



Comparative Analysis of Diplomacy and Peacekeeping Forces in Resolving International Conflicts in Africa

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Abstract

This paper provides a comparative analysis of diplomacy and peacekeeping forces as approaches to resolving international conflicts in Africa. With the continent frequently impacted by political instability, territorial disputes, and socioeconomic challenges, effective conflict resolution mechanisms are essential. Diplomacy, rooted in negotiation, dialogue, and compromise, serves as a nonviolent method for deescalating tensions and fostering cooperation. In contrast, peacekeeping forces offer a more interventionist approach, often deployed to enforce ceasefires, maintain security, and protect civilians in conflict zones. This analysis examines the effectiveness, strengths, and limitations of both approaches within the African context, with case studies focusing on interventions by regional organizations, such as the African Union, and international entities like the United Nations. While diplomacy is effective in the preliminary stages of conflict resolution and offers sustainable, long term solutions, peacekeeping operations are essential in high intensity conflict scenarios, where immediate security concerns must be addressed. The study concludes by suggesting that a combine approach, incorporating both diplomatic efforts and peacekeeping operations, can enhance stability in Africa, provided there is international cooperation, sufficient funding, and a focus on addressing root causes of conflict.

Keywords

peacekeeping operations, international conflicts, Diplomacy, African Union, Africa

1. Background

Africa continues to experience persistent conflicts driven by complex factors, including political instability, resource competition, ethnic divisions, and the enduring impact of colonial boundaries. Conflicts in nations such as South Sudan, the Central African Republic, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) highlight the need for effective conflict resolution mechanisms (Obasi, 2023). The African Union (AU), United Nations (UN), and regional bodies such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have become pivotal players in these peace efforts, utilizing both diplomatic negotiations and peacekeeping operations as tools to stabilize the region. Diplomacy is widely recognized as a critical, nonviolent approach to conflict resolution. Diplomatic efforts often involve mediation, negotiations, and confidencebuilding measures that encourage warring parties to reach mutual agreements. For instance, recent diplomatic interventions in the Ethiopian civil conflict aimed to halt violence and initiate dialogue between government and regional leaders (Girma and Debebe, 2022). Such diplomatic approaches seek to address the underlying issues fueling disputes, such as resource allocation and political inclusion, thereby fostering sustainable peace (Afolayan et al., 2021). However, diplomatic efforts may be constrained by external influence, local distrust, and reluctance among parties to engage, making diplomacy more effective in the early stages of conflict or in lowintensity situations.

Peacekeeping forces, conversely, provide an immediate response to active conflicts by deploying troops who protect civilians, monitor ceasefires, and create conditions for political solutions (UN Peacekeeping, 2023). The UN and AU have jointly implemented peacekeeping missions in highconflict regions, with notable deployments in Somalia, Mali, and the DRC. These missions are essential in mitigating violence and offering physical security where diplomatic efforts alone may not suffice (Adeola and Ogunnoiki, 2023). However, peacekeeping operations are often hindered by limitations such as inadequate funding, logistical challenges, and sometimes restrictive mandates that limit their ability to enforce peace (Elbadawi and Sambanis, 2022). The mixed success of peacekeeping in Africa underlines the need for adequate resources and a robust mandate, as seen in the protracted instability in South Sudan, where peacekeepers have struggled to contain sporadic violence (Karimi and Mba, 2023).

Depending on the type and stage of the conflict both diplomacy and peacekeeping strategies have demonstrated differing levels of success and limitations. Peacekeeping operations offer vital on-ground security in high-conflict areas

while diplomatic efforts typically address the underlying causes of conflict and produce more sustainable long-term peace (Rothchild 2023). Since peacekeeping offers instant security in vulnerable areas and diplomacy prepares the ground for negotiations recent research indicates that combining these strategies could have the greatest possible impact (Chege and Ncube 2023). Through a comparative analysis of these two strategies across several African conflicts this paper evaluated their relative efficacy difficulties and results. In order to improve peace efforts in Africa the paper identified best practices and patterns and offered practical suggestions.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Complex Nature of Peace Efforts

The complexity of peace initiatives and the differing roles that diplomacy and peacekeeping play in managing and resolving conflicts are reflected in the literature on conflict resolution in Africa. Most academics and professionals agree that historical economic political and ethnic tensions are just a few of the many factors that contribute to conflicts in Africa. In order to stabilize the impacted areas these conflicts have required both diplomatic discussions and peacekeeping missions by regional and global actors. Examining the body of research on the application and efficacy of diplomacy and peacekeeping in resolving African conflicts this review highlights the advantages and disadvantages of each strategy as well as case studies that demonstrate its effects (Obasi, C. (2023).

