

**Tracing How Civil Wars End:
The Intrastate Conflict Termination and Outcomes Dataset (1946–2023)**

Abstract

This article introduces the Intrastate Conflict Termination and Outcomes (ICTO) dataset covering conflict endings between 1946 and 2023. Civil war termination is more than violence stopping. It is a bargaining process with both sides accepting the symbols of defeat or victory, or the terms of peace. When settlements or winning are out of reach, belligerents often turn to conflict management strategies, maintaining ceasefires and mutually beneficial stalemates. The transformations of conflict actors also shape short- and long-term conflict ending processes, including territorial changes due to state collapse or chronic failure, with rebel groups carving out durable statelets. Multiple rebel groups may merge institutions, thereby ending one conflict and starting a new dyad. Rebel groups may also surrender or disband long after violence has stopped, giving governments a gradual victory off the battlefield. Many of these endings fall outside the window of existing termination datasets, which code outcomes from the last year of fighting and the first year of inactivity. The ICTO addresses this gap by tracing conflict actors and their endpoints five or more years after violence subsides, accounting for conflict outcomes which occur in periods of non-violence. The dataset also introduces theorized categories of non-decisive conflict outcomes, the most frequent scenarios, which lack the obvious symbolic cues of a peace agreement or military outcome. The sharpened conceptualization of intrastate conflict termination and outcomes, combined with the tracing approach, produces a rise in government victory and peace agreements with the decline in non-decisive situations.

Keywords: civil war, conflict termination, conflict outcomes, conflict dataset

Introduction

How do conflicts terminate? More than the absence of violence, armed conflict ends when belligerents reach mutually acceptable agreements or symbols of the war's outcome. In civil wars, symbolic cues include the signing of a peace agreement between conflict parties, the capturing of a presidential palace by rebel groups, or government armies conducting large scale counterinsurgency to capture rebel leaders. Scores of intrastate conflicts also fail to produce

recognizable symbols of termination, demanding close examination of bargaining dynamics and conflict actor trajectories after violence reduces.

This article introduces the Intrastate Conflict Termination and Outcomes (ICTO) dataset covering conflict endings between 1946 and 2023. It uniquely traces conflict actors and their endpoints for five or more years after violence subsides, capturing outcomes that form during periods of non-violence. In addition to the recognizable government victories, rebel victories, and political settlements, the ICTO distinguishes three non-decisive outcomes grounded in a bargaining framework, each defined by changes in the conflict actors, rather than the absence of violence alone. The three categories include: Territorial Change, where the state ceases to govern effectively, through collapse, chronic institutional failure, or the concession of substantial territory, and where rebel groups or separatist movements hold and govern territory; Rebel Reboot, where a group ends in its original form as its fighters reconstitute in a successor organization often via rebel group mergers; and Conflict Management, where violence subsides into a durable low-level equilibrium without resolving the incompatibility, sometimes sustained by conflict-mitigation ceasefires.

Civil wars have distinct variables that shape how they end. Unlike interstate conflicts, the life cycle of rebel groups shapes conflict trajectories. Rebel groups may dissolve, disarm, merge, or capture a capital city. These processes of change are accounted for in the ICTO conceptualizations of civil war endings, as well as the methods to code them. Government victories, for instance, can happen in periods of non-violence when rebel groups surrender or disband.

ICTO's coding approach leads to several shifts in outcome distribution compared with the UCDP Conflict Termination Dataset. Tracing actors beyond the last year of fighting and the first year of inactivity raises both political settlements and government victories. Political settlements rise from 85 to 131 outcomes, an increase of 6.5 percentage points. Government victories rise from 134 to 168, or 5.4 percentage points. Conflict Management, which replaces UCDP's low activity category, remains the largest outcome but is close to 4 percentage points smaller; many low activity cases are coded to alternative endpoints, and the reconfiguration also brings in dyads

with ceasefires designed only for a cessation of hostilities. ICTO treats ceasefires as instruments supporting different conflict outcomes, based on their design and purpose, rather than as a termination category. Comprehensive ceasefires that disarm rebels are therefore a subcategory of political settlements.

This article first considers what conflict termination means. Second, it examines how leading datasets currently measure it and the categories they use. It then presents the typology of conflict termination and outcomes used in the ICTO dataset and explains why tracing conflicts after fighting stops matters. Finally, the paper concludes by outlining how the sharpened outcome categories and dataset open up avenues for future research on war termination.

