EBA

01
2025

WHAT ARE THEY FIGHTING FOR? AN ISSUE-BASED APPROACH TO THE ANALYSIS AND RESOLUTION OF CIVIL WAR

Johan Brosché, Sebastian Raattamaa, Kate Lonergan

What Are They Fighting For?
An issue-based approach to the analysis and resolution of civil war

Johan Brosché

Sebastian Raattamaa

Kate Lonergan

Report 2025:01

to

The Expert Group for Aid Studies (EBA)

Johan Brosché is Associate Professor and Senior Lecturer of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University. His research covers a broad set of themes, such as causes of peace, communal conflicts, conflict complexity, conflict issues, dynamics of restraint, attacks on cultural heritage, and electoral violence. He has co-authored a Routledge book and published in journals such as *Journal of Conflict Resolution, Journal of Peace Research and Security Studies.*

Sebastian Raattamaa has a Master's degree in Peace and Conflict Research from Uppsala University. His research focuses on peace agreements and he is an expert in quantitative analysis.

Kate Lonergan is a post-doctoral researcher at the Uppsala Centre for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Uppsala University. She received her PhD from the Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University in 2023. Her research focuses on reconciliation and peacebuilding after mass violence and atrocities. Kate has previously worked with the United States Institute of Peace and the World Bank.

Acknowledgements

Innehållsförteckning

Appendix I-V are available online: eba.se/en/reports/what-are-they-fighting-for

Foreword by EBA

Peace and development are preconditions for each other and reinforce one another. This is why development cooperation needs to be conflict-sensitive and contribute to preventing armed conflicts. A vast and increasing share of people living in extreme poverty currently resides in fragile and conflict-affected countries. Hence, future aid will likely focus on the poorest situations marked by armed conflicts and civil war. Using a new dataset and qualitative research, the authors of this report investigate the issues that parties are fighting about in civil wars. Such an analysis provides new insights into how peace negotiations and treaties should be formed to achieve more sustainable results.

The authors emphasize the importance of taking parties' statements at face value while avoiding naivety or simplistic views regarding what the fighting concerns. Prejudices and typical assumptions about the parties in civil wars need to be challenged, and potentially overlooked actors must be identified. This approach enhances the chances of negotiations addressing the core of conflicts.

We believe this report will be useful for policy makers and staff within the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Folke Bernadotte Academy and Sida, who deal with conflict issues, peace negotiations and peace treaty implementation. We also think the report may be relevant to researchers in the field of peace and conflict studies. The study has been conducted with support from a reference group chaired by Malin Oud, vice chair of EBA. The authors are solely responsible for the content of the report.

Stockholm, June 2025

Torbjörn Becker   Malin Oud

Sammanfattning

I dagens värld är antalet väpnade konflikter och krig högre än någonsin. År 2023 dokumenterade Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) 59 konflikter med stater inblandade – det högsta antalet sedan 1946. Medan den globala uppmärksamheten ofta riktas mot mellanstatliga krig, såsom Rysslands fullskaliga invasion av Ukraina, är den stora merparten av dagens konflikter inomstatliga: 57 av de 59 konflikterna 2023 var inomstatliga konflikter.

Några av de allvarligaste inbördeskrigen pågår i Sudan, vilket har lett till världens största humanitära kris, M23-upproret i östra Demokratiska republiken Kongo, den långvariga konflikten i Myanmar och inbördeskriget i Syrien.

Förutom ett enormt mänskligt lidande har krig djupgående negativa effekter på mänsklig utveckling, effekter som ofta kvarstår i årtionden. Väpnade konflikter är den främsta orsaken till osäker livsmedelsförsörjning, de hindrar arbetet mot fattigdom och omintetgör framstegen när det gäller barnadödlighet och miljömässig hållbarhet. Dessutom underblåser krig ojämlikhet och är den främsta orsaken till den stadiga ökningen av antalet tvångsförflyttade personer. Tillsammans ökar dessa faktorer i sin tur risken för att länder hamnar i "konfliktfällan" – en ond cirkel där krig och underutveckling förstärker varandra.

De negativa effekterna av krig är djupt sammankopplade och ömsesidigt förstärkande – skador i en samhällssektor spiller över på andra, vilket försvagar samhällets motståndskraft och förvärrar den långsiktiga skadan.

Sammanfattningsvis visar forskning konsekvent att krig är "omvänd utveckling" (Collier et al. 2003). För att uppnå hållbar utveckling krävs därför effektiv konfliktlösning, vilket i sin tur kräver en djupare förståelse av själva konflikten. Wallensteen (2018) myntade begreppet "konflikttriangeln" – som består av aktörerna, aktörernas beteenden och de frågor som står på spel. Även om betydande framsteg

har gjorts när det gäller att analysera de två första delarna av triangeln, finns det fortfarande en stor lucka i förståelsen av konfliktfrågorna – det som parterna kämpar för.

Alla krig kretsar kring tvistefrågor – de specifika krav, klagomål eller önskningar som de stridande parterna är beredda att ta till vapen för. Forskningen har dock i stor utsträckning försummat denna dimension, vilket begränsar vår förmåga att förstå, analysera och i slutändan lösa inbördeskrig. Denna rapport försöker åtgärda detta genom att placera konfliktfrågorna i centrum för analysen. Rapporten hävdar att utan en tydligare förståelse för vad som driver krig kommer det att förbli svårt att uppnå varaktig fred.

Tyvärr bryter mer än hälften av alla fredsavtal samman. Vi menar att en viktig orsak är tendensen att se mer till de inblandade aktörerna än till de kärnfrågor som driver konflikten. Det aktuella kriget i Sudan visar på de tragiska konsekvenserna av att försumma konfliktens frågor. I december 2022 undertecknade militära ledare och prodemokratiska grupper ett ramavtal som syftade till att skapa fred och demokrati. Sudan kastades dock snart in i ett fullskaligt inbördeskrig med katastrofala humanitära konsekvenser. Dr Amgad Faried Eltayeb, tidigare biträdande stabschef hos Sudans premiärminister, beskriver en viktig orsak till detta misslyckande:

> Det förekom inga verkliga samtal eller medling om frågorna. Det handlade om fördelning och vem som sitter vid bordet [...] det fanns all denna nonchalans mot problembaserade diskussioner [...] det internationella samfundet borde ha fokuserat på frågorna snarare än aktörerna (ICG 2023).

Denna rapport förespråkar en strategi för konfliktanalys och konfliktlösning som utgår från konfliktfrågor, en djupare förståelse av konfliktfrågorna är avgörande för en hållbar fred. Utan klarhet om vad parterna kämpar för riskerar fredsavtal att misslyckas med att ta itu med de grundläggande orsakerna till krig. Ett sådant perspektiv ger djupare insikter i hur dessa tvistefrågor påverkar ansträng-

ningarna att få slut på konflikter och övergången från konflikthantering (kontrollera beteenden) till konfliktlösning (ta itu med grundorsakerna). Denna rapport behandlar två frågor:

1. Vilka är de frågor som partierna strider om?
2. Hur påverkar konfliktfrågor förhandlingar och fredsavtal?

För att besvara den första frågan börjar vi med att definiera konfliktfrågor och diskutera några viktiga aspekter av dessa frågor. Vi undersöker därefter Namibias trepartsavtal från 1989 för att illustrera hur sammanlänkade frågor kan forma en konfliktlösning. Detta följs av en typologisering av konfliktfrågor och en global kartläggning av konfliktfrågor.

För att besvara den andra frågan visar vi hur en frågebaserad strategi bidrar till konfliktlösning genom en fallstudie av fredsavtalet i Nepal 2006. Därefter analyserar vi hur regleringen av konfliktfrågor påverkar hållbarheten i fredsavtal globalt. Slutligen genomför vi en jämförande studie mellan det misslyckade fredsavtalet i Darfur 2006 och det framgångsrika fredsavtalet i Colombia 2016. Tillsammans ger dessa analyser en omfattande förståelse för hur konfliktfrågor formar fredsprocesser.

Rapporten bygger på nyligen insamlade data samt insikter från tidigare forskningsprojekt. Två viktiga dataset utgör grunden för den kvantitativa analysen: UCDP:s Conflict Issue Dataset (CID), som har byggts upp under fyra år sedan 2019, och Issues in Peace Agreements (IPA)-datasetet – som har utvecklats specifikt för denna rapport och analyserar 253 olika fredsavtal.

Studien visar att fredsavtal som reglerar en större andel av konfliktfrågorna leder till betydligt större chans till varaktig fred både ett, tre och fem år efter att avtalet undertecknats. I genomsnitt reglerar fredsavtal 43 procent av de konfliktfrågor som rebellgrupper tar upp. Detta leder till en 85-procentig sannolikhet för att freden varar i ett år. I jämförelse, om inga konfliktfrågor regleras, sjunker sannolikheten för ett års fred till 63 procent.

Baserat på studiens resultat formuleras en rad rekommendationer för konfliktlösning. Dessa berör olika faser av fredsbyggande processer.

Medan en konflikt fortfarande pågår är det viktigt att:

- Undvika förenklade tolkningar av konfliktfrågorna

- Bevaka hur frågorna varierar och utvecklas

- Utnyttja insikter från likartade frågor i andra sammanhang

I förhandlingsfasen rekommenderas bland annat att:

- Identifiera samband mellan olika frågor för att utveckla kreativa lösningar

- Vara kritisk mot snabba lösningar som inte behandlar de faktiska tvistefrågorna

- Säkerställa att fredsavtalets skrivningar överensstämmer med konfliktfrågorna

I genomförandefasen:

- Se upp med ineffektiva lösningar

- Utgå från förståelsen av konfliktfrågorna när policy och program utarbetas

Att förstå konfliktfrågor är avgörande inte bara för diplomater som arbetar för att få slut på väpnade konflikter utan också för besluts-fattare som utformar och stöder utvecklings- och humanitära pro-gram i konflikt- eller postkonfliktmiljöer. Sammanfattningsvis erbju-der denna rapport nya insikter för beslutsfattare, diplomater och forskare som strävar efter att förebygga och lösa inbördeskrig genom problembaserat tillvägagångssätt.

Summary

In today's world, the number of armed conflicts and wars is higher than ever. In 2023, the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) documented 59 state-based conflicts – the highest number since 1946. While global attention often focuses on interstate wars, such as Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the vast majority of contemporary conflicts are intrastate. Of these 59 conflicts, 57 were intrastate conflicts (civil wars), devastating countries across the globe.

Some of the most serious include the war in Sudan, which has triggered the world's largest humanitarian crisis, the M23 rebellion in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the protected conflict in Myanmar and the Syrian civil war.

Beyond the immense human suffering, war has profound negative effects on human development, that often persist for decades. Armed conflict is the leading driver of food insecurity, obstructs efforts to eradicate poverty, and reverses progress in child mortality and environmental sustainability. Furthermore, war fuels inequality and is the main driver of the steady rise in forcibly displaced persons(UNHCR 2022). Together, these factors in turn heighten the risk of countries falling into the 'conflict trap' – a cycle where war and underdevelopment reinforce one another(Collier et al. 2003).

The negative effects of wars are deeply interconnected and mutually reinforcing – damage in one sector spills over into others, weakening societal resilience and compounding long-term harm.

In sum, research consistently show that war is 'development in reverse' (Collier et al. 2003). Hence, achieving sustainable development requires effective conflict resolution, which in turn demands a deeper understanding of conflict itself. Wallensteen (2018) famously defined conflict through the 'Conflict Triangle' – comprising the actors, their behaviors, and the issues at stake. While significant progress has been made in analyzing the first two, a major gap remains in understanding conflict issues – what parties are fighting for.

Every war revolves around contested issues – the specific demands, grievances, or desires that warring parties are willing to take up arms over. However, scholarship has largely neglected this dimension, limiting our ability to comprehend, analyze, and ultimately resolve civil wars. This report seeks to address this gap by placing conflict issues at the center of analysis, arguing that without a clearer understanding of what fuels wars, achieving lasting peace will remain elusive.

Sadly, more than half of all peace agreements collapse. A key reason, we argue, is the tendency to prioritize the actors involved over the core issues driving the conflict. The contemporary war in Sudan demonstrates the tragic consequences of neglecting conflict issues. In December 2022, military leaders and pro-democracy groups signed a framework agreement intended to bring peace and democracy. However, Sudan soon plunged into a full-scale civil war with catastrophic humanitarian consequences. Dr Amgad Faried Eltayeb, former assistant chief of staff to Sudan's Prime Minister, profoundly captures an important reason for this failure:

> There was no real talk, or mediation, on the issues. It was about distribution and who sits at the table […] there was all this disregard to issue-based discussions […] the international community should have focused on the issues rather than the actors (ICG 2023).

This report advocates for an issue-based approach to conflict analysis and resolution, arguing that a deeper understanding of conflict issues is crucial for sustainable peace. Without clarity on what the parties are fighting for, peace agreements risk failing to address the causes of war. An issue-based perspective offers deeper insights into how these issues shape efforts to end conflicts and transition from conflict management (controlling behavior) to conflict resolution (addressing the issues that parties are fighting for).

This report focuses on two central questions:

1. What are the issues that parties fight over?
2. How do conflict issues affect negotiations and peace agreements?

To address the first question, we begin by defining conflict issues and exploring three key aspects of conflict issues: salience, totality and interlinkages. We then examine Namibia's 1989 Tripartite Agreement to illustrate how interlinked issues can shape conflict resolution. This is followed by our conflict issue typology and a global mapping of conflict issues.

To answer the second question, we demonstrate how an issue-based approach informs conflict resolution through a case study of the 2006 Nepalese peace agreement. We then analyse how the regulation of conflict issues affects the durability of peace agreements globally. Finally, we conduct a comparative study between the failed 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement and Colombia's successful 2016 peace accord. Together, these analyses provide a comprehensive understanding of how conflict issues shape peace processes.

This report builds on newly gathered data as well as insights from previous research projects. Two key datasets form the foundation of the quantitative analysis: The UCDP Conflict Issue Dataset (CID), which has been built during four years since 2019, and The Issues in Peace Agreements (IPA) dataset – developed specifically for this report, analysing 253 peace agreements.

The study finds that peace treaties that regulate a larger share of conflict issues leads to significantly higher chance of lasting peace at one, three as well as five years after an agreement is signed. On average, peace agreements regulate 43 percent of the conflict issues rebel groups raise. This leads to an 85 percent probability that peace last for one year. In comparison, if no conflict issues are regulated, the probability for one year of peace falls to 63 percent.

Based on the study's findings a set of recommendations for conflict resolution are formulated. These are directed towards different phases of peace building processes.

While a conflict is still ongoing, it is important to:

- Avoid simplistic interpretations of conflict issues
- Follow how issues vary and evolve
- Harness insights from shared issues in other contexts

In the negotiation phase recommendations include

- Identify interlinkages to develop creative solutions
- Resist quick-fix solutions that do not address the conflict issues
- Ensure that peace agreement provisions align with conflict issues

In the implementation phase:

- Be cautious of ineffective 'resolutions'
- Draw on an understanding of conflict issues to inform policy and programming

Understanding conflict issues is critical not only for diplomats working to end armed conflicts but also for policymakers designing and supporting development and humanitarian programs in conflict or post-conflict settings. In sum, this report offers new insights for policymakers, diplomats, and scholars aiming to prevent and resolve civil wars through an issue-based approach.

Introduction

Today's world is profoundly affected by war and conflict. In 2023, the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) documented 59 state-based conflicts[1] – the highest number since 1946. While global attention often focuses on interstate wars, such as Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the vast majority of contemporary conflicts are intrastate. Of these 59 conflicts, only two – Russia–Ukraine and Israel–Iran conflict – were interstate wars, while the remaining 57 were intrastate conflicts (civil wars), devastating countries across the globe (Davies et al. 2024).

Some of the most serious include the war in Sudan, which has triggered the world's largest humanitarian crisis, the M23 rebellion in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the protected conflict in Myanmar and the Syrian civil war.[2]

Beyond the immense human suffering, war has profound and lasting effects on human development. The effects of war persist for decades. Armed conflict is the leading driver of food insecurity (GRFC, 2022), obstructs efforts to eradicate poverty, and reverses progress in child mortality and environmental sustainability (Gates et al. 2012). War fuels inequality (Bircan, Brück, and Vothknecht 2017) and is the main driver of the steady rise in forcibly displaced persons (UNHCR 2022). These factors, in turn, heighten the risk of countries

---

1 In this report, we use the UCDP definition of a state-based armed conflict, which refers to a conflict with "contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in one calendar year". We focus on civil wars, using the terms armed conflict and civil war interchangeably.
2 This report's focus on civil war excludes certain breaches of international law, such as Russia's occupation of Ukrainian territory. However, international humanitarian law (IHL) remains highly relevant in civil war contexts. One notorious example is the use of starvation as a weapon of war by warring parties in Sudan. While this report does not explicitly focus on IHL, it is important to recognize that IHL applies not only to war between states but also to civil wars.

falling into the 'conflict trap' – a cycle where war and underdevelopment reinforce one another (Collier et al. 2003).

A recent study (Vesco et al. 2025) analyzing war's devastating effects across nine[3] sectors underscores that conflict's impact on human well-being and development extends beyond individual sectors. These effects are deeply interconnected and mutually reinforcing-damage in one sector spills over into others, weakening societal resilience and compounding long-term harm.

In sum, research consistently show that war is 'development in reverse' (Collier et al. 2003). Hence, achieving sustainable development requires effective conflict resolution, which in turn demands a deeper understanding of conflict itself. Wallensteen (2018) famously defined conflict through the 'Conflict Triangle' – comprising the actors, their behaviors, and the issues at stake. While significant progress has been made in analyzing the first two, a major gap remains in understanding conflict issues – what parties are fighting for.

Every war revolves around contested issues–the specific demands, grievances, or desires that warring parties are willing to take up arms over. However, scholarship has largely neglected this dimension, limiting our ability to comprehend, analyze, and ultimately resolve civil wars. This report seeks to address this gap by placing conflict issues at the center of analysis, arguing that without a clearer understanding of what fuels wars, achieving lasting peace will remain elusive.

Sadly, more than half of all peace agreements collapse (Johnson 2021). A key reason, we argue, is the tendency to prioritize the actors involved over the core issues driving the conflict. The contemporary war in Sudan demonstrates the tragic consequences of neglecting conflict issues. In December 2022, military leaders and pro-democracy groups signed a framework agreement intended to bring peace

---

3 Health, schooling, livelihood and income, growth and investments, political institutions, migration and displacement, sociopsychological wellbeing and capital, water access, and food security

and democracy. However, Sudan soon plunged into a full-scale civil war with catastrophic humanitarian consequences. Dr Amgad Faried Eltayeb, former assistant chief of staff to Sudan's Prime Minister, profoundly captures an important reason for this failure:

> There was no real talk, or mediation, on the issues. It was about distribution and who sits at the table […] there was all this disregard to issue-based discussions […] the international community should have focused on the issues rather than the actors (ICG 2023).

This report advocates for an issue-based approach to conflict analysis and resolution, arguing that a deeper understanding of conflict issues is crucial for sustainable peace. Without clarity on what the parties are fighting for, peace agreements risk failing to address the causes of war. An issue-based perspective offers deeper insights into how these issues shape efforts to end conflicts and transition from conflict management (controlling behavior) to conflict resolution (addressing the conflict issues).

This report focuses on two central questions:

1. What are the issues that parties fight over?
2. How do conflict issues affect negotiations and peace agreements?

To address the first question, we begin by defining conflict issues and exploring three key aspects of conflict issues: salience, totality and interlinkages. We then examine Namibia's 1989 Tripartite Agreement to illustrate how interlinked issues can shape conflict resolution. This is followed by our conflict issue typology and a global mapping of conflict issues.[4]

---

4 The typology of conflict issues and the corresponding large-N data builds on Brosché and Sundberg (2023). The remaining parts of the report consist of information gathered for this study, which has not been published elsewhere.

To answer the second question, we demonstrate how an issue-based approach informs conflict resolution through a case study of the 2006 Nepalese peace agreement. We then perform a large-N analysis to investigate how the regulation of conflict issues affects the durability of peace agreements globally. Finally, we conduct a comparative study between the failed 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement and Colombia's successful 2016 peace accord. Together, these analyses provide a comprehensive understanding of how conflict issues shape peace processes.

While our explicit focus on conflict issues began in 2019, this report builds on prior work on civil war complexity[5] and Sudanese conflict dynamics. This report builds on newly gathered data as well as insights from previous research projects. Two key datasets form the foundation of the quantitative analysis.

1. The **UCDP Conflict Issue Dataset (CID),** which is the result of the combined effort of 22 coders who, over the course of 4 years, have coded conflict issues for 150 coder-months.
2. The **Issues in Peace Agreements (IPA)** dataset – developed specifically for this report, analyzing 253 peace agreements across 3,500 pages of text.

Regarding qualitative analysis, Brosché's two decades of research on Sudan and South Sudan, including extensive fieldwork, enrich the Darfur case study. The remaining case studies draw from desk research and secondary sources.

Understanding conflict issues is critical not only for diplomats working to end armed conflicts but also for policymakers designing programs in conflict or post-conflict settings.[6] In sum, this report offers

---

5 See for example (Brosché, Nilsson, and Sundberg 2023).
6 In a Swedish context, several policy documents emphasize that a comprehensive conflict analysis should guide development cooperation in conflict or post-conflict situations (c.f. Sida 2023; Melander 2004). An issue-based approach aligns with this reasoning and advances it by exploring a key component of conflict.

new insights for policymakers, diplomats, and scholars aiming to prevent and resolve civil wars through an issue-based approach.