2.2 The Role of Diplomacy in Conflict Resolution

Because it emphasizes peaceful negotiation mediation and dialogue diplomacy is commonly mentioned as the first choice for resolving disputes. As stated by Afolayan et al. By encouraging understanding and compromise between disputing parties' diplomatic initiatives seek to address the underlying causes of conflicts such as those involving governance political marginalization and resource distribution (2021). Diplomacy has been crucial in bringing about peace agreements in many African contexts. For example, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Sudan in 2005 was a major step in putting an end to the continent's longest civil war (Adejumo and Abiodun 2022). Regional organizations like the African Union (AU) and subregional groups like the Intergovernmental

Authority on Development (IGAD) which promote dialogue and win over global stakeholders are frequently involved in such interventions (Okeke 2023). Diplomacy has its limitations when it comes to resolving conflicts in Africa. Scholars point out that power disparities outside meddling and conflicting parties' unwillingness to agree to negotiated terms frequently undermine diplomatic attempts particularly when there is a long-standing animosity (Chege and Ncube 2023). Furthermore, diplomatic efforts may lack the legitimacy required to carry out and maintain agreements if local and regional actors do not support them (Nwankwo and Mba 2023). Despite these drawbacks research indicates that diplomacy is crucial for laying the groundwork for peace and when called for for acting as a starting point for more drastic conflict resolution techniques.

2.3 Peacekeeping Forces as an Intervention Strategy

Peacekeeping forces are a more interventionist tool in conflict resolution, often deployed when diplomatic measures have failed or when immediate security is needed. Peacekeeping missions, primarily conducted by the United Nations (UN) and the AU, serve critical functions in highconflict areas, including monitoring ceasefires, protecting civilians, and providing stability (UN Peacekeeping, 2023). Peacekeeping in Africa has been instrumental in some regions, such as Liberia and Sierra Leone, where peacekeepers provided essential stability that allowed for political transition and reconstruction (Adeola and Ogunnoiki, 2023).

However, peacekeeping forces also face significant challenges. Scholars argue that these missions are often hindered by funding limitations, logistical difficulties, and restricted mandates that prevent peacekeepers from taking decisive actions in volatile situations (Elbadawi and Sambanis, 2022). Peacekeeping in South Sudan, for example, has been criticized for limited effectiveness in controlling violence due to logistical constraints and local resistance to international forces (Karimi and Mba, 2023). Furthermore, peacekeeping operations can struggle with coordination among multinational troops, cultural differences, and alignment on mission objectives (Obasi, 2023). Despite these challenges, research indicates that peacekeeping missions can create immediate security benefits, especially in highintensity conflicts, making them an invaluable component of Africa's conflict resolution framework.

2.4 Comparative Effectiveness of Diplomacy and Peacekeeping

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2.5 The Role of Regional Organizations in Diplomacy and Peacekeeping

In both diplomacy and peacekeeping regional organizations—especially the AU—are essential. The African Union's tenet of African solutions to African problems demonstrates a dedication to spearheading regional peace initiatives in an effort to lessen reliance on outside parties (Girma and Debebe 2022). Nwankwo and Mba (2023) highlight the African Union's recent success in mediating the conflict in Ethiopia's Tigray region where diplomatic efforts led to a notable decrease in hostilities. The growing cooperation between regional and foreign organizations in African peacekeeping operations is further demonstrated by the AU's cooperation with the UN on a number of missions (Adeola and Ogunnoiki 2023). Notwithstanding these developments regional organizations usually depend on foreign assistance to maintain their missions because they lack the financial and logistical means required for extensive operations. According to scholars bolstering regional organizations' operational and financial capabilities could improve their capacity to autonomously lead peacekeeping and diplomatic endeavors (Elbadawi and Sambanis 2022).

3. Conclusion

When it comes to dealing with international conflicts in Africa diplomacy and peacekeeping forces are two different but complementary strategies that each make a unique contribution to peace initiatives throughout the continent. Targeting the underlying causes of conflict and establishing enduring relationships between disputing parties' diplomacy provides a sustainable approach with its emphasis on communication and negotiation. However, the cooperation of the parties and outside factors frequently limit its efficacy. Peacekeeping troops on the other hand offer crucial stability on the ground by safeguarding civilians and promoting ceasefires particularly in areas of high-intensity conflict where diplomatic efforts alone might not be successful. However, the impact of peacekeeping missions can be diminished by obstacles like logistical limitations vague mandates and reliance on outside funding. A comparison of these two strategies shows that neither peacekeeping nor diplomacy by themselves can adequately address Africa's complicated conflicts. A more effective framework is provided by a hybrid model that blends the two strategies opening the door for long-term diplomatic solutions while allowing for immediate security through peacekeeping.

