to: smallness in the identity of non-European state mediators. Randa M. Slim’s

\textsuperscript{91}https://www.regjeringen.no/en/topics/foreign-affairs/peace-and-reconciliation-efforts/insiktsmappe/peace_efforts/id732943/
\textsuperscript{92} https://www.cfr.org/blog/can-finland-act-mediator-cyber-norms
work has been exceptionally helpful in working towards this contribution. His assertion that small state mediation is best suited for interstate conflicts characterized by huge power gaps and inequalities, has been exceptionally helpful in advancing my understanding of this realm. Through this literature review, the consequently generated discussion, and in regards to the research question of this thesis, I posit the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Smallness/largeness play a very significant role in the choice of mediator in interstate disputes. In the case of asymmetrical power distribution during these disputes, the weaker/smaller disputant is more likely to choose a state whose identity is characterised by smallness.

**Historical identity**

The role of historical identity in state mediators has been rarely discussed in the pre-existing literature. This idea came to me as I conducted background research for this thesis, aiming to understand the world of mediation. The more I honed into the idea of state mediators and their identity facets, the more I thought about the idea of historical identity.

The idea is about a given state’s historical character, which essentially is gauged through the state’s historical identity and placement within the systems of domination on the international stage. This gauging is done vis a vis the state’s relationship to coloniality and revolution. For instance, is the state post-colonial in that it has been colonised? Is the state post-revolutionary in that it has recently had a revolution targeted towards liberation? How has it engaged with these concepts after its own experience, i.e. has it developed colonising tendencies after ending its own era of colonisation? Answers to these questions would determine if a given state has been

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historically dominated or has been a historical dominator. And this, I believe - through all the literature that I have come across - affects mediator identity by either creating affinity or animosity with the disputants.

Let’s take the example of the United States for the sake of theorising. FACTUALLY speaking, it is a state that was colonised and achieved liberation from the British colonists via a revolution. Becoming independent on July 4, 1776 the United States went from being historically dominated to a null state. However, over the course of the next few centuries, the United States has risen to the status of a global hegemon, controlling key international institutions, presiding over international treaties, and controlling the domestic matters of several states via aids of various kinds. This shift has made the status of the United States shift again on this spectrum that I am attempting to develop here; today, it would be deemed a historical dominator. While each country would have to be singularly analysed to be placed on this spectrum, what is important to remember is that this variable is about their current placement on the scales and ranks of international dominion. Post-coloniality or post-revolutionary sentiments are mere ways of gauging it due to their strong correlation with placement on these dominion ranks.

During my research, this variable was never directly addressed. Singulrly, however, several things that may correlate with it are addressed, such as “third worldliness”, “smallness”, “coloniality” and so on. The two pieces of pertinent scholarly opinion that I did find were impactful nevertheless. In Jacob Erikkson’s work on small states as mediators, he has pointed out the salience of state mediators who have no histories of colonialism. Without ambitions to be all-powerful and with the lack of vested strategic interests, these states serve as better contenders for mediating. While Erikkson’s idea doesn’t get to state domination overtly, it is what he is implying; essentially if a state is a historical dominator, it is less preferred, or even disliked as a
mediator. On the other hand, states without these histories, who exist in a null state or have been historically dominated, are preferred mediators.

Similar ideas are presented in Randa M. Slim’s work about small states. He discusses a world where international conflicts are marred by asymmetrical power structures and long histories of mistreatment prevail between states. Simultaneously, there is an environment of distrust as these conflicts take place in the backdrop of some states being colonised, and some having colonised these. While Slim doesn’t refer to the idea of dominion overtly either, what he is illustrating is essentially the idea of historically dominated/historical dominator. Using my own theoretical framework and these two scholarly pieces, I then propose this hypothesis: 

_Hypothesis 3: Historical identities are also crucial parts of mediator identity. In interstate disputes marked by asymmetrical power structures and differential experiences with coloniality/imperialism, the weaker state will choose a mediator that shares a strong level of historical affinities with it._

_**Diplomatic identity & image**_

Similar to the last issue, this idea is rarely present in the literature. Since state based mediation is inevitably reliant on diplomacy, the discussion of diplomacy is inevitable. However, due to this inevitability, the discussions are very scant. After a very expansive literature review, I found that there is a lack of generalizable theory or principles surrounding the issue; there is nothing that theorises upon or analyses how a mediating state’s diplomatic identity plays in during the selection or the process. One could perhaps attribute this lack to the underlying absence of a generalizable phenomenon in the first place: maybe scholars have been unable to

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trace patterns and every case is indeed different. The scant literature could also be a result of the principles of diplomacy being seen as very processual, wherein the mediator’s diplomacy matters just during the process of mediation.

The idea, like the one before, developed over the course of my reading and deep dive into the issue of state mediators and their identity facets. I started thinking about diplomatic image and identity being crucial to how a state is chosen as mediator, how it performs during mediation, and how disputants view it. Here, I theorise that state based mediating agents have diplomatic facets to their identity. This identity is premised on three factors which include: the state’s diplomatic image on the international scale, it’s diplomatic relationship with disputant A, and finally, its diplomatic relationship with disputant B. I theorise that a given state mediators favorability and eventual selection will correspond to how its diplomatic identity and image are shaped. This shaping, in turn, circles back to the three factors that I point out above.

To exemplify the theory, I shall create a hypothetical scenario here. We have disputant A and disputant B engaged in an interstate conflict marked by power asymmetry. Then you have mediator C, mediator D, and mediator E. Mediator C fulfils all of the three criterion, i.e. it has a positive diplomatic image on the international level, and has good diplomatic relationships with disputant A and disputant B. Mediator D fulfils two of these criteria while mediator E fulfils only one criteria. Consistent with how many criteria they fulfil, their favorability as mediating agent differs: mediator C is the most favored and mediator E the least. With this theoretical composition and my research question for this thesis in mind, I propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: A mediator’s diplomatic identity facet is crucial to its overall identity. Its diplomatic image on the international front, and its relationships with both the disputants are
crucial parts of this facet. Differently from the other three hypotheses, here we hypothesise that both disputants - regardless of power asymmetry - must have a good diplomatic relationship with the mediator in order to move forwards.
Chapter V: Algeria Mediates the United States-Iran Hostage Crisis, 1979-1981

Introduction

The past few chapters have fully laid out the theoretical framework, literature review, and research design for this thesis. This chapter will bring it all together; the culmination of all the work previously done will be levied onto the case study of Algeria’s mediation in the U.S.-Iran Hostage Crisis of 1979. The original research question was as follows:

*In interstate conflicts marked by power asymmetries, how are mediators chosen? If given the chance to select, who do the states on the lower end of that power spectrum choose as a mediator? What aspects of the potential mediating state’s identity are most pertinent or salient?*

When levied onto this specific case study, the question looks something like this:

*In the Hostage Crisis of 1979, the dynamic between Iran and the United States was marked by power asymmetry. Bearing this in mind, how do we understand the process employed in the choosing of Algeria as mediator? When given the chance, Iran chose Algeria to mediate. Why was this choice made and what aspects of Algeria’s identity most salient to the choice?*

The rest of this chapter is dedicated to answering these questions. In order to do so, I put to use the previously generated hypotheses, examining primary and secondary resources in depth.