Conflict issues in civil war

In 1832, Carl von Clausewitz asserted: "The political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose." Surprisingly, almost 200 years later, our knowledge concerning conflict issues – these political objects – remains scarce.

Theories on conflict resolution generally emphasize the need to understand what issues underlie the parties' positions in order to resolve conflict (Diehl 1992; Fisher and Ury 1987; Rubin, Pruitt, and Kim 1994). Additionally, issues hold a prominent position in the study of inter-state conflicts (Holsti 1991; Randle 1987; Vasquez and Mansbach 1984). However, the dominant type of armed conflict in the post-World War II era is not war between states but intra-state conflicts (civil wars). For this type of warfare, conflict issues have not received equal recognition. One of the cornerstones of conflict theory thus remains underdeveloped, especially in the quantitative civil war literature. This gap represents a significant oversight in conflict theory, impeding our ability to understand and resolve civil wars.

To outline our issue-based approach to the analysis of civil wars, we start by defining conflict issues. Then we highlight three important aspects of conflict issues: salience, totality and interlinkages along with a case study of issues in Namibia's war of independence. We then present a typology of conflict issues and provide a global overview. The quantitative data is grounded in the Uppsala Conflict Data Program Conflict Issue Dataset (UCDP CID), a dataset we have developed over the past five years.[7]

---

7 The dataset is open access and available free of charge at
https://www.ucdp.uu.se/downloads/

Defining conflict issues

Definitions of conflict issues predominantly exist in the literature on interstate conflict.[8] The concept of 'stakes' is essential in many definitions. Holsti sees stakes as the "fairly concrete" (1991:18) object that can be owned or divided by the contending parties. He distinguishes stakes from values, arguing that values such as 'glory' are difficult to identify empirically. The *concrete stake*, or the object to capture, should thus take precedence in determining what makes an issue. *Contention* is underlined across definitions: two or more parties disagree over either some form of ownership (such as who should run a government) or a particular policy. Based on these insights, we define 'conflict issues' as:

> "a statement suggesting concrete changes to societal structures or policies controlled by other actors"

This definition captures the core components on which there is overall agreement in previous literature and avoids the pitfalls of attempting to capture vague things such as 'freedom'. While it may be important that a group seeks freedom, we focus on what changes to structures or policies a group asks for to achieve such freedom. We include "controlled by other actors" to distinguish between statements that are internal communication rather than demands towards the opponent. Although discussions within a group about tactics to achieve their goals are significant, they do not qualify as conflict issues.

Following Holsti's (1991) preference, we derive issues directly from the statements (or from the horse's mouth in his words) of the par-

---

8 Mansbach and Vasquez aspired to build an issue-centered paradigm for international politics (Mansbach and Vasquez 1981; Vasquez and Mansbach 1984) and defined issues as "contention among actors over proposals for the disposition of stakes among them" (1981:59). Others have kept the conceptualization simpler. Randle (1987) defined an issue as "a disputed point or question, the subject of a conflict or controversy," Holsti (1991:18) as "the stakes over which two or more parties contend", and Diehl (1992) succinctly declared, "an issue is what states choose to fight over".

ties involved rather than inferring them through analysis.[9] We prioritize what the actors say, as outside interpretations are qualitatively different from the goals pronounced by the groups.

Some analysts may contend that the sincerity of actors' statements cannot be trusted, thus questioning the validity of our approach. It is important to weigh the merits and drawbacks of taking statements at face value. We acknowledge that groups may sometimes declare issues that do not reflect their true aspirations, whether to attract recruits, secure external support or as a negotiation tactic. However, we remain confident in the value of our approach, as understanding the stated issues still provides crucial insights into the dynamics of the conflict and the strategies employed by the actors involved. Furthermore, there are already many attempts by outsiders to distill what a conflict is "really" about.[10] These studies, however, often do not consider what the actors themselves proclaim to be the core matter of dispute.

An issue-based approach can complement or contrast such information. Additionally, even if one questions the sincerity of a group's demands, the data can still be useful to explore the signals rebels send to various audiences. For example, a group in a particular region that aims to recruit members must focus on issues that resonate with the grievances of at least part of the local population. The degree to which a group's demands align with the preferences of the population in its region likely varies significantly across different groups. Future research could benefit from exploring the relationship between rebel groups' demands and public opinion in specific regions. However, no existing datasets currently allow for such an analysis.

9 In addition to their stated ambitions, groups may have concealed conflict issues that remain unannounced. While these issues may be crucial for the group, there is currently no viable way to gather comprehensive global data on such hidden agendas.
10 See for instance Maconachie and Binns (2007) discussion on how many African conflicts have often been classified as not being about politics but about loot such as diamonds and timber, and Collier and Hoeffler's review (2004) on greed as the driving factor for the initiation of armed conflict.

In the textbox below, we highlight how an issue-based approach complements conflicts largely viewed from a greed perspective.

Drugs and Ethnic rebellion in Myanmar

Myanmar's northeastern Shan State includes the mountainous Golden Triangle, which borders China to the north, Laos to the east, and Thailand to the south. This region is infamous for its role in global poppy cultivation and heroin production, with drugs flowing across borders before entering the world market. For decades, various non-state armed groups have competed for territorial control and a share in the lucrative drug trade (ICG 2019). In recent years, the production of methamphetamine and online scam centers have become economically important for groups operating in the area (UNODC 2024).

Reports on the armed conflicts in the Golden Triangle often describe them as "drug wars." Furthermore, the United Wa State Army (UWSA), one of the prominent armed groups, has openly acknowledged its reliance on drug-related activities. The UWSA has also stated its intention to transition from opium cultivation and heroin trafficking to legal means of livelihood, declaring that it has "sought to make contact with the West to help them" in this endeavor (Adler 1990).

However, viewing this conflict solely as a drug war overlooks the more complex issues at stake. The UWSA has also long sought to formally secede from Shan State and obtain status as a Wa State within the Myanmar federation. The group has joined other ethnic organizations in calling for the dismantling of Myanmar's military dictatorship and advocating for a democratic, inclusive Myanmar (BBC 1997).

Similarly, the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) advocates for the autonomy of the Kokang minority. It has accused the government of targeting Kokang people and

criticized Myanmar's junta for insufficiently protecting minority rights. The group has also accused the junta of voter fraud and power usurpation (BBC 2009).

Situating the so-called "drug wars" of the Golden Triangle within the broader context of military dictatorship and the grievances expressed by the groups themselves reveals a complex interplay of economic greed and political grievances.

Issues, desires and grievances constitute a fundamental aspect of all societies whether in peace or in war. An issue-based approach is hence applicable across different settings. This report focuses on civil war[11], as it constitutes the most common type of armed conflict in the contemporary world and because issues have received more focus in other contexts.[12]

In a civil war, governments strive for the status quo (maintaining their power), whereas the armed opposition are the challengers to the status quo. Therefore, the CID and IPA datasets focus on the issues raised by non-state armed groups. Conflict issues may differ between different armed groups as well as between armed and non-armed organizations. Within the armed opposition, objectives may differ across different factions and the desire of rank-and-file soldiers may not align with those of the group's leadership. These nuances can influence the dynamics and resolution of a civil war and are therefore important to consider.

---

11 In this report, we focus on conflict issues declared by the leadership of armed non-state groups. This is driven by data availability. The neglect of conflict issues in earlier scholarship resulted in lack of large-N data. To address this gap, the natural starting point was official statements.
12 This includes datasets focused on organizations representing ethnic groups (Vogt, Gleditsch, and Cederman 2021), minorities at risk (Asal, Pate, and Wilkenfeld 2008), mass movements (Chenoweth and Shay 2022) and issues in non-state conflicts (von Uexkull and Pettersson 2018).

Focusing on non-state actors does not imply that the government's perspective on conflict issues is unimportant. Rather, we consider where the demands for change arise from. Armed opposition is inherently disruptive, with groups challenging the government to demand change. Armed opposition groups thus set the initial conflict agenda by contesting certain aspects of the status quo, shaping the core issues at stake. As the conflict evolves the government may introduce specific issues beyond their overarching goal of maintaining the status quo, but these are typically reactive to the opposition's initial grievances.

Before outlining the dataset on conflict issues, we need to discuss a few fundamental aspects of an issue-based approach.

Salience, totality and interlinkages

Not all issues are equally important. As George Orwell might have put it, while all issues are equal, some issues are more equal than others. To understand these differences and provide a more comprehensive understanding of conflict issues, three aspects warrant discussion.

First, when approaching a conflict from an issue-based perspective, it is essential to consider the *salience* of the conflict issues. 'Salient' issues are those that hold high importance for the warring parties. In a conflict, actors often perceive salient issues as more indivisible and are less likely to compromise on them (Fearon 1995; Vasquez 1983; Toft 2006). Some civil wars encompass dozens or even hundreds of issues, but not all carry the same weight for the groups involved. For example, the Colombian rebel group FARC aimed to overthrow the Colombian government while also opposing the El Quimbo Dam project. In this case, the objective of overthrowing the government is likely more important than stopping the dam project: i.e., the former is more salient than the latter. Indeed, if FARC were to succeed in overthrowing the government, they would likely have the authority to decide the fate of the dam project.

Outside observers often make judgement about the salience of various conflict issues. Determining salience on behalf of others is challenging since salience refers to the value that an actor places on a particular issue, and only the involved actors can accurately assess its importance. For instance, an external analyst might suggest that Ukraine should cede territory to reduce human suffering, prioritizing the saving of lives over territorial control. However, only Ukrainians can determine what is most salient to them.

Therefore, and in line with our approach of prioritizing the perspectives of the involved groups, we refrain from imposing our own measure of salience in the dataset. Different researchers are likely to perceive salience differently and the CID dataset offers multiple opportunities to explore how salience influences civil war. For example, users can examine the frequency with which a particular issue arises as an indication of its importance to a group. Alternatively, users might focus on issues deemed most critical for the specific interest at hand, whether related to identity, religion, or territorial demands.

While it is challenging to fully understand perceptions of salience, peacebuilding actors should not shy away from considering it. Instead, they should recognize its importance and remain aware that outside perceptions might be incorrect. Interviews with SPLM/A-IO soldiers during the civil war in South Sudan illustrate this point. The general outside perception was that members of the group, primarily Nuer (South Sudan's second largest ethnic group), were fighting to make Riek Machar President. However, "most SPLM-IO supporters took up the armed struggle because of bitterness and the desire for revenge in the wake of the Juba killings", referring to the government's killing of many Nuer in South Sudan's capital in the initial phase of the war (Young 2015:57).

Second, conflict issues vary in their extent, or *totality*, ranging from comprehensive to narrower concerns. While some Marxist groups demand a complete overhaul of the economic system, other groups request more humble economic reforms. Advocacy for a complete political system overhaul or pushing for independence represent to-

tal issues, necessitating profound societal changes. In the middle ground are matters like safeguarding minority rights, pursuing greater autonomy, or reforming security sectors. Conversely, issues like seeking amnesty, prisoner releases, or acknowledgment of wrongdoing are less extensive, as they have a comparatively limited societal impact. The Israel-Palestine conflict epitomizes the breadth of conflict issues, spanning from radical demands like Hamas' calls for Israel's destruction, to more moderate topics such as management of water resources. By their nature, total issues amplify the stakes and challenges involved in an armed conflict. The CID's distinction between goals based on the extent of the desired change (e.g., removing the entire executive or just the head of the executive) offers opportunities to explore this aspect of conflict issues. Totality can also serve to see similarities and differences between different groups. For instance, while ISIS and Khmer Rouge are two distinctly different groups when it comes ideology, both groups are similar in terms of totality as both groups demand very total changes to society.

Third, the *interlinkages* between different conflict issues constitutes an important feature. Conflict issues are often not isolated, and when issues are interlinked they become more difficult to resolve (Mansbach and Vasquez 1981). Issues can be either vertically or horizontally interlinked.

Vertical interlinkages concern connections across different levels of analysis such as between the national and the local.[13] An example from Western Equatoria in South Sudan reveals how such vertical interlinkages can affect a conflict. In this area, communal tensions between Dinka cattle-herders and non-Dinka (different Equatorian groups) farmers have existed for a long time. Traditionally, these conflicts were not strongly connected to national politics, and when civil war broke out in South Sudan in 2013 this area was largely

---

13 Kalyvas (2006) provides a prominent theory for the connections between the local and national in a civil war. For a level-of-analysis study on peace agreements, see Brosché and Duursma (2018).

spared from fighting. This changed drastically in 2016. When opposition leader Riek Machar retreated to this this area, the war spread there. Government soldiers (primarily Dinka) supported co-ethnic cattle-raiders and abused Equatorian civilians. Dinka encroachment on their land enraged Equatorians, and as government soldiers now supported Dinkas in the local conflict, Equatorian leaders soon concluded that this localized grievance could only be resolved by breaking Dinka domination at the national level. The local conflict entangled with the national conflict, leading many Equatorians to join the rebel side (Young 2015).

Horizontal interlinkages, in contrast, describe connections between issues on the same level of analysis. Sometimes issues that may ostensibly seem separate are intrinsically linked so that a solution to one simultaneously affects the other. The Israel-Palestine conflict illustrates this with the issue of land. Although land per se is divisible, the issue is horizontally connected to issues such as settlements, Jerusalem, holy places, right of return, and security guarantees. A solution to the issue of land subsequently influences how to deal with settlements and how to deal with Jerusalem: the issues are interdependent. These interlinkages are often detrimental to resolution, especially when there are no obvious ways to resolve one issue without addressing the others. Sometimes, however, horizontal interlinkages can be beneficial to conflict resolution by being useful in various negotiating techniques such as logrolling.[14]

Thus, although interlinkages generally pose challenges for conflict resolution, this aspect is not straightforward. To examine this complexity, we turn to Southern Africa and the negotiations that led to Namibia's independence in 1990.

---

14 For a discussion on sequencing and log rolling with multiple issues, see Pillar (2014).

Namibia's tripartite agreements: linking issues and the aligning of the planets

The area now known as Namibia, formerly South West Africa, was colonized by Germany in 1884. After World War I, Britain was granted a mandate to administer the territory through South Africa. Following World War II, South Africa unilaterally annexed South West Africa, imposed apartheid and disregarded calls to place the territory under UN trusteeship. The South African government ruled Namibia from Pretoria, while white businessmen exploited cheap black labor in farming, fishing, and mining. Workers were recruited from homelands and confined to compounds, with infrequent visits to their families (UCDP 2024b; Berat 1990).

Resentment towards South African rule led to the establishment of the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) in 1960. SWAPO sought to mobilize support across Namibia and launched a campaign for international backing. In the early 1960s, Ethiopia and Liberia challenged South Africa's rule over Namibia at the International Court of Justice (ICJ). When the court declined to rule in 1966, SWAPO launched an armed struggle (Vigne 1987). Initially, SWAPO conducted low-intensity guerrilla operations from bases in Zambia with Soviet support. Following Angola's 1975 independence, SWAPO moved its operations there, bolstering its military efficiency and numbers with Cuban training. The conflicts in Angola and Namibia became closely intertwined (Berat 1990; Melber and Saunders 2007).

International efforts to secure Namibia's independence have deep roots. In 1978, the Security Council adopted resolution 435, which called for South Africa's withdrawal from Namibia. Despite the

strong UN involvement, the initiative remained unimplemented for another decade (Melber 2015:9–10).[15]

When Ronald Reagan took power in 1981, U.S. policy towards South Africa's apartheid regime shifted from Jimmy Carter's "pressure tactics" to "constructive engagement". Namibia became a pawn in the Cold War, with the U.S. prioritizing the containment of Soviet influence in Africa (O'Neill and Munslow 1990). Chester Crocker became United States' key representative in Southern Africa and played a central role in the Namibia process throughout the 1980s.[16] Unlike the Carter administration and most African and European states, which prioritized Namibian independence, Crocker viewed the value of a Namibian settlement as contingent on broader political considerations (Kagan-Guthrie 2009). Central for US strategy was to link the withdrawal of Cuban troops in Angola and Namibian independence. In practice, making Namibian independence contingent on the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola (Crocker 2002). While some view this linkage as essential for securing Namibia's independence, others believe that it delayed South Africa's withdrawal.[17]

When initiating his diplomatic efforts, Crocker believed that the broader regional conflict in Southern Africa would not yield clear "winners" and that the wars in Angola and Namibia were essentially unwinnable. Given South Africa's initial reluctance to negotiate, he focused on understanding their primary demand: the complete withdrawal of Cuban forces from Angola (2002). Crocker was convinced that US lacked the leverage to compel South Africa to withdraw from Namibia. However, he hoped that the potential removal of Cuban troops could persuade South Africa to accept Namibian independ-

---

15 One pivotal factor was the shift in Africa policies by the Reagan and Thatcher administrations in the US and UK.
16 While Crocker was not as lenient towards South Africa's government as some in the administration, his primary objective was a deal that favoured U.S. interests.
17 See Kagan-Guthrie (2009) page 76–77 for a review of this debate. In March 1983, France left the Western Contact Group in protest to this linkage policy. It still supported implementation of resolution 435 (Melber and Saunders 2007).

ence, while also believing that the prospect of Namibian sovereignty might convince Castro to withdraw Cuban troops from Angola (Kagan-Guthrie 2009). Angola feared increased vulnerability to UNITA if the Cuban forces withdrew, but Crocker argued that South Africa's withdrawal from Namibia would equally weaken the rebel group. At the same time, both he and Reagan favored continued U.S. support to UNITA (Kagan-Guthrie 2009). That the Reagan administration to a large extent represented South African interests encouraged South African non-compliance during the negotiations (Melber and Saunders 2007).

Crocker later reflected that while the strategy of linkage significantly increased the complexity of negotiations, it also expanded the range of trade-offs and engaged a broader set of relevant parties. By embracing the conflict's complexity, Crocker recognized the potential for unconventional solutions. (Crocker 2002). For instance, when South Africa intensified its focus on the removal of Cuban forces, overshadowing other contested issues, it paved the way for the resolution of previously intractable disputes (Kagan-Guthrie 2009). Similarly, Melber (2015) noted that the "complex blend" of different actors allowed for negotiation arrangements that were rarely available in other situations. Ultimately, Crocker (2002) argues that this linkage strategy prompted Castro to take action, thereby improving the long-term prospects for a mutually beneficial outcome. According to another U.S. diplomat:

> The U.S. approach was comprehensive rather than responsive to a single agenda. It began with identifying possible common interests among Angola, Cuba, and South Africa that these countries themselves did not recognize. It took into account the interests of the Frontline States of southern Africa, SWAPO, and UNITA. The approach built on the fact that the United States shared some of these interests with each of the parties, even as there were differences on others. Like Luanda, Havana, the

Frontline States, and SWAPO, Washington wanted independence for Namibia. Like Pretoria and UNITA, the U.S. sought the withdrawal of Cuban forces from Angola. Like UNITA, the U.S. was interested in a political settlement and peace between Angolans that would remove the immediate cause of East-West involvement in Angolan politics by ending the civil war. (Freeman 1989).

While a statement from a partisan source, we include it since it offers valuable insights into how one could think creatively about conflict resolution.

By the late 1980s, South Africa encountered increasing setbacks and global dynamics shifted. Several factors converged, creating a more favorable environment for a solution. These included:

- End of the cold war: The approaching end of the Cold War and the resulting shifts in global governance pressured South Africa to acknowledge that Namibia should be governed by its own people (Melber 2015:20). Internal pressure in South Africa to end the war in Angola contributed to this shift (Kagan-Guthrie 2009:75).

- Cuban change: Growing domestic criticism in Cuba regarding its involvement in Angola, coupled with doubts about the MPLA's ability to defeat UNITA, increased Cuba's desire for an "honourable exit"(Kagan-Guthrie 2009).

- Soviet union's policy shift: Significant changes within the Soviet Union, particularly after Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in the mid-1980s, led to a 1986 announcement that the USSR sought a political resolution to the war in Angola. This was part of the Communist Party's new strategy to seek negotiated solutions to regional conflicts (O'Neill and Munslow 1990).

- Mutually hurting stalemate: The recognition of a mutually hurting stalemate by all parties, along with the presence of a mutually

beneficial solution on the negotiation table, was crucial (Crocker 2002). South African Prime Minister Botha's decision to initiate direct negotiations was significantly influenced by military considerations and the risk of facing a strong armed adversary that could inflict substantial harm on South Africa's military (Kagan-Guthrie 2009).

On 22 December 1988, two historic agreements were signed at the UN skyscraper in Midtown Manhattan. Cuba, Angola and South Africa were the signatories of the first agreement, which stipulated the road for Namibia's independence. Cuba and Angola (but not South Africa) also inked the second accord that provided for the total withdrawal of Cuban forces from Angola (Berridge 1989). Crocker observed that the agreements ending the war in Namibia resulted from: "the right alignment of local, regional, and international events – like planets lining up for some rare astronomical happening" (quoted in Zartman 1989:234). Zartman uses the case of Namibia as a notion of ripeness. Other analysts view this assessment as simplistic since it does not critically examine whether ripeness might have been relevant at an earlier stage, such as before the introduction of linkage strategy (Melber and Saunders 2007).

Either way, it is noteworthy from a conflict issue perspective that Namibia's independence became closely linked to a separate issue in another country: the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola. The Namibian case thus underscore the profound significance and complexity of conflict issues. While "the alignment of the planets" facilitated the Tripartite Agreement, this "rare astronomical happening" would have been futile if the agreement had not addressed the intertwined conflict issues at the core of the dispute.

After our detour to Namibia, we now turn to present the UCDP CID dataset.

