

KEY POINTS

- Peace processes in the past have not sufficiently acknowledged the role that intangible interests (or ideational stakes) play in conflict.
- To encourage dialogue between stakeholder groups, groups that may be marginalized or designated as “terrorist” should be included at the negotiating table.
- It is important for discussions and negotiations to explicitly address different interests (or stake types) in a conflict and be aware of their importance and implications.
- To improve the peace process, negotiators and mediators must understand the role and influence of international norms and actors in conflicts with ideational stakes.

IMPROVING THE PEACE PROCESS: CONSIDERING IDEATIONAL STAKES IN CONFLICTS

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INTRODUCTION

On June 27, 2012, Queen Elizabeth II shook the hand of Martin McGuinness, a former Irish Republican Army (IRA) commander, and symbolically solidified the long peace process¹ that had sought to resolve the Troubles of Northern Ireland (Rayner, 2012). This historic gesture illustrates that even the most ideologically heated and intractable conflicts can be resolved. In the case of Northern Ireland, resolution was not possible without first acknowledging the important roles that notions of personal and national identity, self-determination and economic fairness played as defining stakes² in the conflict. In contrast, the conflict between Israel and Palestine continues to produce turmoil in addition to a stream of failed negotiations. The failure to include values and beliefs, such as equality and basic human rights, in discussions has poisoned peace efforts, with no end to the bloodshed in sight.

This policy brief presents insights and recommendations gleaned from a thorough cross-comparison of eight case studies analyzing how differing interests, referred to here as “stake types,” influence violent

1 A peace process is an ongoing effort to manage or resolve a conflict through a mixture of diplomacy, negotiation, mediation and dialogue that occurs at any stage in a conflict.

2 A stake is something an actor hopes to gain or avoid losing through participation in conflict and can be either material or ideational; a material stake can be seen or touched in a real, tangible way (for example, territory or resources), usually of an economic value, and an ideational stake is based on an immaterial and intangible idea or underlying values such as justice, social institutions and identity.

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conflict. The cases examined are the Basque Country conflict in Spain, the Franco-Prussian enmity from 1872 to 1914, the Israel-Palestine conflict, territorial dispute over Kashmir, the Mexican Drug War, the Troubles of Northern Ireland, the civil war in Sierra Leone and the Sudanese civil wars (see Box 1 for details). Particular emphasis was placed on the role of intangible ideas and concepts such as social justice, personal identity and fear as central factors in these conflicts. These are examples of *ideational stakes*, as compared with more traditional *material stakes* such as territory or resources. Based on the research, this brief seeks to provide insight and recommendations that will help foster better, more effective peace processes.



Queen Elizabeth II shakes the hand of Martin McGuinness, a former Irish Republican Army (IRA) Commander, symbolically solidifying the long peace process that had sought to resolve the Troubles of Northern Ireland. Paul Faith/PA Wire URN:13941861 (Press Association via AP Images)

The research shows that peace processes in the past have not sufficiently acknowledged the role of ideational stakes as grounds for perpetuating violence. Most traditional peace negotiations have focused on distributions of resources or territory through partition and compensation, often ignoring the importance of recognizing and reconciling ideational concerns. Acknowledging that ideational stakes can motivate conflict just as much as material stakes, and bringing them

into consideration during the peace process, provides a stronger and more inclusive foundation for peaceful resolution. As the examples below demonstrate, peace negotiations that neglect ideational stakes often fail to bring peace, or further exacerbate violent conflict. Some of the examples also demonstrate how international norms and actors can either expedite or hinder peace processes in conflicts with ideational stakes. Thus, the methods and tools for managing and resolving conflicts must evolve to incorporate a consideration of ideational stakes and an understanding of the role of international norms and actors.

BOX 1: CASE STUDIES AND YEARS OF FOCUS

Basque Country: Conflict between Euskadi ta Askatasuna (ETA) and the Spanish government over autonomy in the Basque Country of Spain (1959–2011).

Franco-Prussia: Tensions stemming from the French loss of Alsace and Lorraine in the 1872 Franco-Prussian War and rising European tensions in the prelude to World War I.

Israel-Palestine: Ongoing violent conflict between the Israeli government and Palestinian people within the territory of historical Israel-Palestine (1948–present).

Kashmir: Dispute over ownership of the region of Kashmir between the Indian and Pakistani governments, and the people of Kashmir themselves (1947–present).

Mexico: Violent conflict between the Government of Mexico and the country's drug trade organizations (2000–present).

Northern Ireland: The violent conflict between Protestant Unionists, Catholic Republicans and the British government over the sovereignty of Northern Ireland, often known as “the Troubles” (1968–1998).

Sierra Leone: Conflict between successive governments of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebel forces (1991–2002).

