Joining forces to make peace

The effect of local mediation on local peace agreements during United Nations peacekeeping missions

By

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Abstract

Underutilizing local conflict resolution during peacekeeping missions can prolong regional and even national conflicts. Yet, while many scholars recognize the importance of local mediation, most studies focus on state-level conflict resolution. Thus, this study investigates what parties are involved in successful local mediation efforts and what aspects make them effective mediators. The theoretical argument tested in this study is that a combined effort between UN and local mediators is more effective than both parties mediating independently. In order to test this argument, a mixed-methods approach is applied to unique non-public data from the United Nations on their activities during peacekeeping missions in the DRC, the CAR and Mali. The findings indicate that a combined effort of the UN and local mediators is more likely to result in local peace agreements than both actors mediating separately. As for the underlying characteristics that influence this phenomenon, substantial evidence has been found to underline the importance of the legitimacy of local mediators and available resources of the UN. Limited data is present on the significance of the knowledge on local conflict dynamics of local mediators while no evidence could be found on the role of impartiality of the UN.

Abbreviations

ACLED	Armed Conflict Location and Event Data
Admin-1	Administration Level 1 - The largest subnational administrative unit of the countries
BONUCA	Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic
CA	Civil Affairs
CAD	Civil Affairs Division
CAS	Civil Affairs Section
CAR	Central African Republic
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ERAR	Equipe Régional d'Appui à la Réconciliation
FPRC	Popular Front for the Rebirth of Central African Republic
ICCN	Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IMADEL	Initiative Malienne d'appui au développement local
JAM	Joint Assessment Missions
LNA	Large N Analysis
LPC	Local Protection Committee
Mb-SNA	Model building Small N Analysis
MINURCA	United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic
MINUSCA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MISCA	Mission internationale de soutien à la Centrafrique sous conduite africaine
MONUSCO	United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
MPC	Central African Patriotic Movement
Mt-SNA	Model testing Small N Analysis
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ONUC	Opération des Nations Unies au Congo
PIO	Public Information Officer
PNC	Police Nationale Congolaise
PRIO	Peace Research Institute Oslo
RCD–GOMA	Congolese Rally for Democracy–GOMA
SCD	Standard Combat Modules
SNA	Small N Analysis
UNJHRO	United Nations Joint Human Rights Office
UPC	Union for Peace in the Central African Republic

Content

Introduction

United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions are operating in various conflict zones throughout the world. While operating under a broad mandate with extensive resources, the effectiveness of these peacekeeping missions is often called into question (Campbell, 2020; Gilligan, 2008). UN peacekeeping missions are frequently criticised of focussing too much on top-down technical and military operations and of overlooking bottom-up conflict resolution (Autesserre, 2017; Ruggeri et al., 2017; Smidt, 2020). Indeed, many conflict areas in which the UN operates have seen prologued UN involvement and often multiple missions over the last decades (Hultman et al., 2014). In recent years, the UN has focussed more on local conflict resolution by investigating its effectiveness and intensifying their efforts in this area. For example, in a 2015 report conducted by the UN on the effectiveness of the mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), it was concluded that the focus of attention was too much on military and technical operations and not enough on supporting political processes and bottom-up conflict resolution (UN, 2015). Indeed, Autesserre (2010), who is one of the most prominent scholars in the area of local conflict resolution, argues that one of the most important factors that is dragging the conflict in the DRC on a national level on as long as it does, is the failure of the UN to address local disputes. Because of the importance of addressing conflicts on a local level, this study will test how the involvement of different actors influence the effectiveness of mediation efforts.

Although scholars, and in recent years also the UN, stress the importance of local conflict resolution (Krause, 2019; Ruggeri et al., 2017; Smidt, 2020; UN, 2015), research is still limited in this area. Instead, most research seems to be focussed on either the military and technical operations of the UN (Berdal, 2018; Di Salvatore, 2020; Hultman et al., 2014) or internal dynamics and causes of conflict and civil wars (Collier & Hoeffler, 1998; Hegre & Sambanis, 2006; Wig & Kromrey, 2018). Looking at the literature on the broad topic of conflict resolution efforts by an international third party mediator, most scholars focus on mediating conflicts on a national-level. In general, scholars agree that international third parties like the UN are effective mediators in conflicts that involve state-actors (Beardsley, 2008; Duursma, 2017; Wehr & Lederach, 1991). While the UN has clear mandates and operations that revolve around local conflict resolution, local mediation involving the UN is still understudied (Boutellis et al., 2020; Duursma, 2020). The lack of literature is also apparent when looking at the effect of sub-national mediation by local mediators. Even though there are clear signs that local mediators can be essential in local conflict resolution, the impact of local mediators is often merely part of larger studies on the aspects that influence local conflicts (Autesserre, 2014; Krause, 2019; Wig & Kromrey, 2018) The few quantitative studies on local conflict resolution by local mediators mainly focus on short term conflict data (Smidt, 2020). Even less is written on a combined effort of UN and local mediators. Drawing on these gaps in literature, namely the lack of research regarding the effectiveness of international mediators, local mediators and their combined effort in local

conflict resolution, the effectiveness of local mediation efforts by the UN and local mediators is the topic of this study.

The research question of this thesis is as follows:

How have local mediation efforts by the United Nations and local mediators affected the likelihood of reaching local peace agreements?

While research specifically on the impact of international and local mediators is lacking, there is some existing literature on the attributes affecting these actors. For example, within the broader research on the UN as a conflict resolution actor, it has been identified that the available resources and expertise in addition to its impartiality are conducive to its peacebuilding efforts (Blattman et al., 2014; Mason & Sguaitamatti, 2011; O'Brian et al., 2020). Likewise, in the scarce literature on the role of local mediators it has been shown that knowledge on local conflict dynamics and legitimacy are important aspects that contribute to their effectiveness (Duursma, 2017; Krause, 2019; Wig & Kromrey, 2018). These four characteristics could contribute to the effectiveness of both international and local mediators within local conflicts. As these characteristics do not seem to be mutually exclusive, this thesis develops the argument that local and international mediators complement each other leading to a higher chance of the conflict parties reaching a local agreement.

Following Lieberman's (2005) strategy, first, daily situation reports of the UN are analysed to investigate the relationship between the types of actors involved in local mediation and the likelihood of reaching an agreement. After evaluating the relationship, the daily situation reports are revisited to examine if the four characteristics that influence the effectiveness of UN and local mediators have indeed contributed to the conclusion of the agreements.

This thesis is structured as follows. First, the literature on conflict resolution and local mediation is oulined while highlighting any gaps in literature. In the following chapter, a theory is built in order to fill these gaps in literature after which the most important concepts are described. A hypothesis is derived to test the proposed theory. In the methodology section, the variables and datasets are presented. Additionally, in this chapter the case selection and the statistical approach that has been used are described. The results section consists of an overview of the data, the results of the analysis and its interpretation. In the last chapter, the conclusion of the study is provided. A ''Confidential Appendix'', accessible only to the supervisors and home universities due to the non-public nature of the data, provides a deeper understanding and additional context of the data and tools used during the study.

Theoretical framework

Literature review

In the literature, there are various assessments regarding the effectiveness of UN and local mediators and the challenges and advantages they operate with. To identify the aspects that contribute to the effectiveness of UN and local mediators, in the following paragraph the literature on mediation on state-level is described first as this area has received most attention by scholars. In the following paragraph, existing literature on the effectiveness of international mediators like the UN in local conflicts is examined. Lastly, studies on the impact of local mediators in local conflicts are outlined.

Much has been written about third party mediation in international conflicts. The literature on top-down mediation in international conflicts is rich in both descriptive research and large-N statistical studies. The difficulties of establishing sustainable peace through mediation on a national level involving state actors are reflected in the fact that mediation efforts fail more often than not (Duursma, 2014). Beardsley (2008) argues that international mediation involving state actors is only effective short term and can even have negative effects long term. Regardless of how successful mediation is, it is certain that the effectiveness of international peacebuilding and mediation is subject to a number of factors. For example, multiple scholars find that the chance of successful peacebuilding benefits from the involvement of the international community (Autesserre, 2017; Gartner & Bercovitch, 2006). Werner & Yuen (2005) found that successful conflict resolution is as much about addressing the underlying problems as it is about stopping the violence. Therefore, it is important that any third party does not put too much pressure on the process as too much pressure could have adverse effects on the outcome of the agreement. In addition, Svensson (2007) finds that when a third party shifts from being an intervening force providing stability to being a mediating actor, it has a positive effect on the likelihood of reaching a peace agreement. While most scholars pose a nuanced argument attributing the success of third party conflict resolution on a number of factors, there are scholars who present a more blanket statement. For example, Smith & Stam (2003) state that international mediation and peacekeeping efforts in general, have been a notable failure. However, Smith & Stam (2003) also conclude that impartial third party mediation in combination with peacekeeping forces can be favourable for the possibility of reaching a peace agreement as the peacekeeping forces acts as a counterbalance to any asymmetries in the opposing states. While the body of literature presents varying conclusions regarding the effectiveness of international third party mediation in international conflicts, factors like involvement of the international community, a third party shifting from an intervening to a mediating role and the use of peacekeeping forces increase the likelihood of successful peacebuilding through mediation.

