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Abstract

The phenomenon of international intra-state armed conflicts” poses serious challenges to the theory and practice of conflict resolution. The distinction between intra-state armed conflicts and international war has created a strong perception that, while international wars were dominant in the past, most contemporary armed conflicts are intra-state. The disciplinary demarcation between Conflict Resolution and International Relations has also created bias, leading to the neglect of “international intra-state armed conflicts.” Given the growing number of such conflicts, the theory and practice of conflict resolution need to transcend the bias stemming from the artificial distinction between international wars and “international intra-state armed conflicts.” Deterrence should be discussed in the context of conflict resolution. Both international and domestic monitoring mechanisms should be combined with the mediation of conflict parties. Peacebuilding assistance should be internationally reinforced in line with the analysis of the impacts of the end of the Cold War and the Global War on Terror. With such flexible perspectives, partnerships nurtured through the framework of FOIP (Free and Open Indo-Pacific) should be enhanced. Ukraine would emerge as a maritime power in the Black Sea linked with the Indo-Pacific region through the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea.

Key words: international intra-state conflict, Conflict Resolution, International Relations, peacebuilding, FOIP

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Introduction

This essay argues that there is a phenomenon of “international intra-state armed conflicts,” a concept that may seem complex and contradictory. Conventionally, armed conflicts are categorized as either international or intra-state, not both simultaneously. However, many conflicts exhibit elements of both types. In numerous armed conflicts, multiple domestic actors operate within one sovereign state’s territory, often with foreign intervention forces present. The demarcation between internal and international aspects becomes dubious in practice.

For instance, the Donbas War in eastern Ukraine and Russia’s full-scale invasion in the entire country present theoretical possibilities of demarcation, which eventually proves extremely difficult in practice. The Gaza crisis involving Israel, Hamas, Hizballah, and potentially the Houthi in Yemen further illustrates the complexity. The term “international intra-state armed conflicts” is used to convey the multidimensional nature of such conflicts.

This phenomenon poses significant challenges to conflict resolution theory and practice. The conventional distinction between intra-state armed conflicts and international wars is considered convenient but artificial, leading to a distorted perception of contemporary conflicts. The disciplinary division between Conflict Resolution and International Relations contributes to this bias, as the former focuses on intra-state conflicts and the latter on international conflicts. Given the increasing occurrence of “international intra-state armed conflicts,” there is a need to overcome the bias of this artificial distinction.

1. The Gap between Theory of Conflict Resolution and Reality of Armed Conflicts

The theory and practice of conflict resolution developed over the past decades require reexamination in light of numerous armed conflicts with high casualties, many of which are prolonged or reignited. The current approaches seem to have serious shortcomings in analyzing and addressing policies to alleviate or prevent armed conflicts. Identifying major flaws in the analysis and approaches of conflict resolution is crucial for addressing these challenges.

The essay focuses on the challenges of analyzing and addressing “international intra-state armed conflicts.”¹ Describing a conflict as both international and intra-state may initially appear contradictory, challenging the traditional distinction between international and intra-state wars. However, the reality is that the contemporary world is rife with armed conflicts exhibiting elements of both types. Many conflicts simultaneously involve international and intra-state dimensions, with the number of such conflicts on the rise.

This phenomenon challenges the simplistic view that conflicts are either international or intra-state. Instead, many contemporary armed conflicts feature both external and domestic actors engaged in conflict. The coexistence of international and intra-state elements within the same conflict is becoming increasingly common. In essence, the concept of “international intra-state armed conflicts” is not an exception but rather a prevalent occurrence in today’s armed conflicts. External actors often play a significant role while domestic factions engage in conflict with each other.

