

The Peace Bargain

The Complexities of Finances in Peace Agreements

Lea Ellmanns, Fynn Kaltenpoth, Nora Schmidlin, Neil Ferguson, Tania Hörler,
Dana Landau, Tilman Brück

swiss
peace

ISDC

INTERNATIONAL
SECURITY AND
DEVELOPMENT
CENTER

INTRODUCTION

The signing of a peace agreement is often seen as the end of a long process to end violence, yet up to half of such agreements fail within 10 years. In reality, the agreement is an important milestone but not the final one. Just as negotiation leads to the agreement, the agreement itself leads to an implementation phase, which can affect the durability of the agreement reached.

In addition to technocratic concerns, regarding the availability of funds and support, the process of implementation clearly has political aspects that are often not incorporated into the discussion. There is a need to continue negotiations to make decisions around what is implemented and how that is funded that is seldom mainstreamed into peace processes or the transition from negotiation to implementation. The importance of the implementation phase opens up a series of key questions that pertain to what is implemented, when and how decisions are reached on what is implemented and how this is financed.

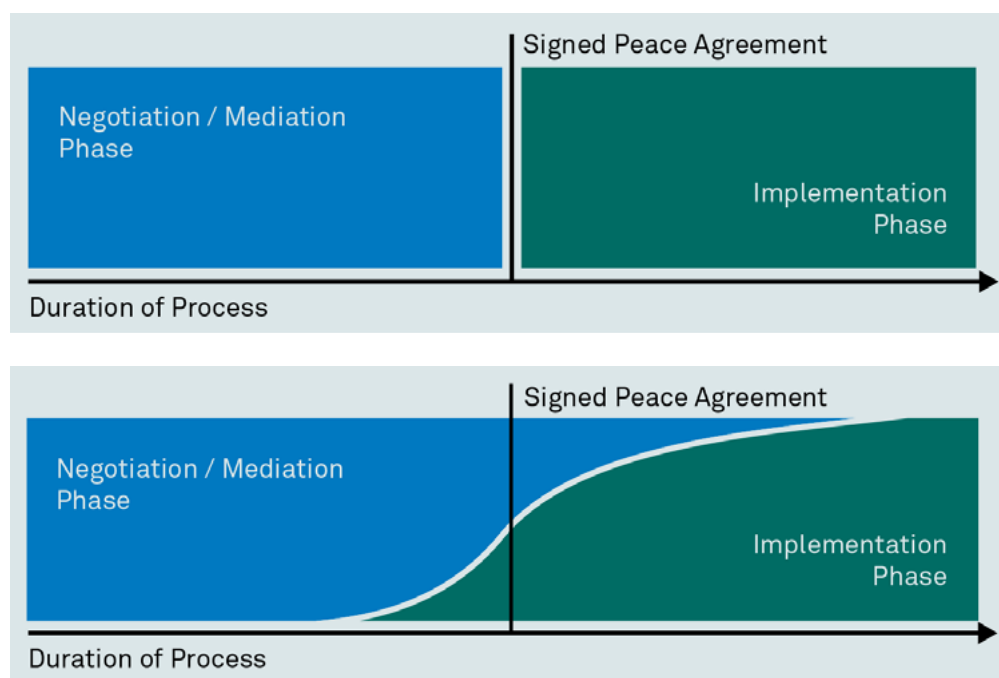
To address these questions, this research aims to shed light on two important aspects:

1. The extent to which questions around implementation and its financing are addressed during the negotiation of peace agreements.
2. The ways in which implementation is financed and how decisions are made on what is implemented or not.

This research is based on a series of in-depth semi-structured interviews with individuals involved in the implementation of peace agreements. The findings show significant variation in the extent to which implementation is considered during negotiations. In some cases, next to no provisions regarding implementation are specified; in others, detailed modalities for implementation are produced. More generally, results show that implementation is political, as well as technical, often requiring on-going discussions and negotiations. This stands in contrast to how these “phases” are often siloed, both in thought and in practice, and points to the need to build structures and an architecture that addresses their interconnectedness.

This policy brief discusses our research and draws implementable recommendations based on its findings.

BACKGROUND



Our work builds around two slightly contrasting conceptualizations of peace processes. One considers the transition from negotiation to implementation as a model linear in time. The second considers that the negotiations do not end with a peace agreement but continue in an iterative way, implicitly or explicitly, into the implementation phase. This allows implementation to be conceived as both “political” and “technical” at the same time.