What is Conflict Termination

Conflict termination literature examines the ways conflicts end and variables which shape conflict ending processes (Carroll 1969; Klingberg 1966; Massoud 1996). Research on civil war endings points to the balance of military capability between the parties (Cunningham, Gleditsch & Salehyan 2009), the institutional make-up of governments and rebel organizations (Cunningham 2006; Staniland 2014), outside intervention and mediation (Regan 2002; Fortna 2004; Doyle & Sambanis 2006), settlement credibility (Walter 1997, 2002), and the length of the fighting (DeRouen & Sobek 2004; Fearon 2004). More than just the absence of violence, war ends when mutually acceptable symbols are reached between belligerents (Coser, 1961). As Coser argues:

Whenever wars have been strictly limited, as in eighteenth-century warfare, some visible event, such as the taking of a particular fortress, the reaching of some natural barrier and the like, symbolized to both parties that the desired objective has been reached by one of them and that the conflict could now be considered solved through the subsequent acquiescence of the loser. When such mutually acceptable symbolic clues are not available, the resolution of the conflict will be more difficult. The nature of such symbolic clues may vary considerably and it is hence important that the potential winner ascertain which clues will be accepted by the potential loser as symbols of defeat.

In Syria, as Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham and allied rebels captured cities on the path to Damascus, including then-president Bashar al-Assad's palace in Aleppo (Jerusalem Post, 2024), the dictator made final plans to fly to Russia and seek asylum. On 8 December 2024, the rebels arrived in the capital and took over sites once closely protected by the regime – the international airport, the state-media organization, a jail full of political prisoners, and a second presidential palace. On state TV the rebels declared victory over the regime (Al Jazeera, 2024). Violence continued in many parts of the country, but the conflict between the rebel coalition and the regime was terminated through rebel victory.

Yet bargaining between conflict actors can persist in non-violent periods through coercive measures imposing costs with cultural, political, or economic impacts, and 'illiberal peace' measures, as opposed to high counts of violent death (Woods, 2011; Lewis, Heathershaw, and Megoran, 2018; Smith et al., 2020). In periods of non-violence, conflict actors may also change policy and their positions on the use of force, thereby shaping prospects for termination (Dudouet, 2013). Some outcomes are reached quickly at the peak of conflict intensity, such as victories (Kreutz, 2010) while others take years to materialize after fighting subsides (Williams, 2026).

Beyond victory and settlements are non-decisive outcomes, where violence ceases or is limited and sporadic. In these situations, recognizable symbolic clues for civil war termination are absent. Rebels may remain armed and operate governance systems; governments may avoid formally ceding territory yet cooperate with rebel governors and de facto statelets (Bastaki, Staniland & Popoola, 2024). Mutually beneficial stalemates may develop through limited cooperation and ceasefires, leading to protracted lulls in violence lasting for decades (Williams, 2026). Without symbolic signs of termination, tracing factors such as the status of rebel groups, ceasefires, and territorial changes are important for determining outcomes.

Rebel group institutional changes shape intrastate conflict trajectories and endings (Cunningham 2006; Cunningham, Gleditsch & Salehyan 2009; Bakke, Cunningham & Seymour 2012; Cunningham 2013). Rebel groups may avoid conflict with the state to preserve institutions, they may dissolve their organizations to merge with other rebels, ending one dyad

and opening another, or gradually disband, delivering a slow-burn victory to the government (Williams, forthcoming). For full termination in a civil war, either the state or the rebel group must undergo significant change; for rebel groups this means defeat, disbandment, or disarmament through settlements, which also often transform rebels into political parties, while the state makes concessions for reforms. A conflict in which violence stops without changes to the rebel group is not the same outcome as one that terminates through these transformations. A strong rebel group that carves out a statelet which is accommodated through cooperation or legal recognition, albeit without formal peace, is different again from a minor group contained in peripheral pockets with little capacity to exert costs and push for concessions. These are the distinctions the ICTO's outcome categories capture, recognizing rebel group institutional shifts and changes to territory signal different outcomes.

The theoretical scaffolding for understanding conflict endpoints without symbolic cues has been laid out in recent scholarship. This includes the concept of armed orders with limited rebel-state cooperation (Staniland 2021, 2024), a typology of civil war outcomes beyond victories and peace agreements (Williams forthcoming), and mutually beneficial stalemates (Williams 2026). Together, these contributions, along with the ceasefire literature (Clayton and Sticher 2021; Clayton et al. 2022), help account for variation in intrastate conflict termination and outcomes, including fuzzy endpoints sustained by non-decisive equilibria and conflict avoidance.