There is a myth that recent armed conflicts are mostly intra-state wars, while international armed conflicts were dominant in the past. But the fact is that the number or the percentage of intra-state armed conflicts were always high during the Cold War period. After the collapses of the empires in Europe at the end of World War I, which led to the wave of de-colonization after World War II, the number of states dramatically increased. The newly independent states born after WWII are still now the theatres of armed conflicts where intra-state conflicts occur. At the same time, they share the same kind of regional conditions of political, economic and social fragility with neighboring states and quite often have international dimensions of conflicts

¹ See the data at UCDP (Uppsala Conflict Data Program) at <https://ucdp.uu.se/> UCDP uses the concept of “internationalized intrastate conflict”. This is somewhat problematic. There is no guarantee that only intrastate conflict might become internationalized, while international conflict might not create intra-state conflict.

through interventions or assistances by external actors. Conflicts easily tend to spill over. International intra-state conflicts are not exceptional, but normal in our contemporary world.

Despite this reality, theories of conflict resolution have heavily relied on the myth that contemporary armed conflicts are solely intra-state. While focusing on the intra-state nature of contemporary armed conflicts is useful and indispensable, it fails to capture all essential aspects, as many conflicts also possess international dimensions. Given the high number of armed conflicts and the ineffectiveness of international responses, it becomes necessary to critically re-examine the validity of assumptions in conflict resolution theories. This reexamination is crucial to ensure that theoretical insights align with the complex and evolving nature of armed conflicts in the 21st century.

2. The Gap between International Relations and Conflict Resolution

Within the field of International Relations, a well-established perspective on the “level of analysis” problem warns against the potential confusion of different analytical layers. This perspective emphasizes the importance of maintaining clear distinctions among the analyses of individuals, the state, and international relations, by assuming that a single war may have multiple causal dimensions. Despite recognizing the coexistence of intra-state and international elements in armed conflicts, the discipline of International Relations has not consistently applied multidimensional analysis. Instead, the level of analysis problem is often used to justify the exclusivity of the international relations perspective.

Consequently, a de-facto division of labor has emerged. International Relations tends to analyze historical or hypothetical international conflicts, while the field of Conflict Resolution focuses on inter-state conflicts in the contemporary world. The assumption that contemporary armed conflicts are exclusively intra-state has widened the gap between International Relations and Conflict Resolution over the past few decades. Additionally, this division has led to the separation of theorizing international order from analyzing armed conflicts in the contemporary world.

This strict disciplinary division hampers the development of conflict analysis from multiple dimensions. While both International Relations and Conflict Resolution possess different dimensional approaches that could enrich multidimensional conflict analysis, the sharp disciplinary division prevents the synthesis of these approaches in coherent ways. Studies of international affairs and armed conflicts operate in isolation, often underestimating the impact of changes in international order on armed conflicts and neglecting the influence of intra-state armed conflicts on the course of international order.

The problem of strictly demarcating between international and intra-state armed conflicts results in an inability to recognize the phenomenon of armed conflicts flexibly and realistically. Excluding international elements from intra-state armed conflicts leads to the oversight of their extra-territorial dimensions. The biased assumption that an intra-state conflict is geographically and politically confined within one territorial sovereign state becomes an obstacle in analyzing its complex multidimensional nature.

To overcome this obstacle and the associated perception biases in recognizing armed conflicts, a reconsideration of the disciplinary boundary between International Relations and Conflict Resolution is essential. These two disciplines should stimulate each other by sharing analytical concepts and theories. For example, the concept of “deterrence,” deeply rooted in International Relations with a focus on nuclear deterrence and superpower confrontation, is rarely introduced in Conflict Resolution discussions about the role of international peacekeepers or intervention forces. However, given the actual nature of many armed conflicts as international intra-state conflicts, it is crucial to break down the barriers of perception biases for a more comprehensive understanding.

3. Political Realism and the State-centric Bias

The state-centric bias in the discipline of International Relations has its roots in the early years of its establishment. Hans Morgenthau played a pivotal role in shaping this bias with the publication of his book,

Politics among Nations, in 1948. Morgenthau strongly criticized what he referred to as idealism during the inter-war period.²

After World War I, the study of international affairs had a tendency to emphasize the necessity for institutional reforms within international systems. Advocates of this perspective, particularly prevalent in the United States, often supported the idea of strong international organizations. Morgenthau, however, took issue with this idealist approach. He believed that the efforts to outlaw war initiated by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson after World War I were part of an idealist campaign and, in Morgenthau's view, were misguided. He argued that wars would persist because powerful states would not relinquish their pursuit of power in international politics. According to Morgenthau, international politics is defined as the arena where states engage in a continuous struggle for power while pursuing their national interests.