Both conceptualizations imply key issues for the implementation of peace agreements. First, as negotiation transitions to implementation, aspects of the agreement are open to interpretation. Second, the fact that something has been agreed during the negotiation is no guarantee that it will be implemented, or is even needed or desirable at the point when it could be implemented. Where these conceptualizations differ is in the extent to which a signed peace agreement marks the end of the negotiation process. In the second model, the agreement is an important step in the negotiation process but is not the final milestone.

In the first, implementation can be thought of as the “technical” undertaking of specifications already agreed. In the second, the undertakings themselves are seen – in

part – as the product of another negotiation. Consequently, these models vary in the extent to which it is right to think of implementation as the fulfilment of a prior contract.

Both concepts, however, imply key trade-offs that likely exist within peace processes. Peace processes, as a whole, might be best served from clearer implementation plans in agreements but negotiating parties might not always benefit from discussing these stipulations. In part, this can arise because needs might change or new needs become apparent; and in part because agreement over implementation can also be difficult to reach and pose material risks to already sensitive political processes. In turn, it might not be sufficient to argue that more complete implementation demands should be provided in the agreement.

A further complexity arises as funds available in post-conflict settings consider general humanitarian and aid needs, as well as the costs of implementing a negotiated settlement. In turn, funding for implementation is often spread out across different issue areas, with projects supported potentially unrelated, to varying degrees, to the needs or specifications of the agreement.

APPROACH AND METHODS

We collected primary qualitative data, using semi-structured interview techniques, from 89 individuals involved, deeply, in peace processes and in the implementation of peace agreements. These individuals include scholars, support staff, mediators and others. We first interviewed 35 individuals with experience across multiple different processes.

To test the extent to which these findings were generalizable across contexts, the remaining 54 interviews were conducted with individuals with deeper experience within specific processes. We focused on 10 cases: Central African Republic, Colombia, Libya, Mali, Mozambique, Nepal, Northern Ireland, Philippines, South Sudan and Yemen. These cases were chosen to reflect the extent of variations in agreements and the processes that delivered them.

Verbatim notes were taken during the interview process and these notes were then subjected to thematic analysis. These analyses were coded deductively, in order to ensure that all themes present in the data emerged in the results.

KEY FINDINGS

Eight key issues were identified. The first three pertain to the extent to which implementation is addressed during the negotiation phase. The remaining relate to financing within the implementation phase.

1. Peace agreements vary in the extent to which implementation, and its funding, are addressed in the written text

Some agreements include no provisions for implementation, let alone its financing; others contain only vague mention of implementation; while others go so far as to specify which modalities should be made available and who should pay for them. We find little evidence that agreements go so far as to specify budgets.

2. Negotiation stakeholders do not have incentives to discuss implementation or its funding in detail

Those involved in negotiations are not incentivized to discuss implementation. Mediators acknowledge their responsibility to engage in longer-term planning but often have limited agenda setting power. Focus more often falls on reaching the agreement rather than on planning beyond it. Donors, similarly, are not sufficiently involved in negotiations to make commitments at this stage.

3. Negotiation stakeholders insufficiently plan for dialogue beyond the signature of the agreement

The implementation phase is often thought of as a technical follow-up to what is agreed during the negotiation phase. This neglects the need to operationalize the peace agreement, and to react to changing circumstances that the on-going process of negotiation this implies.

4. Implementation lacks coordinated funding efforts

At the implementation phase, a peace process moves into the public domain and new stakeholders might seek to have their say. The array of actors from the private, public and non-state sectors seldom define, let alone agree on, an overarching strategy for their demands or the support they offer.

5. Insufficient space is provided to operationalize peace agreements

Even when implementation is well-specified, it is still important to translate the text of that agreement into actionable to-dos. This need for operationalization is seldom well-planned for and is not approached as the continuation of the negotiation process that it, in reality, is. This exposes the process to outside influence. As timelines become extended, needs are likely to change but space is seldom found for dialogue around this changing picture.

6. Implementation processes are insufficiently funded

Funding availability varies between different contexts and is affected by internal and external developments. Financing could, therefore, be unexpectedly diverted to other activities, within a process, between processes, or even redirected outside of peace processes altogether. It is, therefore, important to plan for different scenarios and to combine sources of financing to limit potential impacts on the implementation of the agreement.

