Addressing Complexity in National Dialogue Processes
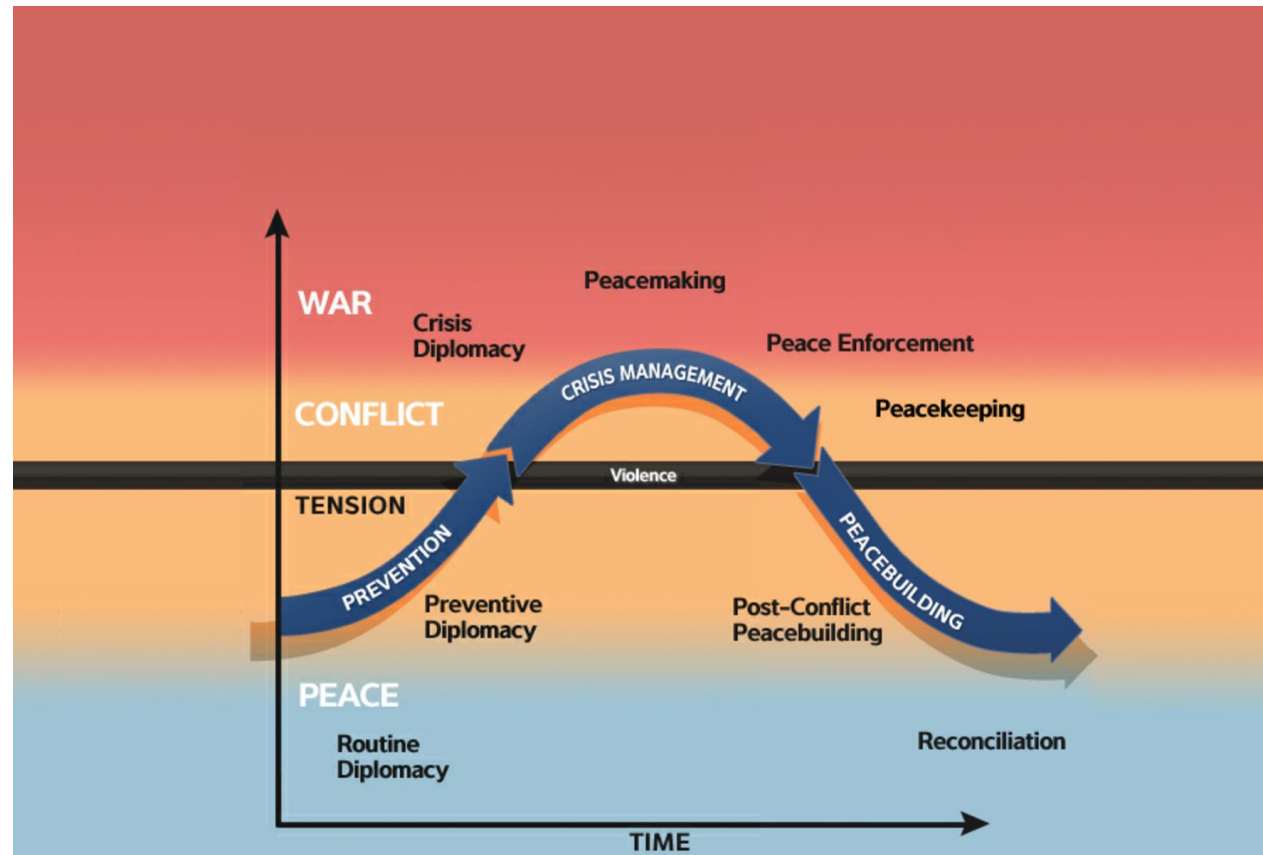
Jan Pospisil, ASPR

4th Conference on National Dialogues, 11 June 2019
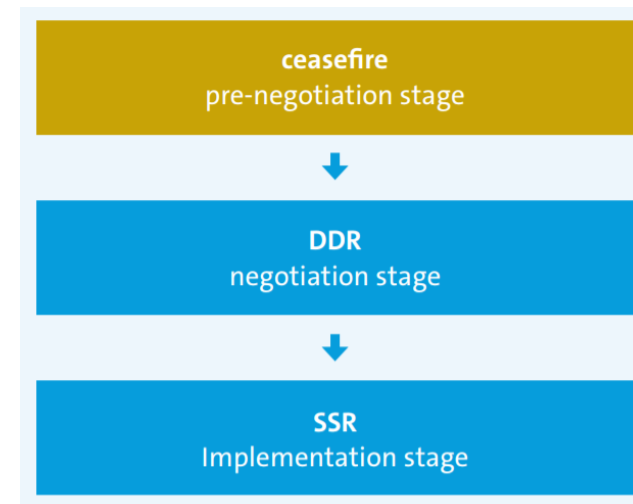
The Linear Story of Peace