Existing Conflict Termination Data

Civil war outcomes are coded differently across leading datasets, particularly in the areas of non-decisive outcomes. In the UCDP conflict termination dataset, categories include peace agreement; ceasefire agreement; victory for Side A (government side); victory for Side B (rebel side); low activity; and actor ceases to exist (Kreutz, 2010).¹ For inclusion on the list, 25 battle-related deaths must occur within a calendar year (Gleditsch et al., 2002). An episode ends when an active year is followed by a year with fewer than 25 battle-related deaths, and the outcome is coded from the final year of activity and the first year of inactivity (Kreutz, 2010). The dataset's strengths are long time coverage (1946-2023) and the inclusion of

¹ See Kreutz, Joakim (2025) UCDP Conflict Termination Dataset Codebook v.4 2024 (<https://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/>) for a full overview of the variables and coding rules.

low-intensity conflicts, which datasets built on a 1,000-death threshold exclude (Kreutz, 2010). A weakness is that the data apply one set of termination categories to extrasystemic, interstate, and intrastate conflicts, obscuring some of the unique features of civil war ending processes and outcomes.

The well-known Correlates of War (COW) Project codes outcomes differently. It uses seven categories in its intrastate conflict dataset: side A wins; side B wins; compromise; the war was transformed into another type of war; the war is ongoing; stalemate; and conflict continues at below war level (Dixon & Sarkees, 2016). A threshold for classifying intrastate conflict includes 1,000 battle-related deaths within a twelve-month period and "effective resistance" on both sides, including their commitment of forces (Dixon & Sarkees, 2016; Small & Singer, 1982). Termination is dated to the month of the last major engagement after which fatalities fall below the threshold, and resumed fighting is recorded within the same war rather than as a new episode (Dixon & Sarkees, 2016). Little explanation or theorizing is offered on the categories, which the Project describes as still evolving and without operational indicators for determining a war's outcome (Sarkees, 2010). Compromise records only that "a solution is reached in which both sides gain something" (Sarkees, 2010), without distinguishing comprehensive settlements from partial agreements or ceasefires, or recording when in the conflict an agreement was reached. The threshold is a further weakness, excluding subnational and smaller armed conflicts and the countries where several persist concurrently over decades with cumulative effects.

Both datasets do not trace conflict events once they fall below thresholds. The UCDP dataset explicitly states that it does not follow developments in warring parties beyond the final year of conflict activity and the first year of inactivity. More recent iterations include dyad-level variables for a ceasefire date and a peace agreement date, recording an agreement reached at or after the end of a dyad episode but before the next episode begins, though neither alters the coded outcome (Kreutz, 2025).² The COW dates the end of a war to combat rather than to settlement: an armistice or ceasefire may serve as the end date where fighting does not resume, but "the date of the final peace treaty would not be used unless it coincided with the end of combat" (Sarkees, 2010). COW also concedes that civil wars "may not necessarily end

² Ibid.

through a cease-fire or an agreement of any sort but may instead peter out as the rebels just cease fighting," and that in such cases "a judgment has been made about the date at which the last sustained combat took place" (Sarkees, 2010). The practice in both datasets is not to return to a case after violence stops.

Herein lies an issue when it comes to understanding conflict termination in full. These approaches favor capturing when violence stops, rather than why. By not tracing change processes that occur during periods of non-violence, it is challenging to capture messy conflict-ending processes and their causes, including significant shifts in conflict actors and changes that can lead to conflict termination. Different categories used in UCDP dataset also have conflicts which reach the same outcome. For instance, some coded as 'low activity' in the UCDP dataset follow the same trajectories as 'actor ceases to exist', with rebels evolving to become less threatening and eventually disbanding or mutating into entirely new organizations over time. UCDP's codebook acknowledges this: Algeria's GIA is coded as terminated by low activity in 2003, and although its remaining members had joined AQIM by 2010, this occurred outside the coded window and does not change the outcome (Kreutz, 2010).

The Intrastate Conflict Termination and Outcomes Dataset

The ICTO aims to better capture the complexities intrastate conflicts, their full trajectories, and unique endpoints. The dataset covers intrastate and internationalized intrastate conflict between 1946 and 2023, using the dyad file of the UCDP Conflict Termination Dataset v4 (Kreutz, 2010) as its foundation. The dataset does not add conflicts or actors to the UCDP list or change the inclusion threshold; a conflict is recorded as active when at least 25 battle-related deaths occur within a calendar year. The unit is the dyad-year. Across 608 dyads in 230 conflicts and 108 countries, the dataset comprises 3,151 dyad-years, of which UCDP records 825 as terminated with an outcome. Conflict activity runs to 2024, but outcomes only to 2023, since UCDP determines termination from the first year of inactivity. The ICTO dataset codes 778 of these dyad-years as outcomes. The change in total numbers arises from coding and category differences outlined below.