The UCDP conflict issue dataset

The UCDP CID is a global dataset detailing the stated demands raised by armed non-state groups involved in civil conflict from 1989 to 2017. The dataset contains 14 832 stated conflict issues organized within a four-tier hierarchical system. This comprehensive data allows groups to simultaneously hold several conflict issues and is time-variant, enabling the detection of how issues changes over time. Below, we outline the typology of conflict issues that constitutes the foundation for the dataset and then describe the dataset and its content.

A typology of conflict issues

When analyzing conflicts from an issue-perspective, the level of detail required depends on the task. Examining a particular conflict enables the incorporation of nuances that may not be possible in a global study. To allow users to select the most appropriate level of detail, UCDP CID organizes issues into a four-tier hierarchical system.

A primary organizing criterion is that conflict issues occur at different phases during a conflict. While groups tend to raise certain issues at their inception, other demands appear later. Consequently, Tier 1 separates issues into three distinct phases of a 'conflict cycle'.

- *Conflict Goal Issues* includes demands related to a group's preferred political and societal system or functioning after conflict.

- *Conflict Dynamics Issues* encompass issues related to, for example, military conduct or foreign involvement.

- *Conflict Resolution Issues* includes demands about how to end a conflict including issues related to ceasefires and peace agreements.

Of the 14 832 conflict issues included in UCDP CID, 57% are Conflict Goal Issues, 28% Conflict Dynamics Issues, and 15% Conflict Resolution Issues. Tier 2 contains ten thematic areas: five for conflict

goals, three for conflict dynamics, and two for conflict resolution. Figure 1 visualizes the first two tiers of the dataset.

Figure 1. Tier 1 and Tier 2 of UCDP CID dataset

The Issue Tree

Conflict Goals	Conflict Dynamics	Conflict Resolution
• Territory • State Structures • Quality of Governance • Political Rights • Distribution of Resources	• Foreign Involvement • Violent Targeting • Refugees, IDPs, Prisoners	• Negotiations, Ceasefires, Peace Agreements • Transitional Justice and Liability
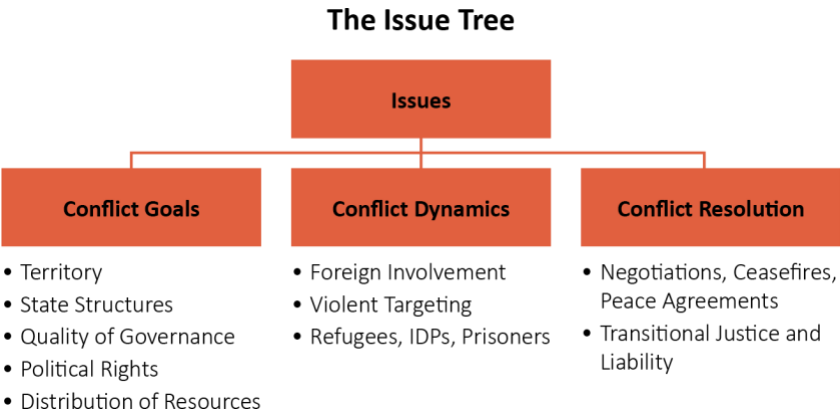
At Tier 3, the dataset subdivides the information into 35 more specific categories representing the form of change that the group demands. For example, within the Tier 2 theme of 'distribution of resources' this tier distinguishes between 'state redistribution structures' and 'natural resources' at Tier 3. As discussed above, conflict issues often range from narrow to more comprehensive. To avoid conflating total and less extensive goals, we distinguish issues in terms of their scope at Tier 4. For example, we create separate categories for 'oust full executive', 'oust head of executive', and 'reform executive'. Tier 4 encompasses 120 categories capturing the specific issue derived from the rebel group's statements.

While it is not possible to visualize all categories included in the typology, Figure 2 illustrates the four-tier system and highlights in black how the issue of 'Revenues from natural resources' fits into the tiers.

Figure 2. Illustration of the UCDP CID's 4-tier coding system

TIER 1	TIER 2	TIER 3	TIER 4

Conflict Goals
- Territory
- State structures
- Political rights
- Governance
- **Distribution of resources**
  - State distribution systems
    - Change economic system
    - Economic reforms
    - Public services
    - Basic needs
  - Natural resources
    - Land reforms
    - Water resources
    - **Revenues from natural resources**
    - Protection of natural resources
    - Climate change

Conflict Dynamics
- Foreign involvement
- Violent targeting
- Refugees, IDPs, and prisoners

Conflict Resolution
- Negotiations, ceasefires, and PAs
- Justice and liability

As discussed previously, across all three issue clusters we track the issues raised by armed opposition groups. This reflects an overarching assumption that the government seeks to maintain the status quo while the armed group sets the agenda on which specific aspects of the status quo it seeks to change. At the same time, the perception of governments

in relation to conflict issues varies across the different broad issue clusters. For **conflict goal issues**, rebel groups predominantly act as agendasetters in civil war contexts by challenging the status quo and defining the central issues of the conflict. For instance, while governments universally aim to maintain territorial integrity, it only becomes a conflict issue when a group demands a change to it. Given that the government generally seeks to maintain the status quo, the challengers, not the government, ultimately define the core conflict goal issues. For the other two clusters – **conflict dynamics issues** and **conflict resolution issues** – the situation is less clearcut. For example, DDR (disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration) is typically an issue driven by government priorities. Although our dataset does not include the government's position on such matters, these dimensions remain crucial for mediators to consider in negotiations.

After describing the structure of the dataset, we now present the content of it in more detail.

Actor characteristics

CID also includes four categories of actor characteristics for all 329 groups.

- **Ideology:** reflects the group's ideological leanings, such as Socialism, Nationalism, or Islamism, with further sub-divisions.

- **Religion:** Indicates if a group claims to represent a specific religion.

- **Ethnicity:** Identifies whether a group claims to represent a particular ethnic group.

Geographical Scope: Notes whether a group's demands are sub-national, national, regional, or global. For example, Al-Qaida's demands operate on multiple levels: national (Afghanistan), regional (neighboring countries), and global (its fight against U.S. 'imperialism').

Conflict issues over time and space

The UCDP CID data documents the conflict issues raised by all non-state armed groups across the world between 1989 and 2017. The number of issues raised fluctuates over time, both as new conflicts arise and as existing actors shift their stated issues. Figure 3 shows the number of conflict issues raised, both in total and per conflict dyad, each year. We see in this figure that the number of conflict issues raised both globally and by dyad remains relatively stable over time from 1989 to 2017. This fluctuates between a maximum of 653 total conflict issues raised in 2014 to a minimum of 374 issues raised in 2005.

Figure 3. Number of issues and number of issues by active dyads over time.
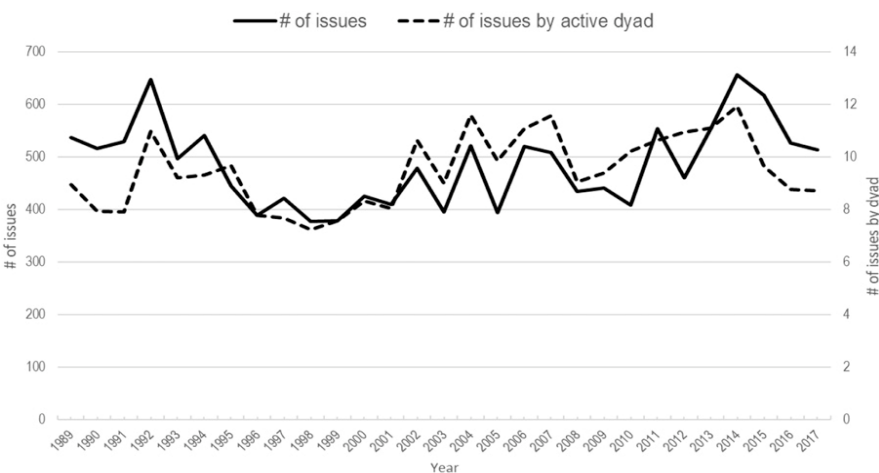
Note. The black line displays the number of issues coded in the CID for each year included in the dataset (frequency on the left axis). The dashed line displays the number of issues coded per year, but divided by the number of active dyads (frequency on the right axis).

One potential bias to consider is that the increased availability of sources over the period covered may have influenced the number of issues coded, potentially creating the appearance of a rise in conflict issues over time. The lack of a clear time trend in Figure 3 indicates that the data is unlikely to be biased by source availability.

Figure 4 provides an overview of how conflict issues vary over time and across regions. It illustrates the number of unique conflict issues (at Tier 4) stated by all rebel groups in a given region for each year. Since the dataset includes 120 different Tier 4 issues, this represents the highest possible value. While it is important to remember that the number of conflicts fluctuates over time, we consider this an approximation of conflict complexity.

Figure 4. Number of unique issues (Tier 4) per region over time
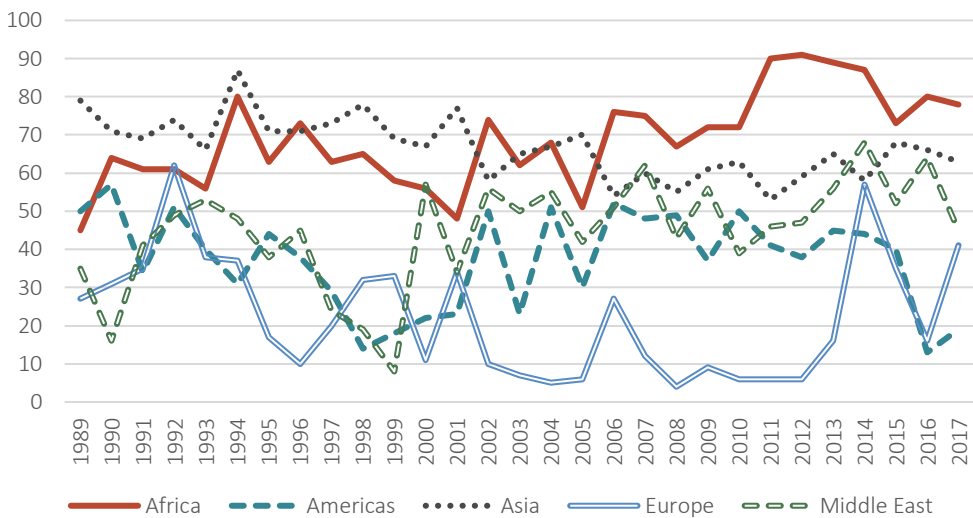
Until 2002, Asia had the highest number of unique conflict issues. Since then, with the exception of 2005, Africa has consistently recorded the most conflict issues, reflecting the rise in conflicts within the region. One notable observation is the high number of coded issues. With 120 categories at the most specific level (Tier 4), we anticipated that many issues would rarely appear in the dataset. However, only in one year did the regional high fall below 70 conflict issues.

Practical utility of the dataset

We see numerous possibilities for how policy actors can utilize data on conflict issues in practice. Broadly, the dataset serves as a crucial tool for deepening the understanding of conflict issues, which is central to a conflict-issue-based approach. Below, we outline three specific ways in which the dataset can be practically applied.

Supporting negotiations: The dataset can be particularly valuable for actors directly involved in negotiations. For example, in a mediation context, a group may raise specific demands – such as citizenship reforms, gender rights, or transitional justice – that negotiators need to better understand. By consulting the UCDP CID, mediators can identify previous instances where similar conflict issues were addressed and analyze what approaches succeeded or failed. This analysis can be further complemented by examining data from the IPA to determine which peace agreements have included similar provisions and whether they were effective in ending conflict.

Enabling thematic analysis: While case selection discussions are more common in academic settings, the UCDP CID also provides practical value for policy actors involved in peacebuilding. For instance, if a development agency is concerned about land grievances contributing to civil war, the dataset can help identify cases where land issues were a significant factor. Similarly, the UCDP CID can serve as a starting point for organizations investigating the intersection of civil wars and conflict issues such as rule of law, corruption, or autonomy.

Informing development and peacebuilding projects: The nuanced understanding offered by the CID is also beneficial for actors involved in development or peacebuilding efforts in specific countries. For each group included in the UCDP CID, the project has produced detailed issue narratives summarizing each group's conflict profile. These narratives, available in the UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia, provide a valuable resource for understanding the key grievances of different rebel groups within a country. Moreover, because

the dataset is time-variant, it enables analysts to track how conflict issues have evolved over time, offering critical insights for ongoing projects.

In addition to practical applications for policy actors, the CID establishes a foundation of empirical data to inform further research. This foundation enables analysts to bring a conflict issue focus to other topics within peace and conflict research. In the remainder of the report, we build on the CID data to study the role of issues in conflict resolution through negotiated settlements.

Conflict issues and the resolution of civil war

The signing of a peace agreement often symbolizes hope for lasting peace. However, the promise of peace is not always realized. In some cases agreements remain only a piece of paper, and occasionally they can exacerbate conflict. There are notable instances where peace agreements successfully ended hostilities, such as the Bangsamoro agreement in Philippines (2017), Indonesia's Aceh agreement (2006), as well as the agreements in El Salvador and Mozambique both signed in 1992. Conversely, the Arusha Agreement signed by the Rwandan government and the Rwanda Patriotic Front in August 1993 serves as the emblematic case for the opposite. Although initially praised by international observers, it preceded the devastating genocide that soon shattered Rwanda. Why some agreements fail and others lead to lasting peace poses an enduring puzzle for conflict resolution.

What we know about lasting peace after a negotiated settlement often fails to account for the specific issues that were at the heart of the conflict. Conflict issues capture the core grievances that drive armed groups to fight. Without a clear understanding of the parties' underlying grievances, it is challenging to determine whether peace agreements address the right issues. Moreover, peace agreements often emerge from complex negotiations reflecting numerous compromises. Analyzing only the provisions included in peace agreements can overlook issues that are either left out of negotiations or discussed but not agreed upon in the final accords.

This report aims to fill this gap by thoroughly examining the interplay between conflict issues and peace agreements.

Conflict issues in the Nepalese civil war and peace process

Nepal suffered a decade-long civil war fought between government forces and the Communist Party of Nepal – Maoist (CPN-M). The conflict was eventually resolved through a peace process culminating in a comprehensive agreement signed in 2006. Since the signing of the agreement Nepal has remained at peace. The 2006 peace agreement addressed some of CPN-M's core issues, including economic reforms, political reforms, and a range of civil, cultural and religious rights. The example of Nepal illustrates the central role that conflict issues can play in negotiating lasting peace after civil war.

Nepal emerged as a unified state in the late 18th century, initially as a monarchy. In 1846, Jung Bahadur Rana seized power, reducing the king to a figurehead while the prime minister held true power. The Rana dynasty ruled with an iron fist until 1951. In 1959, Nepal held its first multi-party election, but just 18 months later King Mahendra declared parliamentary democracy a failure and introduced the Panchayat system, which granted him absolute power. This system persisted under his son, King Birendra, after Mahendra's death in 1972 (Thapa and Sijapati 2004). In 1990, a broad-based democracy movement challenged the Panchayat system. Mass protests, culminating in a gathering of 200,000 demonstrators outside the palace, forced King Birendra to lift the ban on political parties, leading to the adoption of a constitutional monarchy under a multi-party democracy (Washington Post 1990; Associated Press 1990). Despite these changes, the political elites in Kathmandu were widely seen as neglecting Nepal's deep-rooted structural injustices, focusing instead on internal power struggles.

In 1994, following a split among Nepal's communists, the CPN-M was founded. The CPN-M sought to establish democracy as a stepping stone towards socialism, and ultimately, communism through the "dictatorship of the proletariat." The group presented 40 demands to Nepal's Prime Minister, criticizing the government's domestic and

foreign policies, particularly the liberalization and privatization that worsened economic disparities (SATP 2024; Thapa and Sijapati 2004). In 1996, the CPN-M launched an armed rebellion, initiating the "people's war" with the slogan, "Let us march ahead on the path of struggle towards establishing the people's rule by overthrowing the reactionary ruling system of the state" (SATP 2024). The group rapidly gained control over large parts of Nepal's rural areas, mobilizing a substantial number of rebels. The conflict persisted for nearly a decade (UCDP 2024c).

The CPN-M's primary goals included transforming the political system into a democracy, drafting a new constitution, and establishing a socialist state. Over time, the group expanded its objectives to include making Nepal a secular state, implementing land reforms, and altering the economic system.

The CPN-M envisioned completing a democratic revolution, transitioning swiftly to socialism, and ultimately achieving communism through continuous cultural revolutions under the dictatorship of the proletariat. This vision extended beyond Nepal, reflecting international aspirations. In a 2006 letter to the UN Secretary-General, the group stated, "We are proletarian internationalists. Either all of us will reach communism, or none of us will." (CID 2024).

Anti-imperialism was another central issue for CPN-M, as they demanded the removal of foreign influence, which they saw as imperialist and expansionist. A party manifesto from 2001 echoed this view, declaring that Nepal remained in a "semi-feudal and semi-colonial state" due to the dominance of foreign capital in Nepalese industries. In the later stages of the conflict, the CPN-M also demanded investigations into the disappearances of citizens in police custody, prosecution of those responsible, and compensation for victims' families. As the conflict progressed into the 21st century, the CPN-M increasingly pushed for negotiations, ceasefires, and international involvement to mediate the conflict and monitor human rights abuses.

In 2001 and 2003, two serious efforts were made to end the war through negotiations. Despite some success, including the government and CPN-M moderating their most extreme demands, these talks failed to achieve a lasting breakthrough. In 2005, the king seized power in a royal coup, suspending the rule of law and arresting hundreds of political leaders, journalists and activists to stifle dissent. In response, Nepal's mainstream political parties formed the Seven Party Alliance and began to negotiate with the Maoists. In November 2005, the two sides agreed on cooperation and mutual goals. Following widespread demonstrations, the King reinstated Parliament in April 2006. The new government and CPN-M soon reached a cease-fire, establishing a 25-point code of conduct in May 2006. After further negotiations, including two additional signed agreements, they signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) on 21 November 2006.

An analysis of the CPA using CID and IPA data reveals that CPN-M entered the peace process with 43 unique issues (Tier 4) across 23 issue clusters (Tier 3). The 2006 peace process successfully addressed 82 percent of these issue clusters (Tier 3).

Rather than offering rhetorical statements about creating a socialist state, the CPA (CPA 2006) directly addresses key conflict issues voiced by the CPN-M. It stipulates:

- To gradually implement by deciding through mutual agreement a minimum common program for the economic and social transformation to end all forms of feudalism

- To adopt policy of establishing the rights of all citizens to education, health, housing, employment and food security

- Providing land and other economic protection to socially and economically backward classes including landless squatters, bonded laborers and pastoral farmers

Besides establishing an interim government that included CPN-M, the accord did not provide for executive power-sharing. The UN responded to the parties' request by deploying the United Nations

Mission in Nepal, which was tasked with monitoring demobilization and disarmament, assisting ceasefire monitors, and providing electoral support.[18]

The CPA effectively ended the Nepalese Civil War. In the 17 years since the agreement, UCDP has recorded no deaths in organized violence, except for nine fatalities during demonstrations related to the integration of CPN-M combatants into the armed forces. In contrast, the decade preceding the agreement saw more than 12 000 fatalities. Clearly, at least in this case, regulating issues matters.

Regulating issues – creating peace?

The peace process in Nepal demonstrates the importance of crafting peace agreements which address the core issues driving armed conflict. Much of the existing scholarship on peace agreements implicitly assumes that the contents of an agreement reflect the conflict issues raised by a rebel group. However, this assumption has not been systematically tested to date – largely due to limited empirical data on conflict issues.

Conflict issues are a crucial yet overlooked piece of the puzzle in understanding how negotiated conflict settlements can establish lasting peace. Peace agreements are fragile: more than half of all peace agreements collapse (Johnson 2021). Extensive research looks at different provisions included in agreements that help to make peace last, including peacekeeping operations (Collier, Hoeffler, and Söderbom 2004; Sambanis and Doyle 2011; Doyle and Sambanis

---

18 During the extended peace process, the 2007 interim constitution addressed key CPN-M issues by enshrining human, civil, and gender rights and establishing a federal state with decentralized local governance. However, the degree of pro-vincial autonomy was left for parliament to decide. The constitution also tackled corruption by creating the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority. In 2013, the parties signed the "Seven Point Agreement," which focused on the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of CPN-M combatants, established commissions for truth and reconciliation and investigating disappearances, and set a deadline for drafting the new constitution.

2000; Fortna 2004; Fortna and Howard 2008; Gilligan and Sergenti 2008; Hartzell, Hoddie, and Rothchild 2001; Sambanis 2008) and power-sharing provisions (Cammett and Malesky 2012; Hartzell and Hoddie 2003; Hoddie and Hartzell 2003; Jarstad and Nilsson 2008; Mukherjee 2006; Walter 2002; Johnson 2021). Other studies focus on the implementation of peace agreement provisions (Joshi and Quinn 2017). However, a critical gap remains: limited attention has been given to the specific conflict issues at stake. We do not know whether the provisions included in a peace agreement actually align with the issues that conflict parties are fighting for.

Existing research often assumes that the provisions within a peace agreement directly address conflict issues. However, the terms that parties can agree to may not always align with the issues they are fighting for. A peace agreement may instead reflect compromises which are acceptable to both parties but fail to address the underlying issues. Assuming that provisions reflect issues is problematic because it separates conflict resolution strategies from the underlying causes of conflict. This can obscure whether strategies such as power-sharing provisions result from direct issue regulation – where groups seeking power-sharing receive it – or from indirect issue regulation where a group agrees to power-sharing to resolve other grievances. Understanding this distinction is essential, as the former suggests that power-sharing provisions are effective primarily when power-sharing itself is a central issue in the conflict, while the latter suggests that power-sharing serves as a broader tool for conflict resolution.

