



# Gradual, Cooperative, Coordinated: Effective Support for Peace and Democracy in Conflict-Affected States

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**Abstract:** This article analyzes the success factors for external engagement aimed at fostering peace in conflict-affected states. It focuses on a set of three factors that have been under-researched so far: the strategic prioritization between stability and democracy, the degree of coordination, and the mode of interaction. We compare international engagement in six countries—Burundi, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Senegal, and Timor-Leste. These countries all struggled with violent conflict and experienced a democratic transition in the period 2000–2014. We use an innovative approach to assess the impact of external engagement by analyzing twenty critical junctures in the domestic political processes of these countries mainly linked to elections, constitution-writing processes, and peace agreements, as well as disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration. Based on over 300 interviews, we find that prioritizing stability over democratization is problematic, good international coordination has positive effects, and preferring cooperative forms of interaction over coercion is mostly but not always useful. In discussing these general features of international support, this article contributes to the broader discussion of factors that explain the impact external actors can have on transformative political processes after conflict.

**Resumen:** Este artículo analiza los factores de éxito de la participación externa destinada a fomentar la paz en los estados afectados por conflictos. Se centra en un conjunto de tres factores que hasta ahora no se han investigado lo suficiente: la priorización estratégica entre estabilidad y democracia, el grado de coordinación y el modo de interacción. Comparamos la participación internacional en seis países: Burundi, Kenia, Kirguistán, Nepal, Senegal y Timor Oriental. Todos estos países tuvieron que lidiar con conflictos violentos y experimentaron una transición democrática entre el 2000 y el 2014. Utilizamos un enfoque innovador para evaluar el impacto de la participación externa mediante el análisis de veinte coyunturas fundamentales en los procesos políticos internos de estos países, principalmente vinculados a elecciones, procesos de redacción de constituciones y acuerdos de paz, así como desarme, desmovilización y reintegración. Tras realizar más de 300 entrevistas, descubrimos que priorizar la estabilidad sobre la democratización es problemático, que una buena coordinación internacional tiene efectos positivos, y que optar por maneras cooperativas de interacción sobre la coerción es, en la mayoría de los casos, pero no siempre, útil. Al analizar esas características generales del apoyo internacional, este artículo contribuye a un análisis más amplio de los factores que explican el impacto que los actores externos pueden generar en los procesos políticos transformadores después de un conflicto.

**Résumé:** Cet article analyse les facteurs de succès des actions externes visant à amener la paix dans des états affectés par les conflits. Il se base sur un ensemble de trois facteurs qui n'ont pas fait l'objet de recherches poussées jusqu'ici: la priorisation stratégique entre la stabilité et la démocratie, le degré de coopération et la méthode d'interaction. Nous comparons l'action internationale dans six pays: Burundi, Kenya, Kirghizistan, Népal, Sénégal et Timor-Leste. Tous ces pays sont aux prises avec des conflits violents et ont connu une transition démocratique entre 2000 et 2014. Nous utilisons une approche innovante pour évaluer l'impact des actions externes en analysant vingt moments critiques dans les processus politiques domestiques de ces pays principalement liés aux élections, processus de rédaction de constitution et accords de paix, ainsi qu'au désarmement, à la démobilisation et à la réinsertion. En nous basant sur plus de 300 entretiens, nous avons découvert que la priorisation de la stabilité par rapport à la démocratisation est problématique, qu'une bonne coopération internationale a des effets positifs et que privilégier les formes coopératives d'interaction plutôt que des formes coercitives est en général—mais pas toujours—pertinent. En traitant ces caractéristiques générales de soutien international, cet article contribue à élargir les débats sur les facteurs expliquant l'impact que les acteurs externes peuvent avoir sur les processus politiques de transformation post-conflit.

**Keywords:** conflict, international support, democracy, critical junctures, peace

Building and sustaining peace has been one of the major objectives in international relations for decades. Strategies and activities to support peace in conflict-affected states—ranging from support for peacebuilding to democracy support—are thus part of the wider foreign policy agendas of most international players. Donors belonging to the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) spent more than 16 percent of their aid budgets (or on average \$15 billion per year) to support peace and democracy worldwide between 2004 and 2014.<sup>1</sup> Yet, while evidence suggests that democracy and peacebuilding support can contribute to peace, the question of which factors actually do so has remained understudied to date. In fact, most empirical research has generated explanations about why support for peace has *not* worked rather than why it *has* worked.

Based on the in-depth study of six countries (Burundi, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Senegal, and Timor-Leste), this article analyzes when external interventions—peacebuilding and democracy support—have been effective in supporting peace. Drawing upon different strands of literature, we focus on three potentially relevant but yet underresearched explanatory factors. First, we investigate the widespread assumption in peace and conflict research that *prioritizing stability over democratization* makes international support more effective and, thus, contributes to peace. Various empirical studies conclude that prioritizing stability over democratization in post-conflict situations is a necessary condition for successful peace support because of an observed positive relationship between early democratization and violent conflict (Snyder and Mansfield 2007; Cederman, Hug, and Krebs 2010).

Second, we analyze the influence the *interaction mode* of international support has on its effectiveness. Typically, international support for peace and democracy takes *cooperative forms* of interaction between domestic stakeholders and external actors—with dialogue and persuasion as dominant elements of interaction. To varying degrees, however, interventions can also take on more *coercive forms*, such as diplomatic pressure or sanctions. Both modes of interaction—coercive and cooperative—can

<sup>1</sup> Authors' own calculation of bilateral official development assistance, based on OECD-DAC Statistics. <https://stats.oecd.org/qwids/>. Accessed on August 28, 2016.

also be combined in one strategy. Previous research mostly focused on specific instruments (such as sanctions or conditionalities). We take a broader view and analyze the general mode of interaction of various international actors, including the combination of different modes in one strategy.

Third, we examine how the *degree of coordination* among international actors affects the effectiveness of support. Typically, effective coordination between international actors pursuing similar goals in one country is considered crucial for the effectiveness of international interventions (Faust, Koch, and Leiderer 2011; Bigsten and Tengstam 2012). It is less clearly established, though, that these findings also hold true for peacebuilding and democracy support.

The aim of this article is twofold. By focusing on the three explanatory factors mentioned above, we seek to sharpen theoretical explanations for the effectiveness of international support for peace. At the same time, this article also makes a methodological contribution to the field of impact assessment. Most empirical case studies that investigate external support face enormous challenges in demonstrating the causal effect of the external intervention in question because they lack a credible counterfactual. To solve this problem, our empirical analysis departs from the domestic political process rather than the international support. It identifies critical junctures in the peace processes of six conflict-affected states—mainly linked to elections; constitution-writing processes; peace agreements; disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR); and security sector reforms (SSR)—and asks whether international support contributed to the country taking a peaceful turn (or avoiding a negative turn) at these junctures. International support that had a crucial influence in these moments, we posit, can be considered to have had an impact on peace in a given country.

Based on more than 300 interviews, we find that prioritizing stability over democratization is problematic, good international coordination has positive effects, and preferring cooperative forms of interaction over coercion is largely useful for supporting peace, but not always. In discussing these general features of international support, the article provides new insights regarding factors that explain the impact external actors can have on transformative political processes.

In the remainder of this article, we first develop three hypotheses related to the three factors introduced above and discuss the main concepts and their operationalization. In the subsequent section, we outline the methodology used to measure the impact of international support for peace and democracy and explain our case selection. In the main part we discuss the empirical evidence for confirming, rejecting, or refining each of our three hypotheses. The article concludes with an overview of the overall findings and an outlook on their implications for future research on international support for peace and democracy.