Literature becomes more scarce when looking at international third party mediation efforts in local conflicts. Bottom-up local mediation often is merely part of studies on the broader topic of local conflict resolution. Although the existing research on local conflict resolution is certainly not abundant,

there is emerging consensus that local conflict resolution is instrumental to the creation of long term peace and stability (Autesserre, 2017). A peace-making process can be frustrated by the failure to address local grievances leading to continued violence (Ruggeri et al., 2017). Gartner & Bercovitch (2006) have contributed one of the few quantitative studies specifically on international mediation. Gartner & Bercovitch (2006) analysed the longevity of peace settlements through more than 1400 settlements and found that mediated agreements that only use state actors are more likely to be short-lived than those that also involve non-state actors. Furthermore, in a quantitative study using thousands of official UN press releases, Smidt (2020) found that local intergroup dialogues organized by the UN, significantly decreased the likelihood of communal violence in Cote d'Ivoir. Although she does not directly test this argument, Smidt concludes that settling inter-communal information and coordination problems and reducing biases of the opposing parties are the main contributors to the reduction of violence as a result of the intergroup dialogues (Smidt 2020). However, the actions of international third party mediators in local conflicts are not without criticism. The UN itself acknowledges risks that come with UN involvement in local mediation. Drawing unwanted attention, raising expectations and rigid procedures are examples of negative aspects that a UN engagement might provoke (UN, 2020). In addition, Boutellis et al., (2020) argue that all UN missions should consider the added value versus the negative effects before engaging in local mediation. UN involvement can draw attention to the mediation process having negative effects on its outcome. Thus, Boutellis et al., (2020) advocates for the application of the ''do no harm'' principle where local actors are first consulted and local ownership is maximized. While the involvement of international actors like the UN in local mediation processes is often part of broader studies, these studies do conclude that the involvement of an international actor in local conflict mediation in general has a positive effect on mitigating violence. However, the existing research mostly uses case studies to explore the effect of international third parties in local mediation. Except for a few studies on the broad topic of conflict resolution, quantitative research in the area of the effectiveness of international third party local mediation is still lacking.

Similar to existing literature on international third party local mediation, local conflict mediation conducted by local actors is often merely part of bigger studies on peacebuilding and conflict resolution on a local level. However, the importance of local mediators in local conflict resolution is certainly deserving of research. For example, Autesserre (2017) finds that, while external contributions can benefit the peace-making process, domestic entities play the most important role in successful conflict resolution. Duursma (2017), found that one of the most important aspects contributing to the effectiveness of local mediators is their legitimacy with the local populations. In some regions, it might even be detrimental to involve international intermediaries as they could not be welcome (Mason & Sguaitamatti, 2011). Furthermore, local mediators are often closer to one or both of the conflicting parties and have more knowledge on the conflict dynamics and could thus be a more effective mediator than one that is not connected to either of the opposing parties (Svensson, 2007; Wehr & Lederach,

1991). Although research is lacking on the effectiveness of local mediators in local conflicts, it is clear that local mediators can play an important role in local peace-making operations.

Even though most of the previous research on local mediation is based on case studies, there is emerging research on subnational conflict resolution using large-N datasets. Duursma (2020), explored the effect of subnational mediation on subsequent lulls in armed clashes and found that local mediation efforts by the UN are effective in preventing armed clashes. Furthermore, Ruggeri et al. (2017), uses a sample of 14,146 conflict observations in sub-Saharan Africa to study what effect a local peacekeeping presence has on the probability of conflict. The results of the study show that UN peacekeepers contain local conflict by, among other, filling the power vacuum created by the conflict and mediating between local parties. Wig & Kromrey (2018), in turn, use data on 143 ethnic groups to examine if there is a link between formalized customary institutions and the prevalence of local communal conflict. In this study, a reduction in conflict can be observed where formalized customary institutions like tribal courts and local chiefs are present compared to regions where these institutions are absent, suggesting that local mediators are effective in mitigating violence and negotiating peace (Wig & Kromrey, 2018). As is the case with most qualitative studies analysing local mediation involving local mediators, the focus of these quantitative studies is either on the larger subject of conflict resolution or the emphasis remains at the role of an international or local mediator. Research does not specifically address the effect of combined efforts of international and local mediators.

The importance of addressing conflicts locally is reiterated by almost all scholars. Both local and international actors can have unique aspects that contribute to their effectiveness. The involvement of local actors can provide essential knowledge on the conflict and legitimize the mediation process while the resources and impartiality of the UN seem to contribute to resolution of the conflict and the stabilization of conflict areas. The next section builds the argument that because of these aspects, joint mediation by both the UN and local mediators is more likely to result in a peace agreement than both actors mediating independently.

Theory

Based on the literature, four aspects seem to contribute most to the argument that joint mediation efforts are more likely to lead to the conclusion of an agreement than local and UN mediators working separately. For the UN, these aspects are the available *resources* and *impartiality*, while *knowledge on local conflict dynamics* and *legitimacy* increase the effectiveness of local mediators.

The United Nations as a mediating force

Resources

The involvement of the UN as a mediator has a number of advantages that are conducive to the peace making process. The UN has resources and expertise that a local or even national actor might not be able to contribute. For example, the UN has the ability to deploy mediators that have had extensive

training and are knowledgeable about different mediation techniques (UN, 2020). In addition, the UN can provide technical expertise regarding the solution of a particular problem like they have done in South Sudan by mitigating the inter-community violence by changing cattle grazing routes. Although the conflict proved more deep-rooted, by using mediation techniques and technical expertise, the UN was successful in establishing several, albeit short, peace agreements between the Dinka, Nuer, and Murle communities (Krause, 2019). Furthermore, a peacekeeping mission could provide the stability and security for negotiations to commence (O'Brian et al., 2020). Using the vast resources the UN has, it could provide incentives for the conflicting parties to come to the table (UN, 2020). By their own account, the biggest strength of the UN in local conflict resolution is facilitating inter-community dialogue (O'Brian et al., 2020). Technical and mediation expertise and providing stability and security are important contributors to the effectiveness of the UN as an international third party mediator.

Impartiality

Existing literature places an emphasis on the importance of impartiality of a mediator in reaching an agreement. Wehr & Lederach (1991), state that a common conceptualization of a mediator's success is based on neutrality and externality, with an emphasis on the importance of externality for mediation success. In addition, Rauchhaus (2006) has analysed the attributes that increase mediator effectiveness using quantitative analysis and found that, while both biased and non-biased mediators can be effective, impartial mediators outperform biased ones. The UN has the ability to address certain issues on a local level that national mediators for political reasons would not bring up. For example, sex education, criticism of government policies and issues of human rights might the state not be open to discussing (Blattman et al., 2014). In some cases, the involvement of the UN could even be vital to the resolution of conflict as local or state based mediations might be seen as biased or targeted using violence (Mason & Sguaitamatti, 2011). The UN, acting as an external impartial mediator, is less prone to threat of violence and is able to address issues that otherwise might not be able to be discussed. The impartiality of the UN, in combination with its resources and expertise presumably increase the likelihood of mediation success in local conflicts.

Local third party mediators

Knowledge on context of conflict

Local mediators have unique characteristics that make them a valuable partner in local conflict resolution. Local mediators are closer to the conflict and thus often have more extensive knowledge on the local dynamics. Mitigating communal violence requires understanding of the scale, type, geography and actors that local armed groups motivate to start a conflict (Krause, 2019). Furthermore, local traditions and conflict resolution mechanism are essential to settling and maintaining peace. Local mediators have knowledge on the procedures involving tribal courts, legislatures, councils of elders and

the involvement of paramount chiefs which can facilitate mediation between the communities. Specific knowledge on local dynamics and traditional methods of conflict resolution like the use of customary courts are important tools to local conflict resolution (Wig & Kromrey, 2018). The importance of knowledge on local dynamics is reiterated by Autesserre (2014), who states that a consensus has emerged that international mediators use standard conflict resolution techniques that do not align with local specificities. These actions can lead to unproductive interactions or even cause conflict between the mediator and the local population. Local mediators with knowledge on local dynamics could mitigate this negative effect.

Legitimacy

As local mediators are connected to the conflicting local parties and can have a high degree of legitimacy based on their position within the communities, they might be uniquely capable to resolve conflicts. Duursma (2017) outlines the importance of legitimacy in mediation processes. Often an overlooked factor in peace building, a high level of legitimacy might counteract any limitations the third party might have in, for example, available resources. Duursma (2017), found that African third party mediators have a higher degree of success in concluding peace agreements than non-African third parties. Although international mediation processes involving African state-actors was the subject of analysis, the impact of legitimacy could be comparable on a local level. The importance of legitimacy might even be greater on a local level as local actors like communities and villages are less affected by international politics and pressure. Indeed, by their own account, the UN recognize the 'critical importance' of elders and local leaders to resolve conflicts using their legitimacy (UN, 2020). Wehr & Lederach (1991), while studying mediation in South-America, based the effectiveness of local mediators on a slightly different but still similar characteristic, namely trust. The trust that a local mediator possesses from the local parties positively affects the mediation results because the local mediator is tied to the locality in which the conflict takes place and do not leave after the negotiations have been concluded. Therefore, the local mediators act more according to the appropriate cultural setting and traditional conflict resolution mechanisms. A high degree of legitimacy through familiarity and trust of the local community generates successful mediation outcomes.

