Talking the Walk

Peace, Inclusivity and (De)Polarisation

Aisha Erenstein

Affiliation
MSSc Peace and Conflict Studies
Graduate of the Department of Peace and
Conflict Research, Uppsala University

Contact
aisha.erenstein@gmail.com
ORCiD https://orcid.org/0009-0002-4146-5069

Abstract

Warning calls about increasing polarisation have been a mainstay of political science and political reporting in the past decade. At pernicious levels, polarisation has the capacity to erode democratic institutions or escalate into violence. However, depolarisation – the reversal of pernicious polarisation – is possible, but research on the phenomenon is in its infancy. Meanwhile, peace research in the last two decades has found a robust link between inclusivity during a peace process, and the durability of the resulting peace. To bridge these two fields, this paper combines quantitative data on inclusivity in peace agreements with data on political polarisation. A combination of logistic regressions and fixed effects models are used to explore the question: *How does the inclusivity of a peace process affect post-conflict (de)polarisation?* Some preliminary conclusions are reached based on the strongest results. The inclusion of women and disabled people in the text of a peace agreement consistently and statistically significantly correlates with a net decrease in polarisation. Less consistently statistically significant, the inclusion of families correlates with a net decrease in polarisation, and the inclusion of racial groups with a net increase in polarisation. The inclusion of refugees correlates with a statistically significant increase to the odds of depolarisation, yet simultaneously correlates with a statistically significant increase to short-term polarisation levels. Also looked at are inclusion in aggregate, and the inclusion of religious groups, civil society, social class, political parties, children, men, the elderly, and traditional leadership, but these results show no clear, consistent patterns.

Key words: *Polarisation, Depolarisation, Inclusivity, Inclusive Peace, Peace Processes, Peace Agreements, Logistic Regressions, Fixed Effects*

Introduction

Warning calls about increasing polarisation have been a mainstay of political reporting and political science in the past decade (Somer & McCoy, 2018, pp. 3–4). Fairly unique to the phenomenon is that recent warnings appear to apply globally – from Western Europe to the Horn of Africa. At high levels, polarisation can actively undermine democratic good governance and escalate into violent conflict; at its most extreme it is then referred to as 'pernicious polarisation' (Somer & McCoy, 2018, p. 5).

There is a substantial body of research analysing polarisation's causes and consequences, yet very little looks at its reversal.[1] This structural oversight creates a conception of polarisation as an inherently escalatory and irreversible phenomenon, effectively treating polarisation as the opening of Pandora's box. The impetus behind my research for this paper is challenging the fatalism implicit in this assumption. After all, de-escalation does occur: McCoy et al. (2022, pp. 1-2) found that depolarisation episodes have occurred in roughly half of the instances of pernicious polarisation globally from 1900 to 2020. The most common contexts for depolarisation episodes are during large societal shifts, with approximately a third following armed struggles (McCoy et al., 2022, pp. 14–15).

Within peace and conflict research, polarisation has also consistently been pointed to as an important driver of conflict (Esteban & Schneider, 2008, pp. 135–38; Østby, 2008). A clear parallel between the fields of political science and peace and conflict research can be seen in work on conflict recurrence. Approximately half of peace agreements break down within five years of signing (Högbladh, 2012) and estimates of conflict recurrence after the signing of a peace agreement stand at 60% (Walter, 2010, p. 1). Similarly, there appears to be a strong cyclical tendency around (re)polarisation: only 46% of depolarisation episodes are sustained in the medium term,[2] with 60% of those maintaining depolarisation in the long term (McCoy et al., 2022, p. 20). The most common contexts for sustained depolarisation are democratisation, liberalisation, and the resolution of intrastate conflict (McCoy et al., 2022, p. 21).

In the last two decades of peace and conflict research, a robust relationship has been found between the inclusivity of a peace process and the durability of the resulting peace (i.e. C. Bell & O'Rourke, 2007; Nilsson, 2012; Kew & Wanis-St. John, 2008; Krause, Krause, & Bränfors, 2018). The resulting 'inclusivity hype' resulted in inclusion becoming a cornerstone of modern peacebuilding – featuring prominently in the work of the UN, the World Bank, the OECD and other international actors (Paffenholz & Zartman, 2019).

On a theoretical level, the concept of inclusivity seems like a natural antidote to the mutual exclusivity inherent to (pernicious) polarisation. Yet, to the best of my knowledge, this theorised causal relationship between inclusivity and polarisation has never been (directly) tested before. With this project, I seek to narrow the knowledge gap by adding to knowledge on depolarisation as a specific phenomenon, further developing the understanding of polarisation within peace and conflict research, and mapping out previously unseen relationships between inclusion in peace processes and political polarisation. The guiding research question in this effort is: *How does the inclusivity of a peace process affect post-conflict (de)polarisation?*

By combining pre-existing data on peace agreements and societal polarisation from two databases, and analysing them with logistic regressions and fixed effects models, I come to a handful of conclusions. The inclusion of women and disabled people in the text of a peace agreement seems to have a robust, negative correlation with polarisation. Also consistent, but less robust, are the inclusion of families correlating with a net decrease in polarisation, and the inclusion of racial groups correlating with a net increase in polarisation. Interestingly, the inclusion of refugees correlates with a statistically significant increase in the odds of depolarisation, but also correlates with a statistically significant increase in short-term polarisation levels. Finally, no clear patterns were found relating to inclusion in aggre-

[1] Indeed, most research on it stems from the past three years, or specifically looks at the end of the Cold War.
[2] Defined by McCoy et al. (2022, p. 17) as 10 years after a depolarisation episode.

gated, and the inclusion of religious groups, civil society, social class, political parties, children, men, the elderly, and traditional leadership.

Theory

Inclusivity

Defining Inclusivity

When discussing inclusivity the context of peace and conflict research, a commonly accepted starting point is the definition in the *United Nations Guidance on Effective Mediation* (2012, pp. 11): "Inclusivity refers to the extent and manner in which the views and needs of conflict parties and other stakeholders are represented and integrated into the process and outcome of a mediation effort." The duality of looking at both process and outcome is a common thread throughout research on the subject (Cuhadar, 2020, p. 3; Cuhadar & Druckman, 2024, pp. 360–61). Process-centred inclusivity focuses on how negotiations and decision-making processes include or exclude relevant stakeholders and marginalised voices. Outcome-centric inclusivity in turn looks predominantly at formally codified outcomes, such as the distribution of rights, institutional reforms, and how representative a state is of its population(s) (Dudouet & Lundström, 2016, pp. 63–64). Ideally, inclusive negotiation processes result in inclusive governance outcomes.

Theories of Inclusivity & Peace Processes

An inclusive peace process sets the stage for an inclusive peace agreement. The central question for any peace process is who to include, and how to make sure the resulting peace lasts (Zanker, 2018; as in Cuhadar & Druckman, 2024, p. 363; similar in C. Bell & Wise, 2022, p. 399). Inclusion can foster legitimacy: in the early 2000s and 2010s, mass protests occurred to demonstrate resistance against peace processes that were seen as exclusive (Schädel & Dudouet, 2020, p. 59; similar in Dudouet & Lundström, 2016, p. 66). For legitimate inclusivity, included actors must effectively represent and advocate for vested segments of society, do so inside and outside of the negotiations, and be committed to the peace. On the other hand, inclusivity is also often met with resistance (Cuhadar, 2020, p. 2–3), can be abused or made into an empty façade (Schädel & Dudouet, 2020, p. 9).

In recent decades inclusivity has become a settled norm within international mediation circles (Hellmüller et al., 2015, p. 2–3). As a result, modern peace processes are typically designed to be inclusive of non-warring parties (NWP) – which often include, but are not limited to civil society actors (CSA) (Cuhadar, 2020, p. 2). Even so, the inclusion of NWPs[3] tends to be the exception – not the rule. Schädel and Dudouet (2020, pp. 58–59) outline four main reasons for this, along with example cases. First, the peace process simply has no mechanisms for societal participation, as with the peace process leading to the *Kabul Agreement* (2016). Second, mechanisms may be predominantly performative or sacrificed for the sake of efficiency, as with Myanmar's *National Ceasefire Agreement* (2015). Third, preconditions to inclusion set by mediators and governments result in de facto exclusion, as with the government of Mali and Salafi Jihadi armed groups for the *Algiers Accord for Peace and Reconciliation* (2015). Fourth and finally, civil society actors themselves may fail to act effectively, cohesively or be taken seriously by the parties.

