

Effect of peace processes and diplomacy on diplomatic relations

Mediation and informal peace agreements have large effect on negotiations, agreements, and conflict termination, especially for intrastate conflicts.

Geographic region: Global, Sub Saharan Africa

Effect size: Large effect ($g=0.337$)

Confidence in study findings: Medium (5 studies with 13 effect sizes)

Short summary

Peace processes and diplomacy interventions may include mediation and informal peace agreements in shaping diplomatic relations. Studies show that mediation is particularly effective in halting hostilities and enhancing the duration of peace agreements, especially when complemented by United Nations peacekeeping operations (UNPKOs). Informal peace agreements at the community level also contribute to stability, demonstrating that both formal and informal diplomatic interventions are essential for conflict resolution and long-term peacebuilding.

Long summary

The intervention

Peace process interventions often involve mediation. While usually employed during the negotiation stage, mediation can also play a pivotal role in shaping the agreement and implementation phases of the peace process. It is typically conducted by international organizations (e.g., United Nations), regional bodies, or third-party states. As highlighted in one of the studies, mediation may be integrated with peacekeeping efforts to enhance its effectiveness. The duration of mediation varies significantly, ranging from short-term initiatives to extended engagements to address complex conflicts.

How the intervention is expected to work

Peace process through mediation works by fostering dialogue, building trust, and addressing information asymmetries among conflicting parties. It facilitates negotiations by reducing uncertainties and creating shared understanding, making agreements more likely. Mediation can encourage cooperation by breaking stalemates and promoting compromises. Its effectiveness may depend on the regional context and the stage of the peace process. Mediators often act as neutral third parties, leveraging their credibility to enhance communication and commitment among disputants.

The evidence base

The cell includes: 5 impact evaluation studies, 1 systematic review, and 9 qualitative studies.

The review examines and synthesizes findings from 49 studies on conflicts between rural communities and corporations, aiming to identify key features of anti-corporate activism in Indonesia.

The primary studies are set in: Kenya (1 study), Uganda (1 study), globally (6 studies), Indonesia & Philippines (2 studies), Myanmar (1 study), Palestine (1 study). Some qualitative studies include multiple countries, such as Greenberg (2000) (Russia, South Africa, Rwanda, Cambodia, Kyrgyzstan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, El Salvador, Croatia, North Korea; Ide (2018) (Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania, Senegal, Congo, Rep, El Salvador, Mauritania), Lehrs (2021) (Palestine, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina).

Evidence findings

Mediation significantly increases the likelihood of conflict termination and reduces the risk of renewed violence, particularly when combined with peacekeeping, as it facilitates dialogue and fosters trust between conflicting parties (Clayton & Han, 2022; DeRouen & Ishita, 2018). Informal peace agreements, such as those studied in Adan (2020), also contribute to improved diplomatic relations.

The review evidence

These findings suggest that while informal diplomacy and negotiation can sometimes yield results, they are often slow and contingent on political dynamics rather than legal or institutional frameworks.

The impact evaluation evidence

There are 5 impact evaluations. Four study summaries are thus provided here:

Adan (2020) evaluates the role of informal peace agreements in managing community conflicts between the Borana and Gabra communities in Marsabit County, Kenya. The study focuses on the Maikona Declaration and other indigenous mechanisms as proactive tools for sustainable peace. The study employed a descriptive survey design, targeting 152 respondents, including elders, chiefs, women leaders, youth representatives, and NGO staff, with a final sample size of 110 participants. Data collection involved questionnaires and key informant interviews, with quantitative data analyzed through inferential statistics and qualitative data analyzed thematically. The findings suggest that informal peace agreements have played a significant role in managing conflicts between the Borana and Gabra communities, with notable success in fostering cooperation, reducing violence, and promoting peace. The study is rated medium as it is non-experimental and due to its partial description of the evaluation question, intervention, and outcomes.