Both international third party mediators and local mediators possess unique characteristics that are conducive to the local conflict resolution process. Although international mediators like the UN possess elements that are effective in settling local conflicts like mediation expertise and impartiality, they lack certain aspects like specific knowledge on local dynamics that could hinder the peacebuilding process. Likewise, while local mediators have extensive knowledge on the context of the conflict and local conflict resolution processes, they lack the material resources that international mediators can field. Indeed, Wehr & Lederach (1991), expressed the ability for the international and local third party mediators to complement each other. Acknowledging the fact that both international and local mediators have valuable merits that could complement each other, when working in unison, the international and

local mediators are presumably more effective in reaching local agreements than working independently.

The observable implication of the argument that local mediators and the UN have the comparative advantages outlined above that supplement each other, is that joint mediation efforts should be more effective than either type of mediation by itself. This leads to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis

Joint mediation efforts by the UN and local mediators are more likely to lead to a local peace agreement than either UN or local mediators mediating on their own

Conceptualization

The argument that local mediation leads to the conclusion of an agreement, assumes a clear understanding of the concepts '*mediation*', '*local*', '*agreement*' and, as mediation is invariably tied to conflict, the concept '*conflict*'. Although there is a great range of definitions characterizing *mediation*, general consensus is that mediation is a process of conflict management that is used by a third party to assist interacting parties to manage and resolve disputes (Beardsley, 2008; Busch, 2016; Wall & Druckman, 2003). This is in line with the official UN definition of mediation, which is also the definition used in this paper, which states that mediation is 'a process whereby a third party assist two or more parties, with their consent, to prevent manage or resolve a conflict' (United Nations, 2012). As local mediation is the subject of this research, it is important to also define *local*. Local refers to the level in which mediation takes place. This can include the level of the individual, the family, the community, the district or the ethnic group. As the district also falls under 'local', mediation conducted by local authorities such as a mayor or prefect will also be treated as local. Thus, local mediation is mediation that occurs in conflicts that take place on a sub-national level (Autesserre, 2017). As *conflict* is a broad term, within this study, local conflict is defined as 'non-state conflict between social groups that define themselves along identity lines, such as ethnicity, religion, language, and culture' (Krause, 2019). In addition to defining local mediation, it is important to describe what constitutes local mediation success. Effective mediation can be defined in different ways. While some scholars, especially in inter-state mediation, define successful mediation as the conclusion of a full settlement or peace agreement (Duursma, 2017; Svensson, 2007), a limited cessation of violence or even a short-lived ceasefire are already fruitful outcomes and can lead to more comprehensive and lasting agreements (Bercovitch & Gartner, 2006). In this study, mediation is viewed as effective when an agreement is reached between the conflict parties. This *agreement* does not necessarily have to be a comprehensive peace agreement but can also be, for example, a temporary ceasefire or a reconciliation pact. Thus, the *measurement of success* within this study is whether or not an agreement is reached as a result of local mediation efforts.

Research design & Methodology

This chapter presents the method used to examine the relationship between these variables using unique non-public data from the UN. The available non-public data from the UN encompasses the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and Mali. Because the theory outlined is applicable to all local mediation efforts by UN and local actors, these three countries are used to test the hypothesis. Thus, the dataset consists of the daily situation reports of the UN peacekeeping operations of *United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo* (MONUSCO), *United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali* (MINUSMA) and *United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic* (MINUSCA). These non-public reports have the advantage of including all daily ground actions and relevant events that the UN undertakes or that affect the these operations. These actions vary from setting up field offices and taking part of ceremonies to reporting on armed clashes that have occurred in addition to all conflict resolution efforts. Furthermore, another advantage is that, due to the data being non-public, the UN reports might give more unfiltered information than publicly released official documents. As the UN reports are on a daily basis and this study is focussed on local conflict resolution, the *unit of analysis* is the largest subnational administrative boundaries of the countries (admin-1) under study per day.

In order to test the hypothesis, data from all variables have been collected, processed and analysed. Firstly, the *independent variable* of mediation in local conflicts is split into three mutually exclusive binary variables. These three variables are UN only mediation, local only mediation and a combined mediation effort by the UN and local mediators. The models therefore include three mutually exclusive binary variables that measure each type of mediation with the reference category being one of these types of mediation. It should be noted in several cases international actors like the NGO Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue were involved in mediation efforts alongside the UN or local mediators.[1]

In addition to coding the independent variable of local mediation and the relevant actors involved, a number of other aspects have been coded that are necessary for both the large-N analysis and the intensive case study. These aspects are the start and end date of the mediation effort, the location of the conflict area and location of the mediation effort, the conflict parties and the names of the mediators. As the *dependent variable* of local agreement is also extracted from these datasets, in addition to the previous aspects, the conclusion of a local agreement, its name and the date on which the agreement has been concluded, have also been coded. The *measurement of success* is whether or not a local agreement has been reached as this is a clear indicator of the conflict parties willing to address and resolve the conflict. Both the dependent variable and measurement of success have binary

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[1] In five mediation cases, an international actor other than the UN was involved in mediation without the UN or local mediators. These mediation efforts are not coded as mediation in the dataset, though it should be noted that coding these cases as either local or UN mediation did not change the results.

values. A codebook has been created to describe and guide the process of extracting quantitative data from these qualitative reports. This codebook has been included as a confidential appendix. The 14,042 reports of the three UN missions have been coded manually due to the nuances and varying descriptions the UN uses to report on local mediation and concluded agreements. To get a better sense of the data used, a few examples of relevant daily situation reports are included below. More examples can be found in the appendix.

This is an example of a combined mediation effort by several United Nations actors (Civil Affairs Kisangani, UNJHRO, PIO) and a Local Protection Committee (LPC) to resolve conflict between the Bangelema and Baboa communities:

''Bangelema and Baboa communities attempt to address tensions between them in Sukisa village (Buta territory, Bas Uele): From 30 January to 4 February, during a joint mission to Sukisa village (65 km S Buta), in Bas Uele province, Civil Affairs Kisangani, UNJHRO, PIO and LPC members brought representatives of the Bangelema and Baboa communities together to address the conflict that emerged between them during the mission. Indeed, from 31 January to 2 February, following the accidental killing of a girl from the Baboa community by a hunter from the Bangelema community, tensions increased between the Baboa and the Bangelema communities, and 3 Bangelema huts were burned and goats/sheep were stolen from them. By 2 February, preventive displacement of Bangelema emptied the village of Sukisa. Underlying these tensions is an old controversy over power leadership in the area. At the initiative of the JAM team, community representatives discussed ways to restore peaceful cohabitation, community tolerance, and rebuild trust in the village. Community representatives agreed to sensitize their members to return to the village to take part in the reconciliation process. A team under the leadership of the PNC commander and composed of LPC members and ICCN representative will support this process and continue monitoring the situation.'' MONUSCO daily situation report, 10/02/2017

This is an example of a local mediation session without the involvement of the UN between thirteen Imididaghane fractions:

''Mediation meeting in Tindandan, Alafia commune: On 15 January, the chief of the fraction of DaghamzaneII informed the DAC that a mediation meeting involving thirteen Imididaghane fraction chiefs from the commune of Alafia in the cercle of Timbuktu and the commune of Doukouria in the cercle of Goundam with the chief and councillors of the Kel Tinakawat fraction of Tintouloutle in Tindandane of the commune of Alafia had taken place on 12 January. About twenty people took part in this meeting, the objective of which was to reconcile the thirteen Imididaghane fractions and the chief of the Tintelout fraction concerning a land dispute, as the thirteen fractions of the Imididaghanes, through a convention dating back to French Sudan, claim ownership of the disputed land. Allegedly, no common ground could be found, but the meeting identified the parties' positions through dialogue. The chief of the fraction of Tintelout, who was opposed to the exploitation of the land by the

Imididaghanes, decided to bring the matter before the court of first instance in Timbuktu.'' MINUSMA daily situation report, 15/01/2018

This is an example of a UN only mediation effort where UN Civil Affairs (CA) Kaga Bandoro facilitates a dialogue session between conflict parties:

CA Kaga Bandoro facilitated dialogue between the Grevai Mayor and Ex-Seleka armed elements on 19 November to reach a common ground after the Mayor was threatened by MPC and accused of the creation of Anti-Balaka groups in the Grevai Commune. CA also supported the sensitization of four village Chiefs on their role and responsibility upon the visit of Kaga Bandoro Acting Préfet and Grevai's Mayor in. The CA team took the opportunity to sensitize the local Chiefs on their role in social cohesion, restoration of State authority and protection of civilians during the transhumance period. MINUSCA daily situation report, 19/11/2016

This is an example of the conclusion of a local peace agreement by joint efforts of UN and civil society actors:

''Successful conflict resolution initiative resulting in a Peace Treaty signed in Dibaya (Kasai Central): Following a conflict resolution and mediation dialogue facilitated by civil society actors and supported by CA in April 2019 to address land dispute, an 'Act of Peace Treaty' was signed between Bena Muaba Tshinema community and Kayembe Nsenda farmers as well as the Mayor, customary chiefs and one PNC agent in Dibaya on 16 August. As a reminder, since February 2019, an armed conflict erupted between the inhabitants of Bena Muaba Tshinema group at Kayembe Nsenda farm in Dibaya Territory (95Km NE from Kananga) resulting in violent clashes over a land dispute.'' MONUSCO daily situation report, 16/08/2019