Case Study Selection

Before moving ahead, it is necessary to evaluate the fit of this case study within the framework of this thesis. The study looks at interstate conflicts marred by asymmetrical power structures, and the characteristics of states that step up to mediate between them. To verify these structural characteristics for this specific case study, the thesis uses Professor Jacob Bercovitch’s
According to Bercovitch’s classifications, the United States is a “superpower” while Iran is a “micro” state, fulfilling the criteria of an interstate dispute which is functioning with a power asymmetry. Additionally, these were the only two parties involved in the dispute, hence, qualifying as a two-party conflict. The time criteria is also fulfilled since the conflict took place between 1979-1981, which is within the allowed time frame of 20th-21st century interstate disputes. Finally, the conflict was mediated by the state of Algeria, which makes the case fulfil the final qualifier as well.

Even with the case study fully qualifying through the filters assigned to the universe of cases, this choice is bound to raise reservations. Afterall, the case is half a century old and the positions of the states involved have shifted in the time period following this dispute. Both of these issues raise questions about the relevance and generalizability of this as a case study. However, my choice is justified by two very strong reasons, which I shall now proceed to explain:

1) Bias towards European and superpower/large state mediators:

As discussed in multiple sections of the literature review, this case is of utmost importance due to the fact of how non-traditional mediators have been largely ignored by the literature. This ignorance can be assigned to the mediation studies’ world being preoccupied with traditional mediators: superpowers, neutral Scandinavian and Nordic states, all of whom yield insurmountable amounts of influence via various sources.

Despite their undeniable potential to intervene in various conflict situations, smaller, third

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97 I resort to the use of this dataset infrequently throughout this thesis, and the reason behind that is scholarly consensus upon its validity within the mediation studies world.
world, post-colonial mediators have been largely ignored. Even their actual contributions are less prescribed to in scholarly conversations in comparison to their European counterparts.

In the *Handbook of the U.S.-Middle East Relations*, Robert Looney criticizes both the widespread mediation literature and the United States for their ignorance towards Algeria’s mediation. He emphasizes that the world and United States at large have remained “insensitive to the positive mediating role Algerians had played in resolving the Iranian Hostage crisis”, illustrating how easily the contributions of non-traditional state mediators are forgotten.⁹⁸ Even legal advisor to the State Department at the time, Robert B. Owen has emphasized in a firsthand account that the crisis wouldn’t have been resolved without Algeria: “Our Algerian interlocutors were highly intelligent and essentially impartial individuals who were studying our positions with care and questioning us, in a most courteous but thorough way, to find out exactly why the U.S. position was constructed as it was.”⁹⁹ Similar assertions have been made by students in their graduate dissertations: Lakehal Aidli uses his masters dissertation “The role of Algeria in mediation for the resolution of regional and international conflicts (1975-2015)” to emphasise how time and time again, Algeria has resolved international conflicts that many have failed at.¹⁰⁰ Despite these significant contributions, it remains deeply under-discussed compared to its Nordic counterparts.

2) Continued sparring between Iran and the United States:

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It is no secret that half a decade on from the hostage crisis, Iran and the United States are still staunch rivals. In fact, one could argue that Iran is currently the United States staunchest rival. Everywhere else, there is a conversation or negotiation of some sort: even North Korea was conversed with in 2016 when Donald Trump met Kim Jong Un. This unsettled conflict and not being on speaking terms is a trouble for the world at large, threatening peace and stability everywhere. Additionally, and perhaps even more importantly, it hurts the disenfranchised citizens of Iran, who are subject to several embargoes and sanctions by the larger international community. To contain this ongoing and rampantharm, and finally resolve this protracted conflict, it is essential to retrace our footsteps. What was it that allowed for a mediational process? How was Algeria picked and why did it succeed? Seeing what worked -- seeing why Algeria worked -- might provide us with invaluable answers as to what can work next.

Now that the reasons for this selection have been elaborated upon the fit of the case examined, I move towards describing the backdrop in which the hostage crisis occurred.

**Background & Summary of the Conflict**

Prior to 1953, the United States of America and Iran maintained a friendly diplomatic relationship. However, in 1953, the democratically elected government of President Mohammed Mossadegh was ousted by the Central Intelligence Agency through Operation Ajax. While reasons for this intervention are debated amongst scholars and commoners, it is understood as a response to one of two things: the fear of the USSR controlling Iran or the nationalization of the oil industry. A large majority of anti-imperial scholars believe that the latter was the motivation, however, the operation was presented as a result of the former to the larger world and American citizens. In any case, Operation Ajax ousted the popular and democratically elected president and
reinstalled the widely disliked monarch, Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, who was widely
deemed to be a Western puppet figure. Under the Shah’s regime, his secret police service
SAVAK brutalised Iranian civilians without restrain: torture, kidnappings, disappearances, and
political killings were all common business. By 1978, the Shah’s regime had lost all legitimacy
in the eyes of the public and was completely reliant on military control and foreign assistance to
stay in power.\textsuperscript{101} In a nutshell, while Operation Ajax may have had geo-political and/or economic
causes - which for certain will remain hidden until the CIA declassifies documents related to the
operation - it did one irreversible thing: etched the Iranian memory with a distrust of Americans
due to our engineering of societal upheaval in their country.

In 1979, the Shah was overthrown with the start of the Islamic revolution which was led
by the exiled Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini. The Shah fled to the United States for refuge,
and pleaded for a medical emergency based admission on account of his lymphatic cancer. His
entry into the United States angered the Iranian public due to two reasons: one, he had created so
much harm within the public sphere that they wanted to hold him accountable and two, it created
the image that the United States was about to intervene in Iran again in order to re-throne the
Shah. Following his admission to the United States on October 22, 1979, decades of Iranian
anger finally boiled over. Iranian citizens were livid at this admission and provision of sanctuary
to a monarch who had brutally reversed progress and democracy in their country, and whose
secret intelligence service had tortured and disappeared all those who stood in opposition.