### Hypotheses: Prioritization, Cooperation, and Coordination

The starting point of this research is the observation that sustainable peace is a process of political and societal change that is decided upon and executed—but also constrained—by *domestic* actors and institutions. We therefore assume that external peacebuilding and democracy support can positively impact peace processes but are never sufficient to explain them (Leininger 2010). We conceive peace as “the absence of violence, absence of war” (Galtung 1964, 2). Violent conflict is defined as the use of armed force between two organized groups, one of which can be the government of a state (following UCDP/PRIO).<sup>2</sup> Peace will only endure if it is structurally anchored in society. Societies must thus establish institutions that distribute power and resources fairly and equally in the long run (Galtung 1969). If structural peace is absent, the use of violence—from violent civil protests to the outbreak of

<sup>2</sup> Uppsala Conflict Data Program/Peace Research Institute Oslo. <https://ucdp.uu.se/>.

war—is likely to recur (Cederman, Gleditsch, and Buhaug 2013). International interventions address both the direct containment of violence and peace. We use the term “stabilization” to refer to international efforts to contain or end violence in the short run.

Peacebuilding, according to former UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali (1992), comprises an “action to identify and support structures [that] will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict.” Democracy support has become an important element of liberal peacebuilding (Paris 2010). This practice of international actors is based on the assumption that only a democratic regime provides institutions to solve societal conflicts in a peaceful way. Democracy support aims at “establishing, strengthening, or defending democracy in a given country” (Azpuru et al. 2008, 151). Participation and contestation are two key elements of a democracy, including civil rights and the rule of law (Dahl 1971). Democratization refers to a change in regime quality toward a closer representation of this ideal concept. Democratization often implies political struggle because it alters the rules of the political game and power distribution in a given society. We consider international engagement effective if it had a decisive positive impact on peace in a conflict-affected country.

We focus on three big debates in the peacebuilding literature and development studies with the aim of sharpening explanations for the effectiveness of international support for peace. These debates are over the effects of prioritizing stability over democracy, the use of coercive versus cooperative modes of support, and the coordination among donors.

#### *Hypothesis 1: Prioritizing Stability*

The first hypothesis deals with the possible trade-offs between stability and democratization (Jarstad and Sisk 2008; Leininger, Grimm, and Freyburg 2012). With their influential work, Mansfield and Snyder (1995, 2002, 2005) call attention to the fact that the process of democratization might have destabilizing effects. Several authors confirm that democracies (as well as autocracies) are very stable, but during the process of transition, countries are highly vulnerable to conflict (Ward and Gleditsch 1998; Hegre et al. 2001; Goldstone and Ulfelder 2004; Cederman, Gleditsch, and Buhaug 2010).

Qualitative research confirms the statistical results, highlighting in particular the destabilizing effects of competitive elections in postconflict situations (Ottaway 2002; Chesterman, Ignatieff, and Thakur 2004; Fearon and Laitin 2004; Fukuyama 2004; Ottaway and Mair 2004; Paris 2004). Highly relevant for policy-makers, these findings stipulate a debate about how practitioners should react. Numerous scholars call for a sequenced approach that stabilizes the situation first by strengthening state institutions and postponing democratization until adequate state institutions are in place (Ottaway 2002; Chesterman, Ignatieff, and Thakur 2004; Fearon and Laitin 2004; Fukuyama 2004; Ottaway and Mair 2004; Paris 2004). Yet, this view is not uncontested. Most prominently, Carothers (2007) claims that, even if emerging democracies struggle with strengthening state institutions and the rule of law, they are better equipped to respond to these challenges than their autocratic counterparts. Instead of sequencing, he calls for a gradualist approach to democratization that aims immediately for “the development of fair and open processes of political competition and choice” (Carothers 2007, 25). In its very essence, the scholarly consensus holds that a minimum level of stability is necessary before democratization can start (Mansfield and Snyder 2007; Zürcher et al. 2013). Against this background, our first hypothesis reads as follows:

H1: Effective support for peace requires prioritizing stability over democratization in conflict-affected contexts.

*Hypothesis 2: Cooperative Forms of Interaction*

Peace and democratization processes are only successful if based on domestic ownership (see, for example, [Schraeder 2003](#); [Burnell 2007](#); [Fortna and Howard 2008](#)). Depending on the degree of consensus between international strategies and recipients' interests in the peace process, external actors can employ different interaction modes that range from "soft power" or cooperative instruments to coercive measures ([Burnell 2008](#); [Koch 2015](#)). Cooperative instruments, such as financial or material support, are based on consent from both sides and can thus build upon a certain level of local political will. Even in highly authoritarian settings where a political will for democratization, for example, is lacking, cooperation can be used to try to subtly change the attitudes of political actors through socialization ([Freyburg 2015](#)).

Coercive instruments such as sanctions and conditionalities are applied if (personal or group) interests thwart peace. This mostly means trying to pressure or force unwilling governments (or other major political actors) to embrace reforms, while also refraining from undoing steps that may endanger peace.<sup>3</sup> It is to be expected that such resistance makes external support more difficult, since it might imply imposing institutional change rather than supporting endogenously driven processes.<sup>4</sup>

Hard evidence appraising the effectiveness of the different interaction modes for democracy support and peacebuilding has been inconclusive so far ([Burnell 2007](#); [Grävingholt and Leininger 2014](#)). However, comparing different strands of literature suggests that cooperative forms of interaction should be preferred when supporting peace. Conditionalities have mainly been shown to be successful in the context of European Union accession ([Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005](#); [Grabbe 2006](#); [Youngs 2010](#)). Similarly, a large academic literature has come to pessimistic conclusions regarding sanctions ([Cortright and Lopez 2002](#); [Drezner 2003a, 2003b](#); [Lacy and Niou 2004](#); [Strandow 2006](#); [Vines 2012](#)). In contrast, several cooperative forms of interaction have proven effective; diplomatic interventions, for instance, can shorten civil wars ([Fortna 2004](#); [Regan and Aydin 2006](#); [Hegre, Hultman, and Nygard 2015](#)). Against this background, our second hypothesis reads as follows:

H2: Cooperative forms of interaction render support for peace more effective than coercive and conditioned forms of interaction.

*Hypothesis 3: Donor Coordination*

Donor coordination is the systematic and regular exchange between donors on their activities in a subfield of development cooperation.<sup>5</sup> It should be important for the effectiveness of international support for peace and democracy out of two reasons. First, implying a division of labor among the international community, coordination can be essential to avoid duplications when a multiplicity of donors is working on similar issues, and hence coordination makes support for peace and democracy more efficient. Several theoretical studies emphasize the transaction costs poor coordination creates for both donors and particularly recipients by

<sup>3</sup>The most coercive way of external democracy support—external invasion or war—is an extreme case, which is not taken into account in this analysis, since the research project only looks at countries that have specifically decided to engage in postconflict democratization.

<sup>4</sup>In reality, coercive instruments and cooperative instruments cannot be separated neatly, but they often overlap or are used jointly. For example, international mediation is not possible without the consent and participation of the two warring parties. However, threatening sanctions can be an important instrument to keep all parties at the negotiation table. This article differentiates between the two depending on whether the instrument was initially based on consent, but fully acknowledges the possible combination of the two interaction modes.

<sup>5</sup>This ranges from merely sharing information to a strict division of labor and can include domestic actors.



overburdening the absorption capacity of a country (Torsvik 2005; Easterly 2007; Bigsten and Tengstam 2012).

Second, one can assume that coordination also enhances the coherence of donor approaches. Donor approaches are coherent if they further the same overall goal or at least do not conflict with each other. Generally, the realization is spreading that the excessive fragmentation of aid has regularly impaired aid effectiveness in individual countries, and many authors recommend better donor coordination as a means of raising the effectiveness of international support for peace and democracy (de Zeeuw and Kumar 2006; Easterly and Pfütze 2008; Paris 2009; Leininger, Grimm, and Freyburg 2012). Against this background, our third hypothesis reads as follows:

H3: Higher levels of coordination render support for peace more effective than less-coordinated support.

Although each of the three factors can theoretically impact the effectiveness of donor engagement individually, their effect can also depend on one another. Coordination can be important when donors use pressure to overcome a lack of political will for reforms (Boyce 2002). The chosen strategy may also influence whether such pressure is used. If donors fear that employing coercive instruments could jeopardize stability, a strategy of prioritizing stability can explain their choice of more cooperative instruments.