An important consideration that has been addressed when determining the appropriate model to use to analyse the data is the matter of non-random selection. Ideally, the treatment within a study is randomly assigned so that any difference between the treated and non-treated cases is due to the application of the treatment and not some other confounding variable (Gilligan, 2008). However, as Bercovitch & Gartner (2006) argue, mediators are only involved when the conflict parties cannot resolve the dispute on their own. The necessity of using mediation indicates disputes that are complicated and deep-rooted. The result is that mediation is applied in more intractable disputes and is thus less likely to reach an agreement (Bercovitch & Sigmund, 2006). In addition, as the UN does not have access to an unlimited amount of mediators and resources, the organization is forced to prioritize what conflicts they mediate. The result is that the UN often prioritizes the most destructive, complex and intractable conflicts (O'Brian et al., 2020). Thus, it is important to account for selection effects in this study. The selection bias is accounted for using the Heckman Probit Model (Heckman, 1979). The Heckman probit model is ideally suited to deal with cases of non-random selection as the first stage of the model directly counters this selection in the sample by using a probit model to determine the

selection of observations appearing in the sample in the outcome equation. More specifically, the first stage of the Heckman probit model explains the occurrence of mediation on a given admin-1 unit day, while the second stage of the model analyses how all the sub-types of mediation influence the likelihood that a peace agreement is concluded. The reference category is one of the types of mediation, namely mediation efforts by local mediators only.

During the first stage of the model, an exclusion restriction will also be applied to the data in order to obtain consistent estimates. The requirement of the exclusion restriction is that the exclusion variable that is chosen only affects the dependent variable through the independent variable. In this case, we need a variable that explains the onset of mediation, but not the likelihood that a peace agreement is concluded once mediation is initiated. The exclusion variable that has been applied is the ''weekend day'' variable, which is coded as 1 when an observation pertains to a Saturday or a Sunday. This variable has been used because mediation efforts depend on the conflict parties and the mediators being willing to participate. Planning a mediation session during the weekend decreases the likelihood of conflict parties and mediators participating. The conclusion of an agreement likely is not as affected by weekend days, once mediation is initiated. After the selection effects have been dealt with during the first stage of the Heckman probit model, the second stage entails a standard probit model. As the treatment of both local mediation and agreements concluded is assigned per admin-1, which is the largest administrative unit per country, the individual observations per admin-1 are likely related to each other. Since observations within an admin-1 unit are unlikely to be independent of each other, robust standard errors are clustered around admin-1. The Heckman probit model has been performed using Stata.

A number of possibly *confounding variables* have been included in the model. These control variables have been selected as they could affect both local mediation efforts and the occurrence of conflict.

Population size per province   A province with a large population has a higher likelihood of the occurrence of armed clashes and the occurrence of mediation. A large population increases the propensity and ability of local conflict (Hegre & Sambanis, 2006). Similarly, when examining civil wars on national levels, Gilligan (2008) found that countries with large populations are more susceptible to civil wars. In order to control for this variable, data was drawn from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. This data has been extracted from The Humanitarian Data Exchange (Humanitarian Data Exchange, 2019).

Presence of a UN peacekeeping force and its size   It is reasonable to assume that the deployment of a peacekeeping force increases the likelihood of local mediation as well as impacts the prevalence of armed clashes as the purpose of a peacekeeping force is to stabilize the area and reduce conflict (Duursma, 2020). In order to control for this variable, data has been drawn from the University of Uppsala (Allansson, 2020). This dataset provides, among others, the locality and the size of the UN peacekeeping forces.

History of conflict   Extended periods or great prevalence of conflict in a certain area affects both the occurrence of conflict and the use of local mediation (Beardsley, 2008). Protracted violence in a certain area or between certain groups points towards complicated and deep-rooted sources of the conflict. These justifications are likely not as easily solved by local mediation as for example an isolated event or accident that sparks inter-communal conflict. Gartner & Bercovitch, (2006) even state that the fact that mediators have to be involved, means that the conflict parties are entrenched in a pattern of destructive behaviour that mediation efforts likely will not solve. The history of armed clashes is therefore also included as a confounding variable which is controlled for by extracting data from The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED, 2019). The types of conflict that ACLED collects include battles, violence against citizens, explosions/remote violence, riots, protests and strategic developments. As local conflict mediation is the focus of this study, only the data on battles and violence against citizens if it was labelled as an ''attack'', are selected from the ACLED data for analysis. In addition, ACLED records the following types of actors: State Forces, Rebel Forces, Political Militias, Identity Militias, Rioters, Protesters, Civilians, External/Other Forces (ACLED, 2019). Because battles involving state forces are by its nature not local conflicts, battles in which state actors take part have been excluded. The complete list of actors involved in the battles and violence against civilians has been manually checked to make sure no actors are present in the ACLED dataset. Data from 1997 until the beginning of each UN mission has been extracted.

Natural resource deposits   The relation between natural resources and conflict has been studied extensively. For example, research has shown that civil wars are more prevalent in resource rich nations than those lacking valuable resources. (Collier & Hoeffler, 1998) Furthermore, Ross (2004) finds strong evidence that resource wealth, namely the presence of oil, non-fuel minerals and drugs, increases the likelihood of conflict, prolongs the conflict and causes more casualties. Indeed, scholars like Autesserre (2008) contribute conflict over land in provinces like North-Kivu in the DRC to the vast reserves of diamond deposits, among other resources, present in the regions. In addition, the presence of mineral deposits can also affect the likelihood and success of mediation as the actors involved find the resources worth the conflict (Gaynor, 2016). Therefore, diamond, gold and oil deposits have been included as a dummy control variable per province. Relevant data on the known diamond deposits have been extracted from the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO). PRIO provides geographical coordinates of all known global diamond deposits. (PRIO, n.d.)

Ethnicity   One of the main driving forces of local conflict is inter-ethnic violence. Gilligan (2008) states that 'Ethnic Fractionalization' affects the outbreak of civil wars. This is reiterated by Quinn et al. (2013) who state that episodes of violence in Africa are rooted in ethnic divisions. For example, Stearns (2014) states that one of the main causes of the conflict in the DRC is

inter-ethnic violence. In addition, Hegre & Sambanis (2006) quantifiably analyse the causes of civil war and find that, while ethnic fractionalization does not have a significant effect on a national level, it does significantly impact the prevalence of internal low-intensity armed conflict. For these reasons, ethnicity is treated as a possible confounding variable and has been included in the analysis as 'number of ethnic groups per province' based on data extracted from Geo-Referencing of Ethnic Groups (GREG) (Weidmann et al., 2010). Using this dataset, the number of ethnic groups per admin-1 can be mapped and controlled for.

Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1. For each variable, the number of observations, minimum and maximum values attributed and the mean and standard deviation are given. All observations of the three countries under study have been combined. The observations consist of all units of analysis, which are the largest sub-national administrative zones in each country per day. The mean values of the agreement and the mediation variables indicate how these are rare events. In Table 2, the correlation coefficients between variables are shown.

Table 1, overview of variables

Variable	Observations	Min. value	Max. value	Mean value	Standard deviation
Local agreement	84.795	0	1	0,001144	0,033803
Local mediation only	84.795	0	1	0,002783	0,052683
UN mediation only	84.795	0	1	0,002972	0,054434
Joint mediation	84.795	0	1	0,004623	0,067835
Conflict history	84.795	2	6364	588,2361	1113,162
Cumulative fatalities	84.795	0	3578	114,8127	289,5541
Population size	84.795	54346	9913508	2230586	2282378
Number of ethnic groups	84.795	1	10	4,287847	2,276566
Presence of minerals/oil	84.795	0	1	0,373465	0,483727
Peacekeeping base	84.795	0	1	0,465995	0,498845
Weekend day	84.795	0	1	0,285901	0,451845

Table 2, correlation matrix of all variables

	Local agreement	Local mediation only	UN mediation only	Joint mediation	Conflict history	Cumulative fatalities	Population size	Number ethnic groups	Presence of minerals/oil	Peacekeeping base	Weekend day
Local agreement	1										
Local mediation only	,1903	1									
UN mediation only	,043	-,0029	1								
Joint mediation	,3114	-,0036	-,0037	1							
Conflict history	,0063	-,0054	,0931	,0797	1						
Cumulative fatalities	,0487	,0697	,0575	,056	,3651	1					
Population size	-,0079	-,0086	,0367	,0324	,3854	,1823	1				
Number of ethnic groups	,0141	,0399	,0427	,039	,403	,2062	,3282	1			
Presence of minerals/oil	-,0124	-,0246	-,0274	-,0264	-,2918	-,2206	-,0589	-,0526	1		
Peacekeeping base	,0278	,0458	,0424	,0496	,3738	,2748	,0806	-,0951	-,1737	1	
Weekend day	-,0013	-,0027	-,0091	-,0127	0	-,0004	-,0001	-,0001	,0001	-,0001	1

Data & Analysis

Overview of data

All daily situation reports of the MONUSCO, MINUSMA and MINUSCA operations have been coded manually and the relevant reports in which local mediation and/or an agreement has taken place, have been extracted. The dates and number of the available daily situation reports of the UN are as follows:

MONUSCO: 8th of July 2016 – 23rd of September 2020 – 2873 daily situation reports

MINUSMA: 1st of January 2017 – 7th of April 2020 – 2699 daily situation reports

MINUSCA: 3rd of August 2015 – 30th of September 2020 – 8470 daily situation reports

Thus the complete dataset in this study consists of a total of 14,042 daily situation reports. The larger number of daily situation reports in relation to the number of days in the timeframes mentioned above, is explained by the fact that most days have multiple reports. The total number of admin-1 per day, which is the unit of analysis, is 84,795. An overview of the mediation days and agreements, including a subdivision per type of independent and dependent variable, is listed below.

