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Has Türkiye Become Africa's Mediator?

Backdrop

A recent piece published by [Foreign Policy](#) explores Türkiye's mediation efforts in Africa and poses the compelling question: "How Turkey Became Africa's Mediator?" Türkiye's previous mediation efforts in the continent have earned it the reputation of "a [trusted mediator](#)." Although not all those initiatives have yielded tangible outcomes, this status reflects Türkiye's dedicated Africa policy -particularly since 2005- as well as its wider foreign policy approach, which embraces mediation as a core diplomatic principle.

Mediation for Peace

In 2010, Türkiye, in partnership with Finland, co-launched the [Mediation for Peace Initiative](#) (MPI) under the UN framework to elevate the role of mediation in conflict resolution while promoting greater investment in international mediation efforts. MPI has attracted considerable international attention, leading to the expansion of the Group of Friends of Mediation, which now comprises 61 members – 53 countries including 8 African countries and 8 regional and international [organizations](#).

Türkiye has engaged in many mediation efforts both before and after the launch of the MPI. These include facilitating reconciliation in Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine and Kyrgyzstan, establishing a cooperation mechanism between Afghanistan and Pakistan, creating a consultation framework between Bosnia Herzegovina and Croatia, supporting the peace process in South Philippines, mediating dialogue between Ukraine and the Russian Federation, notably through the Black Sea Grain Initiative and most

recently, mediating [between Ethiopia and Somalia](#). This highlights the broad scope of Türkiye's mediation efforts, which extend across diverse contexts and crisis regions.

Mediation in Africa

Over the past two decades, Türkiye has significantly increased its engagement with African countries, playing an active role in multiple mediation initiatives across the Horn of Africa and the wider region. In February 2012, Türkiye hosted [the first Istanbul Conference on Mediation](#) as part of its broader efforts to enhance the role of mediation in conflict prevention. Türkiye mediated talks between Somalia and Somaliland from 2013 to 2014, hosting three rounds of talks to reopen the dialogue. The first round, attended by the presidents of both countries in 2013, resulted in the [Ankara Communique](#), which outlined thirteen areas of cooperation. The second round, held the day after the second Istanbul Conference on Mediation, were attended by ministers from both countries. [The third round](#) was held in mid-2014 in Istanbul, focused on establishing the procedural framework for future negotiations. Despite the existence of multiple international mediation efforts that have been instrumental in facilitating dialogue between Somalia and Somaliland, they have yet to achieve a definitive resolution to their longstanding disputes.

Türkiye offered to mediate [between Ethiopia and Sudan](#) in 2021 to help resolve their border dispute over the Al-Fashaga region. Shortly afterward, Türkiye offered support for mediation efforts to end the conflict in [Ethiopia's Tigray region](#) and extended its offer to mediate [between Egypt and Ethiopia](#) over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. The later process remains ongoing, as reflected in Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hakan Fidan's visits to both countries in the summer of 2024.

Türkiye mediated between Ethiopia and Somalia in 2024, in an effort to ease their long-standing tensions that persisted for decades. Tensions between the two neighbouring countries [further escalated](#) after Ethiopia signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Somaliland in early 2024. The deal would grant the landlocked Ethiopia access to the sea through Somaliland's Port of Berbera, potentially in exchange for Ethiopia's recognition of Somaliland's independence. Somali officials defined the MoU as a violation of Somalia's sovereignty and territorial integrity with tensions increasing in an already volatile [region](#).

Türkiye played a successful mediator role by bringing the conflicting parties to the negotiation table and hosting three rounds of talks. The first round of talks was held in early July, 2024, with the participation of the ministers of foreign affairs and the parties signed the [Ankara Document](#). The second round was held in August, ahead of its originally scheduled September. Although the third round of talks was later postponed, raising concerns of escalating tensions, Turkish FM held separate meetings with the foreign ministers of Somalia and Ethiopia in New York on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in late September 2024. In December 11, 2024, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan hosted the President of Somalia, Hasan Sheikh Mohamud and the President of Ethiopia, Abiy Ahmed Ali in Ankara. This last round of negotiations resulted in [the Ankara Declaration](#) where the parties agreed to leave behind their differences to move forward in a collaborative manner in the pursuit of shared prosperity. Ethiopia ensured access to and from the sea, while respecting the territorial integrity of Somalia. The countries restored their diplomatic relations shortly afterwards, marked by Somalia President Mohamud's visit to Ethiopia on January 11, 2025.