Sudan: Civil wars between the Sudanese government in the North and the Sudan People's Liberation Army largely in the South (1955–1972 and 1983–2005).

KEY FINDINGS FROM CASE STUDIES: INSIGHTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

This section presents key insights from the research, followed by recommendations to help inform and develop strategies for future conflict resolution. The recommendations seek to expose inadequacies that are common in peace processes and address some of the underlying issues that are often neglected, rather than just the topical concerns or fears of belligerents. It is up to diplomats, mediators and policy makers to assess the effectiveness of each recommendation in individual cases, as these recommendations may not be appropriate for every conflict setting.³

TO STRENGTHEN THE PEACE PROCESS, ALL INTERESTED STAKEHOLDER GROUPS SHOULD BE INCLUDED AT THE NEGOTIATING TABLE AS LEGITIMATE ACTORS

The exclusion or marginalization of important groups from negotiations has often led to the re-initiation or perpetuation of conflict. Although it is sometimes difficult to determine which groups should be brought to the table and it can be politically difficult for an opposing side to talk with groups labelled as “terrorists,” there are many cases where including such stakeholders has improved the prospects of peace. Likewise, cases exist where their absence in negotiations seemed to prolong conflict.

In the Israel-Palestine conflict, the Oslo Accords (1993) were the first point at which the Palestinians had direct representation in negotiations and consequently were one

³ The recommendations are based on research from case studies where no counterfactual analysis could be done, as there is no way to construct alternative scenarios for what could occur during the peace processes. In addition, it was not possible to use control groups to determine causal links in the effects of the peace process. However, the research was based on significant primary and secondary data and thus provides well-researched insights and lessons learned.

of the most significant steps toward peace in the conflict. Before the Oslo Accords, Palestinians had been represented primarily by Egypt, Jordan and a host of other countries standing for Pan-Arabism and not Palestine specifically. This progress has since been lost and consequently solidified into a political impasse.⁴

In the Sudan, important stakeholders were not included in discussions about Sudan's independence from Britain, which precipitated conflict. The political exclusion and marginalization of the South Sudanese during the 1947 Juba Conference formed the basis of South Sudan's decades-long conflict with the North, as the South felt their interests and concerns were not consulted during the conference negotiations. Although South Sudan gained independence in 2011, disputes remain between the North and the South.⁵

How stakeholders are perceived will have an effect on the peace process

The way that groups are framed is a determining factor for their inclusion in negotiations. For example, when groups are framed as "terrorists" or "uneducated," it stifles their participation in dialogues. When groups are framed as partners to be negotiated with, however, dialogue improves and prospects for peace tend to follow.

4 See Isaac Caverhill-Godkewitsch (2012). "Ideational Conflict Project Case Study: Northern Ireland and Israel-Palestine" (unpublished paper). University of Waterloo. Balsillie School of International Affairs. February.

5 See Vanessa Humphries (2012). "Ideational Conflict Project Case Study: Basque Country and Sudanese Civil Wars" (unpublished paper). Wilfrid Laurier University. Balsillie School of International Affairs. February.

When the Government of Sierra Leone framed the rebel group the RUF as an important actor, it allowed negotiations to be held that resulted, eventually, in RUF members receiving amnesty and positions in the government in exchange for peace.⁶

In Mexico, prospects for negotiation with the country's drug trade organizations (DTOs) were blocked when the Mexican government, under then President Vicente Fox shifted the framing of the DTOs in 2000 from business actors to terrorists and criminals who could not be negotiated with (Astorga and Shirk, 2010: 6). This framing was instrumental to the Mexican Drug War, initiated by Felipe Calderón in 2006. Since then, thousands of drug traffickers, police and innocent civilians have been killed and the violence continues.⁷

Strategies of repression often backfire, but inclusive strategies have more success

Attempts to create or enforce a unified identity through repression often backfire, creating a stronger sense of identity and legitimacy for those being repressed. Further oppressing marginalized groups often legitimizes the use of violence or creates stronger support for their plight.

6 See Nyiri Karakas (2012). "Ideational Conflict Project Case Study: The Case of Sierra Leone and Mexico" (unpublished paper). Wilfrid Laurier University. Balsillie School of International Affairs. February. When negotiating with actors who have primarily material stakes and who evoke a sense of moral revulsion, prioritizing an end to violence may be to the detriment of human rights and norms of governance. For example, in Sierra Leone, amnesty for the RUF and giving its members positions in the government was *part* of the peace process. However, that may have been contrary to the demands of the human rights community, which does not support the granting of amnesty to human rights violators.

7 See Karakas (2012). President Enrique Peña Nieto of the Institutional Revolutionary Party was elected to office in July 2012. It remains to be seen how his administration will engage with Mexico's DTOs.