It is important to recognise that for any case, there are likely multiple layers of competing interests around questions of inclusivity. The warring parties may not be interested in adding seats to the table, or see inclusivity as a means to invite actors whose support they already have. The case of Syria's Civil Society Support Room shows this particularly well. Established in 2016, it was a mechanism through which CSAs could engage with the peace negotiations and UN mediators. However, the Syrian government only considered allied actors to be civil society – which the opposition refused to accept as legitimate (Theros & Turkmani, 2022, pp. 196–98). This example

[3]Often, in this context, 'inclusivity' refers to the inclusion of CSAs. However, as this is not always the case, I will follow Nilsson and Svensson (2023) in using the broader term 'non-warring parties' when referring to inclusion in general, and civil society actors when I am specifically referring to such actors.

also highlights an important dynamic: accepting inclusivity may be seen as a sign of weakness, as norms upheld by years of proscriptive rhetoric are perceived to be undermined by recognition and an invitation to the negotiating table (Haspeslagh, 2020, pp. 519–20; Haspeslagh, 2021).

There are no theoretical limitations to who can be included as NWP, but it has been noted that in practice 'inclusivity' often translates to 'women' and 'civil society' (Haspeslagh, 2020, p. 519). There are several examples of their inclusion being extremely effective, with the work of the Mano River Women's Peace Network, or MARWOPNET, in Sierra Leone being a particularly well-known example. Even so, there is a frequent assumption that 'women' and 'civil society' are homogenous and civic-minded groups, inherently representative of very large subsets of a society – which is not necessarily the case (Von Burg, 2015). Additionally, other NWP's and their potential relationship with a peace process may get overlooked. This has the potential to create 'spoilers:' actors who undermine peace efforts because they benefit from the conflict, disagree with the terms of the peace, or seek retribution for their exclusion (Stedman, 1997, pp. 7–8, 53). To take the Colombian example, the exclusion of conservative groups and evangelical churches in negotiations resulted in them mobilizing against the agreement. These few key societal actors would go on to successfully campaign for a 'no' vote in the referendum where the agreement was to be adopted (Schädel & Dudouet, 2020, p. 59).

Prior Research on Inclusivity in Peace Processes

CSA inclusion in negotiations need not be substantial for CSA's to make substantial gains during negotiations. Notably, Bell and Kitagawa (2024, p. 16) found that peace negotiations with any civil society participation are approximately 33% more likely to result in an agreement with language addressing matters of safety, inclusion and protection for CSAs.[4] Yet, substantial inclusion tends to result in substantial gains. In their seminal paper, Wanis-St. John & Kew (2008, pp. 27–32) reached three conclusions: peace negotiations where civil society was actively engaged had more lasting peace; when negotiators were democratic actors, this effect extended to cases where the groups did not have a direct seat at the table; and most cases of negotiations with no civil society involvement experienced conflict recurrence.

Furthermore, Nilsson (2012, pp. 262–63) found that peace was more stable and durable in the long term if CSAs were included in the peace process, and even more so if both CSAs and political parties were included. Krause et al. (2018, pp. 1005–6) corroborated these findings, showing that women's participation in peace negotiations resulted in higher satisfaction with the agreement, higher implementation rates, and longer lasting peace; women's representatives signing an agreement also correlated with higher implementation rates. Through participation in peace processes, women's groups have been able to leverage politics and bargaining to advance women's rights in their states (Anderson, 2016, pp. 138–39; similar in Bell & Kitagawa, 2024, p. 16).

Yet, even with the apparent international conviction in favour of inclusivity, Bell and Kitagawa (2024, p. 9) found that in their sample of 1230 intrastate peace agreements, CSAs had participated in 10.2%, with decreasing incidence over time. Additionally, inclusion is not a silver bullet or a progress-guarantee. Bell and O'Rourke (2007, p. 305–6) highlight that despite the importance of peace processes to theories of civil society, causality is very hard to conclusively confirm. Furthermore, inclusivity cannot be a box-ticking exercise: it must be strategic and well-designed at each modality, fitting into overarching processes and their greater societal contexts to function as theorised (Cuhadar & Paffenholz, 2020, pp. 666–67; Paffenholz 2014a, p. 4; Bell & Wise 2022, p. 399).[5]

[4] It should be noted that conditional to this relationship is that pre-agreement "repression of these non-state actors is not too onerous." (Bell & Kitagawa, 2024, p. 16)

[5] Dudouet and Lundström (2016, pp. 66–67) outlined "four possible formulas to combine participatory mechanisms while sustaining the interest of elites so that they do not act as 'spoilers': incremental inclusivity; thematic multi-arena inclusivity; parallel consultation forums with built-in binding mechanisms; and informal deadlock-breaking mechanisms within inclusive formal arenas." The work of Thania Paffenholz also deals extensively with these questions (e.g. Paffenholz, 2014a, 2014b; Cuhadar & Paffenholz, 2020).

Inclusivity and Durable Peace

Signing a peace agreement does not inherently result in lasting peace afterwards. A negotiated settlement may have been reached by elite-level bargaining, failing to address the foundations and impact of a conflict on broader society (Haspeslagh, 2020, p. 519). The fundamental issue is aptly summarised as: "the incentives for violence are often certain and specific to an individual or group, while the incentives for peace are often uncertain and diffuse" (World Bank Group & United Nations 2018, p. 219 referencing World Bank, 2017b). Inclusivity during a peace process is then seen as a mechanism to bring together these diffuse incentives and actors to "effectively deal with political, social and economic exclusion as a key conflict mobilisation factor" (Schädel & Dudouet, 2020, p. 9).

Although the 'handshake moment' signals the successful culmination of negotiations and the signing of the agreement(s), it also heralds a new process: implementation. Peace agreements may include expanding access to state power, economic resources, political participation, minority empowerment, or transitional justice processes in relation to inclusivity (Paladini & Molloy, 2019, p. 33). However, the realities of implementation are incredibly complex and often impeded by continued legacies of war, meaning that the peace brokered within negotiations and codified in an agreement may not last. In fact, Dudouet and Lundström (2016, p. 67) found that violence relapses – by both excluded and included parties – are often motivated by discontentment about the implementation of inclusive governance.

'Durable peace' is typically taken as the gold standard outcome for a successful peace process, and it is generally defined through the (lack of) post-agreement violence (Cuhadar & Druckman, 2024, pp. 361–62). Fundamental to durable peace is the adherence to the principles of procedural justice: fairness, transparency, representation, and voluntary agreement (Druckman & Wagner, 2019, p. 308). Druckman and Wagner (2019, p. 307) also find that procedural justice sets up a chain that allows micro-level interactions to eventually build into macro-level institutional changes. However, states of peace and conflict are not black and white. In the grey zone exist realities such as those of formalised political unsettlement, in which the central incompatibility is translated into political and legal institutions (Bell & Pospisil, 2017).

By adopting the lens of (de)polarisation, I hope to shine a light on the spectrum of "peace beyond the absence of war" (Höglund & Söderberg Kovacs, 2010, p. 389). Chenoweth (2017, p. 134) defines 'proactive peace' as "when people within societies resolve their differences through nonviolent action." Peace processes are one form of this – but as outlined earlier in this section, proactive peace is not always maintained. A common misconception within the field of peace and conflict research is that conflict and violence are synonymous, and peace and violence mutually exclusive – yet nonviolent conflict is a prominent phenomenon, and some forms of systemic violence do not rely on bloodshed. This research effort uses political polarisation as a means of gaining insight into this 'grey zone.'

Polarisation

Defining Polarisation

Polarisation's origins are often found in its strategic use by political elites in response to (objective or subjective) marginalisation as a way to gain and maintain power, particularly relative to their opponents (Somer & McCoy, 2018, pp. 4–5). Within this framework, ideology and social distance are commonly given as key features of polarisation. However, this limits one's understanding to the contexts of specific cases. Viewing polarisation through a process-centric approach is much more helpful for understanding it conceptually. Thus, I adopt the following definition: political polarisation is a "process of simplifying politics in ways that lead toward a binary division of society into mutually antagonistic camps" (McCoy et al., 2022, pp. 4–5). The process is fundamentally relational (i.e. 'us' vs. 'them') and instrumental (usually, someone stands to benefit).

Theories of Polarisation

Warning calls about increasing polarisation, both on an international level and nationally across the globe have been a mainstay of the past decade (Somer & McCoy, 2018, pp. 3–4). Fairly unique to the phenomenon is that the warning appears to apply to both more developing and consolidated democracies (Somer & McCoy, 2018, pp. 5). Polarisation in democratic contexts is a particularly tricky issue. By design, democracy functions on there being a degree of dissent amongst constituents. However, polarisation reflects a state where dissent heightens and consolidates around 'us vs. them' dynamics with several complex knock-on effects.

In the short term, there can even be democratic 'benefits' where polarisation galvanises increased civilian political engagement, and the stabilising of party identities (LeBas, 2011, 2014, 2018; Tilly, 2004). Polarisation can also foster negative partisanship, where votes are cast in opposition to the 'other' candidate instead of in favour of 'your' candidate (Abramowitz & McCoy, 2018). That being said, the Achilles' heel of such effects lies in the systematic disadvantage of efforts to defend democracy within a polarised climate. For example: unconstitutional efforts to remove polarising political figures (Slater & Arugay, 2018), the refusal to accept election results that favour populist candidates (Stavrakakis, 2018), or the use of dismissive and polarising language to mobilise against "undemocratic others" (Somer & McCoy, 2018, p. 6). Refusal to participate in polarising discourses, results in exclusion and the loss of the aforementioned 'democratic' benefits.