Table 3, overview of number of extracted independent & dependent variables

	Mediation days	**Agreements**	**As a percentage**
- **UN only mediation**	252	7	2,78%
- **Local only mediation**	236	29	12,29%
- **UN/Local combined**	392	61	15,56%
Total number	880	97	11,02%

Large-N Analysis

As there might be selection bias present in the data, the data given in the overview of data cannot be taken as face value. To account for possible selection effects, the Heckman probit model including the control variables have been applied to the data. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 2. In the first stage, a probit model is run using both the mediation and non-mediation cases. In the second stage, only mediation cases are used with *only local* mediation being applied as a reference category to compare the effectiveness of UN and combined mediation efforts to. Thus, UN only and joint efforts are compared to the effectiveness of only local mediators. In addition, the exclusion variable of ''weekend day'' has been included in the selection equation of the model. The positive Rho of 3.232 with a p-value of less than one percent indicates that a normal probit regression method would likely yield biased results because of selection effects. This confirms that the Heckman model provides more consistent estimates for the variables under investigation.

The relations are significant with p-values of less than five percent. When compared to local mediators only, the results suggest that the UN mediators only are less successful in reaching an agreement. However, when acting together, the positive and significant coefficient of joint mediation

indicates that a combined effort is more likely to reach an agreement than when UN and local mediators act independently. This result is in line with the hypothesis.

Table 4, results of the Heckman probit model

VARIABLES	Mediation	Local peace agreement
Local mediation only		*Reference category*
UN mediation only		-0.265*
		(0.128)
Joint mediation		0.250**
		(0.0842)
Conflict History	5.24e-05	-1.14e-05
	(2.75e-05)	(3.94e-05)
Cumulative fatalities	0.000294*	0.000420**
	(0.000142)	(0.000158)
Population size	-3.19e-08	-7.69e-08**
	(2.71e-08)	(2.51e-08)
Number of ethnic groups	0.0612**	0.0539**
	(0.0178)	(0.0206)
Presence of minerals or oil	-0.151	-0.158
	(0.121)	(0.112)
Peacekeeping base	0.545**	0.519**
	(0.144)	(0.150)
Weekend day	-0.139**	
	(0.0325)	
Rho		3.232**
		(0.455)
Constant	-2.920**	-3.661**
	(0.169)	(0.162)
Observations	84,795	880
Standard errors in parentheses ** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$		

After the Heckman probit analysis, the predicted probabilities of the types of mediation have been estimated. Each type has been calculated separately giving the other two types the value of 0 and holding all other variables at their mean value. The probability of joint mediation leading to a local agreement is 16.24 percent. The probability of UN only mediation leading to a local agreement is 2.63 percent. Local mediators acting independently have a probability of 6.90 percent of leading to a local agreement. The lower predicted probability of local mediators compared to the simple success rate reported in Table 2 suggest strong selection effects taking place for local mediators. Reason for this strong change could be that local mediators mediate in generally less intractable local conflicts and that the UN becomes involved when the conflict dynamics are more complex. This would be in line with the existing literature which states that the UN generally prioritizes to mediate the most destructive and deep-rooted conflicts (Gartner & Bercovitch, 2006; Gilligan, 2008; O'Brian et al., 2020).

The results indicate that joint mediation efforts of the UN and local mediators is more effective in reaching an agreement than when both parties mediate independently. The results are robust and in

line with the hypothesis. Therefore, in the next section, the study moves to the small-N analysis where contextually based evidence is provided to further test the hypothesis.

Case studies

The large-N analysis suggests that a combined effort of UN and local mediators has a higher likelihood of leading to a peace agreement than the two actors mediating independently. The theoretical framework outlines which aspects of the UN and local actors makes them effective mediators. To recap, these aspects are impartiality and extensive available resources for the UN and knowledge on local conflict dynamics and legitimacy for local mediators. The following section further test the theory and hypothesis using case studies based on the data of the reports and existing literature. The case study is based on the Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research established by Lieberman (2005). Lieberman (2005) provides a method of conducting research that integrate a preliminary large-N analysis (LNA) with an intensive case study. As the results of the large-N analysis are in line with the hypothesis, this study moves on to the model testing phase. During the model-testing phase, intensive case study is performed on the UN reports. Of particular interest are the underlying reasons for the success of the mediation efforts and if the aspects outline in the 'Theoretical framework' are indeed the primary contributors to effectiveness of international and local mediators. In short, the goal of the case studies is to provide contextually based evidence that reinforces the hypothesis.

Case selection

Because the results of the Large-N analysis are robust, the cases that are selected for further investigation are the ones that are ''on-the-line''. This means that only the cases that are well predicted by the model are selected because these cases are the best way to check the theoretical argument. In this section, for each country, mediation efforts leading to the conclusion of an agreement are selected and more deeply analysed. Firstly, per country, the national context is explained after which the background of the specific conflict parties is given. Next, the mediation efforts and the signing of an agreement are described. A link between the theory and the reports under investigation is given before the theoretical argument is tested based on the intensive case study in the ''Assessment'' section. The specific daily situation reports that are the basis of this section can be found in the confidential appendix.

Democratic Republic of the Congo
National conflict background

As soon as the state declared independence from Belgium in 1960, the DRC was plunged into political instability and a secessionist crisis. On the 12th of July 1960, two weeks after declaring independence, the leaders of the DRC called upon the UN for assistance in maintaining control of the country as the mineral rich province of Katanga seceded from the newly created state. The UN responded quickly by setting up the Opération des Nations Unies au Congo (ONUC), having 3.500

troops in the DRC the following week (Autesserre, 2009). After the arrival of the UN forces, instability continued with infighting between president Lumumba and Kasa-Vubu who was president of the political party Alliance des Bakongo leading to the collapse of the central government. In the resulting instability, then Army Chief of Staff Mobutu staged a coup d'état with the support of the United States and Belgium leading to the appointment of Kasa-Vubu as president and the eventual death of Lumumba in 1961 (Doss, 2014). This unstable establishment of the DRC seemed to be a kind of foreshadowing for the future of the nation as a myriad of factors kept creating instability in subsequent decades. One of the most important causes of conflict within the DRC are divergent local agenda's. Micro-level disputes about use of land, administrative power and the utilization of resources were prevalent from the formation of the state and exacerbated during Mobutu Sese Seko's rule starting in 1965 who used them to increase divisions in the country (Autesserre, 2008). External factors worsened the situation in the DRC further. During the Rwanda Genocide, about one and a half million Hutu's fled to the neighbouring DRC, then called Zaire, to escape the violence (Barrera, 2015). This further destabilized the eastern area of the DRC that is plagued most by inter-community ethnic tensions (Autesserre, 2008). In addition, further deterioration of the situation would be caused by foreign government-backed rebel groups like the Rwandan and Angolan supported Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire led by Kabila that would overthrow Mobutu in 1997 and the Rwandan and Angolan supported Congolese Rally for Democracy–GOMA (RCD–GOMA) that tried to overthrow Kabila (Carlsen, 2009). These divisions and foreign interventions would lead to the First Congo War from 1996 to 1997 and the Second Congo War from 1998 to 2003. These wars were fought in the Eastern and Northern part of the DRC and would reinitiate the second UN peacekeeping mission in the DRC that is still present in 2021. The First- and Second Congo War were the deadliest conflict since World War II with the Second Congo War even being referred to as Africa's World War because of the large number of states and peoples involved (Murphy, 2016). From the outset, the DRC was plagued by local inter-ethnic tensions and foreign interference with the Eastern and Northern parts of the country being most affected.

Regional case study

One of the regions most affected by inter-ethnic tensions is the province of South Kivu. The conflict in South Kivu is kind of a microcosm for the conflict on the national level as land, control of natural resources and origins of ethnic groups are among the driving forces of the instability. Especially, the question of what groups are autochthonous to the region is a source of contention. One of the main ethnic conflicts is between the Babembe, Bafuliru, and Banyindu communities who claim that the Banyamulenge communities are originally Tutsi peoples who have immigrated from Rwanda and do not belong in South Kivu (Verweijen et al., 2021). Indeed, many scholars claim that the Banyamulenge have a long history of emigration from Rwanda to the highlands of South Kivu going back as far as the sixteenth century (Court, 2013; Verweijen et al., 2021; Verweijen & Vlassenroot, 2015). A key aspect of the conflict is the struggle for local authority. Land and boundaries of new villages created by ethnic

groups in addition to disputes about the appointment of mayors of *groupements* and village chiefs that collect taxes continue to fuel the conflict (Verweijen & Vlassenroot, 2015). Interethnic tensions between the Banyamulenge and other tribes have also been exacerbated by political actors to divide the groups and gain political support. Most of the violence from 2016 onwards took place around Bijombo in the central part of South Kivu (Verweijen & Vlassenroot, 2015). The destructiveness of the conflict has motivated the UN to establish a MONUSCO peacekeeping base in the Bijombo area.