7. Implementation processes lack “quality” funding

Beyond how much funding is available, the usefulness of that money is essential. Implementation can be required quickly and involve politically risky activities. Funds that are inflexible, risk-averse, or short-term can hinder the effective financing of an implementation process. Complex funding structures with multiple reporting requirements can reduce the usability of funds.

8. Implementation funding is distributed unequally across provisions

Some provisions attract more funds than others. This is based on the political priorities of donors as well as differing levels of visibility of provisions. Donors might be interested in demonstrating rapid results or in reducing political risk. This leads to cherry-picking and uneven financing distribution across provisions that can risk the overall process.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Given these results and the threat they pose to the successful implementation of a peace agreement and the durability of that agreement, our research supports the following key policy recommendations:

Recommendation 1: There is a need to build, support, and reinforce the institutions that support the transition from negotiation to implementation and that are present during the implementation phases. A dedicated organization (alongside existing complementary institutions and national efforts) which has some financing capacity but, also, significant technical capacities could support this work, both by providing material guarantees underpinning the implementation phase and by providing support – and when necessary, expertise – to the operationalization architecture.

Recommendation 2: Negotiation processes should be further professionalized so that they can support, during the negotiation phase, the set-up of the necessary post-agreement architecture to allow for continued dialogue around operationalization and implementation of the agreement.

Recommendation 3: Plans and frameworks should be put in place to navigate the natural turnover in key participants in processes, in order to maintain trust and good relations across as well as within “phases”. Institutionalized and time-consistent trust could be strengthened by involving trusted parties and organizations.

Recommendation 4: The architecture to support implementation should include specific funding structures that can respond to rapidly emerging needs from on-going negotiations.

CONCLUSION

This policy brief examines two questions. First, how implementation of peace agreements and its funding are addressed during the negotiation phase. Second, how the implementation phase is financed. The work is based on two understandings of how peace processes unfold: a linear process separated into distinct phases and an iterative process that requires continuous dialogue throughout. Results emphasize that the iterative model, requiring a continuous dialogue on the agreement and its implementation, better represents contemporary peace processes. Yet in terms of actors involved, the needs of the process and other considerations, there remains a clear differentiation between the phases, which complicates the key relationships that are developed during and across them. This suggests a need for renewed focus on the interlinkages – both temporally and conceptually – between the two phases.

This iterative view on peace processes has implications for how implementation and its financing should be conceived. While financing problems are considered technical and, therefore, as elements that have technical solutions, many of the issues we have drawn out suggest that funding is highly political and thus requires novel approaches towards building a shared global infrastructure for guiding and funding the transition from conflict to peace. This suggests a need to build supporting architecture that matches this reality, while at the same time, reflecting the idiosyncrasies and needs of each context.

ABOUT THIS BRIEF

This policy brief discusses the findings and recommendations of a research project focused on the funding of peace implementation, led by swisspeace and ISDC - International Security and Development Center, with support from the German Federal Foreign Office (GFFO) through its Stabilisation Platform (SPF).

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Lea Ellmanns is a Junior Researcher at ISDC – International Security and Development Center.

Fynn Kaltenpoth is an Associate Program Officer at swisspeace.

Nora Schmidlin is a Program Officer at swisspeace.

Neil Ferguson is the Program Director of Peacebuilding Research at ISDC – International Security and Development Center.

Tania Hörler is a Senior Program Officer at swisspeace.

Dana Landau is a Senior Researcher at swisspeace.

Tilman Brück is the Director of ISDC – International Security and Development Center.

ABOUT THE PUBLISHING ORGANIZATIONS

swisspeace

is a practice and research institute dedicated to advancing effective peacebuilding. Partnerships with local and international actors are at the core of our work. Together, we combine expertise and creativity to reduce violence and promote peace in contexts affected by conflicts.

For more information, visit www.swisspeace.ch.

ISDC – International Security and Development Center

is a non-profit academic institute based in Berlin, Germany. We conduct research to improve lives and livelihoods shaped by violent conflict, fragility, and humanitarian emergencies. We believe in the power of data and evidence for understanding and alleviating suffering around the world.

Find out more on isdc.org.