Changing Peacemaking Practice

PA-X Peace Agreements Database | Key Findings 1990–2025

Peace Agreements and Processes

2,257
peace agreements

396
local agreements

183
peace processes

- **Two-thirds** of agreements in PA-X relate to intrastate conflict
- More than **one-quarter** of agreements are pre-negotiation or process agreements ("talks about talks")
- Only **five percent** are comprehensive framework agreements
- **Local agreements** have become more prominent in the last decade

Peace agreements are becoming fewer, more fragmented, and increasingly internationalised.

Since 1990, there have been over 2,200 formal, written, publicly available peace agreements across more than 180 peace processes. Most relate to conflicts within states, but the landscape of peacemaking has changed:

1. formal, structured peace processes are no longer the norm;
2. agreements are shorter and less ambitious - fewer human rights and democratic transition provisions; and,
3. contemporary peacemaking increasingly operates through fragmented and "multimediation" environments involving multiple actors, tracks, and negotiation spaces.

A changing global context

Peace processes have evolved alongside major geopolitical shifts.
Earlier peace processes were developing in an international order that relied more on the United Nations for normative leadership. Contemporary peacemaking increasingly takes place in contexts of geopolitical competition, fragmented mediation, and normative contestation.

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Key Takeaways

Fewer formal agreements

Peace agreements have declined overall since the early 1990s.

More interstate conflict dynamics

Interstate and internationalised conflicts are becoming more prominent.

Fragmented mediation environments

Agreements increasingly involve more actors and third parties.

A worrying mismatch

Some of the deadliest armed conflicts see little to no formal peacemaking and even fewer signed peace agreements. This points to a gap between settings in which violence is most severe and those in which formal agreement-making is taking place.

A shift around 2010

Peace processes have changed, with an inflection point around 2010. Formal, structured peace processes are no longer the norm; negotiations increasingly take place in ad hoc fashion, often with different mediators for each new agreement between warring sides.

Strategic takeaway

The decline in signed peace agreements does not necessarily indicate fewer mediation initiatives. Rather, contemporary peacemaking increasingly operates through fragmented, multi-actor, and iterative processes that unfold across multiple negotiation spaces and stages over time. Mediation strategies therefore need to support sequencing, coordination, and sustained engagement rather than focus solely on the success of a single agreement.

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Key findings for policymakers and practitioners

1. Fewer formal agreements are being signed

The number of peace agreements signed per year peaked in the early 1990s and has declined overall since, with the exception of recent peaks linked to Colombia.

Policy signal: this reflects a decline in formalised written agreements, not necessarily fewer mediation initiatives.

2. Comprehensive agreements are rare

Comprehensive peace agreements, which aim to support transition out of armed conflict for the entire polity, are relatively rare and only make up five percent of all peace agreements.

Policy signal: electoral institutions and power sharing are less frequently found in agreements.

3. The scope of peace processes has shrunk

Agreements reached are shorter, less ambitious, and dedicate relatively more space to security arrangements than to human rights and democratic transition.

Policy signal: current agreements often manage conflict rather than transform the political conditions that sustain it. Partial and localised agreements may still reduce violence and sustain political dialogue even where comprehensive settlement remains elusive.

4. Interstate dimensions are becoming more prominent

In 2024 and 2025, there have been more agreements in international and internationalised armed conflicts compared with previous years.

Policy signal: peacemaking increasingly requires regional diplomacy and coordination across external actors. Issues related to interstate relationships, such as border management, will require more attention.

5. Peace processes are increasingly fragmented and multi-track

Peace processes are increasingly spread across local, national, and international tracks, as well as across geographies and topics.

Policy signal: coordination between tracks is central to whether partial agreements can contribute to wider settlement.

6. Peace processes are non-linear

Multiple sequenced small steps tend to be the norm rather than one giant stride toward ending armed conflict. Processes often involve several rounds of talks, ceasefires, and revisions of earlier agreements.

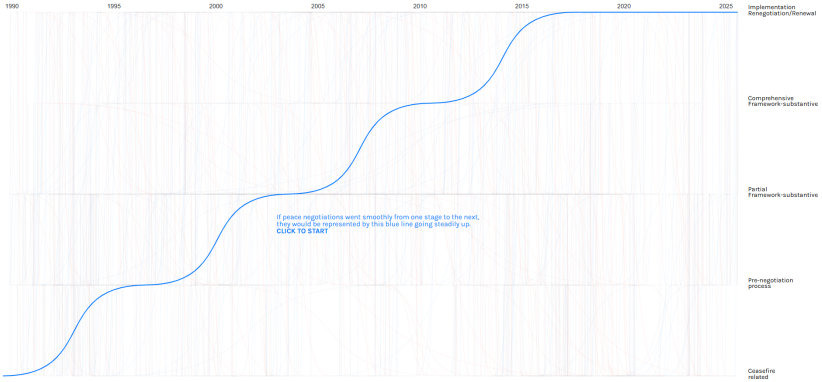
Policy signal: implementation support needs to be sustained across stages, not concentrated around a single agreement.