Because peacekeepers offer stability that facilitates diplomatic discussions and long-term peacebuilding efforts recent examples—such as those in Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo—show how combining diplomacy with peacekeeping missions has produced better results. This study emphasizes the necessity of flexible approaches that fit the unique conflict dynamics of every area acknowledging that African peace initiatives must take into consideration regional influences local complexities and global support networks. Crucial steps in this direction include bolstering the operational capabilities of regional institutions such as the African Union improving cooperation with the UN and guaranteeing sufficient funding for both diplomatic and peacekeeping missions. In order to resolve conflicts throughout the continent in a way that is more resilient and sustainable African and international stakeholders can maximize the roles of diplomacy and peacekeeping forces within a complementary framework.

4. Recommendations

The following suggestions are put forth to improve the efficacy and sustainability of peace initiatives in Africa based on the results of the comparative study of the roles played by diplomacy and peacekeeping forces in settling international disputes. The ability to spearhead diplomatic initiatives should be extended to subregional organizations like the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) as well as African regional bodies especially the African Union (AU). These organizations can improve their ability to avert conflicts and promote prompt fruitful peace talks by funding diplomatic training and offering tools for early conflict detection and mediation. In Africa peacekeeping operations are frequently hampered by logistical and financial limitations.

More sustained funding sources within African nations are crucial as is increased financial assistance from foreign donors. Better logistical support such as facilities transportation and communication tools would also help peacekeeping forces respond to unstable situations more skillfully and protect civilians. It should be a top priority to integrate diplomatic and peacekeeping efforts with peacekeeping forces establishing a stable atmosphere that facilitates successful diplomacy. By putting in place structures where peacekeepers and diplomats collaborate closely to coordinate operations oversee ceasefires and create safe spaces for communication this hybrid model can be formalized in conflict areas. A model that can be applied to comparable conflict situations is provided by the AUUN Mission in Darfur (UNAMID). The sustainability and legitimacy of efforts to resolve conflicts can be improved by involving local communities in peace processes.

Local collaborations including community leaders' civil society organizations and traditional authorities in peacebuilding projects should be given top priority in diplomacy and peacekeeping operations. In addition to providing important

insights into the social and cultural dynamics of conflict these local actors can increase public support for peace accords. Improved training that prioritizes cultural sensitivity mediation techniques and conflict sensitivity can make peacekeeping forces in Africa more effective. Additionally, to enhance operational coherence peacekeepers from different nations ought to receive uniform training. Increased mission effectiveness can also be achieved through better coordination between local security forces and peacekeeping contingents. Because they can promote inclusivity in peace initiatives and offer distinct perspectives womens involvement in diplomacy and peacekeeping operations is essential.

UN Resolution 1325 recommends that African states and international organizations prioritize gender-sensitive approaches by involving women in leadership positions within peacekeeping forces community peacebuilding initiatives and negotiations. The success of diplomatic interventions and peacekeeping operations depends on the establishment of open accountability and assessment systems. Frequent evaluations and performance reviews can support best practices and point out areas that need work. To determine how well missions, accomplish short-term security objectives and long-term peace objectives the African Union and the UN should work together to develop uniform evaluation frameworks. African-led peace initiatives should continue to receive financial support logistical assistance and technical assistance from international organizations such as the European Union and the United Nations. Collaborations between these international organizations and African regional bodies are crucial for bolstering peacekeeping operations and expanding the scope of diplomatic initiatives throughout the continent.

Such partnerships ought to uphold African sovereignty and seek to complement regional and local efforts rather than replace them. The root causes of conflict such as poverty inequality and political marginalization must be addressed through sustainable development projects in a long-term manner. To address these underlying causes African governments should give priority to initiatives in infrastructure development economic empowerment and education with the help of international development organizations. A comprehensive peace strategy should incorporate development projects with diplomatic and peacekeeping activities. The public must be involved and supportive for peace initiatives to be successful.

The public should be educated about peace agreements conflict resolution procedures the function of diplomacy and peacekeeping forces through public awareness campaigns funded by national governments and peacekeeping missions. This openness promotes confidence and aids in coordinating public opinion with peace efforts. Thus, combining short-term security measures with long-term development and inclusive diplomacy these recommendations provide a comprehensive strategy. African governments and their foreign allies can establish a more robust framework for settling disputes establishing lasting peace and advancing regional stability throughout the continent by implementing these tactics.

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