UCDP defines termination as occurring at the final year of activity and the first year of inactivity (Kreutz, 2010). Yet, as this paper demonstrates, many conflict outcomes unfold during periods of non-violence as conflict actors engage in various forms of bargaining, be it coercive strategies, direct talks, limited cooperation, or a combination of these approaches. What happens to the conflict actors themselves shapes the conflict's trajectory; such changes need to be accounted for in the years after violence stops to tell the whole story of the conflict ending process. The date when violence stops is merely one part of the puzzle. Tracing conflict trajectories can lead to changes, including non-decisive situations becoming clearly terminated outcomes.

Another difference is that the ICTO treats ceasefires as instruments rather than points of termination. Their design and purpose link them to a particular outcome. Comprehensive ceasefires with rebel disarmament provisions are coded as political settlements. A cessation of hostilities or conflict-mitigation ceasefire that does not lead to a settlement is most often coded as conflict management.

Table 1 outlines six categories of conflict termination and outcomes, along with one 'Other' category. Three are common to all termination datasets: political settlement, government victory and rebel victory. Three are new, and constitute the dataset's main conceptual contribution: Territorial Change, Conflict Management and Rebel Reboot. In the first two, violence stops without the incompatibility being resolved, and both are disaggregated by whether a ceasefire underpins the outcome. In the third, the armed actor ends while the conflict continues through a successor organization. The 'Other' category holds a small number of dyads that fall outside the typology, such as those ending through intra-rebel conflict, shifting the typology away from its state-based conflict origin.

Distinct from the UCDP dataset, which includes ceasefires as a conflict termination category, the ICTO dataset records them as instruments supporting specific categories. Along with the UCDP outcome data, the coding process draws on the ETH/PRIO Civil Conflict CeaseFire (CF) dataset (Clayton et al., 2022). A benefit of using Clayton et al. (2022) is the typology of ceasefire classes. Specifically, a cessation of hostilities suspends violence for a short or specified period without provisions to monitor compliance or to disarm; a cessation of hostilities with compliance

mechanisms adds monitoring or verification but does not disarm the parties; and a definitive ceasefire carries provisions to disarm and demobilize, and is intended to terminate the conflict rather than suspend it. Comprehensive ceasefires, which transform the rebel group's institutions through DDR, are included as political settlements in the ICTO coding, given their contribution to a conflict ending process that involves the transformation of a conflict actor. Cessations of hostilities, with or without compliance mechanisms, are included in other outcomes, such as Territorial Change but mostly Conflict Management, where the actors remain in place.

Table I. Categories of Intrastate Conflict Termination and Outcome

Outcome	Definition
1. Political settlement <i>(including comprehensive ceasefires where rebel groups disarm)</i>	Warring parties resolve aspects of the incompatibility driving the conflict, reaching a mutually signed or accepted agreement (Kreutz, 2010). This includes partial or comprehensive peace agreements, either terminating the conflict or providing a framework for a continued peace process. It also includes definitive ceasefires, which disarm and demobilize rebel groups with the objective of terminating the conflict rather than suspending hostilities (Clayton et al., 2022).
2. Government victory	The government side defeats, eliminates, or secures the opposition's capitulation (Kreutz, 2010). This includes rebel disbandment or surrenders during periods of limited or no violence.
3. Rebel victory	The rebel side ousts the government or decisively defeats or eliminates it (Kreutz, 2010). This includes situations where rebels secure independences through use of force.

4. Territorial Change	The state ceases to govern effectively, whether through full collapse, chronic institutional failure, or the concession of substantial territorial control to rebels (Milliken & Krause, 2002). Rebels consolidate territory and hold de facto authority — running quasi-states or autonomous subnational administrations — without taking power at the center. The category also includes state or regime collapse, where the dyad closes because the state ceases to function rather than because rebels prevailed.
5. Conflict Management (including cessation of hostilities ceasefires)	No violence, or irregular violence below the 25-death threshold, with limited cooperation between the parties (Bastaki et al., 2024; Kreutz, 2010). Both actors in the conflict dyad are verified as existing institutions after violence has stopped or reduced. The managed period may be sustained by a cessation of hostilities, which suspends violence for short or extended periods.
6. Rebel Reboot	A group ends in its original form and its fighters reconstitute in a successor organization—through merger into a new group or transfer of forces into an existing one—closing one dyad and opening another. Reboots may also follow institutional collapse. Reboots are distinct from splintering, where parent and offshoots both remain active.
7. Other	Eight outcomes that fall outside the typology. These include cases where rebel groups are defeated or forced across borders through intra-rebel conflict, shifting the conflict from state-based to non-state. They also include rebel organizations that rebrand as part of a reorganization of their political and military wings, without a transfer of forces.

