Mediation in Asia and the South Pacific: A Review of Australian Peacemaking Capacity

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Summary

CONFLICTS IN THE ASIA AND THE SOUTH PACIFIC REGION EXPERIENCE A RELATIVELY LOW LEVEL OF MEDIATION BY THIRD PARTIES COMPARED TO OTHER REGIONS.

This paper explores what institutional capacity Australia has to offer and support mediation services in the region. The analysis reviews Australia’s history in undertaking peacemaking, its current institutional capacity, and its national role conception for supporting regional peace and security.

The aim is to invigorate a discussion of Australia’s peacemaking objectives in Asia and the South Pacific.
Mediation in Asia and the South Pacific: A Review of Australian Peacemaking Capacity

The last two decades have seen a marked rise in the interest in and support for alternative methods of conflict prevention and resolution. The post-Cold War paradigm in which there has been a proliferation of intra-state conflicts, has meant states have had to find new and improved methods for engaging with fragile and conflict-affected nations.

Attempts to manage violence have generated a sophisticated array of conflict resolution techniques, along with overlapping local, national, regional and global conflict management regimes. An increasingly popular form of conflict management is mediation, defined as “a non-coercive, nonviolent, and ultimately, nonbinding” form of peaceful conflict management involving the intervention of a third party into a conflict between two or more parties to help them develop a mutually acceptable agreement.¹

Mediation is applied to situations of violent conflict at all spatial levels and degrees of intensity, ranging from domestic disputes to interstate wars.

In both interstate and intrastate conflicts, third party states are one potential type of actor with the capacity to act as a mediator. States also play a key role in enabling a broad range of actors such as the UN and other inter-governmental organisations (IGOs), local and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and individuals to act as mediators through the supply of funding, logistical support and other forms of assistance.

A nation’s responsibility to engage with mediation is set out in the UN Charter. Under Article 2, all Member States are required to “settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security, and justice, are not endangered.” The principle tools for such peaceful means are outlined in Article 33, under which:

The parties to any dispute, the continuance of which is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, shall, first of all, seek a solution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their own choice.

Australia, as a prosperous, stable, and democratic middle-power state, has the potential to play a proactive role in encouraging peace within its local Asian and South Pacific region. Historically Australia has at times shown eagerness to support efforts in conflict mediation—former foreign ministers H.V. Evatt and Gareth Evans are renowned internationally for their peacemaking efforts. However, as
foreign policy has continually evolved over the course of several decades and numerous governments, long fallow periods exist where Australia’s enthusiasm for playing a regional peacemaking role appears waver and inconsistent.

This paper explores the current scope and limitations of Australia’s role in offering direct mediation in situations of violent conflict within Asia and the South Pacific, and in supporting external actors in offering mediation services in this region. It analyses the role Australian governments have played in conflict resolution in the past – particularly through mediation – within the region; the global investment made by governments and organisations in supporting both international and regional-level peacemaking; what institutional and ad hoc arrangements exist to identify and enable mediation within the Australian public service; and to what extent Australia conceptualises its role in support of mediation, peacemaking, and conflict prevention within Asia and the South Pacific.

The purpose of this discussion paper is to begin a national discussion on the manner that Australia engages with peace activities in the region. There is concern that while Australia has a strong history from which it can draw, recent governments have neglected investing in peacemaking as a conscious foreign policy priority. This is particularly salient in light of growing international support for the practice, with states, regional and intergovernmental organisations investing in strengthening their knowledge in and capacity to deliver mediation. It is hoped that this project can invigorate a constructive debate on Australia’s commitment to regional peace and security and its support for international peacemaking norms.
Mediation as a technique of conflict management: How does Australia compare as a mediating state? How often does it mediate and where?

Australia’s foreign policy has been marked by periods in which it has taken a strong interest in engaging in conflict prevention and resolution activities. The International Conflict Management (ICM) dataset, an extensive global record of inter- and intra-state conflicts and mediation attempts, charts 2632 resolution efforts between 1945 and 1999, by states, regional and international intergovernmental organisations, nongovernmental organisations, and individual actors. During this period Australia acted as a mediator on 11 occasions in six conflicts (Figure 1).

This compares well with regional neighbours Indonesia (27 mediations in five conflicts), Japan (six mediations in four conflicts), Malaysia (four mediations over three conflicts), New Zealand (eight mediations over four conflicts), and Thailand (seven mediations over four conflicts). These figures show that, when compared with its key regional neighbours and allies, Australia has a robust history, both in the number of mediation activities and of conflicts in which it has been involved.