### Methodology and Case Selection

Tracing the effect external support has on complex political processes, such as the emergence or enhancement of peace, is methodologically challenging (Grävingsholt, Leininger, and von Haldenwang 2012). The approach taken in this article is a multilayered comparison based on the analysis of twenty critical junctures in six conflict-affected states.

#### *Impact Assessment: Critical Junctures*

Major political change such as a society's move from widespread violent conflict to stable peace is an extraordinary event in a world marked by path dependency and self-reproducing institutional settings. The constant interplay of actors and institutions is usually biased in favor of structural continuity (Hall and Taylor 1996; Scharpf 1997; Pierson 2004; Sanders 2008, 41; Steinmo 2008, 151). However, brief periods of contingency may relax the institutional constraints, enabling agency to influence the political trajectory more than usual (Mahoney 2001; Capoccia and Kelemen 2007). During such times of political change, *critical junctures* emerge that can result in significantly different outcomes, all of which are equally plausible at the time. For instance, a demobilization process may result in the peaceful disarmament and reintegration of combatants, or trigger renewed violence. Whichever outcome eventually occurs will have a decisive impact on the future political process, which will reinforce old or create new path dependencies. Mahoney (2001, 7) suggests a useful definition of critical junctures as “choice points that put countries (or other units) onto paths of development that track certain outcomes—as opposed to others—and that cannot be easily broken or reversed.”

Although some scholars (see Capoccia and Kelemen 2007; Møller 2013) metaphorically refer to critical junctures as “moments” and use the language of “choice points,” which suggests a brief temporal extension, it can take time for structural change to actually take place. We therefore agree with Capoccia and Kelemen (2007) that even periods that take place over several years can be considered critical junctures.

The high relevance of critical junctures for future political developments and the strong counterfactual logic inherent in the concept have useful methodological implications. It allows us to draw causal inferences and approximate the impact of external support: if external engagement can be shown to have had a significant influence on the outcome of a critical juncture, we can conclude that the engagement was crucial for the overall political process.<sup>6</sup>

Choosing critical junctures as our main unit of analysis thus requires constructing careful counterfactuals. Counterfactual analysis is a common tool for causal inference in case study analysis (George and Bennett 2005; Barrenechea and Mahoney 2017). Counterfactuals analysis “means that we engage in a thought experiment” in which we assess what the dependent variable would look like if the independent variable had been different (Blatter and Haverland 2012, 48). If, for example, elections in a postconflict country remain peaceful but lead to an erosion of democratic standards, the elections can represent a positive outcome if a return to violence had been a very likely alternative. However, if a return to violence had not been very likely, an alternative counterfactual would interpret the same outcome as negative if the elections weakened democracy in the country and thereby threatened the sustainability of peace. “It is important to note that counterfactual reasoning should not lead to unlimited speculation, nor are all counterfactual claims equally compelling” (Blatter and Haverland 2012, 48). Using counterfactual reasoning, researchers should pay attention to historical and theoretical consistency. To determine if a fundamentally different outcome had been possible at the time, and what the most plausible alternative outcome would have been, we draw on in-depth fieldwork.

Based on the logic of critical junctures, for the purpose of this article we consider international support to be effective in promoting peace in a conflict-affected state if two criteria are fulfilled. First, *impact* is attributed when international support has been instrumental in bringing about the critical juncture (i.e., it must be featured as one of the key explanatory factors without which the process [and outcome] would arguably have been significantly different). Second, to qualify as *effective for peace*, international support needs to have influenced a critical juncture whose outcome either substantially promoted the overall peace process or prevented an imminent backlash.

The analysis of critical junctures follows four steps. The first step involves assessing the relevance and impact of the juncture on the overall peace process and establishes its most likely counterfactual. Each critical juncture can potentially have a significant positive or negative impact on peace. The second step involves analyzing the evolution of the critical juncture in the political process of a country. More specifically, the actors involved and the main processes and decisions that led to the outcome are identified. The third step is an in-depth analysis of donor engagement for peace and democracy relevant for the critical juncture. Based on the findings of the analysis performed in the second step, the question in this third step is whether donors contributed to the achievements and shortcomings of the juncture and, if so, to which ones and how. The fourth step in the analysis identifies those features of donor engagement that might explain success or failure of the support. Here our hypotheses are directly addressed. Matching international activities with the strengths and weaknesses of the critical juncture makes it possible to construct a causal chain from donor activities to the outcome of the critical juncture. The attribution of impact thus relies on constructing plausible theories of impact through (1) a plausible counterfactual and (2) alternative explanatory factors.

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<sup>6</sup>In terms of logic, “crucial” here comes close to the category of a “necessary condition,” whereas statements of sufficiency cannot be derived from this reasoning.

*Selection of Cases*

Since we analyze the effectiveness of external engagement—peacebuilding and democracy support—on peace, the selected countries all represent conflict-affected states.<sup>7</sup> In addition, all countries experienced a democratic transition after 2000, making the promotion of democracy a plausible element of peace support.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, every country had to have seen a significant increase in external peacebuilding and democracy support either shortly before or after this transition event, implying that external actors took a conscious, strategic decision to support the country's trajectory to peace.<sup>9</sup> In order to guarantee the generalizability across a wide variety of conflict-affected states, we selected six countries affected by three different types of conflict.

Burundi and Nepal represent countries that struggled with civil war. Burundi suffered a decade of devastating civil war before major warfare ceased in 2003. A key peace agreement had been signed in 2000 and initiated a transitional period with a peace and democratization process. Following the 2000 agreement, Burundi registered remarkable initial achievements toward peace and democracy. More recently achievements have been reversed when the country's president was reelected in 2015 despite serious doubts about the legality of this move, which triggered sustained violence.<sup>10</sup>

In Nepal, the signing of a comprehensive peace agreement in 2006 ended a decade-long civil war and provided the basis for a more inclusive democracy. For years, a constituent assembly struggled to write a new constitution. In the end, a new constitution was only adopted in 2015 as a result of a rather controversial process. Nevertheless, Nepal has made important steps toward democracy and remained stable.<sup>11</sup>

Kenya and Kyrgyzstan represent states struggling with interethnic violence. For many years, both Kenya and Kyrgyzstan were ruled by autocratic leaders, who relied heavily upon nepotism and patronage. After the Kyrgyz Tulip Revolution in 2005 and the Kenyan opposition's electoral victory in 2002, both countries began to democratize. Interethnic tensions have caused recurring problems in both countries since the 1990s with bigger violent outbreaks in Kenya after disputed elections in 2007 and in Kyrgyzstan in June 2010 after a second revolution.<sup>12</sup> Since these eruptions, neither country has experienced renewed conflict, but peace remains fragile.

Senegal and Timor-Leste are examples of countries that experienced or emerged from secessionist conflict. Senegal is often referred to as “donor darling” because of its high need of capacity and institutional support coupled with a seemingly benign environment. After a successful transition to democracy in 2000, electoral violence in 2012 came as a surprise. At the same time, the Senegalese state has been facing a low-intensity, secessionist conflict in the isolated region of Casamance for thirty years. After a decade-long independence struggle, Timor-Leste became an internationally recognized independent state in 2002. The country faced the challenge of establishing a stable state and a functioning democratic system. In 2006 a major violent crisis revealed that stability was fragile, forcing the government to invite an international stabilization force. Since then, considerable

<sup>7</sup> Data from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program was used to identify incidents of civil war and other major violence. <https://ucdp.uu.se/>. Accessed on August 28, 2016.

<sup>8</sup> Polity IV data was used to identify a significant (positive) leap in the level of democratic governance between 2000 and 2014. <http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscrdata.html>. Accessed on August 28, 2016.

<sup>9</sup> OECD-DAC reporting on ODA committed for governance and peacebuilding purposes (CRS code 150) was used to identify a concerted international peacebuilding effort. <https://stats.oecd.org/qwids/>. Accessed on August 28, 2016.

<sup>10</sup> For a systematic comparison of donor strategies in Burundi and Nepal, see Mross (2019); for an in-depth study of the Burundi case, see Mross (2015).