In the Basque Country conflict, popular support for the use of violence by ETA (a nationalist group) in the name of independence increased when the Spanish government engaged in repressive or coercive actions to suppress the Basque nationalist movement. This pattern was seen during the authoritarian rule of Francisco Franco, during the Spanish government's actions toward ETA figures in the 1970s and 1980s, and during President José María Aznar's anti-terrorist legislation post-2001.⁸

In the Sudan, processes of Arabization pursued by the North as a means to create national unity backfired, and instead created a stronger southern "African" identity. This was seen during the 1950s, after the Torit mutinies in 1969, when Sharia law was implemented in 1983 and during Omar al-Bashir's regime in the 1990s.⁹

In Kashmir, the Indian government attempted to repress emerging Kashmiri identities by arresting the prime minister of Jammu and Kashmir, Sheikh Abdullah, in 1953. Instead of quelling the Kashmiri movement, this led to the emergence of a number of different Kashmiri actors with different perceptions of Kashmiri priorities and agendas, some of

whom were far more violent than others were in the past.¹⁰

IDEATIONAL STAKES ARE OFTEN NEGLECTED IN THE PEACE PROCESS — AGREEMENTS AND SETTLEMENTS THAT INCORPORATE THESE CONCERNS ARE MORE SUCCESSFUL

Once the parties to a conflict are at the negotiating table, it is important that they explicitly discuss ideational issues and be aware of their importance. Open discussions should include the concise expression of ideational concerns, the framing of ideas, an awareness of history and an understanding of the ties between material and ideational stakes.

Stakes should be clearly, concisely and accurately focused within the context of a dialogue, which requires stakeholders to empathize with one another

In the early stages of talks, setting out the issues and goals that lie at the heart of a solution clears away the proximate challenges and focuses discussion on the essential problems in the conflict. It also creates a positive idea of how the conflict can be successfully resolved. A sense of empathy is a vital component to clearly addressing ideational issues in dialogue.

Empathy can emerge through informal, grassroots diplomacy as was seen in Northern Ireland. In this case, many community and religious leaders in the late 1980s and 1990s helped bridge the gap between Protestants and Catholics, setting the stage for later steps

8 See Humphries (2012). This pattern was not found when there was a low public tolerance for violence. Popular support for violence was low due to: the widely disapproved 1997 ETA assassination of Miguel Ángel Blanco Garrido; the international attention to acts of terrorism; the ETA being compared to al-Qaeda after the March 11, 2004 Madrid bombings; and the ETA breaking a ceasefire agreement while in peace talks with the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party. During this time, a clampdown of the ETA by the Spanish government was successful, contributing to a cessation of violence in 2010.

9 See Humphries (2012).

10 See Sean Jellow (2012). "Ideational Conflict Project Case Study: The Franco-Prussian Conflict and Kashmir" (unpublished paper). Wilfrid Laurier University. Balsillie School of International Affairs. February.

in the resolution of the conflict (Ganiel and Dixon, 2008).¹¹

Empathy played a major factor in the 1976 Camp David Accords. United States President Jimmy Carter presented Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin with a list of Begin's grandchildren's names, saying "This is not just for us. This is for our grandchildren" (PBS, 2012). This gesture was profoundly moving for Begin, who subsequently became more cooperative in the negotiations of the accords.¹²

Solutions are best achieved when the stakes are recast as compatible goals rather than irreconcilable differences

Many peace-building negotiations fail as a result of an absolutist or restrictive stance concerning ideational issues, and the inability to adjust or reframe ideational stakes has prolonged conflict and blocked peace processes in multiple cases. Reframing is especially important for ideational concerns, as the ideas held by groups in conflict situations are often less flexible than material stakes. Shifting to compatible goals can allow for the emergence of original, creative solutions that satisfy the ideational stakes of multiple parties.

In Northern Ireland, the Good Friday Agreement (1998) integrated the priorities of all stakeholders by allowing individuals to choose their citizenship as Irish, Northern Irish or British as it suited them rather than forcing the inhabitants of Northern Ireland

to adopt one identity at the cost of losing another.¹³

The Calderón government in Mexico framed the conflict as zero-sum and restricted options for conflict resolution. Statements by the Mexican government presented the DTOs as trying to undermine the Mexican state.¹⁴

Peace processes must recognize the importance of historical grievances and injustices

Examining the history of violent conflicts provides invaluable insight into causes and dynamics. Past actions and injustices are commonly invoked to justify violence and contribute to underlying ideologies for conflicts, at times engraining violence as a way of life for individuals.