Figure 1: Number of mediations and of conflicts mediated as recorded by the IMCM dataset for the period 1945–99
Australia also fares well when compared with other middle power countries, particularly those that have developed a strong reputation for committed internationalism and conflict mitigation. Finland, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland are leaders in the area of mediation and conflict resolution, both on a practical application level, and in areas of research and funding investment. As analysed within the International Conflict Management dataset, Finland mediated on 25 occasions across six conflicts, Norway on ten occasions in six conflicts, Sweden on 16 occasions in five conflicts and Switzerland on six occasions in five conflicts (Figure 2).

These numbers are modest, and support the observation that Australia has a history of significant engagement with conflict resolution activities. Chronologically there has been wide variation in the phases of Australia’s mediation efforts (Figure 3). Analysed in five-year increments beginning in 1945 through to 1999, Australian mediation activities can be seen to move between concentrated eras of strong engagement, and large periods where mediation efforts were minimal. The period from 1945-49 was characterised by the strong support for internationalism by Minister for External Affairs (a precursor to the current Minister for Foreign Affairs) Herbert Vere Evatt. While Australia’s chief representative internationally H.V. Evatt played an active role in the establishment of the United Nations,
later serving as President of the United Nations General Assembly from 1948-49, a role he filled concurrently with being minister for external affairs. General Assembly President Evatt was involved in peace efforts in the Greek Civil War, in the conflict between India and Pakistan over Kashmir, and in efforts to resolve tensions in post-WWII Germany that led to the Berlin airlift crisis. These early activities were followed by 30 years in which Australia appeared largely inactive in conflict prevention and resolution.

The one activity noted by the International Conflict Management database, taking place in the separatist struggle in East Timor in 1976, alludes to a nation largely uninterested in conflict prevention and resolution. The jump in mediations between 1985–99 correlates with the actions of Foreign Minister Gareth Evans in resolving the civil war in Cambodia, and Australia’s role in supporting New Zealand in mediations in Bougainville.

This data is augmented by the Managing Intrastate Low-Intensity Conflicts (MILC) dataset, a product of the Department of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University. The dataset tracks mediations within low intensity conflicts across the period from 1993-2004, uncovering 3467 instances of some level of activity.
focused on mediation or conflict resolution.  

Throughout this recorded period Australia conducted 24 mediation activities across seven conflicts (Figure 4). For the same period, Indonesia registered four mediations across three conflicts, Japan conducted 28 activities across seven conflicts, Malaysia conducted 20 mediations across five conflicts, New Zealand conducted six mediations in one conflict, and Thailand conducted 17 mediation activities in nine conflicts. This places Australia as one of the most active states within the region in conducting mediation.

Figure 4: Number of mediations and number of conflicts mediated as recorded by the MILC dataset for the period 1993–2004

Australia also fares well when compared with other extra-regional middle power nations (Figure 5). For the period of 1993-2004 Finland was involved in five mediation activities in five conflicts, Norway was involved in 31 mediation activities in five conflicts, Sweden was involved in 29 mediation activities in eight conflicts, and Switzerland was involved in 73 mediation activities in eight conflicts.
Figure 5. Number of mediations and number of conflicts mediated as recorded by the MILC dataset for the period 1993–2004

Figure 6. Number of mediations conducted by Australia as recorded annually by the MILC dataset
Charted annually, the MILC database illustrates Australia having a greater involvement in mediation in the earlier half of the time period than compared with the latter portion (Figure 6). A great number of these correlate with the peace process in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, accounting for 71 per cent of Australian mediation activities across the duration of the dataset.

Bougainville also accounts for all but one of Australian mediation activities between 1993 and 1997. The remaining mediation activities are registered to have taken place in Myanmar in 1994, Burundi, Cambodia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1998, two mediation activities in Israel in 2000, and one in Aceh, Indonesia in 2001.

**Analysis**

The information sourced from the ICM and MILC datasets reveals the historical extent of Australia’s engagement with international mediation. At times Australia has been a proactive mediator; however, when compared with other middle-power states such as Norway it is less active. From 1945 to 1999 the IMC dataset attributes Indonesia with 27 mediation activities, bolstered by strong involvement in the Cambodia civil war (16 mediation activities) and in the Mindanao insurgency in the Philippines (eight mediation activities). In the period from 1993 to 2004 as measured by the MILC dataset Australia was particularly active, linked primarily to a close involvement in Bougainville. The statistical concentration of peacemaking activities in the late 1980s and 1990s significantly boost the number of Australian mediations, and equate to only a small disparity between Australian mediation activities and that of Finland, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland.