<sup>11</sup> For a comprehensive study of the Nepalese case, see Grävingsholt et al. (2013).

<sup>12</sup> For a comprehensive comparative study of the Kenya and Kyrgyzstan cases, see Fiedler (2015, 2018).



**Table 1.** The Six Country Studies and Critical Junctures Selected

<i>Conflict-affected state</i>	<i>Critical junctures</i>
Burundi	Constitution building (2005) Disarmament, demobilization & reintegration (2008) Elections (2010)
Kenya	Mediation and peace agreement (2008) Constitution-building (2010) Elections (2013)
Kyrgyzstan	Overcoming violence (from 2010) Constitution-building (2010) Elections (2010)
Nepal	Elections (2008) Local elections (from 2008) Disarmament, demobilization & reintegration (2012) Constitution-building (2012)
Senegal	Constitution-building (2001) Peace agreement (2004) Electoral boycott (2007) Elections (2012)
Timor-Leste	Security sector reform (from 2006) IDP Crisis (2006) Elections (2007)

achievements have been made but problems in the security sector, which were closely linked to the outbreak of the 2006 crisis, have still not been comprehensively addressed.<sup>13</sup>

#### *Selection of Critical Junctures and Analytic Steps*

While countries and their respective peace processes play an important role for the empirical strategy of our research, the critical junctures constitute our basic units of analysis. In order to select the critical junctures, an extensive literature review provided the basis for a preliminary list of events or processes deemed central to the political process in each country case. A small survey was sent to 15 to 20 national and international country experts per country to identify which of these represent critical junctures and select the most relevant for further analysis. The selection was based on the following criteria: (1) the processes were of *crucial relevance* for the political trajectory at a time when a significantly different outcome was plausible (i.e., is a critical juncture) and (2) international engagement took place (thus, allowing to assess the effectiveness of international engagement). Table 1 presents the resulting choice of critical junctures. All cases were selected from a period of observation ranging from 2000 to 2014.

Our empirical strategy combines field research with the analysis of primary and secondary literature. Academic and policy literature, information on donor programs, strategic documents, and evaluations were used as background information, complemented by more than 300 semistructured interviews conducted in field research. The interviews were conducted with stakeholders from government, civil society, and media, as well as representatives from the donor and diplomatic community. About two-thirds of the interviews were with national representatives and one-third with international representatives. Table 2 gives more detailed information on the background of the interview partners. A comprehensive list of interviews is available at the *ISAISP* data archive.

<sup>13</sup> For a comprehensive study of the Timor-Leste case, see [Mross \(2017\)](#).

**Table 2.** Information on Interviews

Country	Bilateral agency	Multilateral agency	INGO	Politician	Government	Think tank/journalist	Civil society	Total
Burundi	8	5	3	11	7	4	7	45
Kenya	10	2	6	2	1	9	8	38
Kyrgyzstan	7	9	10	2	1	7	4	40
Nepal	28	16	13	25	23	16	20	160*
Senegal	14	5	12	4	7	11	8	61
Timor-Leste	6	11	2	3	9	6	6	43

\*In Nepal, 30 interviews were conducted at the local level, 19 of which with representatives of local communities, former combatants, and local peace institutions.

The following three sections provide the main findings of the empirical analysis in a synergetic way. Analyzing the role of international support to 20 critical junctures in six cases, we scrutinize the role of donor strategies, coercive or cooperative forms of interaction, and coordination of donor engagement.

### Empirical Analysis: Prioritizing Stability over Democratization

When donors are confronted with conflicting objectives between stability and democratization, they often choose to prioritize the former over the latter. The underlying logic is to avoid or postpone support for democratization—or specific aspects of it—that could undermine the peace process while the situation is still perceived as fragile and recurring violence remains a constant threat. Overall, the analysis reveals that prioritizing stability over democratization was *not* effective in most instances, while *not* prioritizing increased the effectiveness of donor engagement in those cases it was used.

#### *Positive Effect of Prioritizing Stability over Democracy*

Prioritizing stability over democracy had a positive impact on the effectiveness of peacebuilding efforts in only one case. The Nepalese elections to the constituent assembly in 2008 were a highly positive step in Nepal's postconflict development because they remained peaceful despite very unexpected results. Forecasts had predicted a strong competition between the largest parties, instead of the clear lead the Maoists gained (Tamang 2011). Although considered a success because of the peacefulness of the elections, higher democratic standards would have been possible at the time. However, the shared interest of the electoral commission and the international community was to “let the elections happen on time, let the elections happen peacefully, and let the elections’ result be acceptable.”<sup>14</sup> Imperfections such as shortcomings in the electoral law and its implementation as well as incidents of electoral violence were largely overlooked. International monitoring missions, most importantly by the Carter Center, European Union, and United Nations, played an important role in legitimizing the results.<sup>15</sup> Their quick and uncritical endorsement seemed to have been motivated by the will to bring the peace process forward. However, this desire to move forward drew criticism since it neglected the irregularities that occurred—with potential negative effects for long-term democratization.<sup>16</sup> Overall, however, this strategy appears to

<sup>14</sup> Interview, domestic government representative, Kathmandu, Nepal, March 21, 2013.

<sup>15</sup> Interviews, domestic politician, Kathmandu, Nepal, March 20, 2013; domestic NGO representative, Kathmandu, Nepal, March 21, 2013; and domestic local-level representative, Kathmandu, Nepal, April 4, 2013.

<sup>16</sup> Interview, international INGO representative, Kathmandu, Nepal, March 13, 2013; and representative of a multilateral agency, Kathmandu, Nepal, March 3, 2013.

have contributed to the effectiveness of international support and facilitated the success of the elections. A government representative judged that, “[w]ithout the vast support of the international community, it would not have been possible to accomplish the same peaceful and accepted election.”<sup>17</sup>

*Negative Effect of Prioritizing Stability over Democracy*

In all other critical junctures where donors prioritized stability over democracy, it had a negative impact on the effectiveness of their support. This was the case during electoral processes in Burundi in 2010 and Kenya in 2013. This also happened with regard to the question of whether local elections should occur in Nepal while the constitution-drafting process was still ongoing and in the effort to end and overcome interethnic violence in Kyrgyzstan in 2010.

Interviewees agreed that the 2013 Kenyan elections represented a failed chance to strengthen peace in Kenya as the elections “left the country divided completely.”<sup>18</sup> That the elections were declared free and fair, despite technical flaws and strong doubts by many that Kenyatta won more than 50 percent of the votes in the first round, caused widespread resentment and frustration (Elder, Stigant, and Claes 2014). The elections were seriously flawed. In particular, the electoral commission struggled with ensuring free elections and even directly violated democratic principles. For example, much of the technology bought to count, transmit, and tally the votes failed. As a result, some of the tallying had to proceed manually, and then the count was not transparent with observers blocked from the process. Donors prioritized stability over democracy by being more preoccupied with avoiding a repetition of the 2007 violence than with ensuring free and fair elections.<sup>19</sup> Despite the fact that most donor funds went to the electoral commission, it was not held accountable or subject to critique by donors, who feared that this would have destabilizing effects.<sup>20</sup> Overall, the elections significantly reduced trust in several state institutions, particularly the electoral commission. In the longer term, the strategy had negative effects on peace: sustained protests against the electoral commission in mid-2016 turned violent, an ominous lead up to the 2017 elections. Had the international community taken a more critical approach in its support for the elections and the electoral commission, it might have contributed to higher democratic standards, rendering the results more credible and contributing to strengthening peace in the long-term.

Prioritizing stability over democracy also negatively affected the effectiveness of donor support in the context of the Senegalese presidential and parliamentary elections of 2007. Parliamentary elections were initially to be held in 2005 but were postponed by President Abdoulaye Wade. He argued that the postponement would save state resources. Critics accused the incumbent government of using the postponement to better position itself for the elections.<sup>21</sup> Eventually, the major opposition parties boycotted the elections, accusing Wade of manipulating the electoral and party system. As a consequence of the 2007 elections, Wade’s government was able to govern without major political opposition (Hartmann 2010). The government further oppressed political debates and disabled alternative politics. Donors continued to closely cooperate with the Wade government and support it economically. They did not question nor criticize the elections in order to preserve political

<sup>17</sup> Interview, domestic government representative, Kathmandu, Nepal, March 19, 2013.