The category of Conflict Management draws on UCDP's low-activity definition (Kreutz, 2010), while accounting for the continued existence of both actors in the dyad through tracing, and additional features such as a ceasefire contributing to the equilibrium. Williams (2026 forthcoming) theorizing of this category draws from Staniland's (2012, 2021) concept of armed orders, in which state–rebel relations settle into limited cooperation once violence falls below the threshold of civil war. These situations are sometimes sustained by ceasefires, though not always, and often by the logic of a mutually beneficial stalemate in which both parties judge the status quo preferable to renewed fighting or to a settlement that risks commitment failures (Williams 2026).

Recent works advance theory on why states and rebels pursue conflict-avoidance strategies (Williams 2026). Incentives include institutional preservation goals of both rebels and governments, and commitment challenges that make settlement risky. For a state, these incentives are compounded in multi-actor conflicts, which are increasingly the norm rather than the exception. A state facing several challengers has reason to withhold concessions from any one of them, since terms granted to one invite the same demand from the rest. For rebels, the incentive runs the other way: holding position preserves the organization and roles within its constituency while waiting on the terms that stronger groups may extract. Disarming would forfeit relevance, while escalation would make the group a higher priority target for potential defeat.

Conflict management may also take the form of illiberal peace, in which states combine coercion with development-based pacification to reduce the threat posed by insurgents without resolving the incompatibility (Lewis, Heathershaw & Megoran, 2018; Smith et al., 2020). Examples include Senegal's containment of the Casamance insurgency, where military pressure has been combined with development funding, amnesties, and factional disarmament deals without conceding the independence demand, and India's approach in Manipur, where the state has negotiated accords with amenable groups while containing holdouts such as the People's Liberation Army.

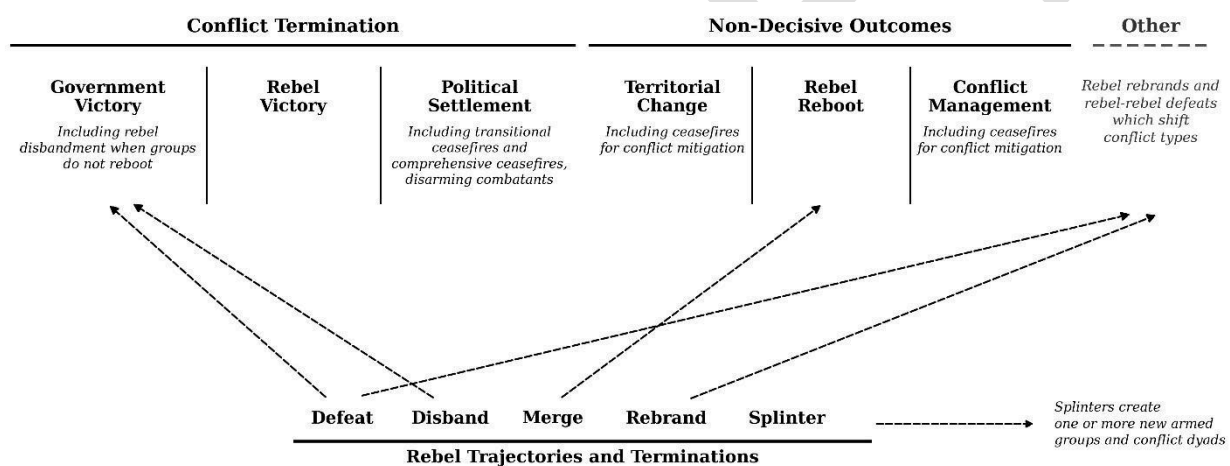
Territorial Change spans full state collapse, chronic state failure, and the concession of substantial territory where rebels administer de facto states (Milliken & Krause, 2002; Arjona, Kasfir & Mampilly, 2015). Building on Kreutz's (2010) definition of 'actor ceases to exist', which accounts for state collapse, the ICTO expands this category to encompass various arrangements that lead to changes in state control of territory, including significant governance shifts short of rebel groups achieving their independence goals. Violence may subside due to cooperation around de facto governance arrangements. For example, in Myanmar's northeastern border region, a verbal ceasefire with the United Wa State Army (UWSA) has held for over three decades, allowing the group to consolidate the territory it holds. The self-governed statelet has been formally recognized as a division in the 2008 constitution, albeit without a peace agreement in place (Ong, 2023). Another case is the Somali National Movement, which declared independence for Somaliland in 1991 and built a functioning polity that Mogadishu has never conceded and that, as of December 2025, only Israel formally recognizes (Bradbury, 2008; Caspersen, 2012; CNN, 2025). Where territorial control remains highly contested rather than durably established, the episode is instead treated as Conflict Management.