Australia has therefore at times proved a valuable mediator. The multiple peacemaking activities in conflicts in Cambodia and Bougainville illustrate that Australia is most active when addressing conflicts that have a regional impact and significance.
Within the MILC dataset, 20 of Australia’s 24 mediation activities took place within the greater local region, including single initiatives in Cambodia, Indonesia (Aceh), Myanmar and a substantial 17 in Papua New Guinea. By comparison, only 12 of Japan’s 28 mediation activities took place in the Southeast Asian region. Of Malaysia’s 20 mediation activities, 17 took place in Southeast Asia, while 16 of Thailand’s 17 attempts took place within the region. Similar trends can be noted with the International Conflict Mediation figures, with eight of Australia’s 11 mediation activities taking place in Southeast Asia or the West Pacific region. The MILC dataset reveals that although Norway, Sweden and Switzerland conducted more mediation activities than Australia for the period 1993 to 2004, Sweden was involved in only 11 in Southeast Asia, Switzerland in nine, and Norway did not mediate in the region during the period.

These findings provide strong quantitative evidence that Australian foreign policy has featured several periods in which it has strongly engaged with international mediation and peacemaking.
The Post Cold War Agenda: Why did Australian mediation increase in the 1990s?

Within the post 1990 period the nature of conflict has changed dramatically, from the interstate conflicts that marked the two World Wars and Cold War years, to intra-state conflicts. At the same time mediation has increasingly been employed to respond to this changing pattern. Analysis by Greig and Diehl of the International Conflict Management dataset reveals that of recorded global mediation activities, 64% took place in the period 1990–99: 1684 mediations took place in the 1990s, compared to just 296 for the period 1980–9, and 303 for the period 1970–9 (Figure 7).

This growth corresponds with a shift within the international community to greater support for mediation and other peacemaking activities. Tellingly, since the end of the Cold War more conflicts have been resolved through negotiated settlements than through military victory.

Figure 7: Total mediations versus state mediations by decade as recorded by the International Conflict Management dataset
This transformation towards investment in mediation and other peacemaking activities was reflected in the global normative discourse. Former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali noted in his 1992 report *An Agenda for Peace* that the UN – and by extension its Member States – should “seek to identify at the earliest possible stage situations that could produce conflict, and to try through diplomacy to remove the sources of danger before violence results.” Further, “the most desirable and efficient employment of diplomacy is to ease tensions before they result in conflict – or, if conflict breaks out, to act swiftly to contain it and resolve its underlying causes.”

13 This increased trend towards intrastate conflict, and the shift in global normative discourse towards non-military forms of conflict resolution in the post cold war era partly explains the increase in Australian mediation attempts in figures 3 and 6.
Institutional support mechanisms for international mediation

To implement this preventative diplomacy the UN Secretariat was reorganised under Boutros-Ghali to create the Department of Political Affairs (UNDPA), and following the 2005 World Summit established a dedicated Mediation Support Unit (MSU) to coordinate UN peace envoys and other good office activities. The UNSG reports that in the two and a half years from late 2009 to mid 2012 26 parties to disputes and conflicts have utilised UN-led or supported mediation, facilitation and good offices efforts.

Within the Unit there is a Standby Team of Mediation Experts who can be deployed within 72 hours. They are specialists in process design, constitution making, gender issues, sharing of natural resources, power-sharing and security arrangements. Three of the seven experts are women. Between 2008 and 2011 they were deployed on more than 100 occasions. As well the Unit keeps a roster of about 240 pre-vetted, operational and senior mediation experts from 70 countries of whom 37 per cent are women. Since becoming operational in mid-2011 the roster has responded to over 80 requests for mediation. The UNDPA also manages a roster that includes around 150 experts who can work on conflict analysis and prevention, dialogue, training and peace-building.

The responsibility to invest in mediation is far from being wholly the preserve of the UN. The European Union has committed itself to reinforcing its own mediation capacity in support of the UN’s increased involvement in preventative diplomacy. This follows a period in which the EU has prioritised establishment of a systematic approach to mediation to “promote the use of mediation as a tool of first response to emerging or ongoing crisis situations.” A dedicated Mediation Support Team exists within the European External Action Service’s Conflict Prevention, Peace Building and Mediation Instruments division, while mediation activities have also been extended to the EU’s secretary general and high representatives, its presidents, special representatives, Security and Defence Policy missions and European Commission delegations. Other regional bodies have established their own innovative peace architectures. The African Union has put in place an early warning system, a Panel of the Wise, and a mediation roster. The UN Mediation Support Unit has been working with ASEAN, the Organization of American States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to organise training programs and assist in the establishment of their own mediation capacities.
Within ASEAN, a mediatory role in intrastate disputes is assigned to a High Council, outlined in Article 14 of ASEAN’s Treaty of Amity and Co-operation (Bali Treaty). In the event that direct negotiation between parties fails, the Council can assume a role as mediator “by recommending to the parties to a dispute appropriate means of settlement, i.e. good offices, mediation, inquiry or conciliation.” ASEAN stresses, in line with its principle of non-interference, that mediation should only proceed in cases that have the agreement of the disputants. In an echo of these shared goals and principles, the EU and ASEAN have held collaborative workshops to bolster the effectiveness of mediation efforts undertaken by both regional organisations.