<sup>18</sup> Interview, representative of a bilateral cooperation, Nairobi, Kenya, May 7, 2014.

<sup>19</sup> They thereby followed the general mood in the country, which was highly focused on maintaining peace.

<sup>20</sup> Interviews, domestic representative of the bilateral cooperation, Nairobi, Kenya, May 12, 2014; domestic policy expert, Nairobi, Kenya, May 23, 2014. For a similar argument, see also Cheeseman, Lynch, and Willis (2014) and Elder, Stigant, and Claes (2014).

<sup>21</sup> Interview, domestic civil society representative, Dakar, Senegal, November 11, 2017.

stability in the country.<sup>22</sup> Prioritizing stability over political competition was based on the assumption that Senegal served as a regional anchor of peace in a troubled region.<sup>23</sup> The donor strategy, however, only contributed to the dedemocratization of the Senegalese political system (Galvan 2009). In the short-term, peace prevailed, yet peace was undermined in the longer term. Wade's government preserved political stability by marginalizing and co-opting opposition parties and critical voices after 2007. Political stability and peace were challenged, however, in the forerun to the presidential elections in 2012 when president Wade announced that he would run for a third presidential term. Political opposition to his attempt increased. Exceptional in the country's history, low-level violent unrest in the urban centers of the country emerged (Demarest 2016).

While in these two cases only minor instability has occurred so far, the Burundi case better demonstrates the detrimental effects such a prioritization strategy might have. After suffering a devastating defeat in a first round of local elections, most opposition parties boycotted presidential and legislative elections in 2010. As one diplomat stated, “[t]hat was a major catastrophe for this country.”<sup>24</sup> It allowed the ruling party to cement its power and strengthen its authoritarian tendencies.<sup>25</sup> These developments were clear causes of the protracted crisis Burundi faces today; President Pierre Nkurunziza's intention to run for a third term triggered violent protests. Despite these, Nkurunziza ran for president and won. State repression and political violence have dominated political life since claiming several hundred lives.

The international strategy to prioritize stability before and during the 2010 elections did not cause the situation in Burundi, but the strategy contributed and failed to help avert it. Donors prioritized stability at several instances: (1) In the run-up to the elections, internationals focused on the militarization of political party wings, while they ignored democratic deficits regarding campaign rights, freedom of association, as well as intimidation and repression (HRW 2010; ICG 2010). (2) In its efforts to convince the last rebel group under the leadership of Agathon Rwaswa to stop fighting and join the political scene, the international community contributed to the group's conviction that electoral victory was very likely if not inevitable<sup>26</sup> (El Abdellaoui 2010) instead of preparing it for the uncertainty of electoral results. The unexpected electoral defeat of Rwaswa's newly formed party at the local elections was one key reason for the subsequent electoral boycott. (3) While the donor community mustered tremendous efforts to avoid the looming boycott, its engagement once again followed the prioritization strategy—it endorsed the legitimacy of the election results and even rephrased an initial critical statement upon request. (4) Moreover, the donor community appeared satisfied when it succeeded in convincing the main “Tutsi” party to join the presidential elections,<sup>27</sup> enabling the fulfilment of the ethnic quotas. The fact that the other parties continued their boycott, however, cemented their marginalization, raising the stakes for the 2015 elections, which triggered the current crisis. The uneven playing field and elevated

<sup>22</sup> Interviews, representative of a multilateral agency, Dakar, Senegal, May 28, 2014; representative of bilateral cooperation, Dakar, Senegal, May 29, 2014; and domestic civil society representative, Dakar, Senegal, June 2, 2014.

<sup>23</sup> Interviews, domestic civil society and academia representatives, Dakar, Senegal, November 11, 2017; and domestic representative of international organization, Dakar, Senegal, June 2, 2014.

<sup>24</sup> Interview, representative of bilateral cooperation, Bujumbura, Burundi, May 15, 2014.

<sup>25</sup> Interviews, domestic civil society representative, Bujumbura, Burundi, May 6, 2014; domestic journalist, Bujumbura, Burundi, May 8, 2014; and domestic politician, Bujumbura, Burundi, May 9, 2013.

<sup>26</sup> Interview, representative of bilateral cooperation, Bujumbura, Burundi, May 15, 2014.

<sup>27</sup> Interviews, domestic journalist, Bujumbura, Burundi, May 12, 2014; representative of bilateral cooperation, Bujumbura, Burundi, May 22, 2014; and international organization representative, Bujumbura, Burundi, May 23, 2014.

expectations,<sup>28</sup> but also the handling of the situation,<sup>29</sup> were key reasons for the opposition's boycott of the general elections.

The previous examples all involve electoral processes, which are closely linked to democracy. Yet, the finding that prioritizing stability over democracy reduced the effectiveness of peacebuilding efforts also holds for a very different critical juncture, namely efforts to overcome interethnic violence in Kyrgyzstan. After the Kyrgyz interethnic violence in 2010, which claimed almost 500 lives and left many more injured and displaced, the international community clearly recognized the need to tackle the conflicts' root causes. Therefore, international partners jointly financed an independent commission to investigate the violence and its root causes. The commission's exclusively international composition and its openly critical and undiplomatic content<sup>30</sup> provoked outright rejection of the commission's final report on the Kyrgyz side (Matveeva 2011). Fearing to endanger a temporary peace,<sup>31</sup> the donor community refrained from emphasizing the need for, let alone push for, reforms that might have helped to prevent similar crises in the future.<sup>32</sup> It is not clear if the international community could have persuaded the governments to proactively address reconciliation. Yet, without even attempting to do so,<sup>33</sup> its efforts to overcome the interethnic violence lacked effectiveness and sustainability.

The empirical results indicate that prioritizing stability over democratization is a risky strategy that might contribute to exactly the instability it aims to prevent. Most often, it does not appear to have positively affected peace. Only in one case, the Nepalese elections of 2008, was prioritization successful, which rendered international peacebuilding support more effective. The finding suggests that this strategy requires very specific preconditions to be effective.

#### *The Alternative Strategy*

Against this background, the question arises whether a gradualist approach (i.e., *not* prioritizing stability over democratization), is less risky, as the counterfactual arguments presented above indicate, or poses a similar, if not stronger, risk of causing instability. Confirming the former, the gradualist approach was implemented successfully in several critical junctures, namely the constitution-drafting process in Burundi in 2005, mediation in Kenya in 2008, and the prevention of an unconstitutional third term in Senegal in 2012. The constitution-drafting process in Burundi exemplifies the effect of this alternative strategy.<sup>34</sup>

In Burundi, the constitution-drafting process took place in parallel to the demobilization and integration of the largest rebel group into the national army. There were strong fears that this process would explode, and observers declared it a "miracle" that it proceeded without a single bullet being fired.<sup>35</sup> The international community, in particular the regional powers engaged in supporting Burundi's peace

<sup>28</sup> Interviews, representative of bilateral cooperation, Bujumbura, Burundi, May 12, 2014; domestic civil society representative, Bujumbura, Burundi, May 22, 2014; and international organization representative, Bujumbura, Burundi, May 23, 2014.

<sup>29</sup> Interviews, domestic politician, Bujumbura, Burundi, May 9, 2014; domestic civil society representative, Bujumbura, Burundi, May 15, 2014; and domestic politician, Bujumbura, Burundi, May 22, 2014.

<sup>30</sup> Interviews, representative of a multilateral agency, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, September 18, 2014; and international representative of an international nongovernmental organization, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, September 15, 2014.

<sup>31</sup> Interview, representative of bilateral cooperation, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, September 19, 2014.

<sup>32</sup> Interview, representative of bilateral cooperation, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, September 19, 2014.

<sup>33</sup> Interviews, representatives of a multilateral agency, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, September 18, 2014; representative of bilateral cooperation, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, September 19, 2014; and domestic representative of a multilateral agency, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, September 24, 2014.

