

ABOUT THE PROJECT

African Politics, African Peace charts an agenda for peace in Africa, focusing on how the African Union can implement its norms and use its instruments to prevent and resolve armed conflicts. It is an independent report of the World Peace Foundation, supported by the African Union.

The Report is the most extensive review of the African Union's peace missions ever conducted. It is based on detailed case studies and cross-cutting research, and draws on consultations with leading experts, peacekeepers, and mediators.

This Paper is a summary of research undertaken in support of the Project.

WORLD PEACE FOUNDATION

The World Peace Foundation, an operating foundation affiliated solely with The Fletcher School at Tufts University, aims to provide intellectual leadership on issues of peace, justice and security. We believe that innovative research and teaching are critical to the challenges of making peace around the world, and should go hand-in-hand with advocacy and practical engagement with the toughest issues. To respond to organized violence today, we not only need new instruments and tools- we need a new vision of peace. Our challenge is to reinvent peace.

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African Solutions to African Challenges: A Statistical Overview of International Mediation in Civil Wars in Africa

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Summary:

Statistical analysis of conflicts and mediation efforts in Africa from 1960 to 2012 points to five main conclusions. First, African third party mediators are more likely to conclude peace agreements, and those agreements are more likely to be durable. Second, however, African third parties with political bias are less effective. Third, sanctions and coercive measures are less effective than positive financial incentives in bringing about peace. Fourth, mediated peace agreements are often fragile, and imposed peace agreements should be avoided. Fifth, the most effective formula is African leadership in peace processes backed by international support.

Systematic comparison of the effectiveness of African and non-African third parties reveals some surprising conclusions. African third parties are typically referred to as ineffective because of a low degree of economic and military capacity. However, drawing on data from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program supplemented with unique data, which together cover all mediation efforts in Africa between 1960 and 2012, reveals quantitative evidence supporting the effectiveness of African third parties. Compared to non-African third parties, African third parties are far more likely to conclude peace agreements and these peace agreements are more likely to be durable. Much of the success of mediation efforts depends on the relationship between the third party and the conflict parties rather than the material capacity of a third party to coerce conflict parties into peace.

A major caveat regarding the finding that African third parties outperform non-African third parties is that the involvement of a biased African third party in mediation processes has a negative and statistically significant effect on mediation success. Since conflicts in Africa have strong regional dimensions, African states have frequently openly supported incumbent governments or have provided covert support to rebel parties prior or simultaneously to their mediation attempt. The statistical analysis employed in this paper suggests that the involvement of biased African third parties that are supporting or have supported one of the conflict parties undermines the prospects for mediation success.

Furthermore, not only does the type of third party influence the prospects for mediation success, but also the mediation strategy that is employed. Contrary to popular belief, sanctions and the use of force are ineffective instruments in making conflict parties sign a peace agreement. By contrast, the use of side-payments to induce the conflict parties to make peace does significantly increase the likelihood of the conclusion of a peace agreement. The use of negative incentives to move conflict parties towards signing a negotiated settlement is less likely to work than the use of positive, financial incentives.

While mediation has a strong positive short-term impact, the long-term effect of mediation is found to be much more negative. Indeed, evidence suggests that peace agreements that have come about without any mediation are more stable than mediated agreements. Additionally, peace agreements that have been mediated solely by non-African third parties are particularly likely to fail. A plausible explanation for this finding is that non-African third parties are more inclined to impose a peace agreement. Conflict parties with ownership over the peace process is a crucial condition for ensuring post-agreement stability. Mediators should therefore take great care to prevent external third parties suffering from “signature obsession” to hijack the peace process and impose

an agreement.

Finally, while mediation by African third parties is more effective than non-African mediation, most effective are mixed mediation efforts in which African and non-African third parties mediate jointly. Particularly effective are mixed mediation efforts in which there is coordination between African and non-African third parties, but in which African third parties take the lead. The phrase, ‘African solutions to African challenges’ should be understood as a division of labour and responsibilities, rather than an excuse for non-African third parties to ignore Africa’s problems or African third parties acting on their own. Indeed, while African third parties should take the lead in mediation processes in African armed conflicts, non-African third parties should support these processes by lending additional strength. Through supplementing each other’s comparative advantages, African and non-African third parties can tackle the problems of Africa.

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