The foundational concept in International Relations, according to Morgenthau, is that states are powerful entities destined to engage in wars. This perspective influenced the discipline's focus on international wars rather than conflicts within states. Throughout the Cold War period, International Relations remained centered on the rivalry between superpowers in the 20th century and European great power politics up to the 19th century.

Even with the emergence of new theories such as "neo-realism (structural realism)" (Kenneth Waltz)³, "hegemonic stability" (Charles Kindleberger, Robert Gilpin, Stephen Krasner), and "offensive realism" (John Mearsheimer)⁴, the state-centric nature of International Relations theories, with a focus on great power confrontation, persisted. The discipline continued to prioritize the actions and interactions of sovereign states, maintaining the state-centric bias that had been established in its early years.

The state-centric bias in International Relations persisted after the end of the Cold War. Scholars within the discipline turned their attention to the transformation of the international order from the Cold War era to the post-Cold War period. The 20th-century international order was often described as the creation of hegemonic US power, a concept prominent in discourses such as the "Liberal International Order" proposed by John Ikenberry.⁵ It was anticipated that the post-Cold War international order would follow a similar trajectory, with the relations among great powers determining the structure of international society.

During this period, little attention was directed toward small-scale intra-state conflicts outside the sphere of influential great powers. The prevailing narrative shifted with the emergence of the myth of the "victory of liberal democracy" as an expression of the "soft power" of the United States and the other Western powers.⁶ The theory of the "democratic peace," advocated by scholars like Bruce Russett, propagated the idea that the ideological hegemony of the West, based on liberal democratic values, was continuously consolidating. This perspective overlooked the theoretical implications of the mutual influence between domestic state structures and international order.⁷

As the decline of US power became evident and the assumed ideological supremacy of the West diminished, the circumstances were characterized as a "return of geopolitics" against the backdrop of the "liberal international order"⁸ Critics of the US-led international order emphasized the "tragedy of great power

² Hans Morgenthau, *Scientific Man Versus Power Politics* (University of Chicago Press, 1946); and Hans Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1948).

³ Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (McGraw-Hill, 1979)

⁴ John Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War", *International Security*, vol.15, no. 1 (summer 1990), pp. 5-56.

⁵ G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order After Major Wars* (Princeton University Press, 2001).

⁶ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (Free Press, 1992).

⁷ Bruce Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace: Principles for a Post-Cold War World* (Princeton Univ Press, 1993).

⁸ Walter Russell Mead, "The Return of Geopolitics: The Revenge of the Revisionist Powers" and G. John Ikenberry, "The Illusion of Geopolitics: The Enduring Power of the Liberal Order", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 93,

politics,”⁹ positing that great power rivalry remained a major structural determinant of international society. This critical perspective challenged the notion that liberal democracy and the dominance of Western values were the primary driving forces shaping the international order, bringing attention back to the enduring dynamics of power politics among states.

4. Theories of Conflict Resolution and the Myth of New Wars

During the Cold War periods, Conflict Resolution theories did not necessarily assume that contemporary armed conflicts were exclusively intra-state. The emergence of Peace Studies, pioneered by Johan Galtung and featuring concepts such as “negative and positive peace,” was not primarily focused on distinguishing between international wars and intra-state armed conflicts.¹⁰ Instead, the development of Conflict Resolution theories during this time documented efforts to find analytical tools for prescriptive practices, particularly in response to the ideological standpoints derived from general political theories.

Peace Studies, as introduced by Johan Galtung, aimed to explore and understand the root causes of conflicts and to develop strategies for achieving both negative peace (the absence of war) and positive peace (the presence of justice and equality). This perspective did not limit itself to a specific type of conflict but sought to address a broad range of conflicts, regardless of whether they were international or intra-state.