<sup>34</sup> Mediation in Kenya in 2008 and the attempt to achieve a third presidential term by President Wade in Senegal in 2012 were other examples analyzed in the project.

<sup>35</sup> Interviews, domestic journalists, Bujumbura, Burundi, August 14, 2014, and May 13, 2014; and representative of bilateral cooperation, Bujumbura, Burundi, May 22, 2014.



process, engaged strongly in forging a final agreement on the issue of power-sharing quotas, which previously had proven a major obstacle in the process<sup>36</sup> (*Great Lakes Regional Initiative 2004; ICG 2004*). A sequencing strategy would put primary focus on the immediate security-related dissolution of the rebel group, postponing constitution-drafting until after this is achieved. However, had this sequence been followed in Burundi, the constitution likely would not have been adopted in time for the elections to take place. These elections, in turn, were important for initiating the transitional period and bringing the peace process forward.

Overall, the hypothesis formulated above must clearly be rejected. Even in highly fragile situations, prioritizing stability over democracy is not generally conducive to rendering peacebuilding efforts more effective. In countries where peace and democratization are closely interlinked, prioritizing stability first poses the danger of allowing detrimental path dependencies to take root, which might have been avoided otherwise. In contrast, supporting both peace and democracy in parallel might have rendered peacebuilding efforts more effective in most instances. This is supported by the cases in which this approach was implemented successfully, particularly the constitution-drafting process in Burundi in 2005, but also mediation in Kenya in 2008, and the prevention of an unconstitutional third term in Senegal in 2012. In addition, the parallel strategy is supported by counterfactual reasoning suggesting that, in those cases where prioritization was used but had negative effects, a stronger focus on strengthening democratic institutions and freedoms might have been more conducive to strengthening peace in the long-term (elections in Burundi 2010, Kenya 2013, Senegal 2007, and overcoming interethnic violence in Kyrgyzstan after 2010).

### **Empirical Analysis: Cooperative versus Coercive Forms of Interaction**

Our second hypothesis states that cooperative forms of interaction contribute more effectively to peace than coercive and conditioned forms of interaction. Our results point toward benefits and drawbacks of both interaction modes, which refute the hypothesis.

On the one hand, donors were able to positively impact several critical junctures through cooperative interaction. In the internally displaced persons (IDP) crisis in Timor-Leste in 2007, where clashes between different branches of the security forces caused thousands to flee, donor support proved crucial. Support was provided cooperatively, according to the needs and under the leadership of the responsible ministry. In this way, international support not only helped to stabilize the situation by provisioning the IDP camps, but also facilitated the design and implementation of a very successful strategy to resolve the IDP crisis. While the leadership of the ministry was crucial, so was the technical support and international expertise that was provided. The close working relationship and mutual appreciation between the parties rendered international support effective.<sup>37</sup>

Similarly, donors were highly instrumental in stabilizing the situation in the South of Kyrgyzstan in 2010. They enabled conflict-sensitive reconstruction after violence had left around 2,800—mostly Uzbek—properties damaged.<sup>38</sup> Sustained support as well as good working relationships with the ministry in charge of reconstruction made this engagement a success. Interestingly, this critical juncture shows that pursuing a cooperative approach does not mean donors have to comply with everything their counterparts demand. Donors were able to insist contrary to the wishes of the mayor of Osh that the Uzbek owners of the destroyed houses not be resettled on

<sup>36</sup> Interviews, domestic government representative, domestic nongovernmental organization representative, Bujumbura, Burundi, May 12, 2014; and domestic politicians, Bujumbura, Burundi, May 19, 2014, and May 5, 2014.

<sup>37</sup> Interview, domestic representative of a multilateral agency, Dili, Timor-Leste, September 25, 2014.

<sup>38</sup> Interview, domestic academic, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, September 16, 2014.

the outskirts of the city but instead have their centrally located houses rebuilt.<sup>39</sup> This was important to prevent reconstruction from fueling new grievances.

The dissolution of the Maoist Army in Nepal in 2012 also shows that cooperative interaction can be highly effective. After the signing of the peace agreement, the combatants of the Maoist People's Liberation Army (PLA) were placed in cantonments, as an equal number of soldiers from the Nepalese Army were restricted to barracks. The UN monitoring mission aided with the verification of combatants, supervised their weapons, and built trust between the political parties.<sup>40</sup> When the process took longer than expected, further donor support, mainly in the form of infrastructure and maintenance of the cantonments as well as educational training, was equally important. This way no major violence between the two parties erupted although combatants on both sides had to wait for up to six years until a political solution was found on how to integrate the Maoist combatants into the Nepalese Army.<sup>41</sup>

#### *Positive Effects of Coercive Instruments*

The research demonstrates that, not only cooperative forms of interaction, but also coercive measures can be effective. In particular, coercive measures can make an important contribution to overcoming obstacles and bringing a peace process forward, as in the context of electoral violence during the Senegalese election of 2012, mediation in Kenya in 2008, and the constitution-drafting process in Burundi in 2005. In other situations, such coercive activities were missing, but could have made a difference.

Although the constitution-drafting process in Burundi relied heavily on agreements reached during the peace negotiations, intense power struggles hampered the process. During the drafting process, both sides tried to renege on the ethnic quotas or change them in their favor and so were unable to reach consensus on the constitution. Enshrining quotas in the constitution was by no means a matter of course despite the existing groundwork. The two main political factions were not natural supporters of the provisions: the main rebel movement did not sign the Arusha Agreement, while Uprona and other Tutsi-representing parties had signed the accord only with reservations. During the drafting process, both sides attempted to change the power-sharing provisions in their favor,<sup>42</sup> and they were unable to reach consensus. In this situation, the international community, in particular the UN special representative and the Regional Initiative actively engaged in the negotiation process; not only did they work to bring both sides together and facilitate discussion, but they also applied significant pressure on both sides to adhere to the power-sharing arrangements as included in the peace agreement (Reyntjens 2005).<sup>43</sup> As one local observer stated, “[a]t a certain moment, if not for the international community, some parties would have assumed radical positions that could have brought the country to war.”<sup>44</sup>

In Kenya and Senegal, international interventions were instrumental in overcoming electoral violence. In Kenya, many believe that mediation spearheaded by Kofi Annan in 2008 helped prevent a civil war. While mediation is generally cooperative in form, key ingredients to its success in these cases included not only good

<sup>39</sup> Interview, domestic journalist, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, September 18, 2014. See also Melvin (2011).

<sup>40</sup> Interview, domestic politician, Kathmandu, Nepal, April 4, 2013.

<sup>41</sup> Interview, representative of bilateral cooperation, Kathmandu, Nepal, March 13, 2013.

<sup>42</sup> The Hutu-representing parties called for a return to a free vote devoid of power-sharing restrictions, while the Tutsi-representing parties insisted on linking ethnic power-sharing components with political party affiliation.

<sup>43</sup> Interviews, domestic politicians, Bujumbura, Burundi, May 9, 2014, and May 19, 2014; and domestic civil society representative, Bujumbura, Burundi, May 12, 2014.

<sup>44</sup> Interview, Burundian government representative, Bujumbura, May 8, 2014.

mediation tactics,<sup>45</sup> but also national and international pressure, which at several instances prevented a breakdown of the talks.<sup>46</sup> These coercive measures, including threats of travel bans and the freezing of assets, helped to compel both presidential candidates to stick to the negotiations and eventually agree on a comprehensive peace agreement (Brown 2009; Kanyinga and Walker 2013; Office of the AU Panel 2014). In the Senegalese elections in 2012, international support was crucial for peace. International actors cooperated intensively with opposition movements and other critics of President Wade's attempt to seek a third presidential term (Kelly 2013). In particular, the European Union, France, Germany, and the United States successfully applied sanctions against the government, such as freezing aid or banning travel visa.<sup>47</sup> In both critical junctures, it appears that it was the combination of cooperative engagement in the form of mediation with coercive measures that effectively helped to advance the process when purely cooperative forms were unable to overcome political deadlock.