With this anger, traction was easily gathered and a group of Iranian students called the
“Imam’s disciples” stormed the American embassy on November 4, 1979 - also students’ day -
to voice their disapproval of the Shah’s admittance into the United States. This group, led by a

\textsuperscript{101} Feste, Karen A.. Terminate Terrorism: Framing, Gaming, and Negotiating Conflicts, Taylor & Francis
Group, 2010, 104.
student named Mohammad Moussavi Khoeini, intended for this movement and the sit-in to last a few days at most. However, the sit in escalated into a prolonged hostage taking situation in which sixty-five American diplomats were held hostage. Thirteen of these hostages were released after two weeks upon the urging of the Palestinian Liberation Organization’s leaders; these included the Black and female diplomats, who the Iranian students didn’t believe to be as incriminated in the imperial project or in the United States’ many interventions into Iran. Another hostage named Richard Queen was released in July 1980 on account of his increasingly deteriorating health. The remaining fifty-two hostages were held for a total of 444 days, or almost fourteen months until January 20, 1981.

During this period, President Jimmy Carter made several attempts to rescue the hostages, but failed. Carter directed several unsuccessful pleas towards the Iranians, but the Iranians alleged that the United States was the “Great Satan”, who they would simply not engage with. Eventually, Carter lost his patience and ran out of ideas as domestic pressure to do something mounted. On April 24, 1980, Operation Eagle was launched through the military but it failed terribly. Aircrafts and troops were secretly sent to eastern Iran, however, two of eight helicopters failed. During the subsequent abortion of the mission, one helicopter collided with a C-130 transport plane, killing eight United States service men. After this terrible failure of the rescue operation, the situation just worsened.

At this point in time, and leading upto November 2, 1980, several bodies and individuals offered to mediate between Iran and the United States. These figures included Pope John Paul II; Yasir Arafat, chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organization; United Nations’ Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim; American private citizens with human rights orientations like

103 https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1979/11/18/women-blacks-ordered-freed-in-iran/66947cbd-c9b1-4933-ac10-0e400c67e215/
Attorney General Ramsey Clark and a former Foreign Service Officer William Miller; United States Congressman George Hansen; a United Nations special commission; and officials from West Germany, Switzerland, Syria, Turkey, Libya, and Pakistan. While the United States was okay with all of these mediators, none of them were fully accepted by Iran. Hence, the situation continued at a standstill.

News that could move the halted situation came in July 1980: the Shah had died in Cairo, Egypt. His death brought resolution to one of the major uncompromisable issues in the conflict, wherein Iran wanted the United States to ensure the return of the Shah to Iran so he could be tried for his crimes, and the United States found this uncompromisable.

Finally, a turn of events took place when Iranian Prime Minister Rajai visited the United Nations in New York in October 1980. Before Rajai arrived, Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher made a visit to see Algeria’s UN delegate, Mohammad Bedjaoui. At this point, the Algerians had already been crucial since they had been serving as Iran’s representative in the United States since April 1980. And when Rajai visited Bedjaoui, conversations transpired that pushed the Iranians towards resolution. Later, Rajai made a stop in Algiers, the Algerian capital, which signalled to the world that something was in the works. This opening of an Algerian connection would eventually lead to resolution.

Finally, on November 2, 1980, the Iranian Majlis announced that it would appoint Algeria as an intermediary. On November 3, 1980 two major events took place: Rajai met the Algerian

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ambassador to formally request assistance in mediating the hostage crisis and The Majlis also put forth these four points as conditions to be fulfilled before moving forward:

1. A policy of complete non-intervention by the United States in Iranian affairs;
2. A return of all Iranian assets that were frozen on November 14, 1979 by Presidential orders;
3. A cancelling and settlement of all United States’ claims, made up of economic and financial decisions by both the government and independent private companies;
4. The recognition of Iranian sovereignty over the Shah’s assets, and an eventual freezing and transfer of those assets to Iran.

Beginning then, there was a back and forth shuttling of American diplomats to Algeria and of Algerian diplomats to Tehran. The Iranians refused to communicate with the United States directly, citing their belief that the United States was the “Great Satan”, one who must not be contacted or negotiated with. As a result, the Algerians quite literally ended up being the only source of contact between the two parties. They set up a “flying committee” that included diplomatic experts in international affairs and mediation, including the Algerian ambassador to Tehran Abdelkarim Ghrieb, the Algerian ambassador to the United States Redha Malek, the head of the central bank of Algeria Seghi Mostefai, and lastly, the Algerian minister of foreign affairs Mohammad Seddik Benyahia.

During the process, Algeria played devil’s advocate constantly. It presented each side as the other one, honing in on the issues, criticizing, questioning, revising and slowly bringing both

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parties towards agreement. First hand accounts from the American negotiating team indicate that Algeria played mediator efficiently by “procedure alternating” between Algiers, Washington, and Tehran. At each US-Algerian session, the Algerian team came through with progress that would eventually bring the two disputants on the same page and lead to resolution.

After almost 3 months of negotiations and back and forth in and from the Algerian capital of Algiers, the Algiers Accord was signed by both parties on January 19, 1981. The main points of the agreement included: a principle of non-intervention into Iran by the United States, the return of Iranian assets, the lifting of all United States claims, and the return of the Shah’s assets to Iran. The hostages were moved to Algiers the day after, and finally arrived in the United States on January 27, 1981.

Mediators Rejected/Failed Prior to Algeria

In order to understand both Algeria’s cruciality to this task, it is essential to understand the mediation efforts that had transpired previously. This table differs from the list of offered mediations that are discussed in the section above. The distinction is that these mediators in the table initiated an action beyond just a verbal offer, whereas the list above consists of mediators who offered to initiate but were outright rejected or ignored.

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111 http://www.parstimes.com/history/algiers_accords.pdf
112 Ibid.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict Management Start Date (mm/yyyy)</th>
<th>Mediating Party</th>
<th>Party Identity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11/1979</td>
<td>PLO negotiating team, members unspecified</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/1979</td>
<td>Individual/US deputation led by Mr. Ramsey Clarke (former Attorney General) and Mr. William Millar (US Senate Committee on Intelligence)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/1979</td>
<td>Papal Mission, Monsignor Annibale Bugnihi</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/1979</td>
<td>UNESCO Rep Sean McBride</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/1979</td>
<td>Team of US Clergymen</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/1979</td>
<td>Cardinal Leon-Etienne (Archbishop of Algiers)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/1980</td>
<td>Dr. Kurt Waldheim UN Sec-Gen</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.1: Who tried to mediate? Table listing all mediation efforts made prior to Algeria’s entry/settlement into the role