In summary, previous explorations into conflict issues and conflict resolution have been somewhat limited in scope. What is lacking is a comprehensive understanding of how the regulation of these issues – essentially, what the conflicting parties are fighting for – affects the prospects for lasting peace. To facilitate a more systematic inquiry into this matter, we have compiled global data on conflict issues addressed in peace agreements.

The Issues in Peace Agreement (IPA) dataset

To investigate whether the stated conflict issues align with the provisions within a peace agreement, we introduce the Issues in Peace Agreements (IPA) dataset. This is a dyadic dataset that provides information on the regulation of conflict issues for 253 unique agreements between 1990 and 2013, encompassing 77 conflict dyads in 42 states. By combining an understanding of what the parties are fighting for before entering negotiations with what the parties receive or don't receive through negotiations, IPA represents a substantial shift in conflict resolution research. Instead of treating the content of agreements as indicative of the underlying issues (See: Bell & Badanjak 2019, Madhav & Darby 2013), it allows for agreements to be products of bargaining, confidence building, or external pressure where the parties are unable to address the conflict issues. We argue that this better captures the extent to which conflict issues are addressed in the conflict resolution process.

IPA builds on the UCDP CID data on conflict issues. In UCDP CID, a conflict issue is defined as "a statement made by an organized armed non-state actor suggesting concrete changes to societal structures or policies controlled by other actors" (Brosché and Sundberg 2023:8). Correspondingly, IPA deems an issue as regulated if there is alignment between the demand declared by the non-state actor and the stipulated changes in the peace agreement. IPA codes issue regulation for 82 out of 120 Tier 4 conflict issues included in UCDP CID.[19] This excludes issues outside of the control of the signatories of the agreement, such as those regarding foreign involvement.[20]

19 Conflict issues coded in UCDP CID but not included in IPA are those related to increasing foreign involvement; decreasing foreign involvement (with the exception of withdrawal of foreign troops); atrocities and abuses; collective targeting; calls for collective targeting; military conduct; negotiations (with the exception of calls for national dialogues); ceasefires; peace agreement. A detailed list is available in Appendix 2.
20 In the foreign involvement umbrella, the issue "withdrawal of foreign troops" is included in IPA since that is something that governments often can regulate.

IPA also excludes issues without a concrete direction of change, such as those regarding atrocities and abuses. Furthermore, it excludes demands related to negotiations, ceasefires, and peace agreements, as these temporally precede the signing of a peace agreement.[21]

To capture global data on issue regulation, IPA matches each issue category coded in UCDP CID with corresponding peace agreement provisions. This process combines original data with existing peace agreement datasets. Stipulations for 45 issues are imported from the University of Edinburgh PA-X peace agreement database and 11 are imported from UCDP Peace Agreement Dataset (PAD), with 2 overlapping issues for which either PA-X's or PAD's provisions are sufficient. The remaining 32 issues are coded manually, as no existing peace agreement dataset contains the corresponding information. The IPA codebook in Appendix 1 details which issues were drawn from PA-X, PAD, and which were manually coded. To examine if the stated issue aligned with any provision in the accord, we read the entire text of all 253 unique agreements with available texts in the UCDP PAD, amounting to approximately 3,500 pages. The coding process amounted to roughly 9 cumulative months of coding.

The data is structured around conflict dyads, or pairs of conflicting actors (e.g. a government and a rebel group). Since conflict issues can vary between parties even within the same conflict, assessing issue alignment by dyad captures a more accurate reflection of the issues a party is fighting for. Furthermore, the successful implementation of dyadic peace agreements appears to influence other parties to follow suit (Quinn, Joshi, and Melander 2019). While IPA codes 253 unique peace agreements, the dataset captures 292 dyadic observations. This is because 39 agreements were signed by multiple dyads.

Peace agreement provisions are only counted as regulating an issue if they directly address previous demands for these issues made by

---

21 In the negotiations, ceasefires, and peace agreements umbrella, the issue "national dialogue" is included in IPA as this can take place after an agreement is signed.

the non-state actor. Power-sharing, elections, and reconciliation are three common peacebuilding tools which are at times included in a peace agreement regardless of whether a rebel group themselves raises these as a conflict issue. On their own, stipulations for power-sharing, elections, or reconciliation are not counted as regulating an issue unless they directly address a demand raised prior to entering negotiations.

The coding process for the original data begins with identifying all issues stated by a non-state actor. For example, during the Second Sudanese Civil War, SPLM/A's leader Garang stated that: "If they (Khartoum) insist on maintaining their agenda of an Islamist Sudan then we are saying in order to maintain the unity of the country let us have two confederate states" (Reuters 1997). This statement is categorized as an issue of *Confederation/union* in UCDP CID. The issue of *confederation/union* is coded as regulated if a formal agreement between a non-state actor and the government stipulates the creation of a confederate state, a union between the state and the disputed territory, or grants the disputed territory self-determination with the right to secede (see Appendix 1, IPA Codebook). In the case of SPLM/A, the Machakos Protocol stipulates that "the people of South Sudan have the right to self-determination, inter alia, through a referendum to determine their future status." By affirming the right of the disputed territory to exercise self-determination and granting it the power to determine its own future status in relation to Sudan, the issue is coded as regulated.

The data is then aggregated into the UCDP CID Tier 3 where issues such as *Hold elections*, *Opposition to elections*, *Electoral reform*, and *Electoral fraud* are all classified under the broader category of *Elections*. Tier 3 is appropriate since there can be overlaps between provisions at the lowest level of analysis (Tier 4). For instance, the creation of an independent electoral commission can address both *Electoral reform* and *Electoral fraud* issues. Similar overlaps occur within the *Civil rights and freedoms* issue cluster, where provisions for *Freedom of association* and

Recognition as a political party can intersect. A Tier 3 level issue is coded as regulated if any of its constituent issues are coded as regulated.

Issue regulation is cumulative across successive agreements, as long as the previous agreement is still considered valid at the time of signature. It is common practice for conflict parties to sign multiple successive agreements which build on prior terms. While these prior terms are sometimes reaffirmed in later documents, this is not a regular occurrence. Therefore, as long as an agreement is upheld, meaning that neither party withdrew nor failed to implement it, we code the cumulative set of conflict issues as regulated. Each partial agreement builds on the prior one, thus regulating a larger share of issues over time.

For example, four separate agreements were signed in Nepal between May and November 2006. The first agreement in May 2006 established a ceasefire but also addressed some substantive conflict issues including civil liberties and assistance for displaced persons to return to their homes. The first agreement regulated six of the 23 issues raised by CPN-M, or 26%. Two subsequent agreements were signed on 16 June 2006 and 8 November 2006, each regulating more issues in addition to those addressed in the first agreement. A final comprehensive peace agreement was signed on 21 November 2006 which in total regulated 83% of the Tier 3 issues raised by CPN-M. Given that all prior agreements remained in force, we count each signed document as a separate observation but carry over the regulated issues from previous agreements.

Insights from the data

On average, 43% of the conflict issues a rebel group is fighting for are regulated in a peace agreement. This average, of course, captures a wide range of situations. Most agreements regulate between 25% and 75% of the issues raised by the rebel group. Only 36 agreements regulate more than 75% of the issues a rebel group raises. In rare instances – only 6 agreements captured in the dataset – a peace agree-

ment addresses 100% of the issues a group raises. Conversely, 30 agreements regulate zero issues. Figure 5 summarizes the share of issues regulated across all dyadic agreements in the IPA dataset.

To illustrate, we return to the example of Nepal. The CPN-M had 23 active demands at the time of agreement (at Tier 3). The comprehensive peace agreement signed in November 2006, building on the three prior agreements signed throughout 2006, addressed 19 out of 23 (83%) of the conflict issues raised by the rebel group. This included issues like holding elections, security sector and judicial reforms, expanding civil rights and freedoms, natural resource and land reforms, and calls for a truth and reconciliation process.

There are also some trends in the types of conflict issues which are more frequently addressed. Figure 11 shows the share of each Tier 3 issue (as defined in the CID data) regulated in peace agreements. Demands for referendums (69%), gender rights and freedoms (68%), refugee return (67%), security sector reform (65%) and civil rights and freedoms (63%) are the conflict issues most often addressed in peace agreements, all at over 60%. This means that out of 49 instances where rebel groups made demands for referendums, 34 of those demands (69%) were regulated in a peace agreement. Out of 72 instances where a rebel group raised issues related to gender rights and freedoms, 49 (68%) were regulated in a peace agreement. Full figures for the number of raised and regulated issues can be found in Appendix 3.

A range of raised issues related to political rights and freedoms are frequently regulated in peace agreements. Rebel demands for religious and gender rights are both regulated in 59% of the instances they are raised, and civil rights 55%. Cultural (44%), labor (41%) and children's (36%) rights are regulated less frequently.

In contrast, less than one-third of the demands for liability (30%), parliamentary changes (26%), adjustments to administrative arrangements (21%), and issues related to national dialogue (18%) are regu-

lated in a peace agreement. No demands related to unification, separatism and revenge or vengeance were regulated.

Figure 5. Share of conflict issues regulated in peace agreements in the IPA dataset
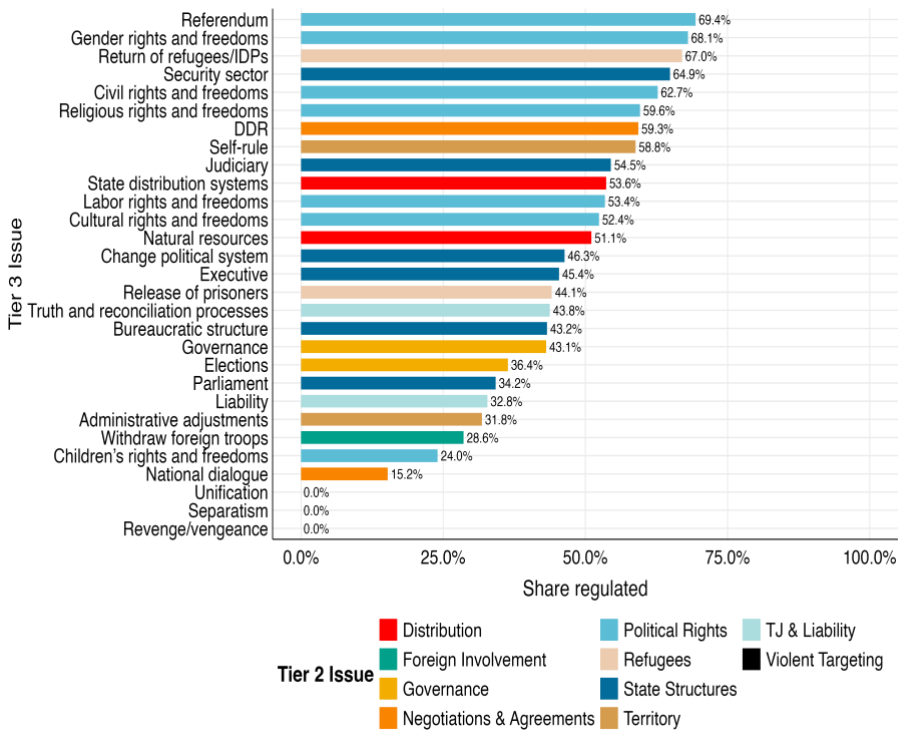
There are also some notable regional variations. Some conflict issues which appear to be frequently addressed in the aggregate are in fact driven by greater regulation in particular regions. While 59% of global rebel demands for DDR processes were regulated in a peace agreement, a smaller share of demands for DDR were regulated in the Americas (33%) and Africa (43%) compared to 100% in the Middle East. There is similar variation for demands for a referendum. Globally, 69% of rebel groups' demands for a referendum were regulated in a peace agreement. But if we break this down by region, most regulation of demands for a referendum occurred in Africa.

93% of the 27 rebel groups in Africa demanding a referendum saw the issue regulated. In contrast, the two groups who raised this issue in the Americas and the one group in Europe did not have their demands for a referendum regulated in a peace agreement.

Rebel demands related to refugees and IDP return are frequently addressed in peace agreements in Asia (84%) and Africa (78%), but less frequently in the Americas (56%) and never in the Middle East. No rebel groups in Europe included calls for refugee return as an explicitly stated conflict issue. Regulation of issues related to governance (such as corruption, elections, and the rule of law) also vary across regions. All (100%) of governance-related conflict issues in Europe and 89% in the Middle East were addressed in a subsequent peace agreement, while only 29% of governance-related conflict issues in the Americas were addressed. Appendix 4 shows a full regional disaggregation of issue regulation.

From conflict issues to lasting peace

We argue that peace agreements are more likely to last if they address a larger share of the issues a rebel group is fighting for. While this hypothesis is implicit in much of the existing scholarship, it has not been systematically tested to date. We draw on the novel IPA data to test whether peace agreements which align with a larger share of the conflict issues raised by a rebel group lead to more lasting peace.

Key variables

The dependent variable is *lasting peace*. We measure this at one, three, and five years after the signing of the peace agreement. This is measured as a binary variable which takes the value of 1 if peace prevails and 0 if the conflict dyad is active. A conflict dyad is coded as at peace if it falls below the 25 battle-related deaths threshold in the UCDP Conflict Termination Dataset version 3-2021 (Kreutz 2010) within 6-months of agreement and remains below the threshold for the following year (three years and five years for the two other out-

comes). We only code the dyad as at peace if the non-state actor in the dyad did not feature in an active alliance for the duration of the period. This criterion considers instances where armed actors form new alliances which continue the conflict under a new name. For example, in Ivory Coast three different rebel groups (MPCI, MPIGO, and MJP) technically ceased to exist after the first peace agreement. However, they continued to fight under the FRCI umbrella organization. This means that for all groups who form an alliance, i.e. all groups with an alliance listed in the UCDP Actor Dataset version 23.1 (Davies, Pettersson, and Öberg 2023). The alliance also needs to become inactive for the dyad to be recorded as inactive. For example, if MPCI signs an agreement on the 1st of January, the armed conflict needs to end by the 1st of July for both MPCI and its alliance FRCI and then both need to remain peaceful until the 31st of June the following year for MPCI be coded as terminated for 1-year. Otherwise, MPCI participation can be masked by FRCI.

The independent variable of interest is the *share of conflict issues* regulated in an agreement. This is calculated by dividing the number of issues regulated in an agreement by the total number of issues that a group has raised.

Control variables

We control for several variables that are likely to influence both the share of issues addressed in a peace agreement and lasting peace.

Not all conflicts are equally complex; some rebel groups raise more demands than others. In order to isolate the effect of the share of issues addressed in an agreement on the durability of peace, we control for *issue complexity*. Issue complexity captures the total number of

issues raised by an armed group.[22] We expect that complexity shapes the ability to engage in negotiations and to regulate issues. Raising many issues may present greater barriers to reaching, or even identifying opportunities for, compromise. Controlling for complexity thus isolates the effect of having a larger share of issues regulated.

The balance of power between negotiating parties also influences the bargaining process and prospects for peace. Parties utilize their respective military capabilities, or their cost of continued warfare, as bargaining leverage (Werner 1998). Militarily advantaged governments should therefore be more resilient to rebel pressure and concede less, whereas tipping the scales towards the rebels should yield the opposite result, instead enabling rebels to extract more concessions than weaker rebels. We measure power balance using the Non-State Actor Data (Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan 2013), which estimates the relative strength of rebels vis-à-vis governments from the parties militarily capabilities. Their ordinal variable is converted into two categorical dummies for *parity* and *stronger* rebels where *weaker* serves as the reference category.

Territorial control captures an additional dimension of a rebel group's relative power. We control for whether a rebel group controls territory, also drawing from the Non-State Actor Data (Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan 2013).

Peacekeeping functions as a third-party security guarantee that alleviates the short-term commitment problem, thus shaping the parties'

---

22 The independent variable, share of issues, and the control variable issue complexity are both calculated using a measure of the total number of issues raised by an armed group. This raises the possibility that the two variables could be correlated, potentially creating issues of multicollinearity in the regression analysis. To test for this, we calculate a variance inflation factor (VIF) for each variable. A VIF value of 1 indicates no correlation, and VIF values above 5 indicate moderate multicollinearity. The VIF value for share of issues ranged between 1.3–1.5 for the different models, and the VIF value for issue complexity ranged between 1.5–1.8. These results indicate that multicollinearity is not an issue in any of the models used, suggesting that each variable contributes independently to explaining the variance in the dependent variable.

ability to reach and stick to an agreement (Walter 2002). Because the number of peacekeepers directly influences their ability to respond to a deteriorating security situation the total number of peacekeeping troops in thousands are included from the IPI Peacekeeping Database (Perry and Smith 2013).

Costly wars can entrap its participants whereby they are led to over-commit resources to the war effort – to not let the their previous commitment in lives and materials go to waste – which hampers the parties ability to negotiate and regulate their issues (Rubin, Pruitt, and Kim 1994; Staw 1981). Therefore, costly wars are approximated through the log of accumulated *battle-related deaths* using the UCDP Battle-Related Deaths Dataset lagged by 1-year.

On the other side of the spectrum, peace processes occurring within already inactive conflicts should be easier to both regulate and maintain. The dyad may fall below the threshold of 25 battle-related deaths without resolving the incompatibility. For example, the parties may establish a ceasefire agreement during the negotiation process, or fighting may simply drop to a low level of activity. A peace agreement then resolves or regulates the incompatibility for the parties, even if the immediately preceding period saw little or no violence. Sustaining peace after a formal agreement in these cases is a continuation of the status quo. *Years since conflict* is therefore included as a control.

We do not control for specific peace agreement provisions such as power-sharing which have also been shown to contribute to durable peace. While such provisions may contribute to durable peace they are unlikely to influence the share of issues addressed in a settlement.

Table 1 summarizes the variables included in the analysis.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Lasting peace 1-year	267	0.637	0.482	0	1
Lasting peace 3-years	267	0.566	0.497	0	1
Lasting peace 5-years	267	0.532	0.500	0	1
Share of conflict issues regulated	267	0.432	0.275	0.000	1.000
Issue complexity	267	11.255	5.816	1	23
Battle-related deaths (log)	267	7.092	1.981	3.219	10.452
Years since active (log)	267	0.343	0.577	0.000	2.708
Peacekeepers (1000s)	267	0.699	2.691	0.000	26.146
Relative strength: parity	267	0.281	0.450	0	1
Relative strength: stronger	267	0.090	0.287	0	1
Territorial control	267	0.551	0.498	0	1

Empirical analysis

We use a binomial logistic regression to estimate the effect of issue regulation on lasting peace. This approach takes into account that the dependent variable, *lasting peace,* is a binary measure (1 if peace prevails; 0 if conflict is active).[23]

The analysis shows that, after controlling for likely confounding factors, regulating a larger share of conflict issues leads to a higher chance of lasting peace at one, three, and five years after an agreement is signed. This relationship is statistically significant at a 95% confidence level at one and three years after signing and at a 90% confidence level at five years after signing.

Table 2 shows the full results of the logistic regression. Coefficients in the table are reported as log-odds. Given that agreements are

23 The distribution of the independent variable, conflict issue regulation, is shown in Appendix 5.

nested within states, the error terms are adjusted for state-level clusters. Measures of model fit improve in the multivariate models as expected.[24]

Overall, we see that after controlling for potential confounding factors peace agreements which regulate a greater share of conflict issues are more likely to prevail. In other words, regulating more issues makes peace more likely to last. We have greater certainty ($p < .05$) about the relationship between issue regulation and lasting peace one year and three years after agreement signing.[25]

---

24 We report the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) and Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC), two measures of model fit best suited to binomial logistic regression. Lower values indicate a better-fitting model. AIC and BIC both provide a relative measure of model quality which takes into account both model fit and complexity.

25 To ensure that issue regulation is not overestimated, we also run the same analysis using the agreement-year as the unit of analysis. This collapses multiple agreements signed within the same calendar year into a single observation (provided that the prior agreements remain in force) so that only the final agreement in a cumulative process is counted. The direction and size of the effect are similar to the main model, but the bivariate relationships are statistically significant when grouping observations by agreement-year.

Table 2. Results of logistic regression for lasting peace at one, three, and five years after signing of a peace agreement

	Peace 1-year (1)	Peace 1-year (2)	Peace 3-years (3)	Peace 3-years (4)	Peace 5-years (5)	Peace 5-years (6)
Share Issue regulation	1.096	2.858**	0.774	2.090**	0.740	1.676*
	(0.815)	(1.143)	(0.631)	(1.017)	(0.614)	(1.012)
Issue complexity		-0.110*		-0.067		-0.074
		(0.060)		(0.049)		(0.049)
Battle-related deaths (log)		-0.447***		-0.429***		-0.279*
		(0.172)		(0.163)		(0.164)
Years since active (log)		1.765***		0.892*		0.516
		(0.640)		(0.484)		(0.466)
Peacekeepers (1000s)		-0.030		-0.042		-0.086
		(0.063)		(0.060)		(0.092)
Relative strength: parity		-1.105**		-0.641		-0.826
		(0.454)		(0.472)		(0.598)
Relative strength: stronger		-0.519		-0.057		0.419
		(1.169)		(1.057)		(1.089)
Territorial control		0.815		1.256*		0.938
		(0.686)		(0.668)		(0.651)
Constant	0.101	3.531***	-0.067	2.539**	-0.191	1.827*
	(0.373)	(1.328)	(0.345)	(1.158)	(0.337)	(1.103)
Observations	267	267	267	267	267	267
Log likelihood	-172.26	-128.69	-181.32	-146.19	-183.18	-160.8
AIC	348.53	275.39	366.63	310.38	370.35	339.6
BIC	355.7	307.67	373.81	342.66	377.53	371.88

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01
Standard errors adjusted for state-level clusters. Unit = agreement

Figure 6 shows the predicted probability of lasting peace based on the share of conflict issues addressed in a peace agreement. On average in our sample, agreements regulate 43% of issues, corresponding to an 85% likelihood of peace lasting one year after agreement signing. Regulating only 25% of conflict issues corresponds with a 78% probability of lasting peace one year after agreement signing, while regulating 75% of conflict issues increases the probability of peace to 94%. Overall, this illustrates that regulating a larger share of conflict issues increases the probability of peace. Improved odds of lasting peace matter greatly for civilians living amidst the devastation of armed conflict.