The development of Conflict Resolution theories during the Cold War era was driven by a desire to move beyond ideological stances and contribute practical insights to resolving conflicts. Scholars in this field worked on refining analytical tools that could be applied to various conflicts, irrespective of their international or intra-state nature. The focus was on offering practical and prescriptive solutions to the complexities of conflicts rather than adhering to rigid distinctions between different types of conflicts.

John Burton’s contributions to Conflict Resolution include the development of the “human needs theory” and the “problem-solving” approach.¹¹ The human needs theory focuses on addressing the root causes of conflicts by fulfilling the basic needs of individuals and communities. This approach is aimed at preventing aggression and promoting peace. The problem-solving method involves analyzing the parties involved in a conflict, bringing them to the negotiation table to discuss their relationships, and working towards establishing agreements that acknowledge the problems and their associated costs, exploring possible options for resolution. Burton’s theories did not require a strict distinction between international wars and intra-state armed conflicts.¹²

Edward Azar’s theory of “protracted social conflict” delves into the structural causes of conflicts, particularly those within communal groups.¹³ Azar identified basic needs, including security, recognition, acceptance, fair access to political institutions, and economic participation, as fundamental elements in understanding and addressing conflicts. These needs are categorized into security, development, political access, and identity needs. While Azar’s framework can be applied to analyze the structures of intra-state armed conflicts, it does not necessarily focus exclusively on them.

No. 3, May/June 2014, pp. 69-79, and pp. 80-90.

⁹ John Mearsheimer, *Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (W W Norton & Co Inc; 2014).

¹⁰ Johan Galtung, *Transcend and Transform: An Introduction to Conflict Work* (Pluto Press, 2004).

¹¹ John Burton, *Conflict: Resolution and Provention* (London: St Martin's Press, 1990).

¹² John W. Burton, “Resolution of Conflict”, *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Mar., 1972), pp. 5-29.

¹³ For influential introductions of Azwar, Oliver Ramsbotham, “The Analysis of Protracted Social Conflict: A Tribute to Edward Azar”, *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (Jan., 2005), pp. 109-126; and Hugh Miall, Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution: The Prevention, Management and Transformation of Deadly Conflicts* (Malden, MA : Polity Press, 1999) (Fourth Edition, 2016).

In summary, both Burton and Azar contributed to Conflict Resolution by providing frameworks that emphasize addressing the root causes of conflicts and promoting dialogue and negotiation. These approaches are applicable to a wide range of conflicts, regardless of whether they are international or intra-state in nature. The theories highlight the importance of understanding and addressing the basic needs of individuals and communities to achieve sustainable peace.

A significant shift occurred with the emergence of the myth of “new wars” in contrast to “old wars,” marking a symbolic sea change.¹⁴ The prevailing assumption suggested that while old-type international wars characterized the period before the end of the Cold War, the post-Cold War era witnessed a rise in intra-state armed conflicts. However, this generalization was largely false. The hypothesis gained momentum with the perception of a changing era following the end of the Cold War.

This shift in perspective led to the popularization of discourses surrounding the “liberal peacebuilding theory,” which came under scrutiny for its perceived ideological nature.¹⁵ Critics emerged, questioning the assumptions embedded in the theory. As a result, a dichotomy emerged: while International Relations continued to engage in the study of international wars in history and theory, Conflict Resolution became the discipline that primarily analyzed intra-state armed conflicts as ongoing contemporary issues. This division reflected a broader trend in academic discourse, where the changing nature of conflicts and the evolving global landscape influenced how scholars approached and studied conflicts. The emphasis on intra-state armed conflicts in Conflict Resolution highlighted the complexities and challenges associated with conflicts within sovereign states, moving away from the traditional focus on international wars that had characterized much of the Cold War era.