Biswas (2007) examines the relative and combined impact of domestic institutions and international intervention on whether negotiations take place and whether a settlement is reached. It is commonly assumed that conflict-affected areas are failed states. But that is not the case. Conflict-affected states have wide variation in their capacity, and so there is a potential role for domestic political structures. The author applies a cross-national logit analysis of the correlates of negotiation and agreement using data from the analysis using the Minorities at Risk (MAR) dataset. The data comprise 475 observations covering 32 countries and 56 rebel groups. The analysis shows that democracy increases the likelihood of negotiations being held and an agreement being reached, though it has a weaker effect for agreement than negotiations. External intervention also helps with both of these, but with differing effects. Mediation and security guarantees (that is the promise of action, or inaction, in a given set of circumstances) have the greatest positive effect. If negotiations had been held in the previous year, the likelihood of an agreement being signed increases significantly. But there is substantial variation in effects. The positive effect of democracy is from Asia, with no effect in Africa, the Middle East and the Former Soviet Union (FSU). In contrast, mediation

is most effective in Africa, the Middle East and former Soviet Union, but not in Asia. The study is rated medium confidence as a non-experimental design with only partial description of interventions and outcomes. There is no allowance for selection bias.

Clayton & Han (2022) analyses mediation and peacekeeping for managing conflicts, with mediation aiming to facilitate negotiated settlements and peacekeeping focusing on preventing agreements from collapsing. These tools are often used simultaneously, especially in intrastate conflicts, where peacekeeping operations create a favorable context for mediation by providing independent information and stabilizing the situation. The study examines the effectiveness and complementarity of mediation and peacekeeping in ending violent conflicts, particularly in the post-Cold War period. The study uses a variety of model specifications, including binary time-series cross-sectional (BTSCS) models and Heckman selection models, to evaluate the effects of mediation and peacekeeping on conflict termination. The analysis covers both inter- and intrastate conflicts from 1946 to 2013, using data from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP). The study includes 1,523 observations of intrastate conflict-years and 258 interstate conflict-year observations, allowing for a detailed examination of the conditions under which mediation and peacekeeping are effective. The study finds that mediation is more effective than peacekeeping in halting hostilities, with mediation significantly increasing the likelihood of conflict termination in both inter- and intrastate conflicts. Peacekeeping, on its own, does not significantly affect the likelihood of conflict termination, but when combined with mediation, particularly transformative peacekeeping, it enhances the effectiveness of mediation in ending civil wars. The study is rated medium confidence as it is non-experimental study.

DeRouen & Ishita (2018) examines the role of mediation and United Nations peacekeeping operations (UNPKOs) in civil war peace agreements, focusing on their combined effect in reducing the risk of renewed or continued violence and enhancing the duration of peace agreements. The context includes various civil war scenarios globally, with a specific case study on the peace process in Guatemala during the 1990s, where mediation and peacekeeping efforts were instrumental in ending a long-standing conflict. The research utilizes a sample of 154 civil war peace agreements signed between 1975 and 2011, sourced from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP). The study employs logit and hazard models to analyze the effects of mediation and UNPKOs on the likelihood of violence recurrence and the duration of peace agreements. The analysis includes control variables such as agreement design, democracy, and income per capita. The study finds that mediation significantly reduces the probability of renewed violence, with a negative and significant effect on the risk of recurrence. The interaction of mediation and UNPKOs also shows a negative effect on recurrence, particularly at lower levels of recurrence risk. However, while mediation alone does not significantly extend the duration of agreements, its interaction with UNPKOs positively impacts agreement duration. The study is rated low confidence due to its non-experimental design and little description of the intervention.

Duursma (2022) examines how both military and civilian components of peacekeeping operations contribute to the conclusion of ceasefires in non-state conflicts. These conflicts, which do not involve a direct state actor, are often major sources of instability in fragile states. Using data from the African Peace Processes (APP) dataset, the study covers mediation and peacekeeping interventions in non-state conflicts across Africa from 1989 to 2018. The analysis employs an instrumental variable (IV) approach to address potential endogeneity in peacekeeping deployment, controlling for factors like intra-state conflict dynamics and the level of violence. The study finds that peacekeeping interventions—both military and civilian—have a significant effect on ceasefire agreements. Civilian peacekeeping staff, through mediation, improve trust between conflicting parties and engage state officials to prevent sabotage of peace efforts. The study is rated low confidence due to its little description of the intervention.

Confidence assessment

Overall medium: The cell is rated medium since it includes 4 studies and the findings across these studies display consistency.

Link to review summaries

Afrizal (2022)

All studies may be accessed via the EGM.

Other outcomes in this study:

Human security / economic security

Human security / physical security

Violence and atrocity prevention / nature and scale of violence and atrocities