Figure 6. Predicted probabilities of lasting peace at 1, 3, and 5 years after an agreement is signed
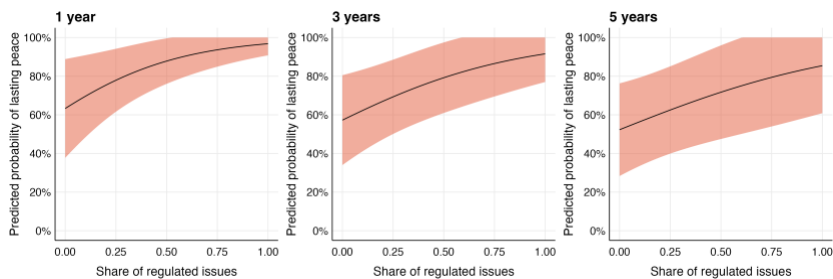
To terminate, or not to terminate? Comparing peace agreements

Earlier, we analyzed the quantitative relationship between conflict issues and peace agreements. In this section, we will examine two peace agreements – Colombia's 2016 agreement and the Darfur Peace Agreement from 2006 – in more detail to gain a nuanced understanding of how conflict issues impact the effectiveness of peace agreements.

Darfur's war from a conflict issue lens

In the introduction of this report, we illustrated how the failure to address underlying issues contributed to the collapse of a peace agreement signed in Sudan in December 2022, leading to a full-fledged civil war. Sadly, this scenario is all too familiar to the Sudanese people. Sudan's political history is replete with similar examples. Despite numerous peace agreements signed by the belligerents in Sudan's various conflicts, the country has experienced little sustained peace. As early as 1992, Abi Alier, a south Sudanese politician and former Vice President of Sudan, highlighted this in his book "Too Many Agreements Dishonored". Why have so many of Sudan's peace agreements failed to deliver lasting peace? In this section, we address this question by analyzing the 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA), which stands out as one of the agreements with the most severe consequences for Sudan.

In the early 2000s, Darfur was in the international limelight due to gross human rights violations. The global attention to Darfur put pressure on the international community to solve the crisis. After drawn out negotiations, the government and one rebel leader signed the DPA in the Nigerian capital Abuja in May 2006. The peace agreement was hailed internationally, and many believed that peace had finally come to Darfur. It had not. Instead of bringing peace, the

DPA exacerbated the conflict. The fighting intensified, the rebel side fractured, and the civil war continued.

A fundamental reason for this bleak result was the mediators' perception of the crisis as "simply a regional conflict over equitable national wealth and power sharing" (Mohamed 2009:40). This faulty impression meant that issues fundamental for a durable solution to the Darfur crisis were left unaddressed, or treated superficially. The stark consequences of misreading what the conflict actually was about underscores a central theme for this report: *a deep understanding of the issues at stake is essential for an accurate analysis of a conflict and for its resolution.* Hence, before analyzing how disregarding central issues contributed to the agreement's failure, we need to conduct a conflict analysis of the war in Darfur.

Our analysis of the DPA is twofold. We begin by examining the war in Darfur from a conflict-issue perspective, demonstrating how neglecting key conflict issues led to a misdiagnosis of the situation. This section also emphasizes that applying an issue-based approach when analyzing a civil war necessitates an accurate assessment of the web of conflicts that exist in it. Without such knowledge, it becomes impossible to ascertain which actors' issues that should be examined. After examining the conflict issues, we analyze the process that led to the accord, the agreement and its repercussions.

Diagnosing Darfur

In 2003, two rebel groups – the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) – initiated a violent insurgency in Darfur, the westernmost region of Sudan. Their goal was to radically change Sudan's governance and address the marginalization of Darfur. The rebels initially achieved significant successes on the battlefield. In response, the government launched a counterinsurgency campaign, involving the army and its affiliated Janjaweed militias. This campaign was marked by severe human rights violations, including ethnic cleansing. The scale of

these abuses drew international attention and pressured the international community to solve the crisis in Darfur.

Several international efforts to bring peace to Darfur followed. They all failed. A core reason for these bleak results was that outside analysts tended to view the war in Darfur as simply a conflict between a marginalized region and a dominant center (Mohammed 2009, 40). More accurately, the war in Darfur consisted of several interlinked types of conflicts where the actors in the different conflicts had diverging aspirations. To grasp the intricacies of the war in Darfur, one needs to recognize four different types of conflicts.[26]

- **Communal conflicts** – These conflicts primarily occur between different pastoral and farming communities over land.

- **Local elite conflicts** – These involve rival rebel leaders vying for power, often fighting against each other. Additionally, there are conflicts between traditional leaders (elders) and younger aspiring leaders.

- **Centre-periphery conflicts** – Sudan is highly centralized, leading to significant marginalization of many peripheral areas, such as Darfur.

- **Cross-border conflicts** – The crisis in Darfur extends beyond Sudan's borders, adding complexity. For example, Sudan and its western neighbor Chad have at times engaged in a proxy war, with each country supporting rebels in the other.

All of these types of conflict encompass many actors with different aspirations. Focusing on issues elucidates the nuances of each conflict type and helps to avoid false interpretations. In Darfur, this is particularly important in relation to communal conflicts. Not only did these conflicts precede the civil war, these communal conflicts also constituted an integral part of the civil war dynamics. It is also a

---

26 Mohammed (2009) presents the conflict as consisting of three types of conflict. Building on his study, Brosché and Rothbart (2013) develop a four-conflicts-in-one framework.

conflict type that is severely misunderstood by outside analysts. For these reasons, we put particular emphasis on communal conflicts when diagnosing the conflicts in Darfur.

This framework offers an alternative to traditional western depictions of the conflict in Darfur as a civil war with the government and the rebel groups as the main contenders. The Darfurian Professor Adam Azzain Mohammed elucidates the importance of looking beyond the traditional civil war prism to focus upon the essential issues behind the conflict.

> "Starting from the premise that what we are having is a civil war, parties in conflict are identified as the rebel movements on the one hand, and the central government on the other. A closer look into the crisis will reveal that the parties are the landless groups, on the one hand, and the landowners on the other. Tubiana (2007:68) was correct in describing the conflict as mainly one over land. The rebel movements are fighting on behalf of their land-owning communities. The government and the Janjaweed, on the other hand, are fighting on behalf of the landless (2009:25)."

Although civil war erupted in 2003, violence was not a new phenomenon in Darfur. Intercommunal conflicts had been prevalent in the region for a long time. A common starting point when analyzing communal conflicts in Darfur is to classify the region's 40 to 90 ethnic groups into Arabs and non-Arabs, or Africans (Flint and de Waal 2008). This distinction is not based on language, skin color, religion (all of Darfur's communities are Muslim), culture, or lifestyle. Instead, it hinges on claims to an Arab identity, which holds significant importance for those who embrace it (Tubiana 2007). Although a highly polarized and politicized Arab-non-Arab division has emerged in Darfur over recent decades (Mamdani 2009), this dichotomy offers little insight into the fact that many communal conflicts have involved Arab groups fighting each other. Instead, focusing on land – the most significant issue in these conflicts – helps to under-

stand the shifting patterns of communal conflict in Darfur, and key features of the violence that has shattered Darfur for the past 20 years.

In Darfur, land is crucial for livelihoods. A population census from 1993 showed that 86% of Darfur's population found their livelihood in either traditional farming or customary herding (Mohamed 2009). Additionally, land is vital for identity, collective action, and political representation. It is so important that it often becomes inseparable from political power (Unruh and Abdul-Jalil 2014). The traditional tenure system divides the region into different Dars (homelands), each consisting of smaller land units called Hawakir (Hakura in singular). This system, established during the Fur Sultanate that ruled the region from the seventeenth century until the British destroyed it in 1916, remains significant today. Each Dar is typically associated with a major ethnic group but also includes smaller communities. This system favors larger communities over smaller ones. For instance, while the large cattle-herding (Baggara) Arab groups in Southern Darfur had their own Dar, the smaller camel-herding (Abbala) Arab groups (mainly from North and Western Darfur) were left without any Dar (Tubiana 2007; Unruh and Abdul-Jalil 2014). This had grave consequences for Darfur's future. When the government sought recruits to its militias, it promised landless Arabs access to land in exchange for fighting for the government. In fact, landless Abbala Arab communities largely see their involvement in the war in Darfur as part of a 250-year-old quest for land (Flint and de Waal 2008).

In Darfur, two principal competing narratives over land exist. The Arab/pastoralist narrative highlights historical and ongoing injustices regarding land, dating back to the Fur Sultanate. The opposing sedentary narrative emphasizes that the Dar and Hakura system is crucial for land administration in Darfur, with Dars and Hawakir being integral to communal memory. This narrative also claims that Arab pastoralists and the government are attempting to seize their historical land (Unruh and Abdul-Jalil 2014).

It is important to recognize the complexity behind these narratives. For instance, not all Arab communities are pastoralists, and significant non-Arab groups, such as the Zaghawa, are primarily herders. Additionally, some pastoralists view herding as essential to their identity and perceive their nomadic culture as being under threat, while others prefer settlement to increase educational opportunities for their children. Despite these differences, land remains critical for both positions, as pastoralism requires grazing pastures and settlements need land for cultivation (Flint 2010).

Prior to 2003, most communal conflicts were between Arab and non-Arab groups. Following a long period of relatively peaceful inter-communal relations, tensions escalated in the mid-1980s. Both farming and herding activities were gradually expanding, leading to increasingly contentious interactions between pastoralists and agriculturalists (Abdul-Jalil and Unruh 2013; Burr and Collins 2008). Between 1987 and 1989, the "Arab-Fur[27] war resulted in at least 2,500 Fur and 500 Arab deaths (Harir 1994; de Waal 2005). During the 1990s, two other significant non-Arab groups, the Zaghawa and Masalit, also engaged in fierce conflicts with various Arab communities (Tubiana 2007). In these conflicts, the government strongly sided with the Arab communities. Consequently, the non-Arab communities increasingly viewed the government as their main enemy. The government's partiality in these communal conflicts was a key motivation for the 2003 rebellion. While non-Arab groups such as Fur, Zaghawa and Masalit formed the backbone of the armed opposition, many Arabs joined pro-government militias (Brosché 2014). Thus, the two main belligerents in the communal conflicts that preceded the war stood on opposing side in the civil war.

Following the eruption of civil war, the pattern of communal conflict changed. In the initial phase of the war, the government's counter-

---

27 Darfur's largest ethnic group in that has given the region its name Dar Fur, homeland of the Fur.

insurgency forced millions of Darfurian non-Arabs to leave their land. This abandonment left large areas of fertile land up for grabs, prompting several Arab communities to fight each other over control of this land. Thus, the main driver of the changing pattern of communal conflicts was control over land (ICG 2007; Brosché and Rothbart 2013). This exemplifies the need for a nuanced understanding of land – the prime conflict issue – in assessing the war in Darfur.

In Darfur, communal conflicts are often intertwined with local elite conflicts, the second conflict type mentioned above. Communal rivalries have, for example, been central for the multiple splits of the armed opposition in Darfur. The first major split took place in November 2005 when Mini Minawi (a Zaghawa) split from SLM/A (led by the Fur Abdul Wahid) to create his own movement (SLM/A-MM). While power struggles and personal ambitions often form the basis for such splits, the fallout is often divided along ethnic lines (Brosché and Rothbart 2013). This is important for conflict issues. As two of the founders of SLM/A, Abdul Wahid and Mini Minawi shared many of the conflict goals for how Sudan should change. Nonetheless, important differences exist. Whereas the Fur primarily are sedentary, herding of cattle and camels are important within the Zaghawa community. As such, a key motivation for the Zaghawa to join the war was to fight the Abbala Arabs (who largely had joined pro-government militias) who were their rivals in the camel trade in North Darfur (Small Arms Survey 2011).

After this issue-focused analysis of the situation in Darfur, we now turn to an examination of the 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA).

Deadline diplomacy and an agreement that aggravated the war

When Mini Minawi and Majzoub al-Khalifa (head of the government's negotiating team) signed the DPA on May 5, 2006, many outside observers thought prospects for peace in Darfur were high.

However, Minawi had signed an agreement that was heavily disliked by the Darfurian population, other rebels, and even within his own ranks.[28] Within days, riots and demonstrations broke out in the IDP camps. The victims of war voiced their rejection to the agreement and support to those who had refused to sign. During riots in the Kalma camp on 8 May, an AU interpreter was beaten to death with IDPs shouting, 'We don't want this peace! This is not our peace'' (Flint 2010).

Rather than bringing peace, fighting soon escalated. The agreement also contributed to proliferation of the number of armed groups and eroded belief in a negotiated solution, leading many to view continued armed conflict as the only viable path forward.

Multiple factors at local, national, and international levels contributed to the DPA's dreadful consequences (Brosché and Duursma 2018). A comprehensive analysis of all these factors is beyond the scope of this report.[29] Our focus is on how the misdiagnosis of the conflict and the agreement's disregard of central conflict issues contributed to its failure.

The Abuja process

International efforts to halt the fighting in Darfur began in 2003 when Chad organized several unsuccessful mediation attempts. In 2004, the African Union (AU) took on the role of the official mediator. The first round of AU-mediated negotiations, later known as the Abuja peace process, commenced in July 2004. After multiple negotiation rounds with limited progress, the seventh and final session began at the end of November 2005. Three rebel groups were

---

28 Many commanders in Minawi's movement quickly left his group, either joining other rebel groups or starting their own movements.
29 For additional analysis of the DPA see for example (Brosché and Duursma 2018; de Waal 2007b; Nathan 2007).

present in Abuja. JEM (led by Khalil Ibrahim), SLM/A (led by Abdul Wahid) and SLM/A-MM (led by Mini Minawi). Former secretary-general of the Organization of African Unity, Salim Salim, led the negotiations and they were supported by the United Nations (UN), the UK, the US and other international partners (Brosché and Rothbart 2013; Nathan 2007).

The international actors involved in Abuja were desperate for a swift agreement, which led to deadline diplomacy and a quick-fix mentality (Brooks 2008). External actors repeatedly stressed that the patience of the international community was running out and continuously threatened to cut funding. In early 2006, a British diplomat reprimanded the parties for missing a 31 December 2005 deadline. A UN-representative proposed a new deadline and in February an AU-official urged parties to conclude by the end of the month (Nathan 2007). On 8 April, AU endorsed 30 April as the final deadline and three days later the UNSC endorsed the same time limit. Realizing that they only had a few weeks to reach an accord, the mediators abandoned their ceasefire first approach and "adopted a "big bang" approach that they would force upon the delegations" (Brooks 2008:425).

The mediators took on the role of "formulators" and spent the next two weeks crafting an agreement that attempted to incorporate compromises on wealth-sharing, power-sharing, and security arrangements. The parties received an 87-page draft agreement from the mediation team on April 25. The mediators gave the parties five days to "read, comprehend, debate within their ranks, and then endorse" the agreement. For non-English speakers, the deadline was even shorter (three days) as the Arabic version of the agreement was not ready until April 28 (Brooks 2008). For sure, five days for this process would be completely unreasonable in any setting. In Abuja, disagreement between the parties was profound on nearly every aspect of the draft document, which also introduced mechanisms and arrangements they had not previously considered (Nathan 2007). This rush led to an extreme lack of ownership making one SLM/A mem-

ber asking why a group should sign an agreement that it did not participate in discussing (Brooks 2008).

The international actors put extreme pressure on the movement leaders to enforce their signatories. The heavy-handed tactics included voicing frantic assaults, threats of ICC and UN sanctions, as well as strong promises if signing. The representatives of the armed opposition highly disliked this behavior and some thought that the external actors used colonial behavior. The pressure was particularly strong on Minawi, who was militarily strongest at the time. Whereas Khalil Ibrahim and Abdul Wahid refused to sign, Minawi yielded and put his signature on the DPA on May 5 (Brooks 2008; Nathan 2007). After Minawi had signed, the mediators showed both disinterest and inflexibility to entice the other to sign (Brooks 2008).

In the end, DPA "was a product of externally imposed deadlines, international pressure and the mediators' drafting efforts rather than a product of negotiated compromises and agreements reached by the parties themselves" (Nathan 2007, 500).

Disregarding issue complexity and unresolved issues

An essential reason for DPA's failure was the lack of consideration of the causes of the conflict. After the agreement, many people left Minawi's group. A former advisor to Minawi expressed the prevailing view among those who left:

> "The Abuja was not a peace agreement since it did not deal with the root causes for the conflict in Darfur. Until now the international community

has just focused upon the effects of the war not the root causes for it."[30]

In a similar vein, Mohammed (2009) argues that a fundamental factor for the outcome of the DPA was its failure to address its causes. For example, it failed to tackle the critical issue of land, which was central to widespread rejection of the deal. The disregard of land issues meant that the agreement lost connection with the core parties of the conflict – the landless and the land-owning groups. DPA included some development-oriented commissions, but did not focus on the key issues. Instead, modernizing both agricultural and herding practices should have been the primary focus of development spending, as it directly promotes peaceful coexistence between farmers and herders (Mohammed 2009).

Beyond land, DPA failed to consider other essential issues:

> "The region faces intricate issues that need specific plans of action and calculated measures to resolve them. One such issue is how to move the displaced population out of camps and to where they were prior to 2003. Another issue is the question of land ownership and access to natural resources. A third burning issue is the claim that the Fur and Masalit land is indeed occupied by newly arriving populations from neighboring countries."

Overlooking the importance of local issues was linked to the international community's failure to fully appreciate the issues at hand. This meant that actors, whose grievances and issues was strongly intertwined with the DPA's political consequences, were not considered during negotiations. The mediators' perception of the conflict in Darfur as solely a civil war, rather than acknowledging the different types of conflict,

30 Former advisor to Minni Minnawi, interviewed 26 November 2007, Juba.

was a fundamental reason for why the DPA failed to address the real causes of conflict. That DPA was negotiated exclusively by the rebels and the armed movements contributed to the lack of local ownership. Refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), women, youth, communal leaders, civil society, and traditional political parties were all excluded from representation (Flint 2010). Moreover, disregarding Darfur's rich conflict resolution history meant that DPA became an agreement that few Darfurians viewed as their own (Mohamed 2009).

It is also important to mention the agreement's lack of attention to reconciliation. Positively, DPA did include a provision entitled Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation. This part of the accord, however, was vague and did not answer fundamental questions such as what the agenda of the forum was or who should be involved in it (Mohamed 2009).

The quick-fix mentality of the Abuja process was central for misdiagnosing the conflict and the disregard of central conflict issues. Furthermore, international interveners largely viewed the DPA as a process that could allow more effective peacekeeping, a UN peacekeeping mission, which meant that the content of the agreement was less important (Brooks 2008). On top of that, the external actors were not receptive to any issues that introduced additional complications to the mediation effort (De Waal 2007a).

Before the accord, there were three rebel groups in Darfur. Afterwards, the number of armed opposition groups quickly increased to dozens of movements, which complicated future negotiations. Furthermore, the DPA's failure eroded belief in a negotiated solution, leading many to view continued armed conflict as the only viable path forward.

Colombia: addressing issues – ending war

Over 1100 km west of Sudan, Colombia has endured a protracted civil war that has lasted for decades. Although Sudan and Colombia differ significantly in terms of democracy, economic development, and other factors, the two conflicts share several notable similarities. In both Colombia and Sudan, multiple actors fighting over a broad range of issues were involved in the conflict and both countries experienced widespread human rights abuses. Efforts to resolve these conflicts have been numerous in both nations.

Unlike the unsuccessful efforts to end the war in Darfur, a landmark peace agreement signed in November 2016 successfully ended the fighting between the FARC and the Colombian government. While significant obstacles to lasting peace remain, such as the continued armed insurgency by other groups, the agreement achieved its primary goal: persuading FARC to disarm voluntarily. As a result, the accord ended over five decades of fighting between these two belligerents. In sharp contrast to DPA, Colombia's 2016 peace agreement comprehensively addressed the core issues of the conflict.

To analyze Colombia's peace agreement, and the negotiations leading up to it, we first provide a background on the war and the negotiations. Then, we present FARC's primary grievances and demands. Finally, we examine the negotiations and the resulting peace agreement through an issue-based lens. Colombia's war is one of the longest in the world. The negotiations spanned over four years and resulted in a 323-page agreement. Our analysis below concentrates on the most critical aspects from a conflict issue perspective.

Background: war and negotiations

Colombia's history of conflict began shortly after gaining independence from Spain in 1819. Central to these conflicts have been the struggle over land and the ongoing central-versus-periphery dynamic. After independence, two major political parties emerged: the Conservative Party, backed by the landowning elite, favored strong central authority, while the Liberal Party advocated for greater federalism. These ideological differences led to numerous civil wars, culminating in the severe violence of 'La Violencia' in the mid-20th century, during which over 200,000 people, primarily peasants, lost their lives. In 1958, a power-sharing agreement between the two parties, known as the National Front, ended this period. The agreement stipulated alternating power between the parties, which successfully ended the immediate conflict but also weakened democratic principles by stifling political competition (JFC 2024).