Source: USIP

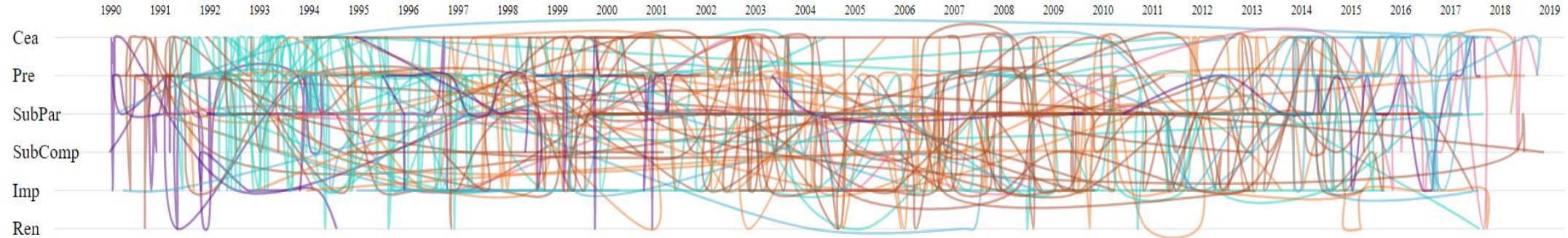# Choreography and Process Design

- Ideal peace process design, sequence, choreography

- E.g. Roland Paris, IBL;
  Transition theory;
  peace process 'packages'
  (DDR, SSR, TJ)

- Choreography?

Source: Pospisil/Bell (2017)

The Complex Story of Peace

Source: PA-X peace agreements database, www.peaceagreements.org

http://datadissonance.org/paxvis/messy-timelines.html
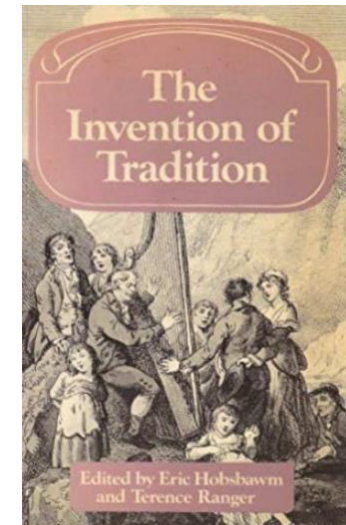
A History of Failure?

- Conceptual authority: statebuilding (1990s, 2000s)

- Contextual authority: local turn, contextuality

- Limits of knowledge: more data results in non-knowledge, not in better knowledge

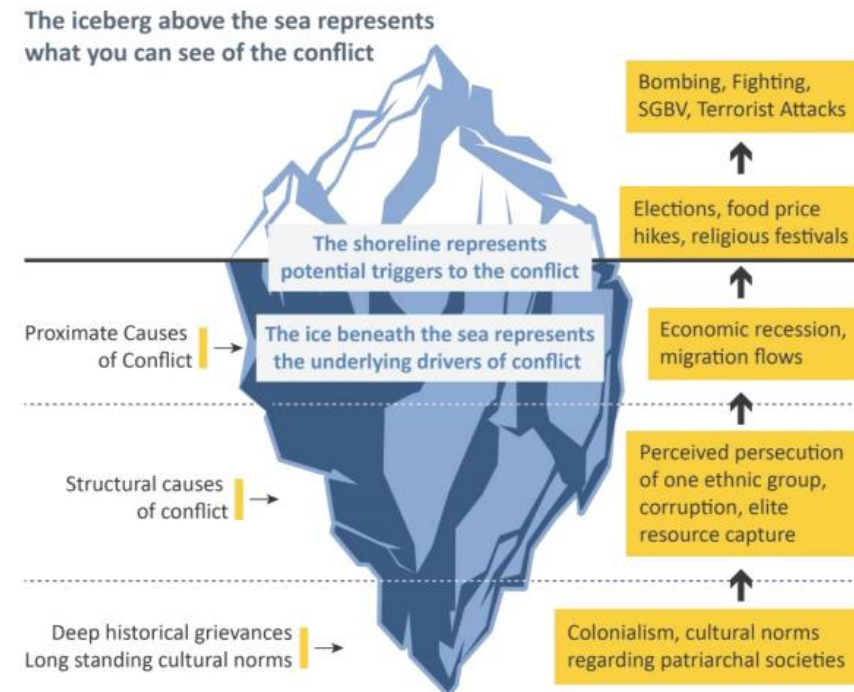# The Principles of Linear Peacemaking

Reasons for perseverance of linear approach?

- 'Invented traditions' (Hobsbawm): ahistorical imagination of a peaceful path to OECD-type statehood

- Liberal 'trias' of peacemaking: solutions, implementation, relation

Solutions

- Addressing root causes, mediating contested issues, political settlements

- *However*: root causes are contested (performativity), e.g. Colombia; radical disagreement (e.g. Israel/Palestine)