In one critical juncture, the international community did not adhere to coercive measures although they could have rendered their peacebuilding efforts more effective. In Nepal, a central problem of the peace process was that it focused mainly on central-level politics and lacked strong local institutions. The last locally elected bodies were dissolved in 2001 and later replaced by appointed bureaucrats. No elections at this level were held in the postconflict period until 2017. When a new constitution for Nepal was adopted after seven years (instead of the envisioned two), it caused violent protest by significant societal groups and hamstrung political life. While far from providing a miracle solution to all problems, locally elected—and accountable—representatives could have closed a serious bottleneck in the previous period, not only addressing the needs and concerns of the population, but also mediating between the central and the local levels. A window of opportunity existed when several stakeholders including the prime minister advocated for local elections,<sup>48</sup> yet few donors saw the urgency to seize the opportunity to support the initiative.<sup>49</sup> Donors recognized the significant challenges at the local level, providing large funds for local governance programs. Yet, they failed to use their leverage to push for local elections in a concerted effort at the time.

#### *The Possible Negative Effects of Coercion*

Two cases—security sector reform in Timor-Leste from 2006 to 2014 and the 2013 elections in Kenya—show that coercion is not always effective and that it can even backfire and have negative effects. Instead of achieving the intended outcome, donor engagement was seen as intrusive and thus was rejected. In addition, it strained the relationship between donors and their counterparts.

The first case involves the positioning of the diplomatic community against specific candidates in Kenya's 2013 presidential elections. At the time, Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto were the most promising team of candidates, but both faced charges at the International Criminal Court for their involvement with organized elements in the 2007 violence.<sup>50</sup> Through several public statements, Western

<sup>45</sup> Interview, domestic politician, Nairobi, May 20, 2014. For excellent, detailed analysis of the mediation and different tactics used, see Jepson (2014), and Kaye and Lindenmayer (2009).

<sup>46</sup> Interview, domestic think tank representative, Nairobi, Kenya, May 13, 2014.

<sup>47</sup> Interview, representative of bilateral cooperation, Dakar, Senegal, May 28, 2014; representative of bilateral cooperation, May 29, 2014; and domestic civil society representative, Dakar, Senegal, June 5, 2014.

<sup>48</sup> Interviews, domestic government representative, Kathmandu, Nepal, April 5, 2013; domestic think tank representative, Kathmandu, Nepal, March 1, 2013; and domestic international organization representative, Kathmandu, Nepal, March 12, 2013.

<sup>49</sup> Interviews, representative of bilateral cooperation, Kathmandu, Nepal, February 8, 2013; and domestic representative of bilateral cooperation, Kathmandu, Nepal, April 4, 2013.

<sup>50</sup> Both cases were later dropped.

diplomats made it clear that a vote for Kenyatta and Ruto would reduce diplomatic relations to minimal contact (Mueller 2014). The international community was strongly criticized for signaling a preference in the elections.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, Kenyatta's and Ruto's Jubilee Alliance was able to build a campaigning strategy around the assertion that a Western conspiracy existed against them (Brown and Raddatz 2014; Cheeseman, Lynch, and Willis 2014). In the end, the Jubilee Alliance won the elections with a narrow margin, the threatened consequences never materialized, and the relationship between donors and the Kenyan authorities suffered.<sup>52</sup>

The second case showing that coercion can be ineffective involves donor support for security sector reform in Timor-Leste from 2006 to 2014. In particular, the United Nations pursued a highly confrontational approach, repeatedly pressing the Timorese side to implement policies according to UN preferences.<sup>53</sup> After the crisis in 2006, the United Nations even made the presence of a UN peacekeeping force conditional on taking executive authority over policing. While the Timorese government initially had to accept the intrusive approach of the internationals, it eventually became more confident, particularly when the inflow of petro dollars increased its independence from donor funding. In the end, the government deliberately kept the United Nations out of key decisions and processes with regard to security sector reform. Not only did donors not reach what they intended, but they also reduced their chances of influencing the SSR process.

Overall, we find that both cooperative and coercive instruments can be both effective and ineffective. In several critical junctures, cooperative donor support was crucial to the process. But, coercive instruments also proved effective at times. In the cases where coercion was ineffective, we also observed a backlash as governments turned away from foreign partners perceived as being too intrusive.

### **Empirical Analysis: Coordination of International Support**

The third hypothesis states that high levels of coordination of democracy support and peacebuilding are a condition for the effectiveness of this support in conflict-affected contexts. The majority of cases in our research clearly confirm the positive effect of donor coordination. Furthermore, poor coordination clearly reduced the effectiveness of donor engagement. Only in one case was good coordination detrimental to effective donor engagement.

Good coordination helped to render donor engagement effective in most critical junctures. The elections in Nepal in 2008, the mediation in Kenya in 2008, and the elections in Senegal in 2012 stand out in this regard. In 2008, Nepal received massive support for its first postconflict elections, which made coordination a particular challenge. Led by the Nepalese electoral commission, a highly effective division of labor ensured the efficient use of the many funds provided.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, the joint goal of making elections possible and acceptable helped to tie donor engagement together. Overall, the elections in Nepal were an important step toward peace and democracy, an outcome supported by coordinated donor engagement.<sup>55</sup>

The mediation in Kenya in 2008, which successfully ended violence sparked by disputed elections, also serves as an example of coordination being decisive for donor impact. Kofi Annan spoke to representatives of the international community before initiating the talks to ensure that the international community stood behind

<sup>51</sup> Interview, international organization representative, Nairobi, Kenya, May 7, 2014.

<sup>52</sup> Interviews, domestic academic, Nairobi, Kenya, May 13, 2014; international organization representative, Nairobi, Kenya, May 7, 2014; and representative from bilateral cooperation, Nairobi, Kenya, May 9, 2014.

<sup>53</sup> Interview, domestic journalist, Dili, Timor-Leste, September 23, 2014.

<sup>54</sup> Interview, domestic government representative, Kathmandu, Nepal, March 21, 2013.

<sup>55</sup> Interview, domestic government representative, Kathmandu, Nepal, March 19, 2013.

him in unity.<sup>56</sup> During mediation, this joint international backing was important to ensure the mediation process stayed on track. Good coordination is one main factor explaining why mediation was successful.

Likewise, coordination between major donors of Senegal was decisive for successfully applying coercive measures to convince President Wade to step down from office after his second term. While international actors cooperated with civil society and supported the extraparliamentarian opposition to Wade's third term attempt, they threatened the aid-dependent Wade government with sanctions. Without a coordinated approach between major donors, conditionality and sanctions could not have been successfully implemented.<sup>57</sup>

#### *The Negative Impact of Poor Coordination*

Several critical junctures—in particular the security sector reform process in Timor-Leste, the failure of the Constituent Assembly in Nepal, and local peacebuilding in Kyrgyzstan—clearly show the negative consequences poor coordination has for the effectiveness of donor engagement.

In Timor-Leste, coordination in the SSR process, described as “not even close to excellent,”<sup>58</sup> led to reduced effectiveness by creating duplications and contradictions in donor support. On the one hand, various donors supported a community policing approach, which involved building a police force with close ties to the citizens and the community it served. On the other hand, the training of recruits was supported by the Portuguese paramilitary police force, which suggests a much more military approach to policing. Allowing these contradictory approaches “was meant to appease everybody who wanted a different type of police force” and had clearly negative effects. As one observer concluded, “[s]o everyone is still doing slightly different things and that has [. . .] led to an identity crisis inside the [National Police of Timor-Leste].”<sup>59</sup> Diverging donor approaches have resulted in inherent contradictions in the Timorese police forces, who now combine community policing with military elements.