Excluded from political participation and inspired by the Cuban Revolution in 1959, left-wing guerrilla movements, most notably Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) and Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), began to rise. In response, prominent landowners and drug traffickers formed paramilitary groups to protect themselves against the guerrillas. This led to a protracted conflict involving the Colombian government, left-wing guerrillas, and right-wing paramilitaries, with all sides committing widespread human rights abuses (Summers 2012; UCDP 2024a).

Despite multiple attempts at conflict resolution, Colombia's war persisted for decades, causing immense suffering for the population. Efforts aimed at ceasing the fighting have included ceasefires, discussions, and peace agreements. For example, between 1990 and 1998, the government signed peace agreements with eight guerrilla groups and three urban militias. All of these efforts failed to end the fighting (Penagos 2022, 64). The government has also engaged in negotiations with the paramilitary group AUC (Autodefensas de los Campesinos de Colombia), but these talks were widely perceived as

illegitimate. This perception arose because the AUC was not truly an enemy of the government; the paramilitaries had often fought alongside the regular army and many of its members were local politicians (Nussio 2011).

FARC and the Colombian government have engaged in three major rounds of negotiations. The first began in 1984, when FARC signed a ceasefire and formed a new political organization called the Patriotic Union. However, the ceasefire collapsed in 1987, and the negotiations broke down in 1990. During this period, paramilitary groups and state security forces killed 3,000 members of FARC (Bouvier 2008). The failure of these negotiations and ceasefires to deliver real political power or security created a strong disincentive among guerrilla groups to pursue peace agreements (ICG 2002).

The second major negotiation period began in 1999 but quickly became paralyzed by procedural issues, leading to a breakdown in early 2002 (Bayer 2013). The government's failure to establish a robust infrastructure for mediation, along with its lack of effort to keep FARC at the negotiating table, contributed to this failure. The process suffered from "an absence of rules and controls and the lack of a clear concept in the negotiations" (ICG 2002:21). Additionally, FARC frequently stalled negotiations and exploited the demilitarized zone as a rear base for military training (Johnson and Jonsson 2013). In 2002, Álvaro Uribe won the presidential election on a platform promising to destroy the guerrillas, leading to an extensive military offensive against FARC. In 2010, Juan Manuel Santos replaced Uribe (Bayer 2013). This shift paved the way for the third negotiation period that we analyze below.

What was FARC fighting for?

FARC traces its roots to a self-defense militia created during the *La Violencia*.[31] In 1966, the group changed its name from Southern Block to FARC. At this point, the group also shifted its primary objective from agrarian reform to seeking the overthrow of the Colombian government (Johnson and Jonsson 2013). As a socialist rebel group, FARC aimed to eliminate U.S. influence in Colombia and implement large-scale economic reform.

In its founding manifesto, FARC outlined several key conflict goal issues. These included the protection of civil, cultural, and language rights for the Colombian people, the decentralization of power to strengthen autonomous communities, and economic reforms such as debt forgiveness for farmers. The group also called for land redistribution, advocating for the expropriation of large landholdings to benefit the people. Additionally, FARC sought to replace the existing government with "a democratic government of national liberation," and demanded that the government provide access to public health services and housing.

As the conflict progressed, FARC consistently emphasized the rights and needs of the Colombian people, including public service provision, government decentralization, land and economic reforms, and the ousting of the sitting government. From 1992 onward, the group more explicitly embraced socialist and Marxist-Leninist ideals, advocating for broader structural changes to the economic system. During this period, FARC's focus on civil, cultural, human, gender, labor, and language rights intensified.

FARC frequently criticized Colombia's democratic and electoral systems as corrupt, calling for reforms to eliminate fraud and corrupt-

---

31 This section builds on information gathered when creating the UCDP CID dataset.
An issue narrative that details FARC's conflict issues is available here
https://ucdp.uu.se/additionalinfo/623/4#conflictissues

tion. They advocated for significant changes in foreign policy, promoting Colombia's independence from U.S. influence and seeking better integration into regional and global communities. In the later stages of the conflict, FARC increasingly emphasized environmental protection and the equitable distribution of revenues from natural resources. The group also demanded structural reforms of the executive, judicial, military, and police systems to ensure they were independent and committed to protecting Colombia's sovereignty while respecting citizens' rights.

As the conflict progressed, FARC also stressed several issues related to the dynamics of the conflict and repeatedly highlighted government atrocities against civilians. The group frequently appealed for international pressure on the Colombian government to uphold human rights and combat the drug economy, which had devastating effects on both society and the economy. FARC also occasionally called on the international community to withdraw military support for Colombia and instead impose sanctions against the country. It also sought increased international involvement for assistance with mediators, aid, international court investigations, and monitoring efforts.

Towards the end of the conflict, FARC increasingly demanded the release of prisoners of war and civilians detained by the government. Regarding conflict-resolution issues, FARC consistently called for accountability and prosecution of war criminals, exploitative businesses, and the Colombian government. The group persistently advocated for negotiations to resolve the conflict politically, emphasizing the need for a national dialogue that included various sectors of Colombian society.

Adaptive mediation and recognizing issue complexity

Following the two previous unsuccessful negotiation attempts, the third round of talks between FARC and the government began with clandestine negotiations at the Venezuela border in the spring of 2011. These secret negotiations continued in Havana from February 2012, and in October 2012, the talks were publicly announced.

Over the course of more than four years, the Havana process experienced several ups and downs. A significant crisis occurred in October 2016 when the Colombian population narrowly rejected the proposed accord in a referendum. However, after a few weeks of renegotiations, FARC and the government signed a revised peace agreement on November 24, 2016. This revised accord was subsequently ratified by both houses of Congress, effectively ending the fighting between FARC and the Colombian government, one of the world's longest-running conflicts (Segura and Mechoulan 2017).

The Havana process

A central principle of the negotiations was that they should be "for Colombians, by Colombians." The government rejected the idea of an external mediator, maintaining firm control over the process. As a result, the negotiations took place directly between the five-person delegations chosen by each party during the secret phase of the talks. A group of three men[32], known as "the facilitators", were important throughout the process. This group advised the negotiating table and engaged in important one-on-one discussions with each party. They also served another crucial function: acting as direct communication

---

32 The group included the president's brother Enrique Santos; leftist Senator Iván Cepeda and the Colombian economist Henry Acosta who had facilitated FARC-government communication for years.

channels between President Santos and FARC's leader Timoleón Jiménez (Segura and Mechoulan 2017).

The focus on local ownership did not exclude external actors. The parties selected Norway and Cuba as guarantor countries. Cuba's influence over FARC and Norway's non-EU status were crucial. Norway was able to provide financial support to the FARC negotiation team, something EU member states could not do because of FARC's designation as a terrorist organization.[33] Although the specific role of these two countries was never clearly defined, they served as a "sounding board", assisted during crisis, and organized confidence-building activities. Two "accompanying countries", Chile and Venezuela, helped with, for example, bolstering regional support. Initially, both the government and FARC were critical to any UN involvement, but the organization's role grew over time and became crucial in implementing parts of the accord (Segura and Mechoulan 2017). That external actors were facilitators rather than mediators increased the parties' feeling of responsibility for the process. The mediation also had an incremental nature where the investment and efforts in earlier phases made it more difficult for the parties to withdraw (CHD 2021).

The Havana negotiations marked a significant departure from previous attempts. Unlike earlier processes, this one acknowledged the importance of issue complexity and employed adaptive mediation techniques. Instead of starting with a ceasefire followed by a broader agreement, as many other mediation efforts do, the principle "nothing is agreed until everything is agreed" guided the process. This approach allowed for unprecedented flexibility in addressing the wide range of conflict issues (Herbolzheimer 2016). It also meant that the war continued alongside the negotiations. A potential setback occurred

---

33 This underscores the challenges that terrorism designations can pose to mediation efforts. In some cases, actors interested in negotiations may hesitate to engage with groups classified as terrorist organizations, often due to legal constraints. For a detailed discussion on mediating with proscribed armed groups, see Drevon (2024).

when the government killed FARC's chief commander, Alfonso Cano, in a raid in November 2011. However, the group told the government that everything hitherto agreed upon stood, which reassured the government about FARC's commitment to the peace process. The negotiation's continued (Segura and Mechoulan 2017).

The negotiation schedule was carefully structured to alternate between intensive mediation periods and intervals for internal reflection. This approach reflected lessons learned from past failures. Given the complex and interconnected nature of the issues, the process provided ample opportunities for reflection and reconsideration. It also incorporated a flexible overall structure that permitted the revisiting of previously negotiated topics (Herbolzheimer 2016).

A key aspect of the Havana negotiations was the recognition that conflict termination and conflict transformation are distinct processes. The negotiation process aimed not only to end the conflict but also to ensure a long-term implementation of the peace agreement that actively involved society at large. This mutual understanding was crucial for addressing complex issues throughout the process. It heightened awareness of the difference between immediate actions and long-term goals. Specifically, it differentiated between what could be achieved during the negotiations and what needed to be addressed through the subsequent implementation phase (Herbolzheimer 2016). In his analysis of this peace process, Herbolzheimer (2016:4) emphasizes this aspect:

> "Demystifying the negotiating table as the core pillar of a peace process opens up a universe of options for more issues to be discussed, more actors to be involved, more processes to be initiated, and more time for transformations to take place"

The talks also paid careful attention to 'territorial peace' and considered the diverse meanings of territory for various actors. For the first time, both sides accepted the territorial aspects of Colombia's conflict (Cairo et al. 2018). The recognition of territoriality emphasized that

local circumstances and settings differed between different areas. Aware of the fact that the road to peace will entail challenges, the Havana process opened up for regional discussions on implementation may require new local 'mini peace process' (Herbolzheimer 2016).

In sum, the Havana Process was marked by adaptive mediation that allowed for a forum where thorough discussions could take place. In the next section, we will discuss how the negotiations and the resulting agreement handled key conflict issues.

Tackling conflict issues

The Havana process took conflict issues seriously. When asked about the government's main desire when entering the negotiations, the head of the government's delegation, Sergio Jaramillo, summarized the twofold goal as (i) stop the war and (ii) make sure that a war does not happen again by *addressing the issues* that have kept this going on for such a long time (CHD 2021).

Importantly, the two sides were able to achieve a mutual understanding about what the key issues were during the secret phase of the negotiations. Thus, when the parties officially announced the talks on 26 August 2012, the parties also released a framework agreement on what should be negotiated. This accord included the five conflict issues that constituted the core elements of the conflict: rural development, political participation, the end of the conflict, the drug economy, and victims (Johnson and Jonsson 2013). These five themes, together with discussions about the implementation of the agreement, became the main topics covered during the negotiations (Tellez 2019). Thus, what the parties agreed upon as the main themes in the secret phase remained the focus also in the public phase.

In 2014, the combined effort of feminist groups and actors from the international community promoting a gender lens resulted in the creation of a gender sub-commission. This process generated much input to the negotiations and the gender sub-commission was man-

dated to ensure that a gender perspective was included across all themes in the agreement. In fact, since the establishment of UNSC resolution 1325 on women peace and security in 2000, no peace agreement had included a gender perspective to the extent that the Havana agreement did. The comprehensive gender approach offered Colombian women's organizations an institutional and political framework for their demands and mobilizations (Garzón-Ramírez 2023; Boutron 2018).

The final agreement has more than 300 pages, divided into six chapters, and contains hundreds of commitments (Alvarez et al. 2020). Below we sketch the main content in each chapter.

Comprehensive rural reform

As earlier declared, land inequities and rural poverty constitute fundamental aspects of Colombia's war. While land inequality and lack of rural development constitutes a core cause of many conflicts around the world, these issues have hardly ever received the attention they did during the negotiations in Havana (Herbolzheimer 2016, 5).

The first chapter of the accord, *Comprehensive Rural Reform*, offers detailed measures for how to address these grievances. These include conducting the first agrarian census in 50 years, updating the land registry, recognizing the holdings of Colombian peasants without titles, and creation of a land fund to redistribute 3 million hectares to poor peasants and agricultural workers over 10 years. The government also committed to provide roads, schools and health clinics to rural communities (LeGrand, Van Isschot, and Riaño-Alcalá 2017; Alvarez et al. 2020).

One key strength of the accord is its ability to balance the interests of small-scale farmers with those of large agribusinesses. It achieves this by prioritizing support for small-scale farmers, while simultaneously respecting private property rights and encouraging the growth of large agro-industrial estates. The accord emphasizes rural development over traditional agrarian reform, fostering a harmonious co-

existence between peasant communities and large agribusinesses (Herbolzheimer 2016).

Political participation

The second chapter focuses on advancing democratic pluralism and social justice within the framework of demobilization and reconciliation. It encompasses a broad range of topics, divided into three main subsections: rights and security measures for political associations, mechanisms for participation, and the promotion of democracy (Alvarez et al. 2020).

The chapter aims to end the exclusion of progressive organizations and foster a more open and inclusive political environment that encourages civic engagement and diverse dialogue. To achieve this, it mandates that Congress enact a special law ensuring the right of all political parties and social groups to exist, oppose, and operate safely. It also provides for funding and media access to support these groups and level the playing field with established parties (LeGrand, Van Isschot, and Riaño-Alcalá 2017).

The emphasis on expanding the political spectrum in Colombia must be understood in the context of the stigmatization experienced by various sectors of the population. During the conflict, paramilitary groups frequently targeted human rights organizations, labor unions and groups representing women, Indigenous, or Afro-Colombian communities. The Colombian peace agreement explicitly addresses issues of stigmatization and discrimination (LeGrand, Van Isschot, and Riaño-Alcalá 2017).

End of conflict

Chapter three of the agreement aims to establish the security conditions necessary for implementing the other components of the accord. A central element is the bilateral ceasefire, which is intended to end hostilities between the government and the FARC. This process includes the relocation of ex-combatants to temporary cantonment zones. To oversee this transition, the agreement establishes a Tripar-

tite Monitoring and Verification Mechanism, consisting of representatives from the Government, FARC, and the UN (Alvarez et al. 2020).

Ensuring security for ex-combatants is crucial in any peace process. In Colombia, this issue is particularly significant due to the historical context where paramilitaries and state security forces killed approximately 3,000 FARC soldiers during a ceasefire in the late 1980s (Bouvier 2009). Additionally, FARC's identity was heavily linked to its role as an armed group, making the disarmament process one of the most challenging aspects of both the secretive and public phases of negotiations (Segura and Mechoulan 2017).

During the clandestine negotiations, the issue of disarmament came to a crisis. The government insisted that FARC should hand over their weapons, the FARC said no, and the government's delegation was about to leave the talks. The external parties intervened and someone came up with a new phrasing "dejación de armas", literally laying down of weapons but in Spanish more passive and flexible, not denoting how or to whom weapons are laid down. This gave the parties the ambiguity they needed to continue discussion and the phrase was used in the 2012 framework agreement.[34] A key reason why FARC rejected more common DDR rhetoric was that the group thought that such wording indicated that an actor had been militarily defeated, which FARC had not. Later, the UN played a critical role in addressing this sensitive issue (Segura and Mechoulan 2017). Chapter three also includes various security measures, such as the establishment of specialized institutions and programs to ensure the safety of former FARC combatants (Alvarez et al. 2020).

---

34 Dag Nylander, Norway's special envoy to Colombia, who played an essential role in facilitating the negotiations. He talked about this in CHD's podcast The Mediator's Studio (2020).

Solution to the problem of illicit drugs

In the absence of rural development, many Colombian peasants relied on drug cultivation for their livelihoods. For both the Colombian government and its sponsor, the United States, reducing this production was crucial. Meanwhile, FARC needed to ensure that former coca farmers did not lose their means of income (LeGrand, Van Isschot, and Riaño-Alcalá 2017). Chapter four of the agreement addresses the illicit drug problem through a comprehensive approach. It outlines strategies for engaging with communities to support the transition from illegal drug cultivation, implementing a national program to reduce drug demand based on public health considerations, and developing measures to combat drug trafficking (Alvarez et al. 2020).

The chapter mandates that coca plantations in areas previously controlled by the FARC should be eliminated manually, as that is less harmful for local communities than aerial fumigation (Eventon and Bewley-Taylor 2016). The chapter instructs that the government should implement major crop substitution programs to facilitate peasants to shift to growing legal crops. Following this, these communities are to be granted land titles. In return, FARC committed to providing the government with all information they had on the illicit drug processing and trafficking (LeGrand, Van Isschot, and Riaño-Alcalá 2017).

Victims and justice

Decades of war and atrocities in Colombia resulted in a significant number of victims. Many of the issues raised by FARC during the conflict centered on the recognition of and accountability for these abuses. As such, addressing victims' needs became crucial for successful peace negotiations. In anticipation of these talks, Colombia enacted the Victims Law, signaling the government's commitment to addressing the conflict's consequences. This law grants victims rights to reparation, truth, and justice, while establishing mechanisms to hold perpetrators accountable. It marked the government's first

major legal effort to confront the conflict's aftermath (Summers 2012).

In Havana, the peace process placed a strong emphasis on victims, including their direct involvement as representatives in the negotiations. To ensure a broad representation of victim experiences, the UN selected five groups of twelve victims each, who travelled to Havana to meet with the negotiating teams between August and December 2014. These meetings, where victims confronted some of the perpetrators of violence, had a profound impact on the negotiation teams (Herbolzheimer 2016).

Chapter five of the final accord outlines judicial mechanisms for sanctioning and investigating crimes committed during the war. It emphasizes the importance of documenting victimization and establishes a commission to gather testimonies (Alvarez et al. 2020). Additionally, the chapter specifies that military officers and FARC members accused of crimes against humanity are ineligible for amnesty or pardon (LeGrand, Van Isschot, and Riaño-Alcalá 2017).

How to deal with victims and perpetrators relates to the delicate balance between peace and justice that is central for all negotiations. In Havana, this balance was addressed through the establishment of a Special Jurisdiction for Peace, marking a significant advancement in transitional justice. Indeed, international debates about peace and justice were reinvigorated by the Havana process (Herbolzheimer 2016).

Implementation and verification mechanisms

The final chapter of the accord, Chapter 6, establishes essential safeguards and oversight mechanisms for implementing the agreement. A key monitoring mechanism is the joint FARC-Government commission, which oversees, verifies, and coordinates actions throughout the implementation process. This commission is responsible for addressing all problems related to conflict resolution that arise during implementation (Alvarez et al. 2020).

A second major monitoring initiative is the Ethnic Chapter, which includes specific mechanisms to protect indigenous groups during the implementation period. To address the legacy of colonialism, this section mandates informed consultation procedures for each point of the agreement, ensuring that ethnic groups are represented in land reforms, security measures, reincorporation processes, and implementation oversight (Alvarez et al. 2020).

The chapter also includes international implementation mechanisms designed to provide objective technical and material support. The verification component involves collecting evidence from local organizations and incorporating input from two Colombian think tanks. Furthermore, the accord requires the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at University of Notre Dame to produce periodic verification reports (Alvarez et al. 2020).

In sum, the Havana process identified the key spheres of conflict issues early on and then stuck to them, which resulted in a focused and nuanced agreement. Not having a clear emphasis from the beginning could have rendered a more scattered agreement. Not taking the identified conflict issues seriously would have resulted in an agreement that did not outline the details for how to deal with these causes.

The aftermath

Although the Havana agreement had several strengths and thoroughly addressed the main conflict issues, Colombia continues to face significant challenges. The implementation of the agreement has been relatively slow, and it did not include other groups such as the ELN (Alvarez et al. 2024). However, these shortcomings are not necessarily due to the agreement itself but rather to other factors, such as the post-agreement political dynamics in Colombia.

When Iván Duque Márquez replaced Juan Manuel Santos in 2018, a staunch opponent of the agreement succeeded one of its principal

architects.[35] Subsequently, when Gustavo Petro Urrego took office in 2022 and became Colombia's first left-wing President, the new administration prioritized a program of total peace, focusing on negotiations with the ELN and FARC dissidents over the implementation of the peace agreement. After the signing of the agreement, Colombia has experienced significant civilian unrest, with large-scale protests frequently erupting. Furthermore, ELN and some groups of FARC dissidents who oppose the peace agreement, have continued their fight against the government but at a rather low intensity.[36]

The 2016 agreement has thus encountered severe challenges, and its implementation has not been smooth. Despite these difficulties, FARC has not returned to arms, which is a remarkable achievement considering the group had fought against the government for over five decades.

Comparing Abuja and Havana

The two peace processes described above – Abuja and Havana – differed dramatically, leading to contrasting outcomes. The Abuja process failed to address the underlying causes of conflict, adopted a quick-fix mentality, and resulted in an agreement that escalated the fighting. In contrast, the Havana process tackled core issues, allowed the parties to carefully deliberate on various components of the agreement, and led to the cessation of violence.

A key reason why the conflict issues were sincerely addressed in Havana but not in Abuja, we argue, lies in the difference in local ownership. While the Havana process had external support, local

35 Duque's opposition to the agreement became famous due to phrase: 'Tear the Agreement to pieces'. For more on this see https://verdadabierta.com/duque-el-presidente-que-saboteo-la-ilusion-de-la-paz/
36 Interview with Juan Diego Duque Salazar, PhD Candidate Department of Peace and Conflict Research Uppsala University and Colombia expert, August 6, 2024

ownership remained intact throughout. The Abuja talks, by contrast, were dominated by intense external pressure. Rather than fostering local ownership, international actors attempted to impose an agreement that was widely unpopular in Darfur.