I initially contemplated placing this table in the summary and background section, however, I settled on not doing so. I strongly believe that Algeria’s importance is made clearer through relativity established by comparison to others whose efforts were shut down. I tried to investigate if the Bercovitch dataset - where this data is collected from - had information on the preferability of these mediators by the United States and Iran, however, I couldn’t find any such information.\textsuperscript{113} Some important things to note are that Algeria was the very first state to enter the

\begin{table}
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|}
\hline
Date & Mediator & Rating \\
\hline
2/1980 & US Team led by Prof. Norman Forer & 1 \\
\hline
2/1980 & Monsignor Hilarian Capucci (former Greek Catholic Archbishop of Jerusalem), Monsignor John Nolan (Papal Sec. to the Holy Land) & 4 \\
\hline
2/1980 & John Thomas (Native American activist) & 1 \\
\hline
5/1980 & Dr. Doioudy (rep. of UN Secretary General) & 3 \\
\hline
11/1980 & Algerian mediation team & 5 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{113} Initially, I had two extra categories built into my table with the headings “Rank from party A” and “Rank form Party B”. Upon rechecking the codebook for my numbers and the variables, I realized that I had wrongly interpreted the data. The variable actually meant the proposed designated position of the mediator for each party, for example Dr. Kurt Waldheim would’ve been a primary level decision maker for the United States and a senior level decision maker for Iran. Contrary to my past understanding, the numbers didn’t indicate preference.
equation, a Muslim entity (PLO) had entered the equation before, and that the others were compromised of several papal/saintly figures and international figureheads.

**Research Hiccups**

I started this research very passionately, hoping that previously existing resources would aid my process seamlessly. However, both primary and secondary resources were much more scarce than I had imagined they would be. This scarcity made the task of bringing this obscure and very forgotten case to the forefront much harder. Very initially, I had hoped to rely very heavily on secondary sources. I tried to find resources that discussed Algerian identity and which facets of it were most pertinent to it being chosen as the mediator here but I found nothing. No theoretical or analytical discussions were to be found around this niche, except for the rare journal article or dissertation.

Consequently, I ended up changing my strategy to analysing primary documents from the time. The hardships continued here too with many official documents from intelligence services and foreign agencies of all three countries being classified. Additionally, there was little to no discussion of why Algeria was chosen, how its identity facets mattered etc etc. Only after months of scouring newspaper and radio broadcast archives was I able to find a clue as to why material is so rare to come across. The answer lay in Algeria’s intentional and strict maintenance of secrecy and silence around its mediatory role.

How did I figure this out? Mainly through primary sources that included news outlets’ and foreign agencies’ speculations at the time. On the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) news hour on November 3, 1980, the American broadcasters discussed the hostage crisis and the assignment of Algeria to the task of mediation via an announcement in Tehran. In discussing the issue, one of the broadcasters cites that the situation is “not at all clear”, showing that secrecy
was maintained around Algeria’s role since the very beginning. Similar reporting was done by international newspapers which drew from accounts of foreign observers and concluded that Algeria was maintaining “discreet lines of communication” and keeping its hush around the issue. Even as news channels in Iran shared the news of Algeria’s appointment with their citizens, and a news agency named Pars provided concrete details on how Iranian demands would be transmitted to Washington via the Algerian embassy, Algerian news channels maintained complete silence on the issue. The eve of November 3, 1980 passed without Algerian television making any remarks or acknowledgement of the situation at hand despite a mention of the hostage crisis.

Algeria’s secretive stance at the time made my hunt for relevant and discursive primary sources extremely challenging. My hope in including this small section is to highlight this difficulty, and lay the grounds to explain why evidence may seem succinct or cut short at times.

Hypothesis Testing: Does Algeria prove or disprove the hypotheses?

My overall hypothesis in this thesis is that in inter-state conflicts marred by power asymmetries, the weaker state will choose a state mediator who shares more identity facets with it, since these identity facets act as a source of affinity and mutual trust. If this hypothesis is true for this case study, it would mean that in this interstate conflict between Iran and the United States, Iran

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chose Algeria to mediate due to their common identity facets, since they created affinity and grounded their relationship in mutual trust.

Proving this hypothesis is a multi-pronged task due to the complicated nature of “identity” as a whole. While it is one word, it encompasses a lot of complex facets, which is why I divide up the notion of mediator identity into various facets and test them separately. This section serves as an opening to all the ones that follow, and essentially asks if Algeria’s identity was relevant to its selection or not. In order to do so, I examined the primary sources at my disposal and the answers that I found support the hypothesis above at large.

This account of Algeria’s identity salience is supported by newspaper articles written at the time. According to a popular New York Times article “Wary Algeria Edged Into Pivotal Role” by Marvine Howe, Algeria was the only country with the “right credentials”. The language of this piece from January 26, 1981 amongst other pieces published around the same time praises Algeria’s “characteristics” and “credentials”. These pertinent “credentials” are cited as both the reason that Algeria was chosen by Iran to mediate, and also the underlying reason that Algeria was able to succeed; in Howe’s piece, she also remarks (through her research) that Algeria must be appraised for doing what “no other could have done”, proving the uniqueness of Algeria’s identity for this role. While at first, it may seem as though using a single journalist’s assertions as a basis for claim making is simplistic, it is important to note that she makes this claim based on several interviews that she conducted with American diplomats.

Other, more direct speeches from diplomats at the time confirm this identity oriented success narrative. On several occasions, Secretary of State at the time, Warren Christopher has emphasised the sentiment that he echoes in his own recount of the event: “The Algerians served

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an indispensable function in interpreting two widely disparate cultures”, a quote which makes two things very clear.\textsuperscript{118} The first one being that this resolution wouldn’t have been reached without Algeria and the second, that Algeria worked with two “widely disparate cultures”. While Christopher uses the term “culture” one can read around the lines and see that it is a reference to everything that is different between Iran and the United States. From his statement, it is clear the Algeria’s identity facets being salient to Iran allowed for it to be chosen, and consequently, serve as a bridge between these cases of stark “disparateness” through leveraging its own positionality.

Additionally, the ease with which Algeria dealt with Iran further lends itself to this hypothesis. While this thesis is about identity more than it is about process, the fact that all other mediators failed to establish communication with Iran and Algeria succeeded proves that Algeria was a more credible and trustworthy mediator in the eyes of Iran. When you examine the differences between each of the mediators, it is clear that having shared identities and consequently shared affinities made Algeria preferable. Secretary of State Christopher speaks of these smooth interactions and writes that the Algerian foreign minister Benyahia had a keen intellect which he would employ to reflect accurately on would be acceptable to Tehran and what wouldn’t.\textsuperscript{119} While Christopher discusses these as “instincts” that Benyahia possessed, it isn’t far fetched to suggest that they were a result of Benyahia’s identity based proximity that helped him make such accurate predictions.