History acted as a foundation for violence in Protestant campaigns in Northern Ireland. Protestant paramilitaries commonly cited the historical sacrifices and betrayals by the English Crown to justify the use of violence (Mitchell, 2000). Many of these historical events date back centuries, while others are embedded in the timeline of the Troubles themselves.¹⁵

There was an attempt to address the injustices perpetrated in Sierra Leone through the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) from 2002 to 2004. Versions of the final report of the TRC, which included a list of perpetrators, were produced for secondary and primary school students,

¹¹ See Caverhill-Godkewitsch (2012).

¹² See Caverhill-Godkewitsch (2012).

¹³ See Caverhill-Godkewitsch (2012).

¹⁴ See Karakas (2012).

¹⁵ See Caverhill-Godkewitsch (2012).

with the hope that the next generation will remember its history and gain some closure.¹⁶

Policy makers need to recognize that material and ideational concerns are often connected

Perceived concern for material stakes may mask underlying ideational stakes. The ideational value of a material stake may not be explicitly stated, yet it is as real as any material value and just as important to the peace process.

Following the Franco-Prussian war, Alsace and Lorraine represented safety, security and stability to Germany. To the French, these regions had both strategic and economic value as territory, but also represented the territorial integrity of France. They were not simply material stakes, but also represented ideational notions that were strongly tied to physical resources and territory.¹⁷

INTERNATIONAL NORMS AND ACTORS INFLUENCE CONFLICT

Almost every modern conflict contains some form of international engagement and this can manifest itself in different ways. For an optimum peace process, negotiators and mediators must take into consideration the role of international actors and norms. Furthermore, for international norms and actors to play a role in expediting the peace process, an understanding of their influence on conflict is crucial.

An effort should be made to promote an understanding of the importance of global norms and how they influence the particular conflict

For a successful peace process, negotiators and mediators must understand all aspects of the conflict, including the role of international norms. Understanding these roles can illuminate the behaviours of actors in conflict, how belligerents are perceived and framed, and successes and failures of peace processes.

After the al-Qaeda attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001, a normative shift occurred in the international and public attitude towards violent non-state actors, increasing their illegitimacy. This shift influenced the outcome of the conflict in the Basque Country. Popular perceptions of the ETA eventually changed and support for the use of violence in making political demands diminished. This was especially evident after the 2004 Madrid bombings, which raised comparisons of the ETA to al Qaeda; in this case, the norm helped to hasten the peace process.¹⁸

Global norms can also impede peace processes. In Mexico, a shift in the norms of domestic governance, among other things, caused the country's DTOs to be framed as actors who were not to be negotiated with by the state.¹⁹

¹⁶ See Karakas (2012).

¹⁷ See Jellow (2012).

¹⁸ See Humphries (2012).

¹⁹ See Karakas (2012).

International engagement can be mobilized to expedite peace processes, but it should not be at the expense of leaving key issues unresolved

External influences can either contribute to settling conflicts or to prolonging them. When external forces do attempt to expedite a peace process, key issues must not be neglected as they can resurface later.

The international community pressured Sudan to reach a peace agreement after September 11, 2001, as the United States hardened its foreign policy approach, making any threats toward Sudan more convincing. The National Congress Party of Sudan, not wanting to risk losing international legitimacy, was therefore pressured to find avenues for peace. Although this expedited the peace process, it left some key issues unresolved, contributing to the resumption of violence between North Sudan and South Sudan.²⁰

International engagement, while it can be useful in expediting a peace process, should also respect and support culturally relevant, locally driven conflict resolution

Where conflicts with ideational stakes have been successfully resolved, the peace processes that led up to their solution should be investigated for features that can be applied to other conflicts, especially those that occur in culturally similar contexts. While useful lessons can be drawn, peace processes should be locally relevant and the international community should support such efforts.

In the Basque Country, the Lizarra Declaration, which announced an ETA ceasefire in 1998,

integrated features of the Good Friday Peace Agreement in Northern Ireland, contributing to an ongoing peace process.²¹

Likewise, an example of a locally driven peace process that influenced progress in the Basque Country was the signing of the 2005 Catalan Charter, which furthered peace processes in the autonomous region of Catalonia in Spain. This sent a signal to the ETA and moderate Basque nationalists that progress was possible through political negotiation rather than violence (Muro, 2008: 183).²²

CONCLUSION

Peace processes have not acknowledged the role that ideational stakes play in conflicts. The methods and tools for managing and resolving conflicts must evolve to incorporate them. In order to achieve this, dialogue should be encouraged with marginalized groups, ideational and material stakes must be included in negotiations, and the role of international actors and norms should be recognized. Only then can a better approach to resolving seemingly intractable conflicts be developed.

²⁰ See Humphries (2012). Unresolved issues include citizenship, border disputes over oil-rich areas and internal violence within Southern Sudan.

²¹ See Humphries (2012).

²² See Humphries (2012).

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