The highest level of polarisation is then known as 'pernicious polarisation,' and describes a state where extreme polarisation destabilises the foundational mechanisms of democracy. This process is driven by the exploitation by political elites of three primary grievance-types (Enyedi, 2005; Lebas, 2006). Political grievances refer to voters feeling unrepresented or unheard within their political system (McCoy & Somer, 2019, p. 240). Economic grievances can take the form of income inequality, relative deprivation, or insecurity in the face of economic crises (McCoy & Somer, 2019, pp. 240-241). Cultural grievances run along religious, moral, racial lines around themes of (perceived) rights, influence or status (McCoy & Somer, 2019, p. 241; Skitka & Morgan, 2014).

The knock-on effects of polarisation tap into fundamental social, psychological and organisational dynamics, which is what makes the phenomenon so difficult to reverse (McCoy et al., 2018). Because of the fundamental human nature of these dynamics, polarisation can "become self-propagating and spiral out of control" (Somer & McCoy, 2018, pp. 7–8). As a result, phenomena like democratic backsliding or democratic decline generally coincide with episodes of pernicious polarisation. Meanwhile, near-misses of a democratic breakdown in cases like Czechoslovakia and Finland are attributed to "polarisation reversals" – and are relatively rare due to polarisation's self-reinforcing escalatory dynamics (Somer & McCoy, 2018, p. 4). Polarisation dynamics can also be weaponised, and unsurprisingly, are often considered crucial to the mechanisms of 'authoritarian takeovers' and 'legal revolutions' as well as 'pre-emptive suspensions' of democracy (Somer & McCoy, 2018, p. 4).

Prior Research on Depolarisation

Whilst the dangers of polarisation – both pernicious and standard – are very real, resorting to fatalism is not the solution. *De*-polarisation is possible, and has been found to occur in approximately half of the incidences of pernicious polarisation between 1900 and 2020 (McCoy et al., 2022, pp. 1–2). The phenomenon is severely under-studied: McCoy et al. (2022)'s paper, which is cited extensively throughout this article, is amongst the first to identify and treat depolarisation as a distinct phenomenon. Building on their operational definitions, a depolarisation episode is defined as any five-year period during which a country's level of polarisation declined substantially from pernicious levels, without re-polarizing to above pernicious levels.

Depolarisation thus refers to a specific, episodic phenomenon – not just decreases overall. McCoy et al. (2022, pp. 14–15), in identifying the episodes, also find common contexts between cases. One cluster of cases follows armed struggles, which are then grouped into episodes after

the resolution of internal state conflict (civil war, ethnic conflict, revolution), after the resolution of inter-state conflict, and after the success of an independence movement (decolonisation, post-World War I). A second cluster follows a regime change (typically democratisation) or changes within a regime (typically liberalisation within autocratic regimes). The third and final cluster refers to cases where no systemic shocks or major changes could be linked to a depolarisation episode.

McCoy et al. (2022, p. 16) also highlight four key nuances to their findings. Depolarisation episodes can follow autocratisation, although this is very rare. Additionally, although liberal democracies are the least likely regime to experience pernicious polarisation, they are not immune. Furthermore, amongst liberal democracies there were no incidences of depolarisation from pernicious levels, which is interpreted as relating to democratic erosion as a consequence of pernicious polarisation.

Theoretical Argument

Based on the theoretical framework, the central argument I posit is as follows. Pernicious polarisation is marked by the division of society into mutually exclusive, antagonistic camps, which is a prominent characteristic of pre- and during-conflict societies. Peace processes seek to end a conflict by bringing together opposing factions of a conflict. To that end, inclusive peace processes extend additional invitations to selected NWPs to participate in the process. As inclusive peace processes have been consistently found to result in more durable peace, an inclusive peace process would reasonably be expected to increase the chances of post-conflict depolarisation. In line with this, an inclusive peace process would also be expected to result in decreased yearly polarisation levels, even if the conditions for a depolarisation episode may not be met. As a peace agreement is a common output of a peace process, inclusion in a peace agreement can be a way to reflect inclusivity in the larger peace process. This causal pathway is codified in the following hypotheses:

H1: *Inclusive peace agreements will increase the chances of depolarisation occurring in the affected society post-conflict.*

H2: *Inclusive peace agreements will result in decreased polarisation levels in the affected society post-conflict.*

Research Design

Datasets

The data core of this research is found in two datasets: the *PA-X Peace Agreements Database and Dataset* (PA-X; Bell & Badanjak, 2019), and the *Varieties of Democracy* dataset (V-Dem; (Coppedge et al., 2024; Pemstein et al., 2024). PA-X is a global database and repository of peace agreements; this paper uses the v8 edition which contains agreements from 1990 until 2023. The dataset contains detailed information on peace agreements, their contents, and their circumstances allowing for both quantitative and qualitative analysis. The dataset has a global scope, uses individual agreements as the unit of analysis. For this paper, I primarily use the variables that fall under "Basic Information," "Groups," and "Gender" (C. Bell et al., 2024). The V-Dem dataset is a comprehensive, detailed compilation of evaluations on democracy and quality of governance; this paper uses v14. For this research I predominantly use the political polarisation variable for which the scope is global, the unit of analysis country-year, and the timespan covered 1900-2023.

Operationalisations

Operationalising Polarisation

The base of both polarisation operationalisations is V-Dem v14 and its political polarisation variable *v2cacamps_osp*. The variable is operationalised through country expert responses to the question "Is society polarized into antagonistic, political camps?", with answers falling on an ordinal scale ranging from "0: Not at all. Supporters of opposing political camps generally

interact in a friendly manner" to "4: Yes, to a large extent. Supporters of opposing political camps generally interact in a hostile manner" (Coppedge et al., 2021, p. 224). Responses are then aggregated across coders using the Bayesian item response theory measurement model to ensure intercoder reliability (Coppedge et al., 2021, p. 32).

Taking this as a base, I operationalise polarisation in two different ways for this study. The first is as a binary variable based on whether McCoy et al (2022)'s operational definition for a depolarisation episode is met. That operational definition is as follows: "any five-year period during which a country's level of polarization declined from pernicious levels to below-pernicious levels (by a value of at least 0.4 on the polarization scale), without repolarizing above 3.0" (McCoy et al., 2022, p. 12). To create the variable, I translated this definition[6] into an R-script, testing for interpretation accuracy with the original list of episodes.[7] The second is as a continuous variable based directly on the political polarisation scores reported in V-Dem v14 (*v2cacamps_osp*; Coppedge et al., 2021). These use the original ordinal scale ranging from 0-4, and scores are led by one year to the IV data. Practically speaking, this means data on peace agreements signed in 1995 is analysed against polarisation scores from 1996. This was done to preserve time-order within the causal mechanism, with the assumption that any inclusivity-type activity would need time to affect society on a larger scale. Additional robustness tests are then done with polarisation scores lead by two and five years to the intervention, to try and facilitate some insight into medium-term effects.[8]

Inclusivity

For the purposes of this study, I interpret inclusion as whether a group is mentioned in the text of the agreement, as recorded in the PA-X database. PA-X codes inclusion in two ways: through binary and scalar variables. They denote, respectively, whether or not group X was mentioned in the text of an agreement, and the strength of group-specific provisions. In developing this research project, both variable types were tested and there was little to no variation in the results. For the sake of simplicity, I use only the binary variables. These are aggregated to a country-year level. As such, I primarily account for outcome-based inclusivity (Cuhadar & Druckman, 2024, pp. 360–61; Dudouet & Lundström, 2016, pp. 63–64).

Based on this, I use two operationalisations for inclusivity. To begin there is inclusivity within peace agreements on an aggregate level, which indicates whether or not *any* group was included in *any* of the peace agreements within a given country-year. Then, there is inclusivity disaggregated on a group-level, which refers to whether a *specific* NWP-group type is included in the text of *any* peace agreement in a given country-year. The group types come directly from the PA-X dataset and are as follows: children/youth, disabled persons, the elderly/age, racial/ethnic/national groups, religious groups, refugees/displaced persons, social classes, women, men, families, political parties, civil society, and traditional leaders. Additionally, it should be noted that PA-X also includes data on the inclusion of migrant workers, indigenous people, LGBTI people and 'other' groups. These are excluded from the models as individually each has too few observations to be able to meaningfully analyse a group's inclusion, nor do they naturally lend themselves to merging with another group.