Finally, the pertinence of Algeria’s identity is also made evident through Iran finally choosing to settle on Algeria after rejecting so many previous attempts of mediation from other parties. Common sense dictates that Algeria possessed something different from all these other parties and the second being how easily they were able to navigate the situation with Iran None

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid, p 309-315
of the resources that were examined, failed to mention Algeria’s uniqueness, positioning, or identity. All of these were factors that made Algeria a credible mediator in Iran’s eyes. Further on, we examine the subsections of this identity based selection and test hypotheses established through the qualitative examination of existing literature and primary sources.

**Testing H₁: Did Algeria’s religious identity matter?**

*Hypothesis 1: Religious identity is crucial to the mediator due to its ability to create affinity with the disputant(s). In the case of asymmetrical power distribution in cases of inter-state conflict, the weaker disputant will choose someone who shares a religious identity or affinity with them. In the case of Algeria, this hypothesis means that Iran chose Algeria due to their shared Islamic identity.*

At the time, Algeria was considered a follower of Sunni Islam, Iran a follower of Shiite Islam, and the United States evangelical Christian. With these distinctions and the overall research question in mind, this section examines primary and secondary sources to see if Algeria’s religious identity was ever invoked in discussions of Iranian choice.

Upon searching through primary sources that would show statements made by Iranian officials at the time, and hence provide some clue as to why Algeria was chosen, I found this hypothesis affirmed. While Iranian parliamentary session transcripts couldn’t be found, a transcript from Tehran radio’s broadcast for November 3, 1980 was found. The radio reported that “It was decided that the issue of the hostages should be taken over by the brother and Moslem country of Algeria.” This language very clearly demonstrates that Iran’s decision was

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made due to a sense of “brotherhood”, which seems to stem from the fact of mutual
“Muslim-ness”. Algeria’s religious identity is front and center in this official statement that
explains Iran’s intent and reason behind this choice of mediator. This assertion is also backed by
the limited number of newspaper articles present of the issue. The New York Times uses the
language of “Algerian assets” and “Islamic country” in tandem, also asserting that one of the
major reasons Algeria was chosen for the job was its religious identity.122

On the secondary sources front, this claim is backed by the Xiamen Academy of
international law, which also claims that Algeria’s historically Islamic inclination and steadfast
practice of the religion is what made it acceptable to Iran.123 A graduate dissertation titled “The
role of Algeria in mediation for the resolution of regional and international conflicts
(1975-2015)” by Lakehal Aidli also examines this issue, and arrives at the same conclusion:
Algeria was chosen due to how closely both Algeria and Iran were “bound by strict obedience”
to the religious values and beliefs of Islam.124

While Algerian feelings and notions aren’t the main focus of this study, it is also
interesting to note that similar sentiments were reciprocated by Algeria. In Negotiating with Iran:
Wrestling the Ghosts of History, John Limbert recounts the situation and ruminates upon the
events of the hostage crisis. He expresses that the Algerians felt “instinctive sympathy for their
fellow Muslims”, a statement that once again highlights the strong presence of religious affinity
between Iran and Algeria.125

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The lack of scholarly material on this issue makes it hard to further drive home the hypothesis. These limited resources that I had access to, however, prove the hypothesis despite their limited capacity. However, one problem lingers: how and why did other Muslim countries fail to mediate in this situation if religion was this important?

The Palestinian Liberation Organization was predominantly Muslim, then why did fail to mediate this situation? In Table 5.1, we see that the Palestinian Liberation Organization tried to intervene in the hostage crisis within the first month of the crisis but failed to continue in this role. However, there is complexity to this failure; as primary sources reveal, the Iranians were agreeably engaging with the PLO unlike others in the long line of mediators. This engagement in itself is a sign that the PLO was acceptable to the Iranians, but they later became estranged from it due to a couple events. In his firsthand account of the events of the hostage crisis, Los Angeles Times journalist Doyle McManus writes of how on November 20, 1979, the Iranian militants let Black and female hostages go, on account of them also being oppressed by the United States of America. The PLO alleged that they had pushed the Iranians towards liberating at least a few hostages and simultaneously the Palestinian ambassador in Iran took public credit for it. According to McManus, this deeply angered the Ayatollah, who angrily asserted over television that “The PLO had nothing to do with this”, which is proof that the PLO was initially an acceptable mediating actor, however, their publicly taking credit ruined the diplomatic threads of the situation.\textsuperscript{126} Hence, even with this PLO related caveat, the hypothesis stands.

Additionally, the importance of the mediator's religion to Iran can be proven through the other mediators that Iran considered. According to an ABC news transcript from November 2, 1980, the ambassadors of Algeria, Syria, and Libya were all summoned to the Iranian foreign

office in the time period that this decision making process was being carried out. The summoning of officials from all three countries indicates Iran’s consideration of allocating the mediatory role to them. Here, it is crucial to note that all three of these are Muslim countries. The eventual choice of Algeria, hence forth, indicates that there were other factors that went into consideration-like the United States’ terrible diplomatic ties to both Libya and Syria at the time - but does not negate this hypothesis. In fact, the involvement of all three shows that being a Muslim country was paramount to this role appointment.

The examination in this section proves that this hypothesis was true in the case of Algeria. Next, I explore the other previously generated hypotheses to find answers to the thesis’s overall research question, and see how these variables work alone, and in conjunction with each other.

**Testing H$_2$: Did Algeria’s smallness play a role in this matter?**

_Hypothesis 2: Smallness/largeness play a very significant role in the choice of mediator in interstate disputes. In the case of asymmetrical power distribution during these disputes, the weaker/smaller disputant is more likely to choose a state whose identity is characterised by smallness. In this case, the hypothesis would translate as Iran having chosen Algeria due to its proximity to smallness._

At the time that this conflict took place, Algeria and Iran were considered micro or small states, whereas the United States was considered a superpower. Hence, the hypothesis being true would mean that Iran and Algeria found affinity in their shared smallness.

Since the variable of smallness/largeness isn’t something discussed as intertwined in everyday life as much as religious tradition or post-coloniality, day to day conversations have

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little to no mention of it. Unfortunately for this case, this lack of overt discussions of smallness/largeness meant that there existed zero discussions of the variable itself or slightly related stuff, specifically within primary documents.