This disparity in ownership resulted in vastly different opportunities to address conflict issues. In Havana, the parties had ample time to reflect on and reconsider complex aspects of the conflict. In Abuja, however, the mediators gave the parties only a few days to read, comprehend, and debate the agreement before being pressured to endorse it. The importance of local ownership closely ties into the framework for addressing conflict issues. In fact, ensuring proper local ownership can safeguard against neglecting key issues during the peace process.

The fact that both FARC and the Colombian government had ownership of the peace process meant that they had a significant stake in its success. Withdrawing from the negotiations in Havana would have been costly, given the time and energy invested over the years, and there was no external actor to blame for potential failure. In contrast, the situation for the Darfurian opposition during the DPA talks was markedly different. The cost of rejecting the agreement was low. They felt no responsibility for its success and could easily attribute its shortcomings to external actors.

Allowing more time for the Abuja process might have led to a different outcome. However, suggesting that the talks should have been prolonged for several more years is challenging, given the dire human rights situation in Darfur at the time. Yet, when looking at the current situation – where starvation, ethnic cleansing, and intense warfare once again devastate the region – one might wonder if extending the negotiations would have been the better option.

While some conflict actors have shifted since the renewed war in 2023, a conflict-issue lens reveals that many of the same fault lines persist. Unlike twenty years ago, the Janjaweed (now rebranded as the Rapid Support Forces, or RSF) and the Sudanese Armed Forces

(SAF) are no longer allies but bitter adversaries. However, the division between land-owning and landless communities in Darfur remains. Most RSF members come from the Arab, landless communities, while those with established land rights tend to side with the government or are part of former rebel groups now fighting alongside the state.

Let us be clear: we are not suggesting that prolonging the Abuja negotiations would have automatically brought peace to Darfur. Rather, our point is that neglecting key conflict issues can have dire consequences, even decades later. When core grievances and significant conflict issues remain unresolved, the risk of renewed conflict is exceedingly high. While we acknowledge the differences between Sudan in the 2000s and the 2020s, there are striking similarities. Many of the same conflict issues that contributed to the devastation 20 years ago continue to drive the current crisis. One conclusion we draw from this is that achieving a sustainable solution is impossible without addressing the conflict issues at the heart of the dispute.

Conclusions and recommendations

In this report, we qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed two key questions: What are the issues that parties fight over? and How do these conflict issues affect negotiations and peace agreements? The main conclusions and recommendations drawn from this study are as follows.

As stated in the outset of this report, the predominant focus on actors and behavior – rather than issues – in contemporary research leads to an emphasis on conflict management over conflict resolution. In this study we bring the focus back to conflict resolution. Not only is this direly needed in today's warshattered world, but successful conflict resolution is also a prerequisite for conflict transformation, which encompasses more profound and lasting longterm change to the causes of conflict.

Focusing on conflict issues should not come at the expense of addressing the other two corners of the conflict triangle: actors and behaviors. Sincere efforts to analyze or resolve a conflict require a comprehensive approach. A deeper understanding of conflict issues also enhances the knowledge about the other central components of a conflict. Indeed, a more nuanced comprehension of conflict issues provides valuable insights into the groups raising them and the behaviors they display.

A critical takeaway is that thoroughly understanding conflict issues is essential to craft effective solutions. In everyday interactions, it's common for someone to respond to a problem by saying, "I've heard this before, you should solve it like this." While sometimes this approach works, there are many instances where the listener misinterprets the issue, leading to frustration and ineffective solutions. This principle is equally applicable to conflicts: without a proper understanding of the causes, any attempt at resolution is likely to fail. A nuanced understanding of what the conflict is about – its under-

lying issues – forms the foundation for analyzing and ultimately resolving the dispute.

Since the early 1990s, there has been a consistent downward trend in the number of peace agreements (Farquhar et al. 2024), and a study covering the period from 1989 to 2013 shows a decline in the proportion of conflicts involving international mediation (Lundgren and Svensson 2020). While the exact drivers of this trend remain underexplored, increased superpower rivalry and the emergence of a more multipolar world are important factors to consider.

Does this suggest that conflict issues have become less relevant in today's world? Unsurprisingly, we believe this is not the case. Instead, the shifting global order highlights the need to recalibrate the conflict resolution toolbox. As part of adapting resolution strategies to contemporary challenges, an important part of such recalibration is to deepening our understanding of conflict issues. For example, the Black Sea Grain Initiative between Russia and Ukraine demonstrates that even in a deeply divided world, solutions to specific issues remain possible.

Understanding conflict issues can facilitate a problem-solving approach to conflict resolution, which focuses on addressing the underlying needs and interests of the parties rather than their positions and demands.

Policy recommendations for conflict prevention, management, and resolution

This report emphasizes the tremendous costs of war and how the lack of a deep understanding of conflict issues can exacerbate these costs. The ultimate purpose of Swedish aid is to contribute to a more democratic, equal, just, sustainable, and peaceful world (Sida 2024). War constitutes an essential threat to all these values, making enhancing the infrastructure for peace a prerequisite for fulfilling the purposes of Swedish aid.

At a time when the world order is quickly changing and important donors withdraw from the aid scene, a comprehensive strategy for enhancing the infrastructures of peace is sorely needed. Such strategy should include:

- Bolstering support to **local** organizations working for peace in conflict-affected countries or in at-risk societies.

- Reinforcing the **national** capacity for peace.

- Strengthening the **international** infrastructure for peace

Based on the findings from this study, we develop a set of recommendations to consider at different stages of conflict resolution. These recommendations apply to a range of actors involved in a conflict resolution process, from those directly involved in mediation to policy makers, peace practitioners and other actors facilitating and supporting the conflict resolution process.

Before a conflict has started

1. Identify early risk factors and potential civil war triggers

To prevent conflicts from escalating into humanitarian crises, it is essential to identify the conditions and grievances that may fuel violence. In particular, stakeholders should assess whether unresolved disputes have the potential to spiral into large-scale armed conflict. Investment in research, early warning systems, and data-driven strategies is necessary to guide proactive interventions. Conflict mediators should be engaged at the first signs of escalation – before tensions ignite into full-blown war.

2. Reinforce mechanisms that prevent violence

Many societies face persistent risks of civil war but avoid large-scale violence by effectively managing disputes through alternative mechanisms. External actors working in at-risk countries should focus on strengthening the institutions and social structures that successfully mitigate conflict. Supporting local dispute-resolution mechanisms and fostering resilience within communities can help sustain peace and prevent escalation.

1. Conduct in-depth analysis of conflict issues

Prioritize a comprehensive understanding of the underlying issues that fuel and sustain the conflict. Beyond identifying key actors and their behaviors, focus on the deeper grievances and structural factors that motivate violence. A thorough diagnosis is essential for crafting effective and lasting solutions.

2. Avoid oversimplified narratives

Conflicts are often complex and multi-dimensional. This study shows that conflict actors can raise multiple issues which need to be considered for conflict resolution. To develop a nuanced perspective, consider the issues raised by a diverse range of conflict parties, including those with differing priorities within the same alliance. Recognizing these variations helps prevent misleading generalizations and ensures more effective engagement.

3. Monitor how conflict issues evolve

Armed actors may adjust their demands and objectives over time. Regularly reassessing their motivations and shifting priorities is crucial to maintaining relevant and adaptive strategies for conflict resolution. Avoid static assumptions about what drives the conflict at different stages.

4. Leverage lessons from comparable cases

Use insights from past conflicts where similar issues – such as citizenship rights, land disputes, or gender-related demands – were addressed. Resources like the UCDP CID and IPA datasets provide valuable case studies on what strategies have succeeded or failed. Applying these lessons can help mediators, negotiators, and policymakers craft evidence-based approaches suited to the specific conflict dynamics.

In the negotiation phase

1. Find common ground for problem-solving

Leverage an understanding of conflict issues to identify areas where adversaries share interests or where compromise is possible. Focus negotiations on overlapping stakes and practical solutions that benefit all parties.

2. Leverage interlinked issues for creative solutions

Broaden the scope of negotiations by recognizing how conflict issues are interconnected. As demonstrated in **Namibia**, linking multiple concerns can create new trade-offs and open pathways for mutually beneficial agreements.

3. Incorporate local perspectives

Ensure that conflict resolution efforts are informed by those directly affected. Local ownership is a well-established principle, but this report's issue-based approach provides fresh insights into why and how it should be prioritized.

4. Resist superficial or rushed agreements

Sustainable peace requires a deep understanding of conflict complexities. Quick-fix solutions risk failing, as seen in the Darfur Peace Agreement, where an incomplete deal worsened tensions rather than resolving them.

5. Ensure peace agreements address core conflict issues

A durable peace agreement must meaningfully respond to the fundamental grievances driving the conflict. Aligning peace provisions with key issues increases the likelihood of long-term stability.

6. Use multiple sources for accurate information

Strengthen decision-making by gathering diverse perspectives from conflict-affected communities. Opinion surveys and other participatory methods can enhance understanding of conflict issues and grievances among the population and thereby increase public support for negotiated solutions.

In the implementation phase

1. Avoid resolutions that merely restore the status quo

Agreements that divide power among belligerents without addressing underlying grievances risk triggering renewed conflict. Power-sharing deals that fail to foster genuine societal transformation often leave conditions ripe for future wars.

2. Use conflict issue analysis to shape policy and programming

A deep understanding of the conflict's central issues is essential when engaging with former rebels and affected communities. Acknowledging their grievances fosters trust and legitimacy. Resources such as the **UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia** and **CID issue profiles** provide valuable data to guide informed policy responses.

References

Abdul-Jalil, Musa, and Jon D. Unruh. 2013. 'Land Rights under Stress in Darfur: A Volatile Dynamic of the Conflict', *War and Society*, 32: 156–81.

Alvarez, Echavarría Josefina, Elise Ditta, Juanita Esguerra-Rezk, and Patrick McQuestion. 2020. 'Colombian peace agreement 2016', *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Peace and Conflict Studies*: 1–11.

Asal, Victor, Amy Pate, and Jonathan Wilkenfeld. 2008. 'Minorities at risk organizational behavior data and codebook version 9/2008', *Online at: www. cidcm. umd. edu/mar/data. asp.*

Associated Press. 1990. 'Former Political Prisoner Becomes Nepalese Prime Minister'*, 19 April 1990.

Bayer, Anna-Karina. 2013. 'Peace processes in Colombia: International third-party interventions', *Journal of Peace, Conflict & Development*, 20: 61–80.

Berat, Lynn. 1990. 'Namibia: The road to independence and the problem of succession of states', *Journal of Political Science*, 18: 10.

Berridge, Geoffrey R. 1989. 'Diplomacy and the Angola/Namibia accords', *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944–)*, 65: 463–79.

Bircan, Çağatay, Tilman Brück, and Marc Vothknecht. 2017. 'Violent conflict and inequality', *Oxford Development Studies*, 45: 125–44.

Boutron, Camille. 2018. 'Engendering peacebuilding: The international gender nomenclature of peace politics and women's participation in the Colombian peace process', *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 13: 116–21.

Bouvier, Virginia Marie. 2009. *Colombia: Building peace in a time of war* (US Institute of Peace Press).

Brooks, Sean. 2008. 'Enforcing a Turning Point and Imposing a Deal: An Analysis of the Darfur Abuja Negotiations of 2006', *International Negotiation*, 13: 413–40.

Brosché, Johan. 2014. *Masters of War – The Role of Elites in Sudan's Communal Conflicts* (Uppsala University Press: Uppsala).

Brosché, Johan, and Allard Duursma. 2018. 'Hurdles to peace: a level-of-analysis approach to resolving Sudan's civil wars', *Third World Quarterly*, 39: 560–76.

Brosché, Johan, Desirée Nilsson, and Ralph Sundberg. 2023. 'Conceptualizing Civil War Complexity', *Security Studies*: 1–29.

Brosché, Johan, and Daniel Rothbart. 2013. *Violent Conflict and Peacebuilding: The Continuing Crises in Darfur* (Routledge: London and New York NY).

Brosché, Johan, and Ralph Sundberg. 2023. 'What They Are Fighting For – Introducing the UCDP Conflict Issues Dataset', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 0: 00220027231218633.

Burr, Milliard, J., and Robert Collins, O. 2008. *Darfur: the Long Road to Disaster* (Markus Wiener Publisher: Princeton NJ).

Cairo, Heriberto, Ulrich Oslender, Carlo Emilio Piazzini Suárez, Jerónimo Ríos, Sara Koopman, Vladimir Montoya Arango, Flavio Bladimir Rodríguez Muñoz, and Liliana Zambrano Quintero. 2018. '"Territorial peace": The emergence of a concept in Colombia's peace negotiations', *Geopolitics*, 23: 464–88.

Cammett, Melani, and Edmund Malesky. 2012. 'Power Sharing in Postconflict Societies:Implications for Peace and Governance', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 56: 982–1016.

CHD, Center for Humanitarian Dialogue. 2020. "The Mediator's Studio." In *Dag Nylander on salmon diplomacy*. Geneva.

———. 2021. "The Mediator's Studio." In *Victoria Sandino and Sergio Jaramillo Caro: former enemies talk peace*. Geneva.

Chenoweth, Erica, and Christopher Wiley Shay. 2022. 'Updating nonviolent campaigns: Introducing NAVCO 2.1', *Journal of Peace Research*, 59: 876–89.

CID, Conflict Issue Dataset. 2024. "Conflict Issues – CPN-M." In.

Collier, Paul, V.L. Elliot, Håvard Hegre, Anke Hoeffler, Marta Reynal-Querol, and Niclas Sambanis. 2003. *Breaking the Conflict Trap. Civil War and Development Policy* (World Bank and Oxford University Press).

Collier, Paul, and Anke Hoeffler. 2004. 'Greed and Grievance in Civil War', *Oxford Economic Papers*, 56: 563–95.

Collier, Paul, Anke Hoeffler, and Måns Söderbom. 2004. 'On the Duration of Civil War', *Journal of Peace Research*, 41: 253–73.

CPA, Comprehensive Peace Agreement. 2006. "Comprehensive Peace Accord Signed between Nepal Government and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)".

Crocker, Chester A. 2002. *High Noon in Southern Africa: Making Peace in a Rough Neighborhood* (Norton: New York).

Cunningham, David E, Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, and Idean Salehyan. 2013. 'Non-state actors in civil wars: A new dataset', *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 30: 516–31.

Davies, Shawn, Garoun Engström, Thérése Pettersson, and Magnus Öberg. 2024. 'Organized violence 1989–2023, and the prevalence of organized crime groups', *Journal of Peace Research*, 61: 673–93.

Davies, Shawn, Thérése Pettersson, and Magnus Öberg. 2023. 'Organized violence 1989–2022, and the return of conflict between states', *Journal of Peace Research*, 60: 691–708.

de Waal, Alex. 2005. 'Who are the Darfurians? Arab and African Identities, Violence and External Engagement', *African Affairs*, 104: 181–205.

———. 2007a. 'Darfur and the Failure of the Responsibility to Protect', *International Affairs*, 83: 1039–54.

———. 2007b. 'the Final days of Abuja Peace Process.' in Alex de Waal (ed.), *War in Darfur and the Search for Peace* (Global Equity Initiative & Justice Africa: Cambridge MA & London).

Diehl, Paul F. 1992. 'What are they fighting for? The importance of issues in international conflict research', *Journal of Peace Research*, 29: 333–44.

Doyle, Michael W, and Nicholas Sambanis. 2000. 'International peacebuilding: A theoretical and quantitative analysis', *American Political Science Review*, 94: 779–801.

Eventon, Ross, and Dave Bewley-Taylor. 2016. 'Above the Law, Under the Radar: A History of Private Contractors and Aerial Fumigation in Colombia', *GDPO Policy Report*, 4: 8.

Farquhar, Adam, Niamh Henry, Juline Beaujouan, Laura Wise, Jennifer Hodge, Tomas Vancisin, Winnie Xia, Robert Wilson, and Tim Epple. 2024. 'Peace Agreements in 2023: Insights from the PA-X Database'.

Fearon, James D. 1995. 'Rationalist explanations for war', *International Organization*, 49: 379–414.

Fisher, R, and W Ury. 1987. *Getting to yes: Negotiating agreement without giving in* (London: Arrow Books Limited).

Flint, Julie. 2010. "The Other War: Inter-Arab Conflict in Darfur." In. Geneva: Small Arms Survey.

Flint, Julie, and Alex de Waal. 2008. *Darfur – a New History of a Long War* (International African Institute: London).

Fortna, Virginia. 2004. *Peace Time Cease-Fire and the Durability of Peace* (Princeton University Press: Princeton).

Fortna, Virginia Page, and Lise Morjé Howard. 2008. 'Pitfalls and prospects in the peacekeeping literature', *Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci.*, 11: 283–301.

Freeman, Chas W. 1989. 'The Angola/Namibia Accords', *Foreign Affairs*, 68: 126–41.

Garzón-Ramírez, Sonia. 2023. 'Making Peace, Fighting Battles in Colombia: An Annotated Interview with Juanita Goebertus', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 17: 646–64.

Gates, Scott, Håvard Hegre, Håvard Mokleiv Nygård, and Håvard Strand. 2012. 'Development consequences of armed conflict', *World Development*, 40: 1713–22.

Gilligan, Michael J., and Ernest J. Sergenti. 2008. 'Do UN Interventions Cause Peace? Using Matching to Improve Causal Inference', *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*, 3: 89–122.

Harir, Sharif. 1994. '"Arab Belt" versus "African Belt" Ethno-Political Conflict in Dar Fur and the Regional Cultural Factors.' in Sharif Harir and Terje Tvedt (eds.), *Short-Cut to Decay The Case of the Sudan* (Nordic Africa Institute: Uppsala).

Hartzell, Caroline, and Matthew Hoddie. 2003. 'Institutionalizing peace: power sharing and post-civil war conflict management', *American Journal of Political Science*, 47: 318–32.

Hartzell, Caroline, Matthew Hoddie, and Donald Rothchild. 2001. 'Stabilizing the peace after civil war: An investigation of some key variables', *International Organization*, 55: 183–208.

Herbolzheimer, Kristian. 2016. 'Innovations in the Colombian peace process'.

Hoddie, Matthew, and Caroline Hartzell. 2003. 'Civil war settlements and the implementation of military power-sharing arrangements', *Journal of Peace Research*, 40: 303–20.

Holsti, Kalevi. 1991. *Peace and war: Armed conflicts and international order, 1648–1989* (Cambridge University Press).

Idrovo, Carolina Serrano and Laurel Quinn, 2024. *Seven Years of Final Accord Implementation: Perspectives to Strengthen Peacebuilding at the Halfway Point*, Report, University of Notre Dame, Indiana, USA.

ICG, (International Crisis Group). 2002. 'Colombia's Elusive Quest for Peace'.

———. 2007. *Darfur´s New Security Reality* (International Crisis Group: Brussels).

———. 2023. "The Horn." In *War and anger inside Sudan's Collapsed Capital*. International Crisis Group.

Jarstad, Anna K., and Desirée Nilsson. 2008. 'From Words to Deeds: The Implementation of Power-Sharing Pacts in Peace Accords', *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 25: 206–23.

JFC, (Justice for Colombia). 2024. "Colombia in detail: Armed Conflict." In.

Johnson, Chelsea. 2021. 'Power-sharing, conflict resolution, and the logic of pre-emptive defection', *Journal of Peace Research*, 58: 734–48.

Johnson, Kyle, and Michael Jonsson. 2013. 'Colombia: Ending the Forever War?', *Survival*, 55: 67–86.

Joshi, Madhav, and Jason Michael Quinn. 2017. 'Implementing the Peace: The Aggregate Implementation of Comprehensive Peace Agreements and Peace Duration after Intrastate Armed Conflict', *British Journal of Political Science*, 47: 869–92.

Kagan-Guthrie, Zachary. 2009. 'Chester Crocker and the South African Border War, 1981–1989: A Reappraisal of Linkage', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 35: 65–80.

Kalyvas, Stathis N. 2006. *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge).

Kreutz, Joakim. 2010. 'How and when armed conflicts end: Introducing the UCDP Conflict Termination dataset', *Journal of Peace Research*, 47: 243–50.

LeGrand, Catherine C, Luis Van Isschot, and Pilar Riaño-Alcalá. 2017. "Land, justice, and memory: challenges for peace in Colombia." In, 259–76. Taylor & Francis.

Lundgren, Magnus, and Isak Svensson. 2020. 'The surprising decline of international mediation in armed conflicts', *Research & Politics*, 7: 2053168020917243.

Maconachie, Roy, and Tony Binns. 2007. 'Beyond the resource curse? Diamond mining, development and post-conflict reconstruction in Sierra Leone', *Resources Policy*, 32: 104–15.

Mamdani, Mahmood. 2009. *Saviors and Survivors: Darfur, Politics, and the War on Terror* (Pantheon Books: New York NY).

Mansbach, Richard W, and John A Vasquez. 1981. *In search of theory: A new paradigm for global politics* (Columbia University Press).

Meier, Vanessa, Niklas Karlén, Thérése Pettersson, and Mihai Croicu. 2023. 'External support in armed conflicts: Introducing the UCDP external support dataset (ESD), 1975–2017', *Journal of Peace Research*, 60: 545–54.

Melander, Erik. 2004. "Conflict-sensitive Development Co-operation How to Conduct a Conflict Analysis." In. Stockholm: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

Melber, Henning. 2015. *Understanding Namibia: The trials of independence* (Oxford University Press).