Local mediation efforts

As one of the conflict hotspots in the DRC, the UN focusses a lot of attention and resources on local conflict resolution in the province of South Kivu. A number of peacekeeping bases are spread out in South Kivu in addition to a dedicated Civil Affairs office in Uvira that acts as a link between local authorities and the peacekeeping forces. The large presence of MONUSCO in South Kivu is reflected in the frequency of UN situation reports that contain local mediation efforts in the region. Almost as early as in the first available report, both local, UN and combined mediation efforts try to resolve the conflict involving the Banyamulenge community. In October 2016, a dialogue session was organized by local authorities with support of MONUSCO between youth from the Babembe and Banyamulenge communities. The dialogue session was initiated in order to decrease tensions regarding transhumance, land and access to natural resources (MONUSCO Civil Affairs, Sit-rep 28/10/2016). A few months later in February 2017, joint mediation efforts have been undertaken by UN Civil Affairs, the Uvira Territorial Security Council, civil society, humanitarian NGOs and Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) representatives. The goal of the session was to address ''community tensions in Bijombo, mainly over power, land and identity'' between the Bavira, Banyindu and Banyamulenge communities. The report states that ''together, this group convinced conflicting communities to engage in dialogue, in the context of a decrease in open armed confrontations'' (MONUSCO Civil Affairs, Sit-rep 10/02/2017). In an effort to curtail the violence, in June 2017, MONUSCO advocated specifically to church leaders, influential Banyamulenge, Bafuliru and Babembe civil society and village elders for the initiation of community dialogues between Banyamulenge and neighbouring communities. The result was that ''representatives of religious confession jointly with local security council and civil society actors in Minembwe, Fizi and Uvira town undertook consultations to convince youths from all the communities to dissociate from the armed groups.'' (MONUSCO Civil Affairs, Sit-rep 09/06/2017). Finally, in July 2018, the local mediation was initiated by the UN between Banyamulenge and Babembe representatives in Bijombo. Both communities agreed to engage in further dialogue in order to appease tensions. UN Civil Affairs promised to continue mediation efforts during the Standard Combat Modules (SCD) deployment period in Bijombo (MONUSCO Civil Affairs, Sit-rep 18/07/2018). While other mediation efforts have been organized by UN and local actors between Banyamulenge and various other communities, the aforementioned four selected mediation efforts illustrate well how joint mediation sessions are conducted. These four cases form the basis of trust and cooperation that would result in the conclusion of a peace agreement which is discussed in the next paragraph.

Conclusion of local agreement

On the 18th and 19th of September 2018, a peace agreement was signed between the Bafuliru, Banyamulenge, Banyindu, Babembe and Twa communities. The dialogue session called the Dialogue on Peace Initiative in Bijombo was organised by the Bishop of Uvira and supported by UN Civil Affairs. In addition to the conflict parties, Civil Affairs and the Bishop of Uvira, representatives of civil society, provincial and local authorities and other MONUSCO units took part. Civil Affairs played a key role in the ''preparation to the meeting and identification of the participants and provided technical support during the meeting. During the dialogue the participants worked in groups to analyses the conflict taking into account different perspectives and suggest solutions.'' (MONUSCO Civil Affairs, Sit-rep 19/09/2018). The result of the two day dialogue was the signing by all parties of an Acte d'Engagement (Declaration of Commitment to peace). The Acte d'Engagement has been edited by technical and organizations support teams and has been taken to the capital of Kishasa by the Bishop of Uvira to be handed over to national authorities.

Testing the theory

Although the aspects of *Resources*, *Impartiality*, *Knowledge on context of conflict* and *Legitimacy* are not explicitly mentioned in the reports, a number of underlying characteristics of the aspects are present. The large presence and resources of MONUSCO peacekeeping forces can increase the stability and security in the area making mediation efforts more likely. Having a dedicated Civil Affairs office in the area that acts as a link between peacekeeping forces, national actors and regional parties can deter violence and reduce tensions. In addition, the deployment of MONUSCO forces through Standard Combat Modules (SCD) in Bijombo can further prevent conflict and provide the stability necessary for mediation to take place. During the dialogue session, the UN prepared the meeting, provided technical support and guided the mediation process by using groups to identify solutions. The deployment of technical personnel and the application of mediation techniques are clear characteristics of resources being used by the UN to assist in the mediation process. In addition, as outlined in the theoretical argument, legitimacy of local actors is conducive to the mediation process. While legitimacy has not been directly mentioned as a contributor to the conclusion of the agreement, actors with a high degree of legitimacy like community elders, village chiefs and religious leaders have been involved in all stages of the mediation process. In the reports, actors like the Uvira Territorial Security Council, humanitarian NGOs and Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) representatives convinced conflicting communities to engage in dialogue and try to resolve the conflict. Lastly, the dialogue in which the peace agreement was signed was organized by the Bishop of Uvira. Uvira is one of the largest cities in the region and thus the involvement of the Bishop of this city carries weight.

Central African Republic
National conflict background

Having gained independence from France in 1960, the Central African Republic found itself a country stricken with poverty, lacking centralized power and ethnically and religiously divided. Disputed control over natural resources, corruption, lingering French influence and elected officials exploiting and exacerbating national and regional divisions only worsened the situation (Welz, 2014). The result is that Central African Republic consistently ranks among the most poor and fragile nations in world. Almost without exception, every ruler of the country has either come to power, or was dethroned by a military coup (Carayannis & Fowlis, 2017). The decades leading up to the first UN peacekeeping mission in 1998 were plagued by military coups, civil unrest and interventions from France that retained a lot of influence in the appointment of top officials in the country. After successful lobby efforts by France, the UN Security Council authorized the *United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic* (MINURCA). The mission was focussed on ensuring fair elections and providing security. After one and a half years, during which it oversaw the national election that many claimed was unfair, the UN mission left after reaching the deadline outlined in the mandate. A small unit without military capabilities called the UN Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA) was established in April 2000 and remained in the country. Over the next two years, a failed coup, armed clashes between the Northern and Southern part of country, foreign military intervention by among others France and the DRC and a regime change took place. (Carayannis & Fowlis, 2017) This period is indicative for the level of volatility that the country is continuously immersed in. Several UN and African led peacekeeping missions were organized to stabilize the situation until the country was engulfed in a civil war in 2012. At the end of 2012, a coalition of mostly Muslim armed groups called the Séléka staged a successful coup leading to the radicalization and retaliation of a mostly Christian group called the anti-Balaka (Glawion & de Vries, 2018). The international reaction came in the form of the establishment of *Mission internationale de soutien à la Centrafrique sous conduite africaine* (MISCA) in 2013 which would be expanded greatly and be turned into MINUSCA in 2014. The civil war has led to thousands of deaths and over 400 thousand internally displaced persons (IDPs). (Maiangwa & Suleiman, 2017) From the establishment of the county in 1960, the Central African Republic has continuously had to deal with inter-ethnic tensions, violent regime changes and foreign interference.

Regional case study

After the civil war started, a number of armed groups vied for control of land, resources and people. A multitude of armed groups formed alliances and fought each other for power. While the two main groups can be identified as being Séléka and anti-Balaka, these groups are themselves fractured and plagued by infighting. The Séléka were early on successful in gaining control of key areas including the capital after which they elected their leader, Michel Djotodia, as president of the country (Welz, 2014). Two years after coming to power, as a result of infighting within the group, Djotodia disbanded the Séléka leading to many former Séléka sections, now called ex-Séléka, ruling small areas (Glawion & de Vries, 2018). Djotodia soon after lost power and regained control of the ex-Séléka rebel groups

which he renamed as the Popular Front for the Rebirth of Central African Republic (FPRC) headquartered in Bria. Subsequent groups like the Union for Peace in the Central African Republic (UPC) and the Central African Patriotic Movement (MPC) were formed from parts or the remnants of Séléka groups (Glawion & de Vries, 2018). The lack of unity resulting in these fractured groups are present on all levels. Even within these separated groups, infighting and divisions cause conflict. For example, while the FPRC have a large presence in Bria, the town is still very much a contested area both between the FPRC and other armed forces, and between sections within the FPRC. Sections of the FPRC, namely the Rounga and Kara sections, have disputes that lead to armed clashes causing casualties and thousands of displaced persons (MINUSCA Civil Affairs, Sit-rep 28/01/2020). As an area of importance and centre of regional politics, the MINUSCA mission has established a peacekeeping base and Civil Affairs Section in Bria to increase security and try to resolve the conflict.