The Pacific Island Forum (PIF) has also drawn attention to the role preventative diplomacy – and by extension mediation – may play within the region. The 2000 Biketawa Declaration, which was negotiated in response to the Fijian coup d’état and tensions in the Solomon Islands, outlines what actions are required to be undertaken by the PIF to work to resolve conflicts within the region. This includes the explicit mention of “third-party mediation.”

This declaration, along with a number of initiatives involving foci on security and good governance, has consolidated the role that the PIF Secretariat and its member states are compelled to perform in the active prevention of regional conflicts.

Individual countries have also become actively engaged in mediation. The commitment of Norwegian governments to peaceful conflict resolution is noteworthy, perhaps no better exemplified than by the Norwegian-led mediation between the Israeli government and the Palestinian representative PLO, which led to the signing of the Oslo Accord in 1993. Peacemaking remains a stated foreign policy priority of the Norwegian government, and they continue to provide extensive financial and knowledge resources for improving mediation training and implementation. This includes hosting the annual Oslo Retreat for mediation practitioners, as well as collaborating with other networks including the UN Department of Political Affairs in hosting international Ceasefire Negotiation and Management courses.

Further, of the $US100m annually the Norwegian foreign affairs department spends on conflict resolution, roughly a third goes to NGOs.

While Norway remains a major player in the field of mediation they are not alone, with a number of other nations strengthening capacity and support for mediation and peaceful conflict resolution. Qatar has actively sought to mediate between the Sudanese government and the disputing groups in Darfur, while it has also been active
in other conflict situations. Finland and Turkey have jointly initiated and co-chair the Group of Friends of Mediation which now has 37 Member States and seven regional organisational members.\textsuperscript{27} It aims to raise awareness of the importance of peaceful conflict resolution, to encourage the use of mediation and to highlight the importance of the participation of women in all stages of mediation.\textsuperscript{28}

Recent years have also witnessed the growth in the number of NGOs whose activities focus on providing mediation to intra- and interstate conflicts, including: the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, the Crisis Management Initiative, the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes, the Folke Bernadotte Academy, the Carter Center, and the United States Institute of Peace. UN Secretary-General Ban reports that other entities such as the International Peace Institute, the Centre for Mediation in Africa of the University of Pretoria and the Institute for Security Studies also contribute to strengthening the mediation capacity of the African Union.\textsuperscript{29} These groups are often able to act without the political ties and bureaucratic impedance that can be counterproductive to the neutrality and legitimacy of nation states and intergovernmental organisations.\textsuperscript{30}

Much of the funding for these organisations comes from nation states. In the case of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, almost half of their $US15m annual budget is provided by donation from Norway.\textsuperscript{31} In a similar manner to the delivery of humanitarian aid, countries are outsourcing a variety of peacemaking activities to specialised NGOs to help in the process of mediation and conflict resolution.

These organisations provide an expert, impartial service that can be utilised to effectively resolve conflicts, both through direct facilitation of negotiations and by providing expertise and support. These dual functions have been exemplified by the work of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, which mediated ceasefires between the Free Aceh Movement and the Indonesian government in 2002 and 2004,\textsuperscript{32} and provided good office support in the AU/UN-led mediation conducted by Kofi Annan in Kenya in 2008.\textsuperscript{33}
Mediation and sustainable development: Why is it in Australia's interest to support mediation?