Even in terms of secondary and scholarly sources, the discussion is scant. In his article “Small State Mediation in International Relations: The Algerian Mediation of the Iranian Hostage Crisis”, Randa M. Slim points out how small states are better suited to diplomacy work in power asymmetries and hence was Algeria. I discuss Slim’s work in the corresponding literature review section, and so essentially, what I discuss here directly aligns with that theoretical basis. Essentially, Slim asserts that Algeria’s smallness resulted in it mediating from a place of weakness and served as a face saver for both parties, a characteristic unique to only small states. Hence, leading to Iran choosing it as mediator. In this context, face saving meant that small - in size, might, and ego - and consequently flexible Algeria saved Iran from having to backtrack on its words of not wanting to negotiate with the “Great Satan” while also saving the U.S. from having to negotiate with apparent kidnappers and blackmailers. Slim further highlights how Algeria’s smallness meant that it didn’t have deeply vested geo-political or economic interests in the conflict or either disputants’ countries, which meant that none of the disputants found it threatening or partial. Iran already felt cornered by the global fraternity and it is only because Algeria’s smallness created non-hegemonic affinity that Iran settled on it. Finally, Slim asserts that this peculiar mixture of traits can only exist , and highlights that it is just small states that can have such peculiar mixes of characteristics. All in all, this article provides a


129 Ibid, p 226
strong basis to believe that Iran choosing Algeria also had to do strongly with its perceivable smallness.

Despite the strong case making in this chapter, it is hard to use it to qualify the hypothesis. The reason for this being that this article is the only relevant piece of literature that talks about this issue. Due to this dearth of resources discussing smallness/largeness, specifically in the context of Algeria, I find myself reluctant to claim that this hypothesis is true. Hence, for not I shall just qualify it as unclear.

Lastly, I have been asked the question of “Why not another small state”, and so I shall try to answer that here. Put simply, why couldn’t a traditional mediator with smallness, like Finland or Sweden mediate this conflict? The answer, as becomes clearer in the next few sections, is that identity salience in more than one arena is needed for the mediator to be chosen. The trait of smallness alone wasn’t enough qualification for a mediator to be chosen, hence Iran didn’t choose a Scandinavian state. Instead, it chose Algeria, which it shared identity based affinity with in multiple facets instead of one.

Testing H₃: Did Algeria’s historical identity matter?

Hypothesis 3: Historical identities are also crucial parts of mediator identity. In interstate disputes marked by asymmetrical power structures and differential experiences with coloniality/imperialism, the weaker state will choose a mediator that shares a strong level of historical affinities with it. In this specific case, this would mean that Iran chose Algeria due to their similar historical identities and characters.

In terms of historical identities, both Algeria and Iran stood historically dominated, with complex subjugative relationships to coloniality. While Algeria had been colonised by the French for 132 years until very recently, Iran had countered both the United Kingdom and United
States tamper with its internal affairs, evoking neo-colonialist tendencies. Additionally, both countries had had revolutions: Algeria fought the French for liberation between 1954-1962 and Iran ousted the Western-installed Shah in 1979. The similarity there is uncanny; the question for this section is if that similarity and affinity of historical identity played into Algeria’s selection as mediator.

Secondary sources detail that the Algerians were proud of “their identities as revolutionaries”, and this is how they were also revered around the post-colonial, historically dominated parts of the world. Their experience with the French had left a simmering hatred towards colonialism and Western domination. This hatred was also intensely felt in Iran due to constant foreign tampering, and was directed towards another Western superpower: the United States. While Algeria’s War of Independence was very overtly about liberation, the Iranian revolution was coated in religious language. However, one in depth glance is enough to reveal that the revolution has strong anti-imperial roots and was aimed at ousting the puppeteered Shah and ending all the suffering he had brought to Iran. This joint experience of being dominated left an active despise towards subjugation by Western and/or Global North states in Iran and Algeria’s state memory. Moreover, it had left legacies of revolutions, which created a unique form of solidarity.

In fact, several scholars have alleged that Iran’s revolution was heavily inspired by the Algerian revolution. Randa M. Slim argues that the Algerian revolution was a neat “precursor” to the Iranian revolution, and a symbol of resistance against a long-stretching period of colonialism

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in the Middle Eastern region. Additionally, its success was a sign that mass mobilization could lead to liberation, and that, according to Marta Kazmierczak’s dissertation “Which Side Are You On? The Study of Algerian and American Biased Mediation”, both encouraged Iran to revolt and raised massive respect for Algeria. Other sources, including work from the Xiamen Academy of International Law confirms this scholarly opinion, and points to Algeria’s revolutionary history as the point which made it an acceptable mediator to Iran. When it came time to choose a mediator for a conflict where Iran was embroiled with an imperial power then, it is no surprise that Iran picked Algeria. Of course, these shared identity facets indicated to Iran the presence of a strong affinity and sympathy.

Upon rummaging through primary resources, a similar consensus was found. News papers at the time, including the New York Times article reflected on Algeria’s positionality and made remarks about its “impeccable revolutionary credentials.” Several pieces in the Los Angeles Times highlight how third world, post-colonial - or as I would call them: historically dominated states find affinity with Algeria due to its own struggle with subjugation and invite it into mediating positions.

While Algeria’s decision to accept the position of the mediator isn’t the exact focus of this study, it is interesting to note that the revolutionary affinity also drove them. According to

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the same New York Times article that is cited above, “Algerians have a good deal of sympathy for the Iranian revolution” which may have been a motivating factor in their support of Iran during the conflict. Real time commentary from the era reaffirms this: the Algerians are said to have felt “instinctive sympathy” for the Iranians who were embroiled in a confrontation with the United States in a quest to rid their country from foreign interference and domination.\textsuperscript{137} All in all, these pieces of evidence prove that historical identity played a crucial role in Algeria’s designation as a mediator.

To further examine the workability of this hypothesis, I examine why some of the bigger and more influential personalities didn't work as mediators in this situation. According to my analysis of existent resources, these actors failed in this situation due to how they are positioned in the colonial imperial hierarchies of the world. Very early on, the Pope at the time, John Paul II appealed to the Ayatollah using a spiritual approach. The Ayatollah’s response makes for an excellent primary source, which upon examination reveals a lot about this crisis at large and indirectly, the final appointment of Algeria. Upon the Pope’s appeal, Khomeini responded with disdain, highlighting the hypocrisy of the appeal: “For 37 years of the shah’s rule, the Vatican was aware of the oppression of Iran and never objected once.”\textsuperscript{138} His statement evokes injustices perpetrated by the Global North on the Global South, specifically how religious offices and international institutions are complicit in the perpetration of those injustices. The rejection of the Pope - an otherwise highly regarded/effective mediator - shows that identity salience was key to the choice of mediator here.

Additionally, United Nations Secretary General Kurt Waldheim extended multiple offers of mediation personally and through U.N. commissions. All of these efforts were declined, and it can be well asserted that since the efforts were started by the United Nations - a Bretton Woods and historically Global North-fraternity-esque institution - its help wasn’t acceptable to the Iranians. All in all, the primary and secondary resources in this arena all point to the same conclusion: historical affinities play a crucial role in mediator selection at large, and they did so too in this specific case.