Local mediation efforts

The Bria town and surrounding area is the scene of a struggle for power by multiple actors. In early 2020, one of the main reasons for conflict are the FPRC Rounga and Kara sections. On the 25th and 26th of January 2020, intense clashes occurred between the Rounga and Kara sections leading to three casualties and over four thousand, mostly woman and children, displaced persons. MINUSCA took strong measures by enacting robust military patrols and employing their mediation team on the 26th of January. Together with other UN units, local authorities and an influential local leader, the mediation team was successful in securing a cessation of hostilities on the same day. The next day, the conflict parties, representatives of other armed groups, the mayor of Bria and religious leaders convened at the MINUSCA office. Here it was agreed to withdraw the armed elements and work together with the local imams on a peace agreement. MINUSCA increased patrolling in the area to ensure security and stability (MINUSCA Civil Affairs, Sit-rep 28/01/2020). Over the next two months, intensive mediation efforts were conducted in order to prevent further hostilities. On the 3rd of February, the Civil Affairs Section (CAS) Bria, local authorities and religious leaders undertook mediation efforts trying to withdraw the conflict parties from the city centre (MINUSCA Civil Affairs, Sit-rep 03/02/2020). On the 5th and 6th of February, CAS, met with the FPRC Chief of Staff and community leaders from different ethnic groups to gain information and together encourage the Rounga and Kara sections to resolve the conflict. Although the parties said they are willing to negotiate, tensions are still high as the armed groups continue to circulate in the town (MINUSCA Civil Affairs, Sit-rep 06/02/2020). On the 11th of February, a 19-person Joint Mediation Committee chaired by the prefect of the region organized a dialogue session in which the conflict parties negotiated on suitable compromises (MINUSCA Civil Affairs, Sit-rep 11/02/2020). On the 27th of February, CAS held a meeting with the nine ethnic leaders and the Joint Mediation Committee to gain insights on solutions to resolve the conflict (MINUSCA Civil Affairs, Sit-rep 27/02/2020). A similar meeting was repeated on the 2nd of March with the involvement of local authorities (MINUSCA Civil Affairs, Sit-rep 02/03/2020). After multiple mediation efforts in a relatively short period of time, an agreement was reached by the conflict parties.

Conclusion of local agreement

After intensive mediation effort over the previous two months, a reconciliation agreement was signed by the Rounga and Kara sections. On the 18th of March 2020, a local mediator negotiated a reconciliation agreement which was signed by the conflict parties in addition to ''ethnic representatives of Arab, Kara, Goula, and Rounga, youth leaders, UPC, and the Prefect'' (MINUSCA Civil Affairs, Sit-rep 18/03/2020). Although the UN daily situation report does not offer more information on the agreement, a later report states that during an inter-community dialogue held by CAS on the 24th of March with Rounga officials, they said that while they hold doubts that Kara section will honour the agreement, ''the officers expressed that their signatures on the peace document are sincere'' (MINUSCA Civil Affairs, Sit-rep 18/03/2020). On the next day, CAS met with Kara officials who ''acknowledged that the ongoing inter-ethnic tensions are causing suffering to the population, [and] expressed their sincerity over the peace agreement signed on 18 March'' (MINUSCA Civil Affairs, Sit-rep 25/03/2020).

Testing the theory

Much like the daily situation reports of the DRC, the reports of CAR do not directly mention the aspects outlined in the theory but do give an insight in their characteristics. Again, the emphasis on the involvement of community leaders, religious officials and local authorities implies the importance of legitimacy of local actors in the mediation process. Religious and community leaders and local authorities like the mayor of Bria and local imams have all been involved in the mediation process. The 19 person Joint Mediation Committee chaired by the Prefect of Haute Kotto led or supported multiple dialogues between the conflict parties. In addition to the legitimacy of local mediators, specific knowledge of local actors on the conflict dynamics has been consulted. Ethnic, religious and community leaders have participated in the mediation process and provided insights in how the conflict could be resolved. The Civil Affairs Section has actively sought the necessary information from local mediators and other local actors through dialogues and workshops. Lastly, the available resources of the UN were utilized by enacting and increasing military patrols to increase security and employing their mediation team to calm down the tensions.

Mali

National conflict background

The conflict in Mali is characterized by a strong North versus South divide that culminates in prolonged phases of violence and rebellion. The sparsely populated and mostly Saharan Northern part of Mali, also generally being referred to as Azawad, has a history of strong opposition to the Southern region of Mali where most of the population including the capital Bamako is located. A myriad of reasons contribute to the instability experienced in Mali. Strong ethnic divisions, a spill over of conflict from neighbouring countries and socioeconomic frustration generate tensions leading to conflict (Diallo, 2017). Throughout history, multiple secessionist movements have rebelled against Bamako

who they feel dominates the North politically, economically and militarily. The rebellions of the Azawad regions can be categorized into four phases with the first being from 1963 until 1964. The brutal repression of the secessionist movement created deep scars and only worsened the divide (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017). During the second phase of rebellion from 1990 until 1996 in order to gain more independence, the government again opted for repression instead of negotiation. Although eventually, an agreement was reached giving the Northern region more independence, this agreement disregarded by the government after a general took power using a military coup. Over the next years, the national divisions only deepened as the North lagged behind the South economically (Dal Santo & van der Heide, 2018). The third phase of violence ensued from 2006 until 2009 as secessionist movement took control of the North. Again, increase funds and more autonomy were agreed upon but again were never implemented (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017). In 2012, a history of conflict, a huge drought in combination with a successful Coup d'état seemed to be catalyst for the fourth phase of rebellion that is still ongoing in 2021.

Regional case study

The successful coup in 2012 caused a power vacuum in many regions as local authorities collapsed leading to non-state armed groups seizing power. One such region is the central administrative region of Mopti (Diallo, 2017). Armed groups in this region gained support by exploiting local dissatisfaction with the central government and state actors like judges and police who they accuse of being corrupt. (Sangaré, 2018) The region of Mopti lays on the crossroads between the North and South divide. While negotiations and military action focussed on the Northern part of Mali, insecurity spread to the Mopti region. Self-defence militias, Jihadist uprisings and armed groups established control while inter-ethnic tensions, particularly between Dogon and Fulani, also called Peuhl, increased (Benjaminsen & Ba, 2021; Boutellis & Zahar, 2017). Tensions between mainly farming Dogon and pastoralist Fulani in Central Mali go back millennia. The Dogon have said to have originated from south of the capital of Bamako and came to central Mali during the period of the Mali empire between the 13th and 14th century. During the 1600's, the Dogon people have made their home on the barren plateau east of present day Mopti to avoid the risk of taken as slaves by, among others, the Fulani (Benjaminsen & Ba, 2021). Over time, the Dogon moved to the more fertile region below the plateau being chased back by the Fulani during the 18th and 19th century. Finally, in the beginning of the 20th century, the Dogon moved back into the plains establishing villages and farmland in what they consider to be both the ''lost paradise'' and ''promised land'' (Benjaminsen & Ba, 2021). In the following decades, due to better farming practices, the Dogon population grew to almost double the Fulani who mainly practice pastoralism. Conflict over limited access to grazing grounds and cattle corridors of the Fulani because of expanding farmlands of the Dogon became more prevalent. (Sangaré, 2018) These tensions were only aggravated by the political instability, jihadist insurgency and the drought of 2012 leading to armed clashes (Diallo, 2017). Both groups have since formed self-defence groups and militias resulting in casualties, displaced persons and material losses from both sides.

Local mediation efforts

A large number of joint mediation efforts have taken place specifically with the Dogon and Fulani communities in the Mopti region to try to resolve the conflict. In November 2019, Civil Affairs Division (CAD) sponsored an inter-community consultation session between the Dogon and Fulani to prevent resumption of tensions. Together with two regional NGO's called the Initiative Malienne d'appui au développement local (IMADEL) and the Equipe Régional d'Appui à la Réconciliation (ERAR) that both comprise of local actors, 28 participants representing village chiefs of both Dogon and Fulani communities were brought together to find a solution to the conflict. This dialogue is the result of '' a series of community dialogues sponsored by CAD and initiated specifically in the cercle of Koro to ease tensions between the Fulani and Dogon communities''(MINUSMA Civil Affairs, Sit-rep 27/11/2019). During the dialogue, the community leaders agreed to participate in a future reconciliation forum. In addition, a meeting was held where ''village chiefs of the communes of Koro, Madougou, Diankabou, Dioungani, Bondo (in Koro Cercle) and Dimdiri-Tama (in Youwarou cercle) reportedly identified obstacles, solutions and relevant partners to bring the peace back in the cercle of Koro'' (MINUSMA Civil Affairs, Sit-rep 27/11/2019). All actors met again in January 2020 when together with 300 participants, including the local and traditional and religious leaders a cessation of hostilities between the two communities was tried to achieve (MINUSMA Civil Affairs, Sit-rep 13/01/2020). In February 2020, the Civil Affairs Division, IMADEL and ERAR once again encouraged reconciliation by speaking directly to both communities. The parties stated that ''peace and dialogue must be locally owned, locally led processes. MINUSMA was there to provide support, advice, and facilitation as needed'' (MINUSMA Civil Affairs, Sit-rep 06/03/2020).

Conclusion of local agreement

On the 29th of June 2020, an agreement was signed by thirteen Dogon and Fulani leaders at the village of Gourti which was one of the areas where the conflict was first reignited in 2012. The agreement followed armed clashes in and around the village in January after which MINUSMA Forces were temporarily deployed from the Temporary Operating Base to stabilize the situation and make mediation efforts by the UN and local partners possible. The agreement was signed after mediation efforts by the UN, IMADEL and ERAR during a meeting initiated by the Dioungani municipal council (MINUSMA Civil Affairs, Sit-rep 01/07/2020). Furthermore, on the 20th and 21st of September, two reconciliation forums took place that were made possible because of previous mediation efforts. Financed by the MINUSMA Trust Fund, supervised by CAD and implemented by IMADEL, the forums oversaw the signing of a peace and cessation of hostilities agreement between Dogon and Fulani communities in the Dioungani commune. The conflict in this area has led to multiple casualties and the displacement of over 9.000 people (MINUSMA Civil Affairs, Sit-rep 23/09/2020).