In recent decades consensus has emerged that effectively managing and preventing violent conflict is an integral component of reducing poverty and achieving sustainable development, and vice versa.\textsuperscript{34}

This is particularly pertinent for Australia’s local region. Developing nations account for 18 of Australia’s 20 closest neighbours, with 12 of these viewed as fragile by the OECD DAC.\textsuperscript{35} Of the ten highest recipients of Australian ODA, seven are considered fragile.\textsuperscript{36} It is warranted that Australia’s development program take special interest in how it may work to prevent and resolve conflict within the Asia Pacific, a region in which it invests over 70 per cent\textsuperscript{37} of its aid budget.\textsuperscript{38} Tellingly, AusAID had also moved to address the nexus between conflict and development by providing aid programs in countries beyond the Asia Pacific affected by conflict, including Afghanistan, Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Cote d’Ivoire, Libya and Liberia, to name but a few.\textsuperscript{39}

Australia has provided strong financial support for the peacemaking efforts of the United Nations Department of Political Affairs. In response to the UNDPA’s Multi-Year Appeal for the period 2011–13, Australia donated $US4.7 million over the three year period, including $US3.7 million in 2011.\textsuperscript{40} These contributions are on top of payment of the compulsory annual UN dues. Despite not contributing to the Multi-Year Appeal during 2012, Australia’s contribution across the appeal period is the fourth largest of any country, behind the United Kingdom, Germany and the Netherlands (figure 8).

These investments are supported by recognition of the supportive role Australian ODA may play in mediation and negotiation initiatives, and that “programs ... should be developed with this in mind.”\textsuperscript{41} And while the 2011 AusAID report \textit{Framework for working in fragile and conflict-affected states: Guidance for Staff} provides for the facilitation of talks and mediation as an option that may be deployed in supporting peace settlements, it stopped short of recommending a more integrated and institutional mediation approach.\textsuperscript{42}

It is notable that many of the states in which Australia has played a mediatory and broader conflict management role (including peacekeeping and peacebuilding) are also significant overseas development aid recipients.\textsuperscript{43} Australian assistance in resolving conflicts and Australian assistance in the service of economic and human development result in many of the same benefits for Australia.
In addition, mediating conflict has unique benefits for third party states, including preventing or halting spillover effects from civil wars, and, in many cases, enhancing the mediating state’s international reputation and regional standing.\(^{44}\)

Figure 8: Contributions in thousands of US dollars to the UNDPA Multi-Year Appeal 2011–13. Note: total contributions below $US500,000 listed as ‘Other’. 
Institutional frameworks for mediation within the Australian government

Given current global trends towards a more cooperative security environment a broad public discussion as to the vision for Australia’s capacity to undertake conflict prevention and peacemaking activities is both warranted and overdue. The question is: is there sufficient institutional capacity in the Australian governmental system to support timely and effective regional mediation attempts?

Australia holds a privileged position within its region as a politically stable and wealthy country that in the post-1945 period has experienced few conflicts with its direct neighbours. Although peacemaking has not been at the forefront of Australian foreign policy, this paper has already demonstrated the distinguished record the country holds in mediation. Not only has Australia shown an ability to play a proactive and engaged role in facilitating and marshalling support for mediation, as it did between conflicting parties in the Cambodian conflict leading up to a comprehensive agreement in the 1991 Paris Accords, but also a supporting role, as was demonstrated by Foreign Minister Downer during peacemaking efforts in the civil war between the Papua New Guinea government and rebels in Bougainville. Further, Australian foreign ministers (both during and after their political careers) have played an important role in developing Australia’s participation in mediation and conflict resolution areas. Foreign Minister Gareth Evans’ subsequent work with the International Crisis Group is notable in this regard, as is Foreign Minister Alexander Downer’s role as UN special representative in the Cyprus conflict.

Yet currently Australian mediation attempts are implemented in a somewhat ad hoc manner. Past mediation and conflict resolution initiatives appear to have been designed and implemented either in response to individual crises or as adjuncts to specific regional aid programs.

A limited discourse analysis of DFAT annual reports reveals that policy makers assign a low priority to peacemaking within Australia’s foreign policy. The 2012-2013 annual report of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade does not include a single reference to the word ‘mediation’, while it includes the word ‘peacekeeping’ 18 times. Within the report DFAT Secretary Peter Varghese does list peacemaking among a broad list of Australian interests abroad that require a whole of government approach (including also people smuggling, counter-terrorism, cyber security, disaster response, transport security, trade in
agriculture, development assistance and peacekeeping), yet this is the only time when the document adopts such language.\textsuperscript{48} Similarly, 10 years prior to these documents, the 2002-3 DFAT annual report contains no reference to the word ‘mediation’ but contains 12 references to the word ‘peacekeeping’.\textsuperscript{49} This observation does not mean that international mediation activity did not occur in DFAT, or other Australian government or state departments, but it does clearly indicate that it is not a foreign policy priority on which DFAT feels the need to report.