Control Variables

There are two levels of control variables in this study: 'main' and 'full.' The 'main' subset

[6]McCoy et al. (2022) also proposed operationalisations for medium-term (10 years) and long-term depolarisation (until end of dataset). A code applying these definitions was also applied to the latest V-Dem data, but unfortunately neither option had enough cases to allow for meaningful statistical analysis with the methods I am using. I decided developing another method of analysis just for this was beyond the scope of the project, although I encourage this as a direction for future research.

[7]The script is stickier than McCoy et al. (2022)'s approach of individual analysis was. After testing various different versions of the script with varying degrees of stickiness, I decided the deciding factor would be trying to catch as many of the original cases as possible. 104/105, with some duplicates and additional cases, was the best result.

[8]Please note that I deviate from McCoy et al. (2022)'s definition of the short, medium and long term. The short term refers to the one-year lead condition, and medium term to effects after that first year.

includes the three variables theory would indicate to be most important; the 'full' set has an additional five control variables, which are relevant but are less prominent in the literature. The reason for this distinction was to transparently allow for comparison between the effectiveness of relatively simple and more complicated equations. Generally, the models using the 'full' set are analysed throughout this paper.

Included in the 'main' set are the degree of liberal democracy, conflict duration, and end year of a conflict episode. The 'degree of liberal democracy' variable is based on the *V-Dem Liberal Democracy Index* (LDI; *v2x_libdem*), indicating to what extent a government reflects the ideals of liberal democracy, taking into account the level of electoral democracy and limitations to the exercise of executive power (Coppedge et al., 2021). The choice of this variable is theoretically informed by Kew and Wanis-St. John (2008, p. 31), who find that democratic actors are necessary for indirect participation of civil society to have an effect on peace, and by McCoy et al. (2022, pp. 16, 23) who note a sort of preventative inoculation effect where liberal democracies rarely experience pernicious polarisation. Next, the 'conflict duration variable' was created by subtracting the starting year of a given conflict, as recorded in version 24.1 of the *UCDP Dyadic Dataset*, from the year in question (Pettersson, 2024; Harbom et al., 2008; Davies et al., 2024).[9] This control variable is theoretically informed by theories of intractability, which point to duration as an important factor for the entrenchment of conflict within a society (Kriesberg, 2010, p. 486). Finally, the 'end year of a conflict episode' variable is based on v.3 of the *UCDP Conflict Termination Dataset* (Kreutz, 2010), and the variable *ependdate*, which marks "the date, as precisely as possible, when a dyad or conflict is terminated" (Kreutz, 2021, p. 6). Using this, the variable is marked 1 if any dyad or conflict active within a country ends that year. The variable is theoretically informed by McCoy et al. (2022, p. 23)'s finding that almost 75% of depolarisation episodes occur after major systemic shocks, and by the fact that peace processes almost by definition tend to take place around such systemic shocks.

The additional five variables for the 'full' set are the conflict incompatibility average, conflict intensity level, conflict recurrence, ethnic fractionalisation index score, and whether or not multiple dyads or agreements were aggregated into a single country-year. 'Incompatibility average' is based on the *UCDP Dyadic Dataset* (v24) and its *incompatibility* variable (Davies et al., 2024; Harbom et al., 2008; Pettersson, 2024). The original variable is averaged to create a scale where 1 marks if only territory-based conflicts occur in a country-year, 2 if only government-based conflicts occur in a country-year, and 1.5 if both territory and government informed the conflicts occur in a country-year. Using this variable as a control was theoretically informed by Nilsson and Svensson (2023)'s study on inclusion in peace negotiations, who also account for the central incompatibility of a conflict. 'Intensity level' is based on the *UCDP Dyadic Dataset* (v24)'s *intensity_level* variable (Davies et al., 2024; Harbom et al., 2008). The original variable is averaged in the aggregation process to provide a more generalised view on the scale of ongoing violence per country-year: the closer to 2, the more violent it was. I included this variable as a control to complement the duration variable, and to further account for underlying factors feeding into conflict intractability (Kriesberg, 2010, p. 486). 'Recurrence' is based on the *UCDP Conflict Termination Dataset* (v.3) variable *recur* (Kreutz, 2010, 2021), which I adapt to reflect whether any of the conflicts in a given country-year are recurring conflicts. The choice of variable is informed by theories of protracted conflict and intractability (Walter, 2010, p. 5; Kriesberg, 2010, p. 486), as well as McCoy et al. (2022, p. 22)'s finding that there appears to be a strong cyclical element to pernicious polarisation. 'Ethnic fractionalisation' is based on the *Historical Index of Ethnic Fractionalization (HIEF)* dataset (Drazanova, 2020), which provides a longitudinal measure of diversity within a society. The variable forms an important theoretical complement to polarisation: whereas polarisation is

[9] If there are multiple ongoing conflicts, the average duration of all ongoing conflicts in a given year is taken to provide some measure of how long a country has been in some sort of conflict at a given point in time.

a measure of how divided a society is into two groups, fractionalisation accounts for the variety of groups a person can belong to (Drazanova, 2020, p. 2–8). Finally, the variable for 'multiple agreements' is an original binary variable to gauge the impact of the aggregation process on the dataset. Simply put, if multiple peace agreements were aggregated into a country-year in the preparation of either dataset, the variable reads 1.

Analytical Methods

The analysis uses two models, corresponding with the binary and continuous forms of the dependent variable data: logistic regressions with clustered standard errors, and fixed effects models. Because of the novel combination of data and the exploratory nature of this study, I am prioritising using simpler, more standard models with the hope of providing the groundwork for more sophisticated approaches.

Logistic Regressions with Clustered Standard Errors

Logistic regressions are standard when working with binary dependent variables, and use the logit function to calculate the probability of a certain outcome. The regression is interpreted by analysing the exponentiated coefficients of the variables, particularly those with statistically significant p-values. Within this paper these models estimate how inclusivity in a peace process affects the likelihood of a country entering a depolarisation episode.

The logistic regressions are run in both bivariate and multivariate form. Clustered standard errors (SE) are used as both datasets, once aggregated to the country-year unit of analysis, are set up as panel data. Clustered standard regressions allow the model to account for the fact that observations from the same country will not be independent from each other. Failing to account for this risks inflated significance in the analysis and improving the validity of p-values.

Fixed Effects Models

The other form of the dependent variable is continuous. For the analysis of such data I use fixed effects models. This is because fixed effects models control for time-invariant variables (e.g. countries), making it easier to isolate the impact of time-varying variables. This makes them a fundamental tool in the analysis of panel data. Coefficients are used to interpret the model, prioritising those with statistical significance. As fixed effects render it impossible to meaningfully analyse the constant, it is ignored.

The models are run in both bivariate and multivariate form. The time-invariant factor that is accounted for is the country, meaning that the output of the model should show the effects of inclusion in a peace agreement text within the context of the countries it targets. It should be noted that this does build on the aforementioned assumption that the effects of a peace process will only affect countries that are the central location of the conflict. Although secondary effects should not be discounted, I consider this an acceptable loss of nuance within the exploratory scope of this research project.

Model Selection, Goodness-of-Fit, and Multicollinearity

In designing this project, 2-way fixed effects models and mixed/random effects models were also considered and then tested. Due to the consistent similarity of the results of these additional models to the one-way fixed effects, the one-way fixed effects model was concluded to capture the main patterns in the data robustly enough.

Variance Inflation Factor tests were run on the full control variation of each of the 'main' models to check for multicollinearity between key predictor variables. In summary, almost all of the variables' results ranged between 1-2. Any which exceeded the 2.5 threshold but remained below 10 were kept and considered an acceptable risk due to their theoretical relevance (James et al., 2021, p. 102; Johnston et al., 2018, pp. 1958–59). Had any exceeded 10, they would have been excluded from the analysis.

Finally, throughout the results tables included

in the paper a few indicators are included to keep an eye on model goodness-of-fit. For logistic regressions, the Akaike Information Coefficient (AIC) and log likelihood scores are included in the results tables. For the fixed effects models, the R^2 and Adjusted R^2 are included in the results tables, as well as the residual standard errors (RSE) and the F-statistic. Overall, in this paper the models with 'full controls' consistently outperform those with fewer or no controls (respectively marked with 'main' and 'base' throughout).

Ethical Considerations

For this study, I did not work directly with any human research subjects. The data sources I used are well-established or have gone through rigorous standards before their publication. Thus, it seems that the ethical risks common to peace research – like tracing sensitive information and directly or indirectly harming the subject of the research – are relatively minimal in relation to the data being used. However, Hoover Green and Cohen (2021, pp. 2–4) raise that there are still downstream risks to research subjects as well as implicit assumptions about data accuracy. For example, informed consent may have been given for the initial purpose of the data collection; yet as desk datasets such as PA-X and V-Dem are used broadly this consent may not apply to the evolutionary trajectory of how the dataset is used. That being said, I believe that this particular risk is as minimal as it can be: the peace agreements included in PA-X are all public documents and were conceived as such; V-Dem's polarisation scores comprise of expert input specifically gathered for a large-scale public-facing dataset.

