

*Triangulating Peace:*<sup>1</sup>  
*How adversaries build sustainable peace through negotiated settlements*  
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**Overview:** This paper aims to study how adversaries build sustainable peace through negotiated settlements. It does so by exploring three important turning points on the path from war to peace in a selected set of armed conflicts that have experienced negotiation processes aimed at resolving those conflicts: the opening of negotiations; the reaching of peace agreements; and the establishment of sustainable peace.

The paper's analytical point of departure is a triangular model of conflict resolution, suggesting that there are three basic dimensions to conflicts that each need to be transformed or managed to establish sustainable peace: the conflict issues at stake; the violent conflict behavior; and the parties including their contentious conflict attitudes. The paper explores the extent to which the selected peace negotiations were able to address these three dimensions of conflict and how changes were brought about.

This article is structured in three main sections. First, it presents as an analytical framework a model of conflict resolution grounded in conflict theory. In the second and main part, it presents a summary of the findings from an extensive comparative analysis of twelve cases. This section is divided into three main parts: getting to the table; reaching an agreement; and establishing sustainable peace. The final section presents the conclusions together with some recommendations for a model of a negotiation process built on the theoretical approach of triangulating peace that may be transferable to other, similar conflicts.

**Analytical Framework:** This article is guided by the understanding of conflict resolution first developed by Johan Galtung, which depicts social conflicts as consisting of three key elements: conflict issues, conflict behavior, and conflict attitudes. According to Galtung, the conflict issues are essentially what the conflict is about: the incompatible claims of the conflict parties, whether a disputed claim over who should hold government power in a state or disagreement over who should have territorial control over a particular piece of land. The second component, conflict behavior, refers to the many ways that the main parties to the conflict pursue these issues, ranging from violent to non-violent strategies or a combination of the two. The third and last component, conflict attitudes, is meant to capture the psychological states or conditions – attitudes, emotions, and perceptions – that develop between the parties during the course of the

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<sup>1</sup> Thanks to Peter Jones – Executive Director, Ottawa Dialogue, University of Ottawa – for drafting, with permission, this summary report derived from “Triangulating Peace: How adversaries build sustainable peace in protracted, asymmetrical, and ethnonationalist conflicts” by Svensson & Söderberg Kovacs.

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conflict, including emotions such as distrust and fear, and the development of group stereotypes along, for example, ethnic or religious lines. According to Galtung, these three components interact and reinforce each other in escalatory or de-escalatory processes of dynamic effects.

According to Peter Wallensteen, all three components of the armed conflict need to be addressed to successfully resolve a conflict. The authors use this conceptual lens for analyzing the conflict resolution models used in the selected cases. In other words, they ask whether the suggested or agreed conflict resolution model addressed all the core components of the Conflict Triangle. When it comes to the conflict issue at hand, the parties need to find ways to solve or manage their central incompatibilities, which means finding ways to mutually agree on how to accommodate seemingly incompatible claims through new institutional arrangements. Conflict resolution also requires that the parties cease the use of direct, physical violence against each other, and that they accept each other's continued existence as parties in a new joint framework of governance.

**Case Studies:** While all cases experienced negotiation processes, they differed in outcomes. In Northern Ireland, Angola, Colombia, and South Africa, the negotiated settlements were generally successful in resolving conflicts and establishing sustained peace. The case of Philippines MILF is also looking promising, and although it is too early to tell definitely, the authors deem this case as being on the road toward sustainable peace. In Guatemala, Bangladesh, Sudan and France/Algeria, the parties signed peace agreements but the outcomes were less stable, either due to shortcomings in the implementation of the agreements or due to the re-emergence of new conflict issues or renewed violence. In Sri Lanka, the peace negotiations failed and the parties went back to the battlefield where the LTTE was militarily defeated. In Thailand, the parties have initiated negotiations but these have not yet yielded any result in terms of a peace agreement. In this study, the objective is to identify trends and patterns of relevance for establishing sustainable peace. The cases also demonstrate considerable variation in the type of resolution reached (for example, how the issues, behavior, and parties were addressed and how a solution was reached), and the methods (for example, differences in the mediation approach and the process design of the negotiations). This variation is explored for analytical purposes. The cases also vary in terms of the main incompatibility at stake (extra systemic, territory and/or government) as well as in terms of the extent and type of third-party mediation.