As to other government institutions, the Department of Defence and Australian Federal Police (AFP) have continued to play an active role in internationally mandated peace operations, including prominent deployments by the AFP’s International Deployment Group.\textsuperscript{50} Consistent with these deployments is a focus on indigenous capacity building to improve the ability of local institutions to provide peace, security and law enforcement. The programs contribute to meeting Australia’s aid objectives and are in line with efforts to improve regional and international security, stability and governance, but did not explicitly support mediation.\textsuperscript{51}

The Conflict and Fragility branch within AusAID was a clear initiative to more systematically address how Australia’s aid programs relate to states affected by conflict. In this capacity Australia is well regarded, judged as having “the framework, analytical capacity, tools, flexibility and organisation structure to deliver innovative and realistic programs that achieve results in fragile contexts.”\textsuperscript{52}

However, specifically in regards to mediation and peacemaking, institutional investment appears consequential and indirect, flowing from development initiatives aimed at strengthening institutions, peacebuilding, and gender equality. In these areas Australia is well regarded. Its support for gender equality as a critical crosscutting theme of Australia’s foreign relations and aid programs has led to wide institutional support for initiatives that support women and young girls in fragile societies. Australia’s Global Ambassador for Women and Girls, appointed in September 2011, is responsible for “high level promotion of Australian Government policies and programs to advance the political, economic and social empowerment of women and girls.”\textsuperscript{53} In this regard, one of the four pillars of Australia’s approach to gender equality and women’s empowerment is increasing women’s voice in decision making, leadership, and peacebuilding.\textsuperscript{54} It is acknowledged that the effects of conflict are felt on men and women differently, and that the involvement of women within political processes
and peace negotiations is vital for a sustainable outcome that is just to all members of society.\textsuperscript{55} Australia has supported the full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, as well as follow up resolutions 1820, 1888, 1889 and 1960.\textsuperscript{56} To this extent, Australia has used its temporary seat in the Security Council to focus on areas of gender equality, including to defend and strengthen language in resolutions mandating peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations.\textsuperscript{57} In some areas aid funding for gender equality has also had effects on peacemaking, as exemplified by funding for the training of women mediators in Southeast Asia.\textsuperscript{58}

In peacebuilding and institutional capacity building Australia has actively engaged in global initiatives aimed at boosting support for strengthening conflict-affected and fragile states. Australia is a member of the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, a forum for political dialogue bringing together fragile states, international partners and civil society to catalyse successful transitions from conflict to stability. Australia, along with Afghanistan, is a co-chair of a working group reviewing implementation of the New Deal, a key agreement developed through the forum that sets out clear peacebuilding and stability goals (PSG) for engagement between fragile states and development partners.\textsuperscript{59} Within the PSGs, there are outcomes for peacemaking, including commitments to “foster inclusive political settlements and conflict resolution” and to “support political dialogue and leadership.”\textsuperscript{60} Australia was the lead aid donor in establishment of the framework.\textsuperscript{61} On an implementation level, peacebuilding continues to be a primary focus in Australia’s aid delivery to its fragile neighbours, most notably in the Bougainville province of Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste, and Myanmar.\textsuperscript{62} Examples of these consequential flow-on effects can be identified within Australia’s aid programs. In the Philippines DFAT has continued to express its support for the Mindanao peace process, an initiative led by Malaysia and supported through an international contact group consisting of Japan, UK, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, along with four international NGOs. Australia’s aid program to the Philippines has focused on increasing basic education assistance - particularly in the conflict affected Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) - while also improving conditions for peace and security.\textsuperscript{63} In fulfilling these objectives there are some direct investments in peacemaking, most notably an aim to train at least 100 people in peace mediation to international standards in conflict resolution by 2017. The remaining objectives have only indirect
peacemaking effects, including to report on the number of conflicts mediated by locals, an increase in the number of children enrolled in school within the ARMM, increasing the number of civil society election monitors, and improving the capacity for women to engage in peacebuilding activities. In this regard Australia’s aid program to the Philippines appears consistent with its stated objective of improving conditions for peace and security so that “vulnerabilities for conflict-affected populations will be reduced and foundations for a negotiated peace strengthened.”

Importantly, at the time of preparing this discussion paper it is premature to conclude how the absorption of AusAID into DFAT, the loss of 500 public service staff, and substantial reductions in Australian ODA will affect current and future capacity to conduct and support mediation and other peacemaking activities.

**National Role Conception**

Given the history of international conflict resolution and peacemaking by Australia outlined earlier, why is the institutional capacity to support international mediation attempts within the governmental system relatively low and ad hoc in nature? One answer may lie in a specific national role conception held by Australian policymakers and foreign policy elites that shapes what are perceived as appropriate ways of interacting with and intervening in the Asia and South Pacific region.

