



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

## *News Release*

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### **Peace deals work better if reached in stages, study shows**

Resolving military conflict is more likely to be achieved by taking small steps rather than one giant stride, a study of peace agreements suggests.

A unique online resource that maps peace agreements – launched today (Tuesday, 20 February) – shows on average six partial agreements are produced before a comprehensive settlement is reached.

Researchers at the University of Edinburgh have developed an online tool which charts the progress of peace agreements since the end of the Cold War.

The database – called PA-X, a Peace Agreement Access Tool – records more than 140 peace processes, which have produced in excess of 1500 agreements aiming to resolving conflicts.

Analysis shows that the common steps towards a significant peace settlement include talks, ceasefires and revision of earlier agreements between opposing factions.

Researchers say the resource can be used to help policy makers understand the fluctuations in peace processes and recognise patterns in global conflict.

Findings show around 1500 of the agreements relate to conflict within states, including, Bosnia, Nepal, Northern Ireland, Yemen, Syria and South Sudan. Around 63 are linked to conflict between two or more countries, such as the war between Iraq and Allied forces in 2003.

The resource highlights how many conflicts – such as Northern Ireland – needed several stages in the peace process. Northern Ireland has had 33 different agreements, 11 before the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, and 21 after it, dealing with unresolved issues. Syria has already produced at least seven ceasefire agreements of different types.

The study shows that on average peace processes include three ceasefire agreements and that these can be renegotiated or renewed, for example the Bosnian conflict, 1992 to 1995, which saw as many as 39 ceasefires negotiated.

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Findings also show that even when substantial agreements are reached between opposing sides, these can fail.

In 11 cases since the Cold War, more than one comprehensive agreement had to be signed after the first one failed or failed to include all of those who had been fighting. These included conflicts in Bosnia, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, India, Somalia, and Sudan.

Researchers say that stepped agreements can reflect the complexity of the conflict. In the Sudan and Colombia, for instance, this complexity led to peace agreements being signed over periods of more than ten years.

Christine Bell, Director of the University of Edinburgh's Global Justice Academy, said: "This resource makes accessible nearly 30 years of human ingenuity in ending conflict. We hope a key contribution of PA-X will be the way in which it will resource political imagination for emerging peace processes in some of the world's most intractable conflicts."

The PA-X, a Peace Agreement Access Tool can be accessed at [www.peaceagreements.org](http://www.peaceagreements.org). #peaceagreements #pax. The resource is being launched at the British Academy.

The resource is part of the Political Settlements Research Programme, which received a £4.4million award from the UK Department for International Development (DFID). Further information can be accessed at: [www.politicalsettlements.org](http://www.politicalsettlements.org).

The resource has been welcomed by policy makers involved in international relations.

Former US Ambassador Carey Cavanaugh, involved in peace efforts in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cyprus, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Tajikistan, and Turkey, said: "The database is a noteworthy accomplishment, with remarkable breadth. It will serve as an invaluable resource for scholars, groups impacted by violent conflict seeking a greater voice in peace processes, and individuals charged with mediating disputes."

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