Melber, Henning, and Christopher Saunders. 2007. 'Conflict mediation in decolonisation: Namibia's transition to independence', *Africa Spectrum*: 73–94.

Mohamed, Adam, Azzain,. 2009. *Evaluating the Darfur Peace Agreement: A Call for an Alternative Approach to Crisis Managment* (Department of Peace and Conflict Research Uppsala University: Uppsala).

Mukherjee, Bumba. 2006. 'Why Political Power-Sharing Agreements Lead to Enduring Peaceful Resolution of Some Civil Wars, But Not Others?', *International Studies Quarterly*, 50: 479–504.

Nathan, Laurie. 2007. 'The Failure of the Darfur Mediation', *Ethnopolitics*, 6: 495–511.

Nussio, Enzo. 2011. 'Learning from shortcomings: The demobilisation of paramilitaries in Colombia', *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 6: 88–92.

O'Neill, Kathryn, and Barry Munslow. 1990. 'Ending the Cold War in Southern Africa', *Third World Quarterly*, 12: 81–96.

Perry, Chris, and Adam Smith. 2013. "Trends in uniformed contributions to UN peacekeeping: A new dataset, 1991–2012." In. New York: International Peace Institute.

Pillar, Paul R. 2014. *Negotiating peace: War termination as a bargaining process* (Princeton University Press).

Posen, Barry R. 1993. 'The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict', *Survival*, 35: 27–47.

Quinn, Jason, Madhav Joshi, and Erik Melander. 2019. 'One dyadic peace leads to another? Conflict systems, terminations, and net reduction in fighting groups', *International Studies Quarterly*, 63: 863–75.

Randle, Robert F. 1987. *Issues in the History of International Relations: the Role of Issues in the Evolution of the State System* (Praeger: New York).

Reuters. 1997. 'Sudan rebel leader committed to Sudan unity', 1997-11-26.

Rubin, Jeffrey Z, Dean G Pruitt, and Sung Hee Kim. 1994. *Social conflict: Escalation, stalemate, and settlement* (Mcgraw-Hill Book Company).

Sambanis, Nicholas. 2008. 'Short- and Long-Term Effects of United Nations Peace Operations', *The World Bank Economic Review*, 22: 9–32.

Sambanis, Nicholas, and Michael W Doyle. 2011. *Making war and building peace: United Nations peace operations* (Princeton University Press).

SATP, (South Asia Terrorism Portal). 2024. "Communist Party of Nepal Maoist." In.

Segura, Renata, and Delphine Mechoulan. 2017. 'Made in Havana: How Colombia and the FARC decided to end the war', *Available at SSRN 2969332*.

Sida. 2023. "Guidance on Conflict Analysis – A Technical Note." In. Stockholm: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

Small Arms Survey. 2011. "Darfur Peace Process Chronology." In.

Staw, Barry M. 1981. 'The escalation of commitment to a course of action', *Academy of management Review*, 6: 577–87.

Summers, Nicole. 2012. 'Colombia's victims' law: transitional justice in a time of violent conflict', *Harvard Human Rights Journal*, 25: 219–35.

Tellez, Juan Fernando. 2019. 'Peace agreement design and public support for peace: Evidence from Colombia', *Journal of Peace Research*, 56: 827–44.

Thapa, Deepak, and Bandita Sijapati. 2004. 'A kingdom under siege: Nepal's Maoist insurgency, 1996 to 2003', *(No Title)*.

Toft, Monica Duffy. 2006. 'Issue indivisibility and time horizons as rationalist explanations for war', *Security Studies*, 15: 34–69.

Tubiana, Jérôme. 2007. 'Darfur: A War for Land?' in Alex De Waal (ed.), *War in Darfur and the Search for Peace* (Harvard University: Cambridge MA).

UCDP. 2024a. 'Conflict Encyclopedia, Colombia '.

———. 2024b. "'South Africa: Namibia'", UCDP.

UCDP, (Uppsala Conflict Data Program). 2024c. "Government of Nepal – CPN-M." In.

UNHCR. 2022. "Forced Displacement in 2021 (Global Trends)." In.: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

UNODC, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2024. 'World Drug Report 2024'.

Unruh, Jon D., and Musa Abdul-Jalil. 2014. 'Constituencies of conflict and opportunity: Land rights, narratives and collective action in Darfur', *Political Geograhpy*, 24: 104–16.

Vasquez, John A. 1983. 'The tangibility of issues and global conflict: A test of Rosenau's issue area typology', *Journal of Peace Research*, 20: 179–92.

Vasquez, John, and Richard Mansbach. 1984. 'The role of issues in global co-operation and conflict', *British Journal of Political Science*, 14: 411–33.

Vesco, Paola, Ghassan Baliki, Tilman Brück, Stefan Döring, Anneli Eriksson, Hanne Fjelde, Debarati Guha-Sapir, Jonathan Hall, Carl Henrik Knutsen, and Maxine R Leis. 2025. 'The impacts of armed conflict on human development: A review of the literature', *World Development*, 187: 106806.

Vigne, Randolph. 1987. 'SWAPO of Namibia: a movement in exile', *Third World Quarterly*, 9: 85–107.

Vogt, Manuel, Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, and Lars-Erik Cederman. 2021. 'From claims to violence: signaling, outbidding, and escalation in ethnic conflict', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 65: 1278–307.

von Uexkull, Nina, and Therese Pettersson. 2018. 'Issues and Actors in African Nonstate Conflicts: A New Data Set', *International Interactions*, 44: 953–68.

Wallensteen, Peter. 2018. *Understanding conflict resolution* (Sage).

Walter, Barbara F. 2002. *Committing to Peace: The Successful Settlement of Civil Wars* (Princeton: University Press: Princeton).

Washington Post. 1990. 'Police in Nepal Fire on Protesters; Dozens of Demonstrators Reported to Be Killed or Wounded'*, 7 April 1990.

Werner, Suzanne. 1998. 'Negotiating the terms of settlement: War aims and bargaining leverage', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 42: 321–43.

Wucherpfennig, Julian, Nils W Metternich, Lars-Erik Cederman, and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch. 2012. 'Ethnicity, the state, and the duration of civil war', *World Politics*, 64: 79–115.

Young, John. 2015. 'A fractious rebellion: Inside the SPLM-IO'.

Zartman, I William. 1989. *Ripe for resolution: Conflict and intervention in Africa* (Oxford University Press: Oxford).

Previous EBA reports

2024:10 *Extreme Poverty and Marginalisation in Bangladesh: Drivers and Lessons for Development Cooperation*, Owasim Akram, Mathilde Maîtrot and Joe Devine.

2024:09 *En antologi om trender och olika perspektiv på global hälsa*, Jesper Sundewall och Malin Ahrne (red.)

2024:08 *Reformagendans genomförande: en startrapport*, Expertgruppen för biståndsanalys

2024:07 *Swedish Climate Mitigation Finance,* Númi Östlund, Luisa Weber, Max Schmidt, Igor Shishlov, Annika Hilgert, Fiona Lambe, Flintull Annica Eriksson, Per Strömberg

2024:06 *External Support to Constitution Building Processes*, Cheryl Saunders, Andy Carl, Anna Dziedzic, Samantha Smith

2024:05 *Evidence-Based Anti-Corruption? Evaluation of Sida's Efforts to Reduce Corruption in Partner Countries*, Marina Nistotskaya, Hayden Buker, Marcia Grimes, Anna Persson, Michelle D'Arcy, Bo Rothstein, Adea Gafuri

2024:04 *Det svenska biståndets transparens,* Pontus Hedin, Christopher Lokatt

2024:03 *Public Opinion on Carbon Pricing and Revenue Uses in East Africa*, Niklas Harring, Anna Nordén, Daniel Slunge

2024:02 *The Long and Winding Road: Evaluation of Swedish Long-Term Development Cooperation with Liberia*, Christoph Emminghaus, Simon Wallisch, Kou Meapeh Gbaintor-Johnson, Julian Klauke, Anouchka Baldin, Tillman Hönig, John Pokoo, Johanna Schaefer-Kehnert

2024:01 *Supporting Local Actors: Evaluation of Sweden's Application of the Grand Bargain Localisation Agenda*, Sophia Swithern, Charlotte Lattimer, Teddy Atim, Gang Karume, Dmytro Kondratenko, Kateryna Korenkova, Cheery Zahau

2023:04 *Det är resultatet som räknas: För en bättre resultatredovisning av biståndet*, Númi Östlund och Helena Hede Skagerlind

2023:03 *The Swedish Aid Response to the HIV Epidemic: An Overview*, Pam Baatsen, Thyra de Jongh, Hannah Kabelka, Josefine Olsson, Liana Petrosova, Renée Robbers, Noor Tromp, Edited by The Expert Group for Aid Studies

2023:02 *More Than a Label, Less Than a Revolution: Sweden's Feminist Foreign Policy*, Ann Towns, Elin Bjarnegård, Katarzyna Jezierska

2023:01 *The Role of Aid in the Provision of Sexual and Reproductive Health Services*, Jesper Sundewall, Björn Ekman, Jessy Schmit

2022:08 *The Rise of Social Protection in the Global South: The Role of Foreign Aid*, Miguel Niño-Zarazúa, Ana Horigoshi, Alma Santillán Hernández, Ernesto Tiburcio

2022:07 *Member State Influence in the Negotiations on the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI)*, Magnus Lundgren, Jonas Tallberg, Camilla Pedersen

2022:06 *Swedish Development Cooperation with Ethiopia: Sixty Years of Lessons Learned*, Bereket Kebede, Leif Danielsson, Hailu Elias, Gunnar Köhlin

2022:05 *Mapping Swedish Aid to Agriculture*, Ivar Virgin, Alice Castensson, Filippa Ek, Ylva Ran

2022:04 *A Team Player and Free Agent: Sweden's Engagement with EU Country and Joint Programming*, Erik Lundsgaarde

2022:03 *Hur förändra världen? En antologi om förändringsteorier i biståndet*, Kim Forss och Númi Östlund (red.)

2022:02 *Swedish Aid in the Time of the Pandemic*, Carsten Schwensen, Jonas Lövkrona, Louise Scheibel Smed

2022:01 *Utvärdering av strategiska sekunderingar som del av svenskt påverkansarbete*, Lisa Dellmuth, Paul T. Levin, Nicklas Svensson

2022:July *Social protection for the forcibly displaced in low- and middle-income countries*, Jason Gagnon, Mona Ahmed, Lisa Hjelm, Jens Hesemann (joint with the OECD Development Centre, published as OECD Development Policy Papers No. 43)

2021:08 *Practicing Peacebuilding principles: A Study of Sweden's Engagement in Fragile and Confilct-Affected States*, Gary Milante, Jannie Lilja, Jups Kluyskens, Johanna Lindström

2021:07 *In Pursuit of Sustainable Peace: An Evaluation of the Folke Bernadotte Academy 2008–2019,* Nicklas Svensson, Julian Brett, Adam Moe Fejerskov, Charlotte Bonnet

2021:06 *Informerad eller kunnig: Utvärdering av insatser för information och kommunikation om bistånd 2010–2020,* Maria Grafström, Cecilia Strand

2021:05 *Supporting Elections Effectively: Principles and Practice of Electoral Assistance,* Therese Pearce Laanela, Sead Alihodžić, Antonio Spinelli, Peter Wolf

2021:04 *Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights: Measuring Values and Norms to Guide Swedish Development Cooperation,* Anna Kågesten, Karin Båge, Jesper Sundewall, Helena Litorp, Bi Puranen, B., Olalekan Uthman, Anna Mia Ekström

2021:03 *Credible Explanations of Development Outcomes: Improving Quality and Rigour with Bayesian Theory-Based Evaluation,* Barbara Befani

2021:02 *Målbild och mekanism: Vad säger utvärderingar om svenska biståndsinsatsers måluppfyllelse?,* Markus Burman

2021:01 *Data Science Methods in Development Evaluation: Exploring the Potential*, Gustav Engström and Jonas Nóren

2020:07 *Effects of Swedish and International Democracy Aid*, Miguel Niño-Zarazúa, Rachel M. Gisselquist, Ana Horigoshi, Melissa Samarin and Kunal Sen

2020:06 *Sextortion: Corruption and Gender-Based Violence,* Åsa Eldén, Dolores Calvo, Elin Bjarnegård, Silje Lundgren and Sofia Jonsson

2020:05 *In Proper Organization we Trust – Trust in Interorganizational Aid relations,* Susanna Alexius and Janet Vähämäki

2020:04 *Institution Building in Practice: An Evaluation of Swedish Central Authorities' Reform Cooperation in the Western Balkans*, Richard Allen, Giorgio Ferrari, Krenar Loshi, Númi Östlund and Dejana Razić Ilić

2020:03 *Biståndets förvaltningskostnader För stora? Eller kanske för små?*, Daniel Tarschys

2020:02 *Evaluation of the Swedish Climate Change Initiative, 2009–2012,* Jane Burt, John Colvin, Mehjabeen Abidi Habib, Miriam Kugele, Mutizwa Mukute, Jessica Wilson

2020:01 *Mobilising Private Development Finance: Implications for Overall Aid Allocations*, Polly Meeks, Matthew Gouett and Samantha Attridge

2019:09 *Democracy in African Governance: Seeing and Doing it Differently,* Göran Hydén with assistance from Maria Buch Kristensen

2019:08 *Fishing Aid – Mapping and Synthesising Evidence in Support of SDG 14 Fisheries Targets,* Gonçalo Carneiro, Raphaëlle Bisiaux, Mary Frances Davidson, Tumi Tómasson with Jonas Bjärnstedt

2019:07 *Applying a Masculinities Lens to the Gendered Impacts of Social Safety Nets*, Meagan Dooley, Abby Fried, Ruti Levtov, Kate Doyle, Jeni Klugman and Gary Barker

2019:06 *Joint Nordic Organisational Assessment of the Nordic Development Fund (NDF)*, Stephen Spratt, Eilís Lawlor, Kris Prasada Rao and Mira Berger

2019:05 *Impact of Civil Society Anti-Discrimination Initiatives: A Rapid Review*, Rachel Marcus, Dhruva Mathur and Andrew Shepherd

2019:04 *Building on a Foundation Stone: the Long-Term Impacts of a Local Infrastructure and Governance Program in Cambodia*, Ariel BenYishay, Brad Parks, Rachel Trichler, Christian Baehr, Daniel Aboagye and Punwath Prum

2019:03 *Supporting State Building for Democratisation? A Study of 20 years of Swedish Democracy Aid to Cambodia,* Henny Andersen, Karl-Anders Larsson och Joakim Öjendal

2019:02 *Fit for Fragility? An Exploration of Risk Stakeholders and Systems Inside Sida*, Nilima Gulrajani and Linnea Mills

2019:01 *Skandaler, opinioner och anseende: Biståndet i ett medialiserat samhälle*, Maria Grafström och Karolina Windell

2019:August *Migration and Development: the Role for Development Aid*, Robert E.B. Lucas (joint with the Migration Studies Delegation, Delmi, published as Delmi Research overview 2019:5)

2018:10 *Nation Building in a Fractured Country: An Evaluation of Swedish Cooperation in Economic Development with Bosnia and Herzegovina 1995–2018*, Claes Lindahl, Julie Lindahl, Mikael Söderbäck and Tamara Ivankovic

2018:09 *Underfunded Appeals: Understanding the Consequences, Improving the System,* Sophia Swithern

2018:08 *Seeking Balanced Ownership in Changing Development Cooperation Relationships*, Nils Keizer, Stephan Klingebiel, Charlotte Örnemark, Fabian Scholtes

2018:07 *Putting Priority into Practice: Sida's Implementation of its Plan for Gender Integration*, Elin Bjarnegård, Fredrik Uggla

2018:06 *Swedish Aid in the Era of Shrinking Space – the Case of Turkey*, Åsa Eldén, Paul T. Levin

2018:05 *Who Makes the Decision on Swedish Aid Funding? An Overview*, Expertgruppen för Biståndsanalys

2018:04 *Budget Support, Poverty and Corruption: A Review of the Evidence*, Geske Dijkstra

2018:03 *How predictable is Swedish aid? A study of exchange rate volatility,* Númi Östlund

2018:02 *Building Bridges Between International Humanitarian and Development Responses to Forced Migration*, Alexander Kocks, Ruben Wedel, Hanne Roggemann, Helge Roxin (joint with the German Institute for Development Evaluation, DEval)

2018:01 *DFIs and Development Impact: an evaluation of Swedfund,* Stephen Spratt, Peter O'Flynn, Justin Flynn

2017:12 *Livslängd och livskraft: Vad säger utvärderingar om svenska biståndsinsatsers hållbarhet?* Expertgruppen för biståndsanalys

2017:11 *Sweden's Financing of UN Funds and Programmes: Analyzing the Past, Looking to the Future*, Stephen Browne, Nina Connelly, Thomas G. Weiss

2017:10 *Seven Steps to Evidence-Based Anticorruption: A Roadmap*, Alina Mungiu-Pippidi

2017:09 *Geospatial analysis of aid: A new approach to aid evaluation*, Ann-Sofie Isaksson

2017:08 *Research capacity in the new global development agenda,* Måns Fellesson

2017:07 *Research Aid Revisited – a historically grounded analysis of future prospects and policy options*, David Nilsson, Sverker Sörlin

2017:06 *Confronting the Contradiction – An exploration into the dual purpose of accountability and learning in aid evaluation*, Hilde Reinertsen, Kristian Bjørkdahl, Desmond McNeill

2017:05 *Local peacebuilding – challenges and opportunities*, Joakim Öjendal, Hanna Leonardsson, Martin Lundqvist

2017:04 *Enprocentmålet – en kritisk essä*, Lars Anell

2017:03 *Animal health in development – it's role for poverty reduction and human welfare,* Jonathan Rushton, Arvid Uggla, Ulf Magnusson

2017:02 *Do Anti-Discrimination Measures Reduce Poverty Among Marginalised Social Groups?* Rachel Marcus, Anna Mdee, Ella Page

2017:01 *Making Waves: Implications of the irregular migration and refugee situation on Official Development Assistance spending and practices in Europe*, Anna Knoll, Andrew Sherriff

2016:11 *Revitalising the policy for global development,* Per Molander

2016:10 *Swedish Development Cooperation with Tanzania – Has It Helped the Poor?,* Mark McGillivray, David Carpenter, Oliver Morrissey, Julie Thaarup

2016:09 *Exploring Donorship – Internal Factors in Swedish Aid to Uganda,* Stein-Erik Kruse

2016:08, *Sustaining a development policy: results and responsibility for the Swedish policy for global development* Måns Fellesson, Lisa Román

2016:07 *Towards an Alternative Development Management Paradigm?* Cathy Shutt

2016:06 *Vem beslutar om svenska biståndsmedel? En översikt,* Expertgruppen för biståndsanalys

2016:05 *Pathways to change: Evaluating development interventions with Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA),* Barbara Befani

2016:04 *Swedish responsibility and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals,* Magdalena Bexell, Kristina Jönsson

2016:03 *Capturing complexity and context: evaluating aid to education,* Joel Samoff, Jane Leer, Michelle Reddy

2016:02 *Education in developing countries what policies and programmes affect learning and time in school?* Amy Damon, Paul Glewwe, Suzanne Wisniewski, Bixuan Sun

2016:01 *Support to regional cooperation and integration in Africa – what works and why?* Fredrik Söderbaum, Therese Brolin

2015:09 *In search of double dividends from climate change interventions evidence from forest conservation and household energy transitions,* G. Köhlin, S.K. Pattanayak, E. Sills, E. Mattsson, M. Ostwald, A. Salas, D. Ternald

2015:08 *Business and human rights in development cooperation – has Sweden incorporated the UN guiding principles?* Rasmus Klocker Larsen, Sandra Atler

2015:07 *Making development work: the quality of government approach,* Bo Rothstein and Marcus Tannenberg

2015:06 *Now open for business: joint development initiatives between the private and public sectors in development cooperation,* Sara Johansson de Silva, Ari Kokko and Hanna Norberg

2015:05 *Has Sweden injected realism into public financial management reforms in partner countries?* Matt Andrews

2015:04 *Youth, entrepreneurship and development*, Kjetil Bjorvatn

2015:03 *Concentration difficulties? An analysis of Swedish aid proliferation*, Rune Jansen Hagen

2015:02 *Utvärdering av svenskt bistånd – en kartläggning*, Expertgruppen för biståndsanalys

2015:01 *Rethinking Civil Society and Support for Democracy*, Richard Youngs

2014:05 *Svenskt statligt internationellt bistånd i Sverige: en översikt*, Expertgruppen för biståndsanalys

2014:04 *The African Development Bank: ready to face the challenges of a changing Africa?* Christopher Humphrey

2014:03 *International party assistance – what do we know about the effects?* Lars Svåsand

2014:02 *Sweden´s development assistance for health – policy options to support the global health 2035 goals,* Gavin Yamey, Helen Saxenian, Robert Hecht, Jesper Sundewall and Dean Jamison

2014:01 *Randomized controlled trials: strengths, weaknesses and policy relevance,* Anders Olofsgård

The more core conflict issues a peace treaty following civil war includes, the higher the chance peace will hold over time. This study, based on new data, argues that conflict issues ought to be given more attention in peace building.

Ju fler konfliktfrågor som hanteras i fredsavtal efter inbördeskrig, desto längre tenderar freden att hålla. Denna studie argumenterar, baserat på en ny databas, för att konfliktfrågor bör få större uppmärksamhet i fredsbyggande.