Rebel Reboot covers cases in which a group ends in its original form and transfers its forces into a new organization, whether by merger or after institutional collapse (Staniland, 2014). It is distinct from splintering, in which a parent rebel group and its offshoot both remain active (Cunningham et al., 2013). The typology coding practices also distinguishes two ways a rebel organization can end outside active conflict. In the first, a group gradually disbands and does not reconstitute; because the state outlasts it, the outcome is recorded as a government victory, a conflict termination reached during a lull rather than on the battlefield. In the second, one or more rebel organizations merge or transfer their forces into a new organization, ending the original dyad while generating new ones; this is recorded as a Rebel Reboot. Splintering sits outside the typology. When a faction breaks away while the original group remains active, no dyad ends: the splinter is captured as a distinct group and a new conflict dyad begins (Cunningham et al., 2013).

Various data sources were used to verify how rebel group trajectories shape different conflict outcomes, as outlined in Figure 1. These include FORGE, the Foundations of Rebel Group

Emergence dataset (Braithwaite & Cunningham, 2020), on rebel group emergence and successors. The Mapping Militants Project (Crenshaw & Robinson, 2025) was also used to verify rebel group trajectories, as well as UCDP's actor and dyad profiles. Other sources were used to trace outcomes include the PA-X Peace Agreements Database (Bell & Badanjak, 2019) drawing on primary sources of peace agreements and ceasefires. Reputable conflict analysis and public policy sources, such as the International Crisis Group, and Conciliation Resources' *Accord* series, were also used to verify rebel institutional shifts, conflict and negotiation dynamics, as well as outcomes between the conflict parties. The appendix outlines the dyad-level sources of information and verification of all recoding.

Figure 1. Intrastate conflict termination and non-decisive outcomes, with rebel trajectories and the integration of ceasefires.



Coding Approaches

UCDP assigns termination outcomes to conflict dyads once an active year is followed by an inactive year in which battle deaths fall below 25 (Kreutz, 2010). The ICTO dataset instead follows conflict actors for five years beyond that point, and longer where the record allows, dating the outcome to the agreement, defeat, merger or shift in territorial control that ended the dyad. These events can occur well after the fighting stops. In India, UCDP records the Mizo National Front dyad as a low-activity ending in 1968, yet eighteen years later the MNF signed a Memorandum of Settlement with the Government of India, abjuring violence and depositing its

arms in return for measures to confer statehood on Mizoram (Memorandum of Settlement, 1986).