**Conclusions:** The findings from this study confirm that the three different dimensions of conflict are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. For example, escalatory processes are characterized by negative trajectories due to spiraling dynamic effects in all these three dimensions – often manifest through a proliferation of armed actors, polarizing conflict attitudes, heavier conflict tactics and a multiplication of conflict issues. Similarly, de-escalatory processes that reverse these dynamics help parties move from war toward peace. However, all three dimensions are not equally important at all stages of the path from war to peace; there is a sequence, over time, in the successful cases in terms of *when* and *how* they addressed the three dimensions. Analyzing the sequencing of successful cases can help to shed light on how transformative processes are initiated and maintained, which in turn has important implications for potential support to peace process. Acknowledging the risk of simplifying complex processes, we can still detect some general trajectories.

First, in terms of getting to the table, processes towards sustainable peace invariably do not start until the parties realize the futility or limits of armed means. Subsequently – and often related to this realization – conflict parties carried out important intra-party changes or reforms, resulting in key policy shifts, changes almost always preceded by changes in their leadership. In most cases of protracted armed conflicts there are also important regional dynamics at work. In several of our cases, the parties were able to either take advantage of external changes (such as the end of the Cold War) or deliberately and actively improve neighborly relationships in such a way that it reinforced, amplified or triggered a mutually hurting stalemate.

Second, in terms of getting to an agreement, findings clearly show the value of inclusion. While the pre-negotiation phase usually benefits from secrecy to build trust between the adversaries and to explore options, in all successful cases, the conflict parties later broadened the negotiation process to include additional actors, such as civil society organizations or political parties. These actors may not be offered a seat at the table, but mechanisms are established for transparency, information gathering and consultation. This in turn enables a comprehensive approach to the resolution of the conflict issues at the table, with better potential to address broad-based societal concerns and grievances. The most successful negotiation processes took several years to achieve a comprehensive peace agreement, but were carefully designed, with a pre-identified and limited agenda and divided into several phases, often building on several partial peace agreements along the way. In order for this to work, the process included various mechanisms aimed at maintaining momentum. The parties also continued military activities in parallel to the negotiation process. Temporary ceasefires can be used as conciliatory gestures, a complete and final cessation of hostilities is most usefully negotiated as part of the final agreement. While third party mediators and facilitators play many useful roles in different stages of the process, they should be selected on the basis of a careful needs' assessment of their added value.

Third, efforts should be made to institutionalize the newly-built trust between the conflict parties in the creation of new institutions and constitutional reforms with the potential to carry this trust forward and into the future. In the most successful cases, the peace agreements have included the establishment of institutions aimed at broad-based political representation in society. Autonomy solutions that do not provide the preconditions for self-determination and self-governance are less likely to resolve the contentious issues at stake in the long run. Many forms of autonomy arrangements also give rise to new minority formations. It is essential that the establishment of such new and decentralized political entities include sufficient minority guarantees. Moreover, while most conflict resolution mechanisms benefit from a political context characterized by political openness and democratic governance, electoral competition and referendums can undermine a fragile peace accord. In such contexts, it is useful to consider active measures for the strengthening of intra-party unity around the negotiated settlement.

Finally, while all three dimensions are necessary, working for intra-party transformation is critical to the long-term, sustainable peace. Hence, when considering where to begin the journey towards sustainable peace, the actor dimension seems to be the most relevant point of

departure for initiate change in the other dimensions. It is when there are new leaders in place or new governments elected, that processes start to move on the other dimensions of the conflict triangle and open up the potential for ending violent behavior and resolving issues.