National experience, along with being a global middle power and a regional leader, would appear to place Australia in a good position to make a strong contribution to international peacemaking. Peacemaking should remain an important consideration if the goal is to make ODA as cost effective as possible. Yet in recent times Australia has appeared to prefer using its resources to mount large and costly military interventions, rather than intervening through diplomatic or other peacemaking means. UN-backed military and peacekeeping operations in Timor-Leste and Afghanistan, as well as the decade-long RAMSI federal police mission to the Solomon Islands and AFP joint training initiatives in Indonesia and elsewhere characterise Australia’s interventions in regional conflicts during the last couple of decades. This is not to disparage these actions as unnecessary, but rather to elucidate that these reactionary trends within Australian foreign policy created a regional perception of Australia and a ‘national role conception’ within the Australian foreign policy elite that was not at all conducive to offering mediation or to being accepted as a mediator in many regional conflicts.

This is consistent with initiatives implemented through Australia’s foreign affairs and aid apparatus.
Where Australia’s peacemaking support appears strongest is within its aid operations, through funding the UN Department of Political Affairs, the Asian Foundation, and a number of smaller international NGOs, including the International Crisis Group and individual projects of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue. These investments are welcome: Australia’s extensive aid program to its conflict-affected neighbours should be cognisant of its capacity to foster and build conditions consistent with sustainable peace.

Yet this does not exclude the capacity for DFAT to play an active role in preventative diplomacy, mediation and peacemaking as an explicit foreign policy priority of the state. While Australia sees utility in allocating funding to certain organisations and programs for initiatives that may include peacemaking, the primary national role conception for Australia is one where support for fragile states remains isolated within post-conflict peacebuilding and peacekeeping activities. The language of mediation and peacemaking is absent from Australia’s foreign strategy, and support for international norms of conflict resolution is auxiliary to other policy priorities.

A perception and judgement continues to exist (within Australia as much as anywhere else), that Australia is not a suitable mediator in many of the sensitive internal conflicts in Southeast Asia and the Pacific. This is partly assigned to the legacy of European settlement and Australia’s Anglo-Imperial heritage (a continuing factor despite Australia’s multicultural policies and increasingly diverse population) and partly to the history of Australian military engagement with the region, including in complex territorial disputes such as in East Timor.

Domestically, a targeted examination of Australia’s role conception in regard to peacemaking is needed. Australia’s distinguished history in the field needs to be examined beside the public’s uneven attention to foreign aid and internationalism, and compared with the stated foreign policy objectives of Australia’s leading politicians and major political parties. Strategic and economic priorities must be counterbalanced with the outcomes that can be envisaged from reinvesting in initiatives to strengthen Australia’s responsibilities toward good global citizenship.

Regionally and internationally, it is important to recognise that while current perceptions of Australia within Asian and Pacific countries may be seen to constrain an official mediation role, a nuanced institutionalised mediation capacity has the potential both to circumvent official involvement by the Australian government by funding local, international or Australian civil society organisations, and to
gradually strengthen the perception of Australia as a constructive actor in pursuit of peaceful, mediated resolutions to regional conflicts. An ideal outcome in states such as Indonesia would be to slowly alleviate Indonesian fear of Australian military intervention or Australian exacerbation of risks towards territorial disintegration. This cannot be achieved through words alone. An Australian commitment to pacific and non-binding forms of conflict resolution acceptable to ASEAN states in particular can only be proven through sustained and consistent regional actions. Tying such interventions to the development focused aims of Australia’s foreign policy may be of great assistance in this regard.

**Conclusion**

Asia and the South Pacific host a diverse range of existing or potential intrastate and international conflicts which forms of conflict resolution such as mediation have the potential to ameliorate. Australia, as a wealthy and stable state in the region, has a significant capacity to expand its role as a mediator in regional conflicts. Despite a quantitatively proven history of substantive engagement with mediation and peacemaking, currently Australia would appear constrained by an unimaginative national role conception and an ad hoc framework for launching mediation initiatives which lacks a carefully designed institutional framework of support. A determined examination both of the practical and conceptual arrangements for mediation and peacemaking is warranted in an effort to locate Australian foreign policy within the rapidly expanding and exciting global peaceful conflict resolution norm.

