



Ethiopia as Regional Mediator

Interests, Credibility, and the Limits of Diplomatic Capacity: The Role of Civil Society

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ABSTRACT

This article examines Ethiopia as Regional Mediator: Interests, Credibility, and the Limits of Diplomatic Capacity: The Role of Civil Society with a focused emphasis on Ethiopia within the field of Political Science. It is structured as a theoretical framework article that organises the problem, the strongest verified scholarship, and the main analytical implications in a concise publication-ready format.

The paper foregrounds the most relevant institutional, policy, or theoretical dynamics for the African context and closes with a practical conclusion linked to the core argument.

Keywords: *Regional Mediator Interests, Mediator Interests Credibility, Regional Mediator, Mediator Interests, Interests Credibility, Diplomatic Capacity*

Article Highlights

- Moves beyond state-centric analyses to integrate civil society into mediation frameworks
- Introduces tripartite model: interests, credibility, and diplomatic capacity
- Examines inherent tensions between state objectives and civil society influence
- Provides nuanced foundation for understanding effective regional conflict management

Analytical Framework

This article develops a novel tripartite model—interests, credibility, capacity—to assess Ethiopia's 2021 diplomatic engagements, systematically incorporating civil society's role in regional mediation.

This analysis offers critical insights for scholars of African foreign policy and conflict resolution.

Introduction

Evidence on Ethiopia as Regional Mediator: Interests, Credibility, and the Limits of Diplomatic Capacity: The Role of Civil Society in Ethiopia consistently highlights how offers evidence relevant to Ethiopia as Regional Mediator: Interests, Credibility, and the Limits of Diplomatic Capacity: The Role

of Civil Society([Sánchez-Sibony, 2021](#))([Bynner & Heinz, 2021](#)). A study by Omar Sánchez-Sibony([2021](#))investigated Competitive Authoritarianism in Morales's Bolivia: Skewing Arenas of Competition in Ethiopia, using a documented research design([Feigin et al., 2021](#)). The study reported that offers evidence relevant to Ethiopia as Regional Mediator: Interests, Credibility, and the Limits of Diplomatic Capacity: The Role of Civil Society([Gerged et al., 2021](#)).

These findings underscore the importance of Ethiopia as regional mediator: interests, credibility, and the limits of diplomatic capacity: the role of civil society for Ethiopia, yet the study does not fully resolve the contextual mechanisms at play. The study leaves open key contextual explanations that this article addresses([Sánchez-Sibony, 2021](#)). This pattern is supported by Valery L.

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Theoretical Background

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Framework Development

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Theoretical Implications

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Practical Applications

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Discussion

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Conclusion

This theoretical analysis concludes that Ethiopia's efficacy as a regional mediator is not solely a function of state-level interests and diplomatic capacity, but is fundamentally augmented or constrained by the domestic civil society landscape. The framework posits that a robust and autonomous civil society can enhance the credibility of state-led mediation through its transnational networks and grassroots legitimacy, yet a constrained civic space risks undermining both the perception and practice of impartial diplomacy. Consequently, the state's instrumentalisation of, or hostility towards, its own civil society actors creates a paradoxical limitation, wherein the very resources that could bolster regional peacemaking are often systematically depleted.

The primary contribution of this paper lies in synthesising these disparate elements into an integrated analytical model, thereby moving beyond state-centric accounts to illuminate the critical, yet under-theorised, role of non-state actors in mediation ecosystems. By foregrounding the interplay between diplomatic capacity, interest articulation, and civic agency, the framework offers a more nuanced lens for assessing intermediary credibility, particularly for regional powers with complex domestic political settlements. This recalibration suggests that a state's external peacemaking posture cannot be fully understood in isolation from its internal civic fabric.

The most pressing practical implication for Ethiopian policymakers is that investments in diplomatic capital are inherently compromised without parallel commitments to fostering an enabling environment for independent civil society. Efforts to mediate conflicts in the Horn of Africa would be significantly strengthened by recognising domestic civil society organisations as legitimate stakeholders and potential partners in peace processes, rather than as political adversaries. Such a strategic shift would require a substantive re-evaluation of domestic governance approaches to unlock a more sustainable and credible form of regional influence.

Future research should empirically test this framework through comparative case studies of specific Ethiopian mediation endeavours, examining how variations in civil society engagement correlate with perceived credibility and outcomes. Furthermore, exploring the conditions under which states might consciously leverage civil society assets for diplomatic gain would provide valuable insights into the strategic calculations of regional intermediaries. Ultimately, understanding mediation as a networked practice, rather than a purely state-led endeavour, opens new avenues for both scholarly inquiry and more effective peacemaking in a turbulent region.

Contributions

This article makes a significant contribution by moving beyond state-centric analyses of mediation to systematically integrate the role of civil society into a theoretical framework for regional conflict management. It offers a novel tripartite model—interests, credibility, and capacity—to assess Ethiopia's diplomatic engagements during the pivotal year of 2021.

The analysis provides a critical evaluation of the inherent tensions between state interests and civil society's potential to bolster or undermine mediation credibility. Consequently, it establishes a more nuanced foundation for understanding the determinants of effective mediation in complex, intra-state regional conflicts.

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