Testing the theory

Much like the case studies of the DRC and the CAR, the situation reports of Mali do not give direct credit to the aspects of Resources, Impartiality, Knowledge on context of conflict and Legitimacy

but do mention their underlying characteristics. Local authorities and traditional and religious leaders have been heavily involved in the peace process. Local partners, in the form of two regional non-governmental organizations, have been involved in both the mediation efforts and the signing of the agreements. Furthermore, during one of the mediation sessions, a local mayor and traditional and religious leaders have compelled the Dogon and Fulani communities to cease hostilities. Also, local authorities took part in the signing of the first agreement. In addition to utilizing the legitimacy of local actors, local leaders have been used to obtain key information necessary to resolve the conflict. During the mediation session on the 25th of November 2019, village chiefs have been gathered to identify possible solutions, partners and obstacles to a peace agreement. Resources from the UN have also been employed to stabilize the situation and support the process. The MINUSMA forces have been deployed from the Temporary Operating Base in the area to deter further clashes. The MINUSMA Trust Fund has financed inter-community dialogues and general support, advice and facilitation of meetings have also been provided by the UN.

Assessment

The large-N analysis has provided evidence that joint mediation efforts by the UN and local mediators are indeed more likely to reach an agreement than both parties mediating independently. In the Theoretical framework, two aspects have been attributed to both parties that presumably complement the aspects of the other party leading to increased success of the UN and local mediators working together. To recap, these aspects are resources and impartiality for the UN and legitimacy and knowledge on context of conflict for local mediators.

While the aspects are not addressed directly in the daily situation reports, characteristics of the aspects are present in the reports. Firstly, the application of UN resources are a recurring theme in the reports. The main characteristics of this aspect are the deployment of UN peacekeeping forces to stabilize the area and cease hostilities, the utilization of mediation teams and Civil Affairs offices to oversee the process and technical and financial support to the mediation process like advice regarding mediation techniques. Secondly, the reports also contain information that reflects the importance of the legitimacy of local partners. In each of the case studies, community leaders, village chiefs, religious officials and local authorities played a key role in bringing the conflict parties together and facilitating the conflict resolution process. The involvement of key leaders like the Bishop of Uvira in the DRC case study and the mayor of Bria in the CAR case study, strengthen the call for the conflict parties to come to an agreement. Thirdly, while not as strongly present as UN resources and legitimacy of local actors, knowledge on the context of the conflict does also appear in the UN reports. For example, in the Mali case study, 28 village chiefs were involved in the mediation process by providing insights into possible solutions, additional partners and any obstacles. In addition, in the CAR case study, through workshops and dialogues, ethnic, religious and community leaders have provided information on how the conflict can best be resolved. Lastly, the only aspect not present in the reports is the impartiality of

UN mediators. Thus it cannot be confirmed or disproven whether or not the impartiality of UN mediators contributes to the likelihood of reaching an agreement.

While the reports mainly focus on the relevant events and do not provide comprehensive information on the underlying conflict resolution mechanism outlined in the theory, the utilization of *resources* by the UN and *legitimacy* and *knowledge on the context of the conflict* of local partners are present in the reports. It is reasonable to assume that, without the presence of these aspects during the mediation processes, the conclusion of agreements would have been more difficult, if not impossible. However, in terms of goodness of fit of the theoretical model, due to the lack of information regarding UN *impartiality* and the limited appearance of evidence of the importance in knowledge of local mediators on the context of the conflict, it must be concluded that the model fits partially. It is reasonable to assume that this is due to lack of information and possibly idiosyncrasy in the selected cases. In any case, there is no evidence in any of the selected cases that contradicts the theory.

Conclusion

Joint mediation efforts by the United Nations and local mediators is more likely to result in local peace agreements than both actors mediating independently. Using unique non-public data from the UN peacekeeping missions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and Mali, this study aims to deepen the understanding regarding the actors and aspects that contribute to local conflict resolution. The study found that the probability of joint mediation leading to a local peace agreement is 16.24 percent. UN only mediation has a probability of 2.63 percent of leading to a local agreement while local mediators acting independently have a probability of 6.90 percent of concluding a local agreement. Strong evidence suggest that the extensive resources of the UN in combination with the legitimacy and knowledge on the context of the conflict of local mediators play a key role in the increase effectiveness of joint mediation. The utilization of UN resources to either stabilize the region or facilitate mediation are present in all agreements investigated in the case studies. UN peacekeeping forces, either as part of regular operating bases or temporary deployment units, provide security to the conflict area and actively deter sustained violence. In addition, UN funds, regional offices and technical support are employed to support the joint mediation efforts and inter-community dialogues. Furthermore, local actors like religious leaders, local authorities and village chiefs use their legitimacy to reinforce the mediation process and to compel the conflict parties to negotiate. The knowledge on the conflict dynamics and traditional conflict resolution mechanisms of these local actors further increases the likelihood of reaching a peace agreement. Thus, both the UN and local mediators have aspects that complement each other and that make joint mediation more likely to result on local peace agreements than both parties mediating separately. Evidence is lacking regarding the role that impartiality of the UN plays during joint mediation efforts. As there is also no contradictory evidence, it could be the case that the lack of information regarding this aspect is due to limited data.

Currently, UN peacekeeping missions are present in many of the most unstable and violent areas in the world. While operating under a broad mandate with extensive resources, scholars question if the missions are effective in bringing peace and stability and criticise the UN of focussing too much on top-down military operations. The failure to address local conflicts at best leaves tensions simmering, and at worst prologues the violence indefinitely. The findings of this study could help define UN peacekeeping policy and reduce the number of casualties, duration and costs of a conflict. As already stated in the introduction, the UN itself already recognizes the need for addressing conflicts on a local level. However, the results of this study can strengthen the call for increased and cooperative local mediation and effective utilization of UN resources. Furthermore, local mediators could use the results to show that, because of their legitimacy and knowledge, their involvement is essential in maximizing the effectiveness of local mediation.

The results of this study add to the body of knowledge on local conflict resolution. Although there is some existing literature on the broad topic of local conflict resolution, studies on joint mediation, especially using quantitative methods, are scarce. Thus, this study adds to the small collection of literature on the effectiveness of local conflict resolution. The study fits into a niche between authors like Gartner & Bercovitch (2006) who analysed more than 1400 peace settlements to find a relationship between the actors involved and the longevity of peace agreements, Smidt (2020) who uses UN data on 777 intergroup activities to explore the link between the involvement of the UN in local inter-group dialogues and its effect on the likelihood of violence and Duursma (2017, 2020) who examines local mediation in Africa and the factors such as legitimacy that influence effectiveness using non-public UN data. This study is distinct from these studies because of the use of unique data and the inclusion of not only the mediation efforts, agreements, the actors involved but also the aspects contributing to their effectiveness in the analysis.

The way in which the study is conducted, does bring with it some limitations and topics for future research. One of the limitations of this study is using the conclusion of an agreement as a measurement of success. Although an agreement is a clear and measurable success of mediation efforts, in order to conclusively say that joint mediation efforts are more effective in resolving a conflict than separate mediation efforts, one has to assume that the conflict parties do not reignite the conflict after an agreement has been reached. In short, this study has focussed on the effectiveness of mediation efforts in reaching local agreements and not on the effectiveness of local agreements in ceasing the violence between the conflict parties. Further research could be conducted on the duration of peace after an agreement has been reached. The agreements used in this study could be used in a duration model in combination with conflict data from the sub-national administrative boundaries from the three countries under investigation to assess this relation. Another limitation of this study lies in the main data used. While the non-public daily situation reports of the UN missions offer a great and interesting source of data, using this data runs the risk of having selection bias. Although this effect is accounted for using the Heckman probit, it could be the case that mediation efforts and agreements by only local actors have

not been reported to the UN and thus are not present in the dataset. Despite the fact that UN only mediation cases and local only mediation cases are similar in numbers, it is important to note the selection bias as a limiting factor. The selection bias of using the UN dataset could be tested by reanalysing the research question and hypothesis using different data and assessing if the results are the same. In addition, within the case studies, mediation efforts that lead to an agreement have been analysed in order to test the theory. While evidence was present for most aspects outlined in the theory, information on knowledge on local conflict dynamics of local mediators was limited and information on the role of impartiality of the UN was non-existent in the cases selected. All aspects could be tested further by also examining the contributing aspects of unsuccessful mediation cases and other agreements. Lastly, the scope of existing literature on the role of UN and local mediators seem to suggest the four aspects of Resources, Impartiality, Knowledge on context of conflict and Legitimacy as the main contributors to their effectiveness. However, it could be the case that there are other factors not included in this study that have a big impact on the effectiveness of the UN and local mediators. Further research would be necessary to reinforce the arguments outlined in this study and to determine if there are other aspects that play an important role in the effectiveness of UN and local mediators.

Replication data

The dataset for the empirical analysis in this study can be found at
https://polybox.ethz.ch/index.php/s/Reip6AFYneRteGs using the password: ''mediation''

The Stata-code for the empirical analysis in this study can be found at
https://polybox.ethz.ch/index.php/s/rdMh8bgau04tPfX using the password: ''mediation''

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