Following this successful mediation between Ethiopia and Somalia, Erdoğan [extended an offer](#) to mediate between Sudan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Despite prior mediation attempts, such

as the US-Saudi Arabia initiated Jeddah process, the conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF) has continued to escalate. Türkiye's mediation offer is particularly noteworthy as it proposes facilitating dialogue between Sudan and the UAE, rather than directly between the SAF and the RSF. This is an acknowledgement of the UAE's role in Sudan's internal conflict dynamics¹, however, the UAE foreign ministry, as with Sudanese leadership, [announced that](#) they are willing to cooperate with the Turkish efforts to end the conflict in Sudan. However, the details regarding the mediation process remain unclear.

Erdoğan also expressed Türkiye's readiness to mediate the conflict between Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) during Rwandan President Paul Kagame's visit to Türkiye on January 23, 2025. Rwandan side welcomed Türkiye's offer, suggesting that Türkiye's efforts might contribute to regional stability. In contrast, the DRC declined the offer, emphasizing its preference for an [African solution](#) through existing frameworks like the Luanda Process.

Key to Success: Critical Factors for Effective Mediation

The complexity of issues, coupled with internal and regional dynamics, the competing interest of external players as well as their involvement in those conflicts, pose challenges to successful mediation. Nonetheless, it can be argued that the success of negotiations depends on three key factors. First, the pivotal role mediators play in such processes. Mediators are expected to act as impartial third parties, maintaining neutrality and avoiding any affiliations with either of the conflicting parties. Despite Türkiye's growing engagement with Somalia, Türkiye also has strong ties with Ethiopia and its mediator role reportedly began [at the official request of Ethiopia](#). Having mediated in different contexts, Türkiye played the mediating role by leveraging its solid relationship with both countries and its experience in conflict resolution/mediation.

Second, all parties must benefit from the process, ensuring neither feels disadvantaged nor marginalized. This simply means that both Somalia and Ethiopia needed to see tangible benefits from the negotiations. This is reflected in [Turkish FM Hakan Fidan's statement](#), after his visit to Ethiopia in August 2024, where he suggested that tensions could be resolved through a deal that would allow Ethiopia access to the sea through Somalia, provided Somalia's sovereignty and territorial integrity was secured.

Third, the conflicting sides must either demonstrate a strong commitment to overcoming their differences or face significant disadvantages if the negotiations fail. While the Ethiopian side sought an independent access to the sea, Somalian side maintained that such access should be limited to commercial purposes. After the second round, it appeared that both sides lacked a commitment to finding a peaceful solution, as the talks ended without an agreement. However, the third round demonstrated a clear willingness to address their disputes and differences. In [an interview](#) Somalia's former minister for the environment and climate change, Adam Aw Hirsi argued that the Ankara Declaration represented a significant victory for his nation. It did not only reinforced Somalia's sovereignty, but it also reduced tensions with a neighbouring country whose future was deeply intertwined with Mogadishu's. Hirsi also added that the pact offered Ethiopia a chance to step back from the edge of a conflict with a neighbour.

¹ Despite the accusations that the UAE provides support to the RSF in the ongoing conflict, the country repeatedly denied such allegations.

Conclusion

Africa is -and has always been- home to numerous intra-state and inter-state conflicts, exacerbated by the competing interests among neighbouring countries. These dynamics, often magnified with the involvement of extra regional powers, complicate the mediation efforts. Effective mediation becomes even more crucial to promote stability in this already volatile context. As discussed, Türkiye has actively engaged in several mediation initiatives in Africa, leveraging its growing influence to facilitate dialogue between conflicting parties. Its recent mediation effort between Somalia and Ethiopia has been welcomed by several actors including [the EU](#), [the USA](#), [Germany](#), [the UK](#) and [the UN](#). However, the sustainability of its position as “Africa’s mediator” depends on its ability to skilfully manage complex regional dynamics and overlapping priorities of the conflicting parties.

Further Reading:

Rashri Baboolal Frank (Ed.) *Dispute Resolution within Africa: A Journey Forward*, Cham, Springer, 2024.

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