Furthermore, there are ethical risks relating to the questions central to the research project and the answers it may point to. As Hoover Green and Cohen (2021, pp. 4–5) highlight, it is vital not to lose sight of the human subjects that are hidden behind the numbers and figures in quantitative research. Throughout this paper I try to be consistent in contextualising the preliminary nature of the findings and their limitations. There is simply not enough information included in the models to have conclusive findings about the effectiveness of inclusion in general, as well as the effects of the inclusion of specific groups. Additionally, in this study I measure inclusion in a peace agreement based on whether a group is explicitly mentioned in the text of an agreement. However, mention is not a guarantee of actual active participation in the broader peace process or in post-agreement decision making.

Inclusivity can never be a silver bullet to polarisation – only a tool in the toolbox. The 'inclusivity hype' has resulted in some thoughtlessly 'inclusive' programmes that ultimately backfired on a larger peace process (Cuhadar & Paffenholz, 2020, pp. 666–67; Paffenholz, 2014a, p. 4; C. Bell & Wise, 2022, p. 399). It is vital to understand that effectiveness in a peace process is always deeply context-dependent and varies significantly on a case-by-case basis.

Analysis

The following section is structured in two parts. First are the regression analyses in which inclusion in a peace agreement is evaluated against the occurrence of a depolarisation episode, beginning with inclusion on an aggregated level and subsequently disaggregated by group. Second are the regression analyses of inclusion in a peace agreement against the yearly polarisation scores of a country, again beginning with inclusion operationalised aggregately and then disaggregated on a group level.

Aggregate inclusion refers to the inclusion of any NWP in the text of any peace agreements within a given country-year, as recorded in the PA-X database. When this is disaggregated, inclusion refers to the inclusion of a given type of NWP-group – such as references to women, religious groups, or youth within the text of peace agreements for a given country-year. For example, take the case of the *Agreement for Lasting Peace through the Permanent Cessation of Hostilities Between the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF)* was signed in 2022. Beyond the permanent cessation of hostilities, the agreement features detailed provisions condemning sexual and gender-based violence; violence against children, girls, women and the elderly; and supporting family reunification. Thus,

in the dataset Ethiopia in 2022 scores an affirmative (1) for the aggregated inclusion variable, as does the inclusion of children, women, the elderly and families. The inclusion of racial or religious groups is scored with a negative (0), as these are not mentioned explicitly in the text of the agreement.

Included in the results tables are multiple variations of each model. Generally, this is the 'baseline' model, which includes only the independent variable and the dependent variable; the 'main controls' model, which includes the core control variables listed in the operationalisation section; and the 'full controls' model, which includes all control variables included in the study. This is done to be able to transparently show the effect of the control variables on the relationship and the size of the N in the model. However, only the full control models are analysed in detail as these are the more scientifically sound models.

Inclusive Peace Agreements vs. Depolarisation Episodes

The logistic regression models indicate how inclusion in a peace process affects the likelihood of a country entering a depolarisation episode. The results are presented first as log odds, which is also how they are in the results tables, and then converted into an odds ratio.

Table 1 presents the results of aggregate inclusion being evaluated against the occurrence of depolarisation episodes on a country-year level in a logistic regression model. With full controls, the log odds of a depolarisation episode are 0.636 with a standard error of 1.108. This translates to an odds ratio of 1.889, meaning that the inclusion of any NWP in the text of a peace agreement increases the odds of a depolarisation episode occurring by 88.9% – a strong, positive relationship. However, it should be noted that these results do not meet standards of statistical significance.

When inclusivity is disaggregated to the group level, a more detailed picture of the impact of different groups on the occurrence of a depolarisation episode comes into view. The full results are shown in full in Table 2. The analysis of the full control models is grouped as follows: statistically significant results with a negative impact on depolarisation odds, statistically significant results with a positive impact on depolarisation odds, and results that do not pass any statistical significance thresholds.

I begin with the three variables that have statistically significant results with a negative impact on depolarisation odds – meaning that the inclusion of these groups in the text of a peace agreement would have a net positive effect on polarisation. First, inclusion of racial groups has a log odds of -3.640 with a standard error of 1.853 which is significant at the 5% level. The subsequent odds ratio is 0.026, pointing to a decrease in the odds of a depolarisation episode occurring by 97.4%. Second, the inclusion of religious groups has log odds of -8.589 with a standard error of 4.654, translating to an odds ratio of almost 0 (0.000186 to be more precise) or a near 100% decrease in the odds of a depolarisation episode happening. This model is significant at the 10% level. Thirdly, the inclusion of general civil society has a log odds of -4.372 with a standard error of 2.153, significant at the 5% level. The subsequent odds ratio of 0.013 equates to a 98.7% decrease in the odds of a depolarisation episode occurring. In summary, the inclusion of racial, religious and general civil society groups all appear to have a strong, negative relationship to the occurrence of a depolarisation episode.

Table 1 – Logistic Regression of Aggregated Inclusion vs. Depolarisation Episodes (Clustered SEs, Log Odds)

Regression Table

Variable	Depolarisation Episodes		
	Baseline	**Main Controls**	**Full Controls**
inclusion_cy_any	1.342	0.514	0.636
	(1.064)	(1.179)	(1.108)
v2x_libdem	-	-11.147***	-11.205**
	-	(3.855)	(4.546)
duration	-	0.020	0.019
	-	(0.029)	(0.037)
end_year_ep	-	1.144	0.866
	-	(0.714)	(1.040)
incompatibility_avg	-	-	0.085
	-	-	(1.152)
intensity_level	-	-	-0.390
	-	-	(0.927)
recur_any	-	-	-0.129
	-	-	(0.926)
multiple_agrmts	-	-	-0.639
	-	-	(0.788)
hief_efindex	-	-	0.840
	-	-	(1.653)
Constant	-5.088***	-3.123**	-2.567
	(1.023)	(1.269)	(3.188)
N	683	363	247
Log Likelihood	-63.178	-36.092	-32.619
Akaike Inf. Crit.	130.356	82.185	85.239

*p < 0.1, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01

Then, there are four groups whose inclusion has statistically significant, positive impact on the odds of a depolarisation episode occurring, and a negative impact on polarisation in general. The inclusion of women has a log odds of 3.463 with a standard error of 1.939, which translates to an odds ratio of 31.913 or a roughly thirtyfold (3,091%) increase in the odds of a depolarisation episode occurring. The result is significant at the 10% level. After that, the inclusion of disabled people has a log odds of 4.173 with a standard error of 1.977 in the controlled models. The resulting odds ratio is extremely large: 64.910. This would indicate that inclusion of disabled people in the text of a peace agreement increases the odds of a depolarisation episode by approximately sixtyfold (6,391%). The inclusion of refugees has a similar result: a log odds of 4.252 with a standard error of 1.728, and a resulting odds ratio of 70.246 – an increase in the odds of a depolarisation episode occurring by approximately seventyfold (6,925%). Both the results for the inclusion of disabled people and refugees are statistically significant at 5%. Lastly,

the inclusion of families in the text of a peace agreement has a log odds of 4.244 with a standard error of 1.472, significant at the 1% level. This corresponds to an odds ratio of 69.686 or a near-seventyfold (6,869%) increase in the odds of a depolarisation episode occurring. It's notable that all of these results have extremely large odds ratios, especially for the latter three. This could be indicative of data sparsity issues, which is possible given there were little over 100 incidences of depolarisation episodes. The issue is something I try to address with the second operationalisation, where I analyse the data against yearly polarisation scores. The results should thus be interpreted cautiously, and be taken as indicative of a possible relationship between the inclusion of women, disabled people, refugees, and families and depolarisation.

Finally, the inclusion of children, social class and political parties were all found to have positive effects on the odds of a depolarisation episode, although none met statistical significance thresholds. Interestingly, the inclusion of children and social class have similar results, with the former having a log odds of 0.741 and an odds ratio of 2.098, and the latter a log odds of 0.795 with an odds ratio of 2.214. The inclusion of political parties has a very big odds ratio, although not on par with the aforementioned: it had a log odds of 3.093 with a resulting odds ratio of 22.043. Next, the inclusion of the elderly, men, and traditional leaders all have negative effects on the odds of a depolarisation episode, all without meeting statistical significance thresholds. Within this group, the inclusion of the elderly and of men have comparable results with, respectively: a log odds of -2.033 yielding an odds ratio of 0.131, and a log odds of -2.151 resulting in an odds ratio of 0.116. The inclusion of traditional leaders has a much smaller impact with a log odds of -0.173, corresponding to an odds ratio of 0.841. All of these results can be indicative of weaker positive or negative relationships between the inclusion of these groups and the occurrence of a depolarisation episode. Yet, because none meet statistical significance thresholds considerable uncertainty remains about the direction and scale of the relationships.