**Testing H₄: Did Algeria’s diplomatic identity and image matter?**

_Hypothesis 4: A mediator’s diplomatic identity facet is crucial to its overall identity. Its diplomatic image on the international front, and its relationships with both the disputants are crucial parts of this facet. Differently from the other three hypotheses, here we hypothesise that both disputants - regardless of power asymmetry - must have a good diplomatic relationship with the mediator in order to be chosen as mediator. In this specific case, it would mean that Algeria had a good diplomatic image on the international scale, and it had good diplomatic relationships with both the United States and Iran. As a result of these good relationships and consequently positive diplomatic identity, it was chosen to mediate._

In this section, I move forward by examining each of the three sub-factors one by one. First off, I will elucidate what Algeria’s international diplomatic image was at the time. From the resources that I have examined, both primary and secondary, it is clear that Algeria had a positive diplomatic image. Even before mediating the U.S.-Iran Hostage Crisis, Algeria mediated

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multiple crises, specifically those involving hostages. In the 1960s and 1970, Algiers was used to free hostages taken by Palestinian hijackers. Additionally, when OPEC ministers were seized by an international terrorist “Carlos the Jackal” for two days in December 1975, Algeria lent a helpful hand by lending a location where the situation could be diffused. Other than these hostage based crises, Algeria also mediated several other interstate conflicts between: Iraq’s Saddam Hossein and the Iranian Shah (1975), Somalia and Ethiopia, Tanzania and Burundi, Mali and Burkina Faso, Iraq and Syria (1968), the two Yemens (1972), Syria and the PLO (1976), Egypt and Libya (1977), and PLO and Jordan (1978). Hence, it is very clear that Algeria checked the first of the three boxes for this hypothesis: it was an internationally liked and accepted mediator.

Next, I discuss Algeria’s diplomatic relationship with Iran. Generally speaking, the relationship seems to have been very stable. When Iran cut off all contact with the United States in April 1980, Algeria took over the role of representative. Evidence suggests that this was the case since Algeria was one of the select few countries that had positive and friendly relationships with the regime in Iran. During the crisis, several things happened that can be analysed as signs of an emboldened or atleast, steady diplomatic relationship. On the Iranian end of things, Iran spared resources to send over humanitarian aid to Algeria in the aftermath of the Al-Asnam earthquake that affected approximately 900,000 people, causing death, injury, and homelessness.

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142 Ibid
144 Ibid, p 208
This aid effort came at a time when Iran was embroiled in the war with Iraq itself. This show of support was reciprocated on the Algerian end of things. Algeria never publicly condemned Iran for hostage taking, and continued to maintain its diplomatic ties with Iran even as the rest of the world publicly condemned the act. Additionally, in September 1980, Algeria also joined forces with Libya to support Iran’s demands at the thirteen nation OPEC conference, pressing for oil production cuts to pressure the Western nation consumers. Despite major opposition, Algeria backed Iran on this public and global platform. Hence, it can be surely concluded that the second box for this hypothesis stands checked: Iran and Algeria had a good diplomatic relationship and the salience of this diplomatic identity seems to have definitely affected its selection as mediator.

Next, I flesh out the diplomatic relationship between Algeria and the United States. Unlike Algeria and Iran’s relationship, this relationship was subject to some friction. In the early 1970s, a prime dissident of the American state, Eldridge Cleaver sought asylum in Algeria, and sustained himself rent free over there for a long time. In fact, he was able to set up an exile headquarters for members of the Black Panther movement, something that the United States deeply despised. On the reverse end though, the United States had an established mediator-disputant relationship with Algeria already. Under Nixon, the U.C. had asked Algeria to mediate between them and the south Vietnamese national liberation front. These situations

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148 Ibid.
from the past sort of balance out, leaving no clear trace of how the net effect panned out for this diplomatic relationship.

In terms of events in the backdrop of the 1979 hostage crisis and the diplomatic relationship at the time, the relationship again had both positives and negatives going on. On the negative node, the Sahara conflict was ongoing at the time, where Morocco and Algeria were sparring over territory. On the reverse end, Algeria remained a major purchaser of United States’ technology for rampant industrialization and both countries continued to have a very mutually beneficial trade relationship. Additionally, a smaller indicative piece can be how the U.S. interacted with Algeria during the hostage crisis. National security advisor Zbigniew Brzeziński’s incessant praise of Algeria for pursuing a policy of non-alignment during the hostage crisis signifies a good relationship between both these states. Together, these instances seem to indicate that while not completely smooth, the diplomatic relationship between the United States and Algeria was very functional. With that clarification, the last criteria of the hypothesis is fulfilled. Hence, the hypothesis stands proven through factual, event-based research.

Some rare primary sources have also emphasized Algeria’s good diplomatic relationships with both Iran and the United States. The New York Times characterized Algeria as being a “confidante” of both parties, and asserted that this was the “main” attribute that led to it being chosen as mediator. Additionally, White House Press Secretary at the time, Jody Powell highlighted that both Iran and the United States had pleasant relations with Algeria on several occasions.

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occasions.\textsuperscript{152} In conclusion, primary sources also confirm the hypothesis: Algeria had a positive diplomatic identity because it fulfilled all three of the laid out criteria, and was hence chosen as mediator.

\textbf{What then?}

Put succinctly, the discussion in this section demonstrates that:

Hypothesis\textsubscript{1} - Proven;

Hypothesis\textsubscript{2} - Proven;

Hypothesis\textsubscript{3} - Unclear;

Hypothesis\textsubscript{4} - Proven.

While this is just one case study, the clarity that it provides towards these hypotheses is crucial. I dive more deeply into the issues of generalizability and limitations in Chapter VI. In the rest of this section, I discuss the questions that the rest of this section doesn’t address. So, why did Algeria want to mediate? Sure, Iran saw Algeria as a trustworthy and credible mediator, but what is in it for Algeria itself? Good thing: the answers are plenty. Not so good thing: none of them are presented with certainty. While some have argued that Algeria was pursuing self-interest, it is hard to see how this specific mediation changed things up for Algeria. It had been mediating for a while so it already had a good international reputation, and the conflict being resolved didn’t directly serve any of Algeria’s interests. Even the Western Sahara conflict continued as is. Other opinions assert that Algeria's effort was purely humanitarian.\textsuperscript{153} However the multiplicity of unconfirmed opinions makes this question hard to answer cohesively.