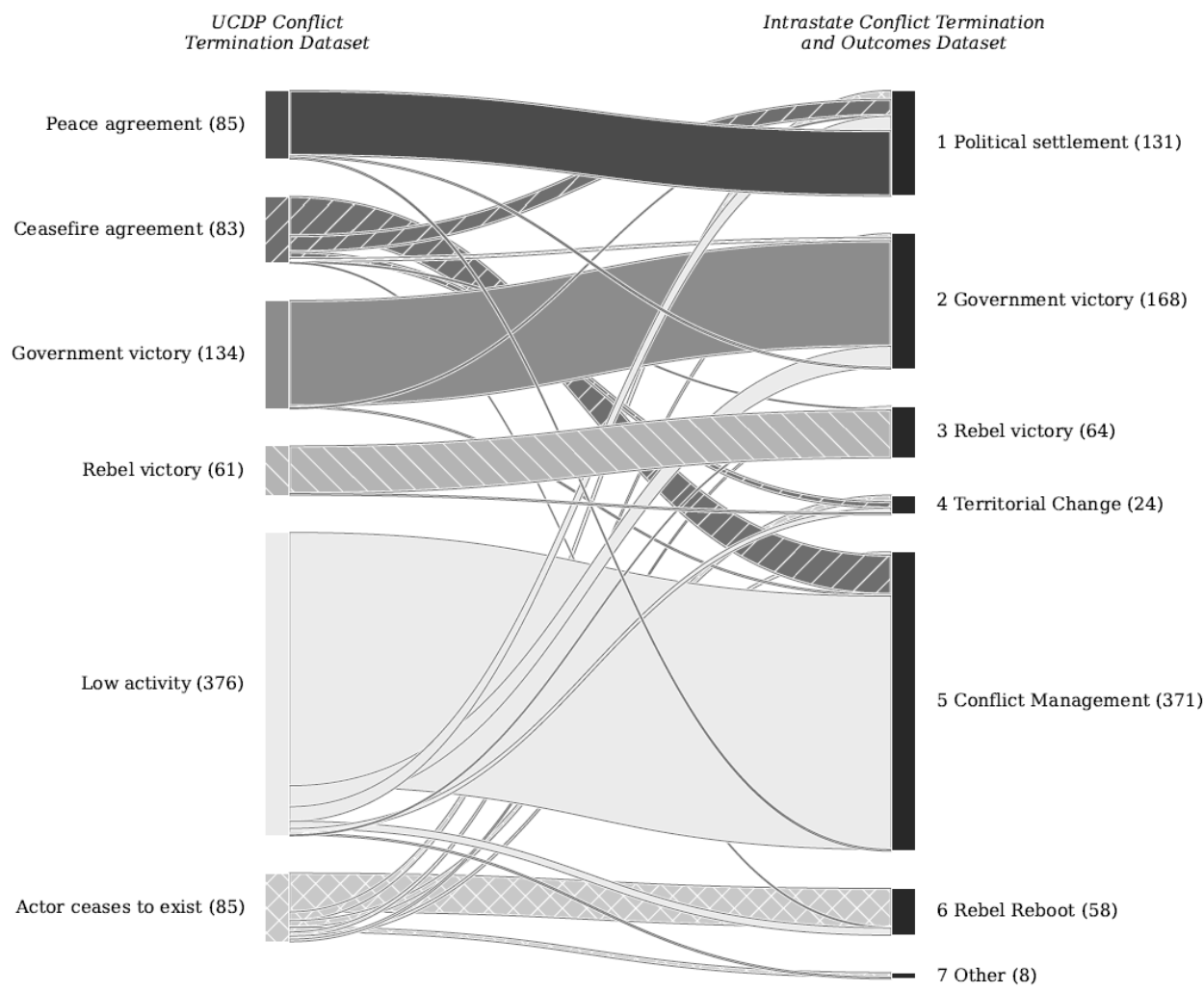
In multi-episode protracted conflicts, UCDP's consistent coding of terminations after one inactive calendar year produces a high volume of 'low activity' cases for the same dyad. Some of these outcomes are brief, with multiple counts of 'low activity' in a short period (Kreutz 2010). To avoid overcounting conflict termination close to the violence threshold, the ICTO dataset codes conflict management on a two-year window when the dyad is without a ceasefire. Where the dyad has a ceasefire to indicate the conflict management period commencing, the ceasefire date is used.

Applying the two-year window removes 47 dyad-years from the conflict management category, 45 of which UCDP codes as low activity. In these cases, the dyad had been inactive for just one year before fighting resumed. Thirty-nine dyads are affected, and several appear more than once. Angola against the Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda – Armed Forces of Cabinda – Nzita Tiago (FLEC-FAC-TN) and India against the People's Liberation Army of Manipur (PLA) each lose three dyad-years; Colombia against the Popular Liberation Army – Megateo faction (EPL-Megateo), Ethiopia against the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), Iran against the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI), and the Philippines against the Abu Sayyaf Group each lose two. The two-year window aims to avoid overcounting, capture genuine shifts in conflict dynamics, and reflect conflict management as it is conceptualized. Other categories are unaffected, since those outcomes rest on clearer symbolic cues and the tracing of events: an agreement, a military defeat, a merger, or a durable change in territorial control.

Figure 2 highlights change between UCDP and ICTO terminations based on the categories and coding approach. Tracing actors beyond the last year of fighting raises both political settlements and government victories. Political settlements rise from 85 to 131, an increase of 6.5 percentage points, drawing in 20 dyad-years UCDP records as ceasefire endings, 18 as low activity and 11 as an actor ceasing to exist. Government victories rise from 134 to 168, or 5.4 percentage points, with 26 coming from low activity: groups that disbanded or surrendered