A Note on Model Fit

It is important to note that the results of both the models of aggregated and disaggregated inclusion variables measured against polarisation episodes consistently have very large standard errors. The consequence of this is that many will have very wide confidence intervals, often including one and thus making it impossible for the results to meet the standards of statistical significance. This is likely due to the relatively small N once all controls were added. Worth noting is that for both the aggregate and the disaggregated models, the AIC improves significantly when control variables are added. This indicates that these variables are important to the explanatory power of the model. Furthermore, the log likelihood of both sets of models gets closer to zero as controls are added, once again indicating an improving model fit.

The aim of this study is primarily exploratory work as the sub-field of depolarisation research is in its infancy. This does not erase issues of validity, but does point to this being the best possible result with the data available at the time of analysis. To that end, the next section uses an operationalisation that is less restrictive by analysing the inclusion data against 'just' the polarisation scores of the years that follow inclusion in a peace agreement. The hope is to confirm patterns and add nuance to the relationships found.

Inclusive Peace Agreements vs. Yearly Polarisation Levels

The fixed effects models control for the country of the data, and so coefficients indicate the effects directly on polarisation levels within a country over time. The yearly polarisation scores are led against the inclusion data by one, two, and five years to provide some insight into potential variability in the short- and medium-term effects of inclusion. Thus, say any NWPs are included in a peace agreement in country X in the year Y (e.g. 2000), this results in a

Table 2 – Logistic Regression of Disaggregated Inclusion vs. Depolarisation Episodes (Clustered SEs, Log Odds)

Regression Table

Variable	Depolarisation Episodes		
	Baseline	**Main Controls**	**Full Controls**
GCh_cy_any	0.272	-0.087	0.741
	(0.858)	(1.027)	(1.560)
GDis_cy_any	0.953	2.127***	4.173**
	(0.671)	(0.705)	(1.977)
GAge_cy_any	-0.978	-1.821	-2.033
	(1.024)	(1.508)	(1.482)
GRa_cy_any	-0.024	-1.229	-3.640**
	(0.672)	(0.894)	(1.853)
GRe_cy_any	-2.506***	-4.241***	-8.589*
	(0.735)	(1.398)	(4.654)
GRef_cy_any	0.841	1.760	4.252**
	(0.696)	(1.075)	(1.728)
GSoc_cy_any	-0.094	1.212	0.795
	(0.959)	(0.866)	(1.409)
GeWom_cy_any	0.579	2.313	3.463*
	(0.777)	(1.480)	(1.939)
GeMe_cy_any	-0.824	-0.669	-2.151
	(0.946)	(0.856)	(1.330)
GeFa_cyv_any	1.104	1.843	4.244***
	(0.729)	(1.223)	(1.472)
PolPar_cy_any	1.232**	1.987**	3.093
	(0.542)	(0.971)	(2.922)
Civso_cy_any	0.351	-2.408*	-4.372**
	(0.816)	(1.343)	(2.153)
Tral_cy_any	-1.644	-1.514	-0.173
	(1.155)	(1.381)	(0.775)
v2x_libdem	-	-15.004***	-22.933***
	-	(5.598)	(7.071)
duration	-	-0.008	-0.030
	-	(0.035)	(0.068)
end_year_ep	-	1.510	1.846
	-	(1.089)	(2.080)
incompatibility_avg	-	-	0.014
	-	-	(1.728)

Table 2 – Continued
Regression Table

Variable	Depolarisation Episodes		
	Baseline	**Main Controls**	**Full Controls**
intensity_level	-	-	-0.560
	-	-	(0.990)
recur_any	-	-	-2.449
	-	-	(2.147)
multiple_agrmts	-	-	-1.478
	-	-	(0.976)
hief_efindex	-	-	-3.746
	-	-	(3.693)
Constant	-4.977***	-3.128**	0.181
	(0.648)	(1.222)	(5.128)
N	683	363	247
Log Likelihood	-54.473	-26.436	-19.496
Akaike Inf. Crit.	136.947	86.872	82.992

*p < 0.1, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01

positive value for inclusion (1) in that country-year. The model then analyses that inclusion against the polarisation scores in the years Y+1 (e.g. 2001), Y+2 (e.g. 2002) and Y+ 5 (e.g. 2005). As with the logistic regressions, only the full-control models are analysed in-text but all three variations of a model (base, main controls, full controls) are included in-table for transparency. These additional models all exclusively use the Y+1 data.

Table 3 contains the results of aggregate inclusion regressed against yearly polarisation scores. Inclusion in the aggregate appears to increase a country's polarisation scores by 0.099 with a standard error of 0.073 one year on from inclusion; increase by 0.071 with a standard error of 0.075 two years after inclusion; and increase by 0.063 with a standard error of 0.069 five years after inclusion. These results do not meet statistical significance standards. Thus, it seems that when NWPs are included in a peace agreement, generally polarisation levels in subsequent years do increase slightly – but the increase tapers off with time, and the effect remains fairly uncertain.

Next, Table 4 shows the results of the fixed effects analysis of inclusion disaggregated to the group level against yearly polarisation levels. Again, analysis is focussed on the full-control models, for which yearly polarisation levels lead inclusion variables by one, two and five years. Results are sorted by groups who had directionally consistent and consistently significant results, groups with any significant result within the three year-leads checked, groups with directionally consistent results without statistical significance, and groups with mixed results without statistical significance.

The inclusion of disabled people and women both have consistent negative effects on polarisation scores in all three year-leads being tested. The inclusion of disabled people has a coefficient of -0.224 with a standard error of 0.079 one year after inclusion, significant at 1%; -0.143 with a standard error of 0.083 two years after inclusion, significant at 10%; and -0.154 with a standard error of 0.072 five years after inclusion, significant at 5%. Along similar lines, the inclusion of women in a peace agreement text correlates to an effect of -0.125 with a standard error of 0.069 in the first year,

Table 3 – Fixed Effects Model of Aggregated Inclusion vs. Yearly Polarisation Scores
Regression Table

Variable	Polarisation Scores				
	Baseline	**Main Controls 1y**	**Full Controls 1y**	**Full Controls 2y**	**Full Controls 5y**
inclusion_cy_any	0.034	0.080	0.099	0.071	0.063
	(0.041)	(0.055)	(0.073)	(0.075)	(0.069)
v2x_libdem	-	-2.040***	-1.390**	-0.716	-0.729
	-	(0.383)	(0.566)	(0.585)	(0.534)
duration	-	0.001	-0.005	-0.003	-0.004
	-	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
end_year_ep	-	-0.151***	-0.132**	-0.205***	-0.097
	-	(0.049)	(0.063)	(0.065)	(0.060)
incompatibility_avg	-	-	0.244*	0.325**	0.124
	-	-	(0.132)	(0.137)	(0.125)
intensity_level	-	-	0.005	-0.056	-0.074
	-	-	(0.072)	(0.074)	(0.068)
recur_any	-	-	0.020	0.075	0.038
	-	-	(0.072)	(0.075)	(0.068)
multiple_agrmts	-	-	-0.038	-0.001	-0.013
	-	-	(0.050)	(0.051)	(0.047)
hief_efindex	-	-	-1.846	-1.726	-5.177***
	-	-	(1.524)	(1.576)	(1.437)
Constant	2.615***	2.886***	3.744***	3.363***	6.406***
	(0.095)	(0.117)	(1.121)	(1.159)	(1.057)
N	679	363	247	247	247
R^2	0.851	0.858	0.885	0.873	0.884
Adjusted R^2	0.828	0.829	0.851	0.834	0.849
Residual Std. Error	0.371	0.320	0.312	0.322	0.294
	(df = 586)	(df = 301)	(df = 189)	(df = 189)	(df = 189)
F-Statistic	36.405***	29.801***	25.581***	22.716***	25.195***
	(df = 92; 586)	(df = 61; 301)	(df = 57; 189)	(df = 57; 189)	(df = 57; 189)

*p < 0.1, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01

significant at 10%; -0.176 with a standard error of 0.073 in the second year, significant at 5%; and -0.170 with a standard error of 0.063 in the fifth year, significant at 1%. These results point to strong, consistent, and negative relationships between polarisation levels and the inclusion of disabled people and the inclusion of women in the text of a peace agreement. They average out to decreasing polarisation scores by roughly 15-20%. Interestingly, the inclusion of disabled people appears to have a slow and slight decrease in scale over time; whereas the inclusion of women appears to grow slightly after the first year and then remains steady in the medium term.