William Zartman is renowned for his contributions to the field of Conflict Resolution, particularly for introducing concepts such as “ripeness” and “mutually hurting stalemate (MHS).”¹⁶ He stated that that “As the dominant system of conflict and world order disintegrates, internal conflicts and their regional ramifications emerge as the primary challenge to international peace and security.”¹⁷ This viewpoint extends to other major theoreticians on conflict causes, including scholars like Paul Collier and Francis Stewart. While their perspectives may not be exclusively constrained by the distinction between international wars and intra-state armed conflicts, their analyses often delve into the conditions prevalent in domestic societies. For instance, scholars like Collier and Stewart have explored causal factors of armed conflict, considering conditions such as the dependence of national revenues on natural resources and social inequality among sub-national groups within a state.¹⁸ Their work underscores the idea that addressing internal dynamics and conditions within a society is crucial for understanding and effectively resolving armed conflicts. This shift in focus toward

¹⁴ Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

¹⁵ Roland Pairs, *At War's End: Building Peace After Civil Conflict* (Cambridge University Press, 2004); and Oliver Richmond, *A Post-Liberal Peace* (Routledge, 2011).

¹⁶ William Zartman, “Understanding Ripeness: Making and Using Hurting Stalemate” in Roger Mac Ginty and Anthony Wanis-St. John (eds.), *Contemporary Peacemaking: Peace Processes, Peacebuilding and Conflict* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 23-24.

¹⁷ William Zartman, “Chapter 9: Dynamics and Constraints in Negotiating Internal Conflicts” *I William Zartman: A Pioneer in Conflict Management and Area Studies: Essays on Contention and Governance* (Springer, 2019), p. 161.

¹⁸ Paul Collier, “Greed and Grievance in Civil War”, Policy Research Working Paper 2355 (World Bank, 2000); and Paul Collier, “Doing Well Out of War: An Economic Perspective”, in Mats Berdal and David M. Malone (eds.), *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), pp. 91-111. Francis Stewart, “Horizontal Inequalities: A Neglected Dimension of Development”, Working Paper 1: Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity, CRISE Queen Elizabeth House, University of Oxford; and Francis Stewart, *Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict: Understanding Group Violence in Multiethnic Societies* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

internal conflicts reflects the changing nature of global conflicts, with scholars recognizing that conflicts within states can have significant regional and international implications. The emphasis on internal dynamics and root causes aligns with a more comprehensive approach to conflict resolution that considers the complexities of domestic societies in addressing the challenges to international peace and security.

In this context, the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia in 2022 shocked many researchers who felt unprepared to deal with major international wars as subjects of conflict analysis. However, the armed conflict involving Russian troops had already been underway in Ukraine's eastern part well before 2022, known as the Donbas War since 2014. In reality, Ukraine has been at war with Russia since 2014, punctuated by temporary nominal ceasefires such as the Minsk Agreement. The Donbas War was not terminated by the 2022 full-scale invasion; rather, it evolved. Given that the major battlefields of the Russo-Ukraine War were in the eastern part of the country, especially from 2023, it appears that the Donbas War continues to be merged with the larger international conflict known as the Russo-Ukraine War.

The intermingling of intra-state armed conflict and international war in Ukraine is not exceptional, as seen in other cases like Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Ethiopia, Nigeria, etc. These circumstances underscore the urgent need to remove the disciplinary constraint of the demarcation between "intra-state conflict" and "international war." Instead, there is a strong need to integrate insights from Conflict Resolution and International Relations to better understand and analyze the reality of "international intra-state wars."

5. Reflections on the Constraints of Policy Perspectives in Conflict Resolution

The limitations of academic perspectives in Conflict Resolution and International Relations, particularly the relative lack of integrated theories to analyze "international intra-state armed conflicts," may mirror the challenges faced in implementing conflict resolution measures in practice. International Relations often sheds light on "deterrence" among great powers, exemplified by nuclear deterrence between nuclear-armed nations. However, it rarely addresses contemporary armed conflicts as arenas where the perspective of "deterrence" can be applied. Practitioners seldom discuss "deterrence" in the context of resolving armed conflicts in practice. During the Cold War, the United Nations developed monitoring activities through UN peacekeeping operations between multiple state conflict parties in the Middle East, Cyprus, Kashmir, etc. However, there was hesitancy to intervene in the domestic spheres of sovereign states to conduct monitoring actions between actors within the same sovereign state.