What this means

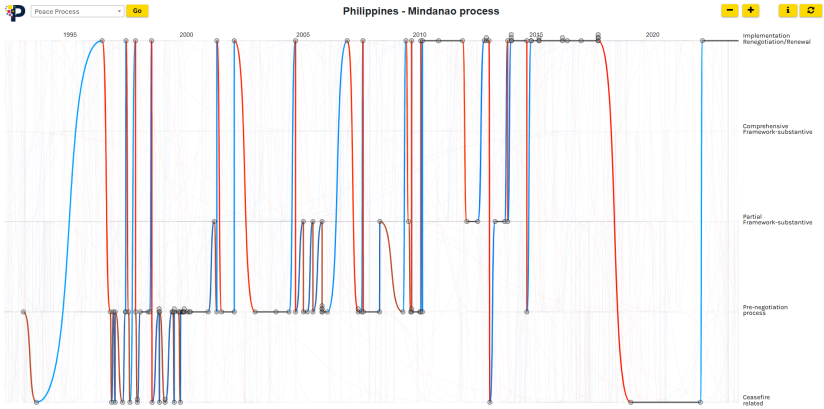
Peace processes increasingly require coordination across tracks, topics, geographies, and mediators, rather than support for a single negotiation table. Contemporary peacemaking often operates through fragmented and “multimediation” environments involving simultaneous mediation efforts across different levels and issue areas.

Process trajectories

Peace processes are often imagined as linear transitions from ceasefire to comprehensive settlement and implementation.



In practice, most involve repeated cycles of negotiation, partial agreement, implementation failure, and renewed talks. Below is the illustrative "messy" peace process trajectory showing back and forth movement between pre-negotiation, ceasefires, partial agreements, implementation, and renewed talks in **Philippines-Mindanao**.



Evidence from past processes

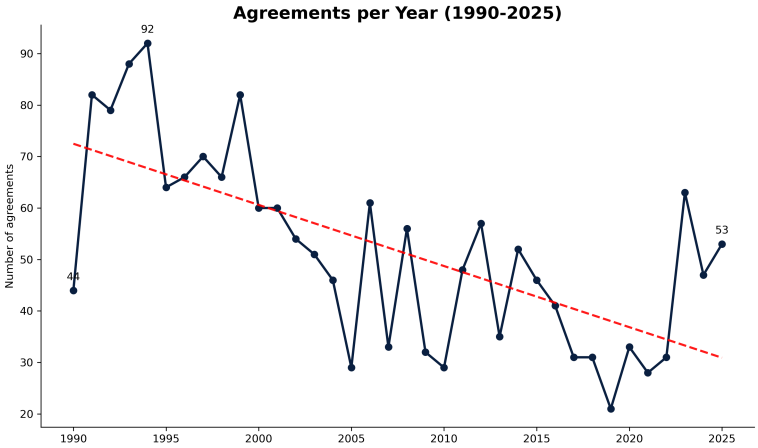
Bosnia and Herzegovina: 39 ceasefires signed between 1992–1995 alone.

Northern Ireland: 11 agreements before the Good Friday Agreement, and 24 after it was signed.

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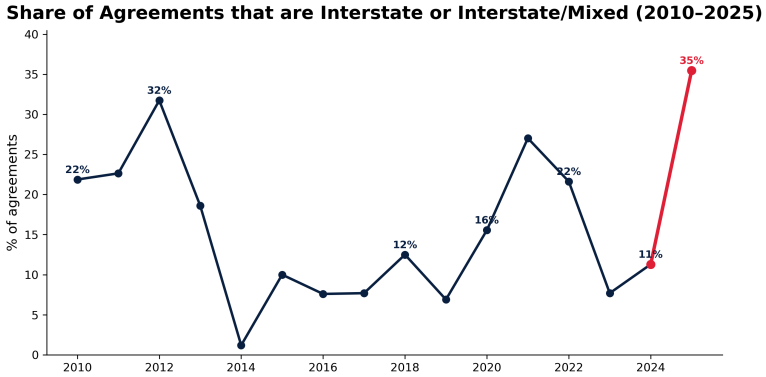
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Fewer agreements are being signed over time



The number of peace agreements signed per year peaked in the early 1990s and has declined overall since, with the exception of a significant number of peace agreements signed in Colombia that explain a recent peak in peace agreement numbers.

Interstate dimensions of conflict are becoming more prominent



The proportion of agreements involving interstate or internationalised conflict has increased in recent years, rising sharply between 2024 and 2025. This reflects a broader shift toward conflicts involving multiple states and external actors. The rise in internationalised conflict has coincided with more fragmented mediation environments and greater geopolitical contestation around peace processes themselves.