Following these, the strongest results are seen with groups in which one of the year-leads has statistically significant results. I'll begin with the inclusion of racial groups and refugees, which both have significant results in the one-year lead condition. The inclusion of racial groups has a positive effect of 0.117 with a standard error of 0.070 in the first year, which is significant at the 10% level; a positive effect of 0.005 with a standard error of 0.074 in the second year; and a negative effect of -0.019 with a standard error of 0.064 in the fifth year. Subsequently, the inclusion of refugees corresponds to an increase of 0.125 with a standard error of 0.061 in the first year, which is significant at the 5% level; an increase of 0.061 with a standard error of 0.064 in the second year; and a decrease of -0.007 with a standard error of 0.055 in the fifth year. Notably, the results for both these groups seem to mirror each other: correlating with a strong increase of polarisation levels in the first year, which then tapers off in the second, and ultimately flips to a decreasing effect by the five-year lead condition.

On the other hand, the inclusion of social class and political parties both have significant results in the five-year lead condition. To start, the inclusion of social class in a peace agreement has a positive coefficient of 0.032 with a standard error of 0.088 in the first year; a positive coefficient of 0.078 with a standard error of 0.092 in the second year; and a positive coefficient of 0.171 with a standard error of 0.080 in the fifth, which is significant at the 5% level. Then, the inclusion of political parties has a positive correlation coefficient of 0.067 with a standard error of 0.071 in the first year; a negative correlation coefficient of -0.023 with a standard error of 0.075 in the second year; and a positive correlation coefficient of 0.211 with a standard error of 0.065 in the fifth year, which is significant at the 1% level. Put together, it seems that inclusion of social class generally corresponds with increasing polarisation, but that this relationship becomes more significant and bigger in the medium term. The inclusion of political parties has a less clear-cut impact: small but fluctuating impact in the shorter term, yet growing to a significant positive relationship by the medium term.

Following these, there are several groups whose correlation coefficients had a consistent direction yet were never statistically significant. These results can be used to point out a general direction of the relationship, but should be understood as still fairly uncertain. The inclusion of the elderly had a consistently positive impact on polarisation, with coefficients of 0.031 at one year after inclusion; 0.062 two years after inclusion; and 0.023 five years after inclusion. However, the inclusion of families is paired with a consistent decrease of polarisation levels with a coefficient of -0.006 in the first year; -0.032 in the second year; and -0.022 in the fifth. Somewhat comparably, the inclusion of traditional leaders has a negative correlation coefficient of -0.037 in the first year; a negative coefficient of -0.040 in the second year; and a negative coefficient of -0.023 in the fifth year.

Table 4 – Fixed Effects Model of Disaggregated Inclusion vs. Yearly Polarisation Scores
Regression Table

Variable	Polarisation Scores				
	Baseline	**Main Controls 1y**	**Full Controls 1y**	**Full Controls 2y**	**Full Controls 5y**
GCh_cy_an	0.029	0.050	0.014	-0.010	-0.008
	(0.049)	(0.061)	(0.071)	(0.074)	(0.064)
GDis_cy_any	-0.174***	-0.168**	-0.224***	-0.143*	-0.154**
	(0.060)	(0.068)	(0.079)	(0.083)	(0.072)
GAge_cy_any	0.046	0.040	0.031	0.062	0.023
	(0.063)	(0.072)	(0.086)	(0.091)	(0.079)
GRa_cy_any	0.083*	0.153***	0.117*	0.005	-0.019
	(0.045)	(0.055)	(0.070)	(0.074)	(0.064)
GRe_cy_any	-0.020	-0.096*	-0.058	0.075	0.090
	(0.046)	(0.052)	(0.063)	(0.066)	(0.057)
GRef_cy_any	0.045	0.069	0.125**	0.061	-0.007
	(0.041)	(0.051)	(0.061)	(0.064)	(0.055)
GSoc_cy_any	-0.001	-0.019	0.032	0.078	0.171**
	(0.070)	(0.075)	(0.088)	(0.092)	(0.080)
GeWom_cy_any	-0.101**	-0.098	-0.125*	-0.176**	-0.170***
	(0.049)	(0.060)	(0.069)	(0.073)	(0.063)
GeMe_cy_any	0.007	0.054	0.037	0.078	-0.053
	(0.057)	(0.062)	(0.075)	(0.079)	(0.069)
GeFa_cy_any	-0.057	-0.029	-0.006	-0.032	-0.022
	(0.046)	(0.054)	(0.065)	(0.068)	(0.059)
PolPar_cy_any	0.091*	0.057	0.067	-0.023	0.211***
	(0.054)	(0.060)	(0.071)	(0.075)	(0.065)
Civso_cy_any	0.056	-0.00005	-0.035	-0.018	0.031
	(0.038)	(0.048)	(0.057)	(0.060)	(0.052)
Tral_cy_any	0.046	0.062	-0.037	-0.040	-0.023
	(0.046)	(0.051)	(0.065)	(0.068)	(0.059)
v2x_libdem	-	-1.913***	-0.945	-0.402	-0.177
	-	(0.392)	(0.588)	(0.617)	(0.537)
duration	-	0.0003	-0.007**	-0.004	-0.006*
	-	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
end_year_ep	-	-0.160***	-0.137**	-0.202***	-0.080
	-	(0.049)	(0.064)	(0.067)	(0.058)
incompatibility_avg	-	-	0.233*	0.323**	0.056
	-	-	(0.135)	(0.142)	(0.123)

Table 4 – Continued
Regression Table

Variable	Polarisation Scores				
	Baseline	**Main Controls 1y**	**Full Controls 1y**	**Full Controls 2y**	**Full Controls 5y**
intensity_level	-	-	-0.020	-0.063	-0.101
	-	-	(0.071)	(0.075)	(0.065)
recur_any	-	-	-0.007	0.043	0.003
	-	-	(0.073)	(0.076)	(0.067)
multiple_agrmts	-	-	0.014	0.052	0.020
	-	-	(0.054)	(0.057)	(0.049)
hief_efindex	-	-	-1.641	-1.796	-5.164***
	-	-	(1.500)	(1.574)	(1.369)
Constant	2.668***	2.958***	3.742***	3.549***	6.734***
	(0.095)	(0.110)	(1.111)	(1.166)	(1.014)
N	679	363	247	247	247
R^2	0.857	0.867	0.897	0.882	0.902
Adjusted R^2	0.831	0.834	0.857	0.837	0.864
Residual Std. Error	0.367	0.316	0.305	0.320	0.278
	(df = 574)	(df = 289)	(df = 177)	(df = 177)	(df = 177)
F-Statistic	33.060***	25.849***	22.385***	19.247***	23.686***
	(df = 104; 574)	(df = 73; 289)	(df = 69; 177)	(df = 69; 177)	(df = 69; 177)

*p < 0.1, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01

Incidentally, all three groups appear to have fairly stable positive and negative impacts on polarisation, each experiencing a small bump in scale at the two-year lead condition. However, as none are statistically significant, these results should be interpreted cautiously.

Lastly, there are groups whose inclusion does not seem to have a consistent effect. This refers to the inclusion of children, religious groups, men and civil society. First, the inclusion of children corresponds with a polarisation level increase of 0.014 in the first year; a decrease of -0.010 in the second year; and a decrease of -0.008 in the fifth year after inclusion. Second, the inclusion of religious groups has a negative correlation of -0.058 in the first year; a positive correlation of 0.075 in the second year; and a positive correlation of 0.090 in the fifth. Third, the inclusion of men corresponds with an increase of 0.037 in the first year; an increase of 0.078 in the second year; but a decrease of -0.053 in the fifth year. Fourth, the inclusion of general civil society corresponds with decreasing polarisation scores by -0.035 in the first year; decreasing by -0.018 in the second year; and increasing by 0.031 in the fifth year. The highly variable results for these groups could point towards a complex, time-sensitive relationship between their inclusion and polarisation scores. However, the current data does not allow much further insight into this; and none of the results meet statistical significance standards.

A Note on Model Fit

As with the logistic regressions, the results of the fixed effects models also often have relatively large standard errors which can once again be explained by the relatively small N. Also as with the logistic regressions, I do not consider this to

be too much of an issue as these results should be taken as a preliminary mapping out of potential relationships.

Then, looking at the broader performance statistics of the models we see that the inclusion of the control variables generally improves the performance of the models. For the models using aggregated inclusion measures, the R^2 shows us that roughly 88% of the variation in the data is explained by the full control models compared to the baseline model which has an explanatory power of 85%. For the models using disaggregated operationalisations of inclusion, the R^2 statistic goes from 86% of the variation in the data being explained by the baseline model to 88-90% for the models with control variables.

The Adjusted R^2, which adjusts for complexity, yields comparable results. For models using aggregated inclusion measurements 83-85% of the variation in the data is explained by the models with full controls compared to 83% for the baseline model. Similarly, the Adjusted R^2 for the models using disaggregated inclusion variables shows 83% of the variation being explained in the baseline model to 84-86% being explained in the full control models.

Finally, the smallest RSE's are seen in the models with more controls, thus also indicating a better predictive fit. This pattern recurs across both the aggregated and disaggregated groups of models.[10]

Additional Findings: Analysing Patterns in Control Variables

There were a few patterns in the control variables which stood out across the various models. Below I highlight the overarching patterns and significant results for each variable; detailed results can be found in the results tables.