The iceberg above the sea represents what you can see of the conflict

The shoreline represents potential triggers to the conflict

The ice beneath the sea represents the underlying drivers of conflict

Proximate Causes of Conflict

Structural causes of conflict

Deep historical grievances Long standing cultural norms

Bombing, Fighting, SGBV, Terrorist Attacks

Elections, food price hikes, religious festivals

Economic recession, migration flows

Perceived persecution of one ethnic group, corruption, elite resource capture

Colonialism, cultural norms regarding patriarchal societies

Source: United Nations
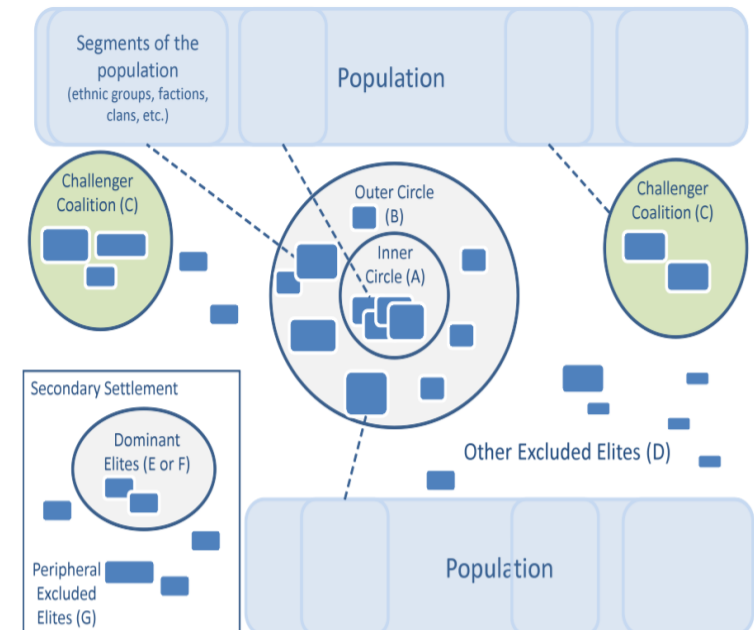
Implementation

- Implementation paradigm:
  the better agreements are implemented,
  the more sustainable the peace process

- *However*: default positions can be
  perpetuated by non-implementation,
  necessary for transitions
  (e.g. referenda, Abyei)

General Peace Agreement for Mozambique
Accord Type: Comprehensive Peace Agreement
Country: Mozambique
Date Signed: 04 October 1992
92% Implementation Score after 10 years

Mindanao Final Agreement
Accord Type: Comprehensive Peace Agreement
Country: Philippines
Date Signed: 02 September 1996
59% Implementation Score after 10 years

Ouagadougou Political Agreement (OPA)
Accord Type: Comprehensive Peace Agreement
Country: Côte d'Ivoire
Date Signed: 04 March 2007
83% Implementation Score after 9 years

Sudan Comprehensive Peace Agreement
Accord Type: Comprehensive Peace Agreement
Country: Sudan
Date Signed: 09 January 2005
73% Implementation Score after 7 years

Agreement between the Republic of Indonesia and the Portuguese Republic on the question of East Timor
Accord Type: Comprehensive Peace Agreement
Country: Timor-Leste (East Timor)
Date Signed: 05 May 1999
94% Implementation Score after 10 years

General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina
Accord Type: Comprehensive Peace Agreement
Country: Bosnia and Herzegovina
Date Signed: 21 November 1995
93% Implementation Score after 10 years

Agreement on Ending Hostilities in the Republic of Congo
Accord Type: Comprehensive Peace Agreement
Country: Congo
Date Signed: 29 December 1999
73% Implementation Score after 10 years

Source: KROC Institute

Relation

- Liberal idea of relation: a single polity, one political settlement

- Ideal: comprehensive national peace accord

- *However*: local peace agreements increasing, comprehensive peace agreements decreasing

Source: The Asia Foundation

Complexity in Peace Processes

- Unpredictable effects, contradicting parallel effects

- Effects become perpetuated, re-inscribed, politicised, influence behaviour

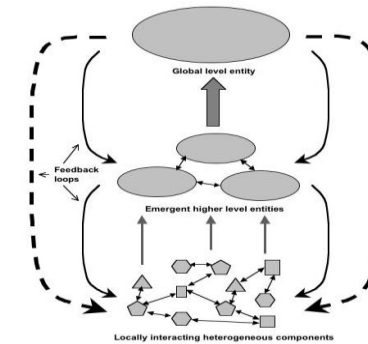- Hybridity, 'Compromised Peacebuilding', 'Formalised Political Unsettlement'

Complexity Approaches (potentially)

- Complexity *modelling*: identifying nodes, loops, feedback

- Management of *process*: **inclusion** (more diverse process is more sustainable)

- Management of *effects*: **resilience** (systems characteristics such as adaptability, redundancy)

The Pitfalls of Complexity Approaches

- Simplification through modelling:
human conflict ≠ climate

- Re-linearisation:
e.g. *'more inclusion leads to better peace'*

- Power relations inscribed in inclusion- / resilience-based approaches

Consequences

- *Messiness* not exception but the rule

- *Unlearning* linear peace

- Thinking in *trade-offs*: conflict management, inclusive dialogues, national peace

- Visions? Norms? Hope?

Opportunities

- Principled Pragmatism

- Embracing complex transitions on all levels and scales, e.g. local peace processes (important for National Dialogues)

- Humbleness in agreements

- Risk taking, providing 'hooks' in processes