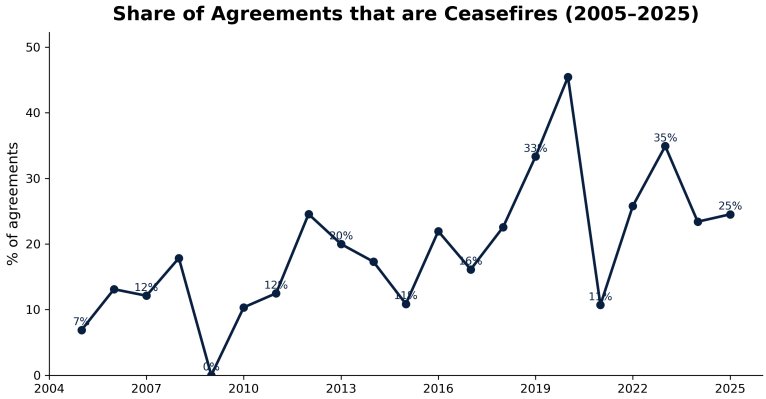
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Agreement types are shifting

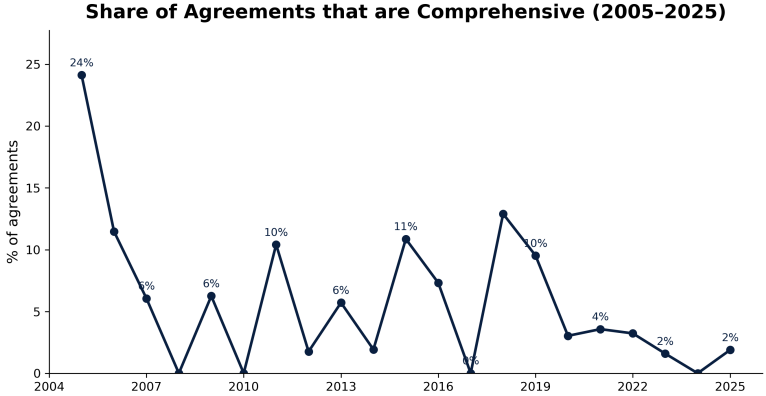
The scope of peace processes has shrunk. Agreements reached are shorter, less ambitious, and dedicate relatively more space to security arrangements than to human rights and democratic transition.

Ceasefires make up a growing share of agreements



Ceasefire agreements have become more prominent over time, indicating a focus on short-term conflict management rather than comprehensive political settlements.

Comprehensive framework agreements have declined



Longer, comprehensive agreements which address substantive issues to resolve the conflict are increasingly rare.

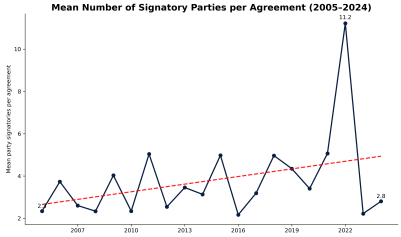
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Actors in peace agreements

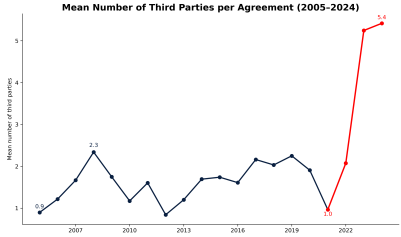
Despite a fall in the number of peace agreements signed, the average number of party signatories per agreement has increased over time. Third-party involvement has also risen sharply in recent years, contributing to increasingly fragmented and congested mediation environments involving overlapping mediators, negotiation tracks, and external actors.

More actors are directly involved in agreements



The average number of party signatories per agreement has increased over time, highlighting an increasingly fragmented conflict landscape.

Third-party involvement has increased sharply



The number of third-party signatories per agreement remained relatively stable for much of the period but has risen significantly since 2021.

Changing mediation environments

There has been a broader geopolitical shift from a more United Nations-led, norms-based international order supporting peace processes, and toward a more contested mediation landscape, in which peace interventions themselves increasingly become arenas of geopolitical, normative, and economic competition.

For policymakers and practitioners

Contemporary peacemaking increasingly operates through “multimediation”: simultaneous mediation efforts across different levels, geographies, and issue areas. While this can broaden engagement, it can also fragment responsibility, weaken coordination, and make meaningful inclusion harder to sustain — particularly where women’s groups and civil society actors remain separated from the most influential negotiation tracks.

PeaceRep
Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform

PA-X Peace Agreements Database

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PeaceRep
Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform

PA-X
Peace Agreements Database

PA-X Peace Agreements Database & Dataset

PA-X is a database and repository of peace agreements from 1990 to date, current up to December 2025. PA-X provides a comprehensive dataset of peace agreements, capable of underpinning both quantitative and qualitative research. PA-X is primarily produced by a team of researchers at the University of Edinburgh as part of the Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Program (PeaceRep).

Suggested citation

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Available at https://www.peaceagreements.org

PeaceRep

PeaceRep is a research consortium based at the University of Edinburgh focused on peace and conflict resolution, mediation, and peace process design.

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