Should such an examination support an institutionalised mediation and peacemaking role this document suggests one approach to how this might be achieved. An option to enhance Australian mediation capacity is to establish a dedicated mediation support unit within DFAT, complementing the sustainable development and stability aims of the Department. There exists a potential for a mediation support unit of this type to leverage existing civil society and intergovernmental conflict resolution networks to address conflict situations of concern to Australia, along with providing the expertise and funding to launch and assist in official Australia mediation initiatives. Any institutionalised peacemaking capacity would become tightly integrated within current foreign policy apparatus, and may greatly enhance Australia’s ability to pursue objectives of regional stability and prosperity, while improving relations with ASEAN nations and China in particular, states that stress non-binding forms of conflict resolution in their approach to regional conflicts.
The support unit would be required to carefully integrate with existing regional, international and national institutions and networks tasked with delivering conflict resolution services, including the Mediation Support Unit within the UN Department of Political Affairs, the ASEAN High Council, and the existing suite of peacemaking programs initiated by DFAT and other Australian organisations. An Australian mediation support unit could remain small and efficient through leveraging existing civil society networks and organisations with expertise in conflict resolution. One professional membership organisation that would offer immediate assistance to the capacity of a mediation support unit is the Australian Institute of Arbitrators and Mediators. The Institute possesses an existing pool of skills and expertise which could be drawn upon for application to complicated international and intrastate conflicts. University-level training programs such as the Peace and Conflict Studies Centres at Sydney and Queensland Universities, along with numerous national research centres focused on dialogue, mediation and conflict resolution could also be drawn upon as required to provide the specific conflict resolution or country specific expertise necessary to implement mediation strategies in diverse regional circumstances.\(^{68}\) The largest development NGOs might also be interested in expanding their mediation capacity.

The Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade recommended in October 2012 that “the Minister for Foreign Affairs should create a mediation unit within AusAID and funded from the aid budget. The aim of the unit would be to prevent conflict by providing timely assistance to mediation efforts, and acting as a mediator and legitimate third party.”\(^{69}\) While AusAID has since been amalgamated into DFAT, the proposal is still ripe for consideration. Doing so could lead to a renaissance of Australia’s internationalism and engagement with peacemaking and conflict mediation as a method of preventative diplomacy.

Beyond this specific proposal, this paper has sought to demonstrate the need for a more wide-ranging debate regarding Australia’s commitment to non-violent conflict resolution methods internationally, and has highlighted the need for further research to evaluate the institutional capacity within the Australian government system to support international mediation in the Asia and South Pacific region.
Endnotes


3. Within the International Conflict Management dataset state mediations have been identified by comparing the third-party identity with their prescribed functional mediator identity codes. All state functional mediator identity data was included, while in cases where an individual, regional organisation, international organisation, mixed, or unspecified functional mediator identity was listed, a judgment was made as to whether the listed mediation could be considered as an extension of state activities. This extends to determined work conducted by current state officials, or where proactive third-party activity is assigned to a state or state representative through a regional or international forum.

4. While Japan is not a near regional neighbour, its significance as a key ally to Australia in Asia and its elevated role in regional fora including ASEAN +3 make its inclusion appropriate.

5. During the period of 1945–9 Thailand was named Siam, and is reflected as such in the dataset.

6. Mediations have been attributed through the inclusion of a state’s Correlates of War (COW) country code within the Third Party ID section of the dataset. Third parties are listed separately by the MILC database, with an individual mediation event allowing for a possible 27 mediators. With the view that engagement in mediation activities, no matter the number of third parties, requires some agency on behalf of the states involved, this paper makes no distinction between where a state is located in the assigned Third Party columns.

7. Defined as “at least 25 battle-related deaths per year and fewer than 1,000 battle-related deaths during the course of the conflict.”

8. Frida Moller and Birger Heldt, Codebook for the dataset: Managing Intrastate Low-Level Conflict (MILC), Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University, 2007, 3. Available at: http://www.pcr.uu.se/digitalAssets/124/124936_1milc_codebook_version_1.0_15_nov_2010.pdf.


19. ibid.


25. Ban Ki-moon, Strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement


27. Member states: Bangladesh, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Colombia, Costa Rica, Finland, Germany, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Malaysia, Mexico, Montenegro, Morocco, Nepal, Netherlands, Norway, Panama, Philippines, Qatar, Romania, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America. Organizations: African Union (AU), League of Arab States (LAS), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), European Union (EU), Organization of American States (OAS), Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). The United Nations is also a member of the Group of Friends of Mediation.


32. While the Aceh ceasefires would eventually fail, it was followed by the successful 2005 peace agreement mediated by another NGO, the Helsinki-based Crisis Management. It could be said that the HD Centre helped GAM to understand their interests and alternatives—in particular, to understand that independence was not an option.


37. To be increased to 90 per cent in future aid budgets.


66. The February 2014 interim DFAT organisational structure suggests some duties may be assumed by the newly created Humanitarian and Stabilisation Division, yet this remains unclear.


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