In contrast, conflict resolution measures after the Cold War emphasized interventions in the domestic spheres of sovereign states. For instance, when NATO launched military interventions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, etc., and ECOWAS intervened in Liberia and Sierra Leone in the 1990s, there was a clear perception that these interventions occurred in the domestic spheres of sovereign states. These actions were conducted as "enforcement" under the banner of collective security, driven by the understanding that conflict resolution measures might need to take the form of intervention when the governments of sovereign states are part of the conflict problem, and resolution cannot solely rely on those governments. The frequent use of the authority of Chapter VII of the UN Charter by the UN Security Council underscores this trend. With or without military interventions for "enforcement," international actors provide assistance in the form of development aid, framed as "peace-building" or even "state-building" efforts in domestic jurisdictions. These efforts often include governance reforms in state apparatuses, such as security sector reforms, judicial reforms, reforms in legal frameworks, capacity development programs, etc. The underlying assumption is that conflicts arise because the state lacks the capacity to govern society or the willingness to comply with internationally standardized norms, presupposing that contemporary armed conflicts are predominantly intra-state conflicts.

6. Reality of Armed Conflicts in the Contemporary World

As discussed earlier, the problematic presupposition underlying policy assumptions becomes evident with the increasing number of armed conflicts, giving rise to the phenomenon of "international intra-state

armed conflicts.” Contrary to the general observation emerging in the 1990s that armed conflicts primarily result from state fragility and/or poor governance, the widespread occurrence of international intra-state armed conflicts challenges the assumption that intra-state factors are the major causes of such conflicts. Several patterns in the international arena shed light on the factors influencing contemporary armed conflicts.

The first pattern pertains to the impact of the end of the Cold War, marked by the collapse of the Soviet Union and its communist regime. The periphery of Russia, comprising former USSR republics that gained independence apart from the Russian Federation, became a notable conflict-prone area in the contemporary world. From Ukraine and Moldova (Transnistria) in Europe, through South Ossetia and Abkhazia in Georgia, Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan, Chechnya in Russia within the wider Caucasus region, to Tajikistan and other volatile areas in Central Asia, the periphery of the former USSR is replete with records of armed conflicts in the post-Cold War period. The pattern of Russia’s military intervention is a prevalent feature, underscoring the international dimension inherent in these conflicts.

The second pattern is observed in the significant impact of the Global War on Terror. While the broader concept of combating terrorism dates back to the 20th century, the so-called Global War on Terror commenced with the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 to remove Al-Qaeda and the Taliban regime following the 9/11 attacks in New York and Washington, D.C. The 2003 Iraq War resulted in disastrous consequences in the country, the region, and for the US and its allies. The Arab Spring, armed conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and the rise of the Islamic State (IS) further fueled terrorist activities, extending to the Sahel region in Africa. Many of these groups pledged allegiance to either IS or Al-Qaeda, establishing connections with their networks. The Global War on Terror expanded from South Asia through the Middle East to Africa.

The third pattern arises from the fragility that invites international interventions. After the Arab Spring, numerous authoritarian regimes faced challenges from anti-government movements, leading to varying responses. Some regimes brutally suppressed anti-government movements with international support, as seen in Syria, while others descended into factional wars with foreign intervenors, exemplified by Libya. Coup d’états unfolded in the Sahel, accompanied by internationally instigated disinformation, misinformation, and the presence of foreign mercenaries.

The legitimacy of liberal democracy is globally contested, evident in incidents of violence during elections even in the United States, where groups like the Proud Boys operate actively. With the waning political and economic power of the West, traditional democracies face accusations of a double standard, particularly in their disparate approaches to conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza. If universal applicability is compromised, skepticism about liberal democracies, driven by perceptions of hypocrisy, becomes inevitable.

7. Conflict resolution policies need to be adjusted

The era of ambitious agendas for peacebuilding/state-building has passed. Few donors can afford to sustain large investments for extensive projects aimed at renewing a sovereign state. UN peacekeeping operations continue to see downsizing in their budgets, numbers, size, and operational scope. Even humanitarian aid activities started to be downsized in 2023. Given this challenging reality, conflict resolution policies must be adjusted realistically in tune with the conditions on the ground.