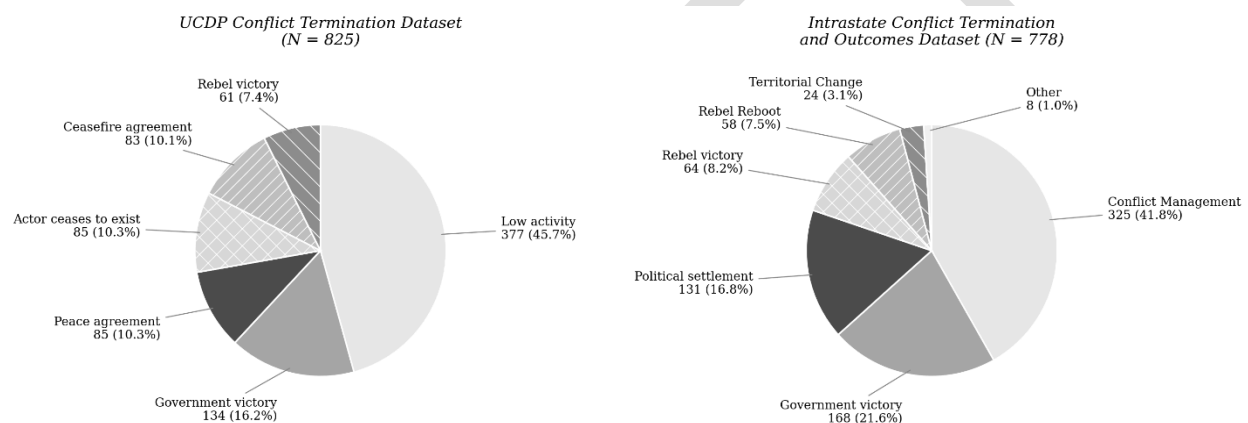
during years of no recorded violence. In both cases the ending occurred during periods of non-violence or limited violence below 25 battle deaths.

Figure 2. Conflict Outcome and Termination (1946-2023) Changes Between Datasets



These changes lead to proportional increases in decisive outcomes and a drop in non-decisive scenarios, such as conflict management. Political settlements rise from 10.3 to 16.8 per cent and government victories from 16.2 to 21.6 per cent under the tracing approach, increases of 6.5 and 5.4 percentage points respectively. Ceasefire endings are redistributed to the outcome the arrangement supports. Conflict management replaces low activity as the largest category, falling from 45.7 to 41.8 per cent, close to 4 percentage points. Figure 3 highlights the proportional breakdown of both datasets' conflict outcomes.

Figure 3. Distribution of Conflict Outcomes, UCDP and ICTO Datasets (1946–2023)



Data Limitations

The ICTO dataset uses UCDP's dyad units, which effectively treat conflict actors as homogeneous. This actor unit level does not allow for variation within rebel groups, such as specific territorial areas they hold across different commands. Where a group fully controls some regions while others remain contested, the coding is conflict management, rather than territorial change. The Karen National Union in Myanmar is an example of this coding challenge and the variation it masks. The KNU has fought the Myanmar state since 1949 and is organized as a de facto federation of seven districts, each with significant autonomy in local governance and financial management and each corresponding to a Karen National Liberation Army brigade (Jolliffe 2017). In its stronghold areas, territorial control and administration are comprehensive, with a judiciary of supreme, district and township courts, its own police force, taxation, schools,

and a land registration system adopted across all districts. In mixed-control areas, authority overlaps with the government, the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army and Border Guard Force units, each levying its own taxes on the same communities.

Why Tracing Conflict After Violence Stops is Important

Many intrastate conflict outcomes are reached after violence subsides, as rebel groups disband, merge, disarm, or consolidate territorial control in years when fighting has fallen below the recording threshold. Where the coded window closes at the first inactive year, these endings become residuals. Two further examples illustrate what tracing reveals.

Gradual disbandment can deliver a government victory without a battlefield defeat. Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) fought its last recorded episode in Spain in 1991, which UCDP codes as a low-activity ending. After a series of ceasefires the group declared a definitive cessation of armed activity in 2011, and disarmed and dissolved in 2018 (BBC News, 2012; Binnie, 2018). The state outlasted the organization rather than defeating it, and the recoding classifies the conflict as a government victory as of 2018.

An organization may also end by reconstituting itself, closing one dyad and opening another. UCDP records the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria's 1999–2007 episode as an actor ceasing to exist, a residual that registers the organization's disappearance without identifying what replaced it. Doku Umarov abolished the ChRI in October 2007 and reconstituted it as the Caucasus Emirate, with the former republic integrated as its Vilayat Nokhchicho branch (Crenshaw & Robinson, 2025). The secessionist dyad terminated and a new one began, which the recoding captures as a Rebel Reboot.

Conclusion

Civil wars end in unique ways. The symbolic cues and non-decisive endpoints have observable features related to the conflict parties themselves, shifts in territorial control, and distinct uses of ceasefires. Conflict termination theory increasingly recognizes distinct endpoints. Meanwhile, rebel group literature explains institutional change and how it shapes conflict trajectories. These gains need to be reflected in the empirical work on civil war termination, and in how outcomes

are coded. The ICTO dataset addresses that gap, building on UCDP's foundations while supplying termination and outcome categories with sharper conceptual specification, fit for the messy nature of intrastate conflicts. The dataset opens new inquiries into how conflict termination occurs in non-violent periods, how non-decisive outcomes form and endure, and how rebel institutional changes shape conflict outcomes. It can also support revised testing of conflict outcome determinants against a full set of theorized categories.

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