Chapter VI: Conclusion

Summarising Findings

This senior thesis is set out to understand the salience of mediator identity to the choice of mediating party, specifically when a state mediates in an interstate conflict. An expansive literature review spanning the disciplines of both international relations and political science and the sub-realms of international mediation and conflict studies was used to start off the discussion. More specific literature streams surrounding state based mediation, mediator identity salience, and that at the nexus of these two streams was then used to generate four distinct hypotheses.

- **The overall hypothesis** presented was that in inter-state conflicts marred by power asymmetries, the weaker state will choose a state mediator who shares more identity facets with it, since they act as a source of affinity. **PROVEN**

Since this hypothesis is so broad and overarching, it was broken down into smaller testable hypotheses, with each one focusing on a distinct facet of mediator identity:

- **Hypothesis 1**: Religious identity is crucial to the mediator due to its ability to create affinity with the disputant(s). In the case of asymmetrical power distribution in cases of inter-state conflict, the weaker disputant will choose someone who shares a religious identity or affinity with them. **PROVEN**

- **Hypothesis 2**: Smallness/largeness play a very significant role in the choice of mediator in interstate disputes. In the case of asymmetrical power distribution during these disputes, the weaker/smaller disputant is more likely to choose a state whose identity is characterised by smallness. **UNCLEAR**

- **Hypothesis 3**: Historical identities are also crucial parts of mediator identity. In interstate disputes marked by asymmetrical power structures and differential experiences with
coloniality/imperialism, the weaker state will choose a mediator that shares a strong level of historical affinities with it. PROVEN

- **Hypothesis 4**: A mediator’s diplomatic identity facet is crucial to its overall identity. Its diplomatic image on the international front, and its relationships with both the disputants are crucial parts of this facet. Differently from the other three hypotheses, here we hypothesise that both disputants - regardless of power asymmetry - must have a good diplomatic relationship with the mediator in order to move forwards. PROVEN

**Contributions & Significance**

Hence, out of the four hypotheses generated, the case study of Algeria’s mediation in the United States-Iran Hostage Crisis, 1979-1981, proves three and leaves one unclear. In a nutshell, the thesis’s speculations about the salience of mediator identity during the mediator selection is proven, alongside the speculations that religious, historical, and diplomatic identities are crucial to the choice of a mediating state. These successfully proven hypotheses bring interesting prospects for the world of mediation. The thesis has highlighted an issue seldom discussed: while states as mediators are discussed in the existing literature, the exploration of identities has been done only in material regard. Which is why the literature based exploration of variable two “smallness/largeness” - which connoted size, might, power etc - was the easiest. The other three variables were extremely hard to theorise upon since the literature heavily ignores the more intangible and covert facets of mediator identity. Essentially, this thesis is possibly one of the first discussions of such identity facets in regard to a state based mediating agent. Once this discussion starts, the possibilities are endless for fleshing out the potential of state mediators and using previously uncovered sources of leverage.
Additionally, one of the bigger interventions of this thesis is discussing Algeria as a case study instead of resorting to the highly prescribed Scandinavian/Nordic/European states and superpowers. The latter options are over-prescribed and projected in literature. The reasons for this are very apparent and circulate around prevalent Eurocentrism in academia. Since I have already discussed this issue in various places throughout the thesis, I will refrain from being redundant and discussing it here yet again. The crux of what I emphasise here is that a lot of the contribution of this thesis is shedding light on the forgotten peacemakers: the non-traditional mediators (according to popular global imagination) who without the same access to might and resourcefulness, levy other facets of their identity to effectively peace make in situations that are otherwise highly flammable. The significance of this contribution is massive: it opens up the gates for mediation to be re-prescribed to really wide in a world where the practice is declining writ large. By bringing in geo-politically and economically less vested states as mediators, one can effectively look to solve most of the conflicts that plague our world today.

Finally, the thesis brings back Iran and the United States under the spotlight. In my examination of conflict studies’ literature it almost seemed as though this conflict’s longevity has made it unworthy of attention within the scholarly world. Within the practical world, it is clear that the conflict is very much alive. This conflict requires the world’s attention, and moreover, it requires a solution. Now that this thesis has highlighted why Algeria clicked as mediator, how do we proceed ahead to find an effective mediator for the protracted United States-Iran conflict?

\[1^{54}\] From looking at how many sanctions Iran has been subjected to since 1979 by the global community, and the recent-ish scuffle with the U.S. killing Iranian General Qasem Suleimani through a missile drone. Many other examples, ofcourse, of presidential candidates campaigning on different approaches to Iran and the Nuclear Treaty is a big proof in and of itself, showing that this is far from over.
Limitations & Weaknesses

In an ideal world with plentiful time and resources, this section wouldn’t have to exist. Alas, since time and resources are limited, so is the scope of this thesis. While the literature review was extremely expansive and hence the hypotheses reliable, I was able to use only one case study. The usage of just one case study, additionally one which several scholars have pointed to as idiosyncratic, limits the generalizability of these proven hypotheses. If more case studies had been put to the test, and all of them had yielded the same results for the hypotheses, then I could make a larger claim about their generalizability. Unfortunately, I cannot make a broad and expansive claim as such. I can, however, claim that hypotheses one, three, and four aren’t universally untrue. By this I mean that there is at least one study in the world where they stand proven, and hence, that means that there is a possibility that more cases might lend their support to these speculations.

Another major weakness of the study is the lack of a proper listing of all cases that apply to this universe. As I already explain above, this was the case due to a lack of comprehensive data compilation within the field in the past twenty years, and my own incapability to filter through every single interstate conflict that has taken place since the start of the 20th century. This lack of proper tabulations weakens the theoretical foundation of the study, which I am well aware of. My aim in upcoming renditions of this thesis will be to revise and better illustrate the universe of cases.

Future Steps

This discussion of weaknesses ties well into the discussion of future steps. Whether I pick this research up myself or somebody else picks up the baton, I believe that solidifying the universe of cases further is essential. Additionally, an increased number of case studies would be
helpful to see if the hypotheses are generalizable beyond this specific case. It would also prove helpful to have a quantitative dynamic to the study since it would allow the researcher to see if the salience of these identity facets in cases of state mediation and interstate conflict is statistically significant or not. Finally, despite all of the weaknesses that I discuss here, I believe that the thesis makes a valuable contribution to the existing literature around mediation. However, it is crucial that the research be drawn on and advanced, otherwise its potential and original contributions will not be utilized to the best of their abilities. Scholars building on research about non-traditional state mediators is a crucial way to advance our way towards a world where states exist on an increasingly level playing field, and consequently, we are able to attain the seemingly naive and impossible goals of peace and stability on our planet.


Rubin, Jeffrey 'Introduction' in Dynamics of Third Party Intervention (New York: Praeger, 1981), pp. 7-41;


https://www.cfr.org/blog/can-finland-act-mediator-cyber-norms

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