Firstly, the traditional measure of “deterrence” should be discussed in conflict resolution, responding to many international intra-state armed conflicts in the contemporary world. With the weakening and loosening of US power after the rapid expansion of NATO, partner states are urged to increase their defense efforts. In line with this process, (sub-)regional organizations have emerged as security providers, such as the EU, AU, ECOWAS, etc. While they have clear limits in their operational capacities, they are expected to function as deterrence mechanisms by compensating for the lack of strong military alliances to deter moves of instability in their regions. This applies to countries like Ukraine, which aspires to accede to NATO but may not be able to do so in the near future. There must be some kind of deterrence system to prevent the spread and re-occurrence of armed conflicts once they are alleviated or terminated. The package of so-called “security

guarantees” is supposed to be a deterrence system through weapon provisions, capacity development, information sharing, etc.

Secondly, the traditional measure of “monitoring” should be reassessed in the context of the downsizing of peacekeeping operations and the reluctance of conducting military interventions as “enforcement” actions. Robust manners of UN peacekeeping operations are almost outdated. The pretension of a universal organization may continue to be betrayed by the Security Council in the foreseeable future, as it does not decide on important policy agendas due to serious confrontations among the permanent members. The effectiveness of economic sanctions is being seriously questioned. In the end, elaborate manners of mediation for peace through negotiation must be patiently respected, with careful introductions of ad-hoc monitoring mechanisms and the way they operate in gradation of areas. In short, more modest approaches to conflict resolution need to be revalued, with reinforced investments in the areas of mediation and monitoring. In the case of Ukraine and some others, the universal nationwide implementation of monitoring is just impossible, but, thus, there should be ad hoc mechanisms of monitoring in gradation systems.

Thirdly, the recent approach to peacebuilding, regarding ambitious reform agendas, needs to be scaled back. The diminishing credibility of liberal democracy negatively affects the way peacebuilding agendas are pursued. With reduced funds available for peacebuilding projects, prioritization must be seriously made in favor of the importance of conflict resolution. The Hobbesian concentration of power in the central government may not appropriately work under circumstances in which universal values are seriously questioned. More gradual, nuanced, and locally-owned approaches to peacebuilding need to be mainstreamed. Regional settings beyond national borders are indispensable. In the case of Ukraine, which is going to be regarded as a strong military power in the region, assurances of confidence-building measures with neighboring countries must be pursued with an informal platform for dialogues among regional partners.¹⁹

8. Concluding remarks and the future of FOIP

The theory and practice of conflict resolution need revitalization to better address the challenges of our changing and complex world. This essay contends that unless the theory and practice of conflict resolution adapt more effectively to the phenomenon of international intra-state armed conflicts, the bias towards the dominance of intra-state armed conflicts in the contemporary world will persist. A combined approach that draws on the theoretical insights of both Conflict Resolution and International Relations is necessary to overcome this bias. Implementing domestic reforms and promoting international partnerships in a combined manner is also essential to tackle the increasing number of international intra-state armed conflicts.

The relevance of FOIP (Free and Open Indo-Pacific) is underscored in this context. While FOIP itself is not a conflict resolution mechanism, the partnership envisioned by the Free and Open Indo-Pacific should be strengthened and leveraged for conflict resolution purposes. Partnerships for conflict resolution can be formed within the framework of FOIP, and existing forums like TICAD (Tokyo International Conference on African Development) could be enhanced within the FOIP framework by expanding the number of sponsoring states. Japan, for example, doesn’t have to host TICAD alone, and may rather position it as a forum to broaden Japan’s partnership with other FOIP-committed countries.

Take Ukraine as an example, as it is not irrelevant to FOIP. Ukraine maintains the status of a maritime power, and the Indo-Pacific area is connected to the Black Sea through the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. The management of free and open seas is crucial for the FOIP partners. The vision of FOIP as a platform for partnership in maintaining free and open seas should be visibly pursued for the purpose of conflict resolution as well.

¹⁹ Hideaki Shinoda, *Partnership Peace Operations: UN and Regional Organizations in Multiple Layers of International Security* (Routledge, 2024), forthcoming.