Problems with regard to coordination in Kyrgyzstan serve as another example of how poor coordination can create duplications and contradictions reducing the effectiveness of international engagement. After the violence in 2010, Kyrgyzstan received massive donor attention and funds, one focus of which was supporting peacebuilding initiatives at the local level. Several donors became active in training mediators at the local level, each supporting their own program and format—the OSCE trained “peace ambassadors,” UNDP trained “oblast (province) advisory committees,” and UN Women trained “women peace committees,” for example. Due to the many different approaches and structures pursued, “the concept of mediation was totally undermined in Kyrgyzstan.”<sup>60</sup>

In Nepal, coordination functioned poorly with regard to the highly diverse donor engagement to the Constituent Assembly, the body who was tasked (but ultimately failed) to write a new constitution for Nepal. An INGO representative described the situation regarding coordination as follows: “The [Constituent Assembly] was a complete mess [. . .]. We did whatever we felt we thought that we should be doing.”<sup>61</sup> As a consequence, divergent approaches to federalism were supported or several

<sup>56</sup> Interview, domestic representative of a multilateral agency, Nairobi, Kenya, May 16, 2014.

<sup>57</sup> Interviews, representative of bilateral cooperation, Dakar, Senegal, May 26, 2014; and domestic government representative, Dakar, Senegal, October 14, 2017.

<sup>58</sup> Interview, domestic representative of bilateral cooperation, Dili, Timor-Leste, September 30, 2014.

<sup>59</sup> Interview, international organization representative, Dili, Timor-Leste, September 22, 2014.

<sup>60</sup> Interview, domestic representative of a multilateral agency, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, September 22, 2014.

<sup>61</sup> Interview, domestic international organization representative, Kathmandu, Nepal, March 12, 2013.



high-level facilitation dialogue mechanisms created, which reinforced the secretive nature of discussions on the constitution.<sup>62</sup>

Two further problems can arise from poor coordination: donor shopping and reputational costs. Security sector reform in Timor-Leste demonstrates how poor coordination resulted in the government regularly pitting donors against each other in search of the type of financing it preferred.<sup>63</sup> It thereby became impossible for donors to attach any type of conditions to their support because mutual competition led to situations where “there is always someone willing to pay for things.”<sup>64</sup> The issue of reputational costs caused by poor coordination was particularly salient during constitution-drafting in Nepal, but was also observed in Kyrgyzstan.<sup>65</sup> In Nepal, donors were harshly criticized for their poor coordination in the Constituent Assembly. This was problematic because it reduced the likelihood that external actors would be invited participants in similar processes in the future.

#### *One Deviant Case*

One critical juncture—namely the 2013 elections in Kenya—provides an important caveat to these insights. Donors were highly active in the preparations for the elections, investing large sums of money to ensure they would be peaceful and fair. Donor engagement was well coordinated, particularly since most donor funds were channeled through a UN basket fund. In fact, coordination in the elections was “remarkable” and the “highlight of the elections 2013.”<sup>66</sup> This good coordination, however, had a downside: massive funds were being concentrated on primarily one institution—the Kenyan electoral commission.<sup>67</sup> The commission was thereby enabled to buy technology, most of which failed on election day. Additionally, donors were not able to leverage the electoral commission when it became apparent that the commission was struggling to organize free and fair elections. Despite being highly coordinated, massive donor engagement in the 2013 elections failed to have a positive effect and instead exacerbated negative dynamics.

The example shows that good coordination is not enough to ensure successful donor engagement and that a certain diversity among recipients of support can be beneficial. This is not meant to encourage fragmentation—the negative effects of which are clear in the examples of poor coordination given above. But, it is important to note that positing coordination to be good and effective does not mean donor engagement should be reduced to one activity.<sup>68</sup>

Overall, the analysis of the critical junctures demonstrates that coordination usually increases the effectiveness of donor engagement. Poor coordination often impeded the effectiveness of donor engagement, and contradictions in donor support sparked by this poor coordination has negative long-term effects.

### **Conclusion**

This article took a closer look at what makes international support for peace (including peacebuilding as well as democracy support) effective by analyzing 20 cases

<sup>62</sup> Interviews, domestic civil society representative, Kathmandu, Nepal, April 1, 2013; and international organization representative, Kathmandu, Nepal, March 18, 2013.

<sup>63</sup> Interview, policy expert, Dili, Timor-Leste, September 24, 2014.

<sup>64</sup> Interview, representative of bilateral cooperation, Dili, Timor-Leste, September 30, 2014.

<sup>65</sup> All but one of our Nepalese interview partners was highly critical of donor support and coordination with regard to the Constituent Assembly.

<sup>66</sup> Interviews, domestic representative of a multilateral agency, Nairobi, Kenya, August 8, 2014; and representative of bilateral cooperation, Nairobi, Kenya, May 9, 2014.

<sup>67</sup> Interview, domestic representative of bilateral cooperation, Nairobi, Kenya, May 5, 2014.

<sup>68</sup> New quantitative research shows that, in democracy, aid diversity is actually beneficial—the more donors active in democracy support increases a country’s likelihood of being democratic (Ziaja 2018).

of external engagement in six conflict-affected states in the period 2000 to 2014. The focus lay on three explanatory factors: the prioritization of stability over democratization, the interaction mode between external and domestic actors, and the degree of coordination. By subjecting these general features of international support to systematic empirical analysis, the article contributes to the broader discussion of factors that explain external actors' impact on transformative political processes.

Our findings challenge the common assumption that stabilization must be prioritized over democratization to maintain peace. On the contrary, the empirical analysis reveals that prioritizing stabilization over democratization is problematic because it can lead to ineffective external support for peace in most cases. Furthermore, prioritizing stabilization in the short-term not only causes negative effects for democracy in several instances, but it even negatively impacts peace in the long term, as examples in Kenya and Burundi demonstrate. Counterfactual reasoning further supports these findings. In cases where stabilization was prioritized but with negative effects, a stronger focus on strengthening democratic institutions and freedoms would have been likely to be more successful in the long run. Overall, our findings suggest that a gradual approach—supporting both goals in parallel—is more promising than prioritizing peace over democracy.

The analysis of the forms of interaction and the degree of coordination as explanatory factors for effective support for peace yields interesting results for future research. Preferring cooperative forms of interaction over coercion was largely useful—but not always. Although cooperative external support was often crucial to render international support effective, coercive instruments such as sanctions (used in Kenya and Senegal) also proved effective at times. Where coercive interaction worked successfully, it was a consequence of prior failures to cooperate for peace and thereby helped overcome significant blockades in the political process. In some cases, coercive measures were absent, but might have made a difference. Yet, they are also more risky and can produce a backlash against international support, as in Timor-Leste and Kenya. In addition, good international coordination between external and domestic actors in transformative political processes turned out to be an important factor for successful coercive interaction. This finding resonates with studies on negative conditionality, which argue that coordination between donors is a necessary condition for successful international interventions in most developing countries (Koch 2015). Taken as a factor on its own, good international coordination mostly has positive effects. This is further underlined by cases where poor coordination led to contradictions that had negative long-term effects.

Methodologically, applying the logic of critical junctures turned out to be a useful tool to assess the impact of international support for peace. Based on the assumption that domestic processes drive political transformation, we used critical junctures in the countries' political processes as the starting point of the analyses. In order to assess effectiveness, we focused on the analysis of international actors' contributions to individual critical junctures. In none of the cases was international support a sufficient factor for peace in a given country. However, the critical junctures approach allowed us to identify nine effective instances of international support that clearly contributed to peace. In addition, comparing international actors' different contributions and effects during different critical junctures in the same country helped to solidify our findings.

The results described in this article can inform future research on the effectiveness of international support for peace in at least two meaningful ways. First, a gradual approach and the mixing of cooperative and coercive interaction seem to be more effective than prioritizing stabilization or purely cooperative interaction. These findings are relevant for a large variety of conflict-affected countries as they are deduced from six country contexts that suffered from very different types and intensities of conflict—large-scale civil war, secessionist conflict, and interethnic

violence. Further research should not only address the question of the right mix of areas of intervention (stability and democracy) but also consider its combination with the interaction mode (cooperative and coercive). Second, assessing the impact of international support for peace on the basis of the “critical junctures approach”—which implies counterfactual thinking—helps broaden the empirical evidence of explanatory factors for successful international peace support.

### Supplementary Information

Supplementary information is available at the *ISAISP* data archive.

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