At first glance, the variable controlling for the degree of liberal democracy of a state (*v2x_libdem*) appeared to have contradictory effects. In the logistic regression models the variable had odds ratios of nearly 0 (specifically, 0.000136 for the aggregated mode and 0.0000000000110 for the disaggregated model). These results were significant at the 5% and 1% levels, respectively, and would indicate a net increasing effect on polarisation. Yet the fixed effects models indicated a broadly negative effect on polarisation levels. In the aggregated model, correlation coefficients were -1.390 in the first year, -0.716 in the second year, and -0.729 in the fifth, of which only the first year met statistical significance thresholds at 5%. In the disaggregated model, the coefficients were -0.0945 in the first year, -0.402 in the second, and -0.177 in the fifth. None of the coefficients was statistically significant. The apparent contradiction in these results can be explained by the fact that most instances of pernicious polarisation occur outside of liberal democracies (McCoy et al., 2022, p. 16). As such, liberal democracies are also less likely to undergo depolarisation episodes in general, perhaps explaining the negative effect on this operationalisation of the outcome variable. McCoy et al. (2022, p. 16) also describes the inoculation effect of liberal democracy against polarisation, which could explain the negative effect on direct polarisation scores. Interestingly, the effect seems particularly prominent in the first year.

The variable controlling for the duration of a conflict (*duration*) generally has a small, net negative effect for polarisation in a country. One model has statistically significant results, namely the disaggregated fixed effects model. In this model the coefficient for the first year is -0.007 and significant at the 5% level; for the second year was -0.004 but not statistically significant; and for the fifth year -0.006 and significant at the 10% level. The pattern of slightly bigger negative effects in the first and fifth year recurs in the aggregated model, although none of these coefficients meets statistical significance standards. Thus it would seem that the duration of a conflict has a small negative effect on polarisation levels, which may be more pronounced directly after the conflict and in the medium term. This is curious, as the bigger the duration variable, the longer the conflict has gone on – which in the literature is associated with issues of intractability and entrenchment (e.g. Kriesberg, 2010).

[10] Additional ZIF-tests were also run on all models, and showed no indications of collinearity concerns. These have been excluded from the current publication in the interest of space, but can be found in full in the original thesis.

Next, the variable accounting for whether the year of an agreement was also the end year of an episode of conflict (*end_year_ep*) has mixed results in the logistic regressions. However, in the fixed effects models a consistent pattern emerges. In the aggregated model, the correlation coefficients are -0.132 in the first year, -0.205 in the second year, and -0.097 in the fifth year; of these the first and second year-lead conditions are significant at 5% and 1% respectively. The disaggregated model parallels this, with coefficients of -0.137 in the first year, -0.202 in the second year, and -0.080 in the fifth year. As with the aggregated model, the first and second year-lead conditions are respectively significant at the 5% and 1% levels. Note that the variable was binary, where 1 indicated that the agreement and episode-end years were the same. From this, I conclude that it seems chronological proximity between an agreement being signed and the end of a conflict is particularly important for decreasing polarisation in the short term. This makes sense: if a state of conflict is the pinnacle of pernicious polarisation, the post-conflict state should be less polarised.

The type of incompatibility (*incompatibility_avg*) appears to have a mixed impact on polarisation overall. In both logistic regressions, the variable had a small, positive but not statistically significant effect on the odds of a depolarisation episode. Yet here too there is a consistent pattern in the fixed effects models' results. The aggregated model had correlation coefficients of 0.244 in the one-year lead setup, 0.325 in the two-year lead setup, and 0.124 in the five-year lead setup. The disaggregated inclusion models had correlation coefficients of 0.233 at one year; 0.323 at two years; and 0.056 at five years. For both models, the results for the one-year and two-year leads were statistically significant at the 10% and 5% levels respectively. The way this variable was set up means that a lower score indicated territory-based conflicts, and a higher score indicated government-based conflicts. Thus it seems that more government-based conflicts correlate with increased polarisation after the conflict, particularly in the short term.

Then, accounting for the historical ethnic fractionalisation (*hief_efindex*) within a country has mixed results in the logistic regressions, but a consistent pattern where the five year-lead condition was significant at the 1% level in both fixed effects models. The coefficients for the aggregated models were -1.846 in the first year; -1.726 in the second year; and -5.177 in the fifth year. The disaggregated inclusion model had regression coefficients of -1.641 in the first year; -1.796 in the second year; and -5.164 in the fifth year. It's also notable that both five year-lead coefficients are substantially larger than the short-term indicators. So it seems that, at least in the medium term, the historic diversity of a society significantly decreases polarisation levels after a conflict. This may point to a secondary inoculation-type effect, similar to that of liberal democracy.

Finally, the remaining control variables have no statistically significant results. The variable accounting for the intensity of a conflict (*intensity_level*) has a negative effect on the odds of a depolarisation episode occurring. However, in the fixed effects models it has a positive effect on polarisation levels in the first year, followed by a negative effect on polarisation levels two and five years later – perhaps pointing to some sort of 'turning point.' The variable for whether a conflict is a recurrence of a previous conflict (*recur_any*) generally has a net positive effect on polarisation. The logistic regression results have odds ratios pointing to a decrease in the odds of a depolarisation episode; the fixed effects models generally have small but positive coefficients pointing to increasing polarisation levels. This matches expectations based on prior research into conflict recurrence and intractable conflicts (e.g. Walter, 2010; David Mason et al., 2011; Loyle & Appel, 2017). Lastly, the variable controlling for whether multiple peace agreements were signed in a given country-year (*multiple_agrmts*) has very mixed results. In both logistic regressions the odds ratios indicate a decrease in the odds of a depolarisation episode. However, the fixed effects model with aggregated inclusion has consistent, negative coefficients whereas the model with disaggregated inclusion has consistent, positive coefficients. This may indicate that whether or not there are multiple agreements going into effect simply does not matter for polarisation levels on a more macroscopic level.

Analysis & Discussion

This section contains summaries of the overarching trends between and across models, as well as their implications when contextualised in theories of inclusivity, polarisation, and peace.

Cross-Model Comparison: Inclusion in the Aggregate

In the logistic regression model, the impact of aggregate inclusion on the occurrence of a depolarisation episode has an odds ratio of 1.889 or increases the odds of a depolarisation episode occurring by 88.9%. For the fixed effects model, the correlation coefficients of the aggregate inclusion variables indicate an increase in polarisation levels of 0.099 with a standard error of 0.073 one year on from inclusion; an increase of 0.071 with a standard error of 0.075 two years after inclusion; and an increase of 0.063 with a standard error of 0.069 five years after inclusion. None of the results is statistically significant.

These mixed results point towards seemingly contradictory effects: inclusion generally in the text of a peace agreement both seems to substantially contribute towards the likelihood of a depolarisation episode occurring in a country, whilst also still correlating with small increases in actual polarisation levels in a country. I think the explanation for this lies in the operational definition of a depolarisation episode, which was quite strict and identified only 123 episodes within the V-dem data. On the other hand, the polarisation levels operationalisation simply looks directly at the polarisation scores. Thus it only captures broad and likely more superficial patterns for polarisation scores – not necessarily systematic depolarisation. So, I tentatively draw the conclusion that inclusive peace agreements do not automatically decrease polarisation levels, but they may improve the chances for systemic, substantial depolarisation occurring post-conflict in a country. Further research is needed to determine the strength of this potential relationship. I suggest starting by exploring the operational area between the depolarisation episode and yearly polarisation levels.

Cross-Model Comparison: Inclusion Disaggregate

In the following sub-section I compare the key patterns in results across the logistic regression and the fixed effects model. These are grouped accordingly: results that align in net effect on polarisation and statistical significance, results that align in net effect but not fully on statistical significance, results that do not align in net effect but somewhat on statistical significance, results that are significant in only one of the models, and results where no clear broader pattern can be found.

To start, the results on the inclusion of disabled people and women are the strongest and most consistent throughout the data. In the logistic regression, both have significant and extremely large positive effects on the odds of depolarisation – indicating a net negative effect on polarisation overall. In the fixed effects models, both have statistically significant coefficients at all three year-lead conditions, and all indicate a negative effect on polarisation scores. These results are particularly notable for three reasons. The results of the fixed effects appear to confirm the results of the logistic regression – pointing to a very strong relationship, although the scales indicated by the logistic regression (of a 30-fold and 60-fold increase in odds, respectively) should still be interpreted cautiously. Regarding the inclusion of women, it aligns with prior research on the issue (e.g. Nilsson, 2012; Krause et al., 2018). Regarding the inclusion of disabled people, the results' strength is especially interesting due its nearly ubiquitous absence in prior research – and so seems a particularly promising area for future research.

Following this, the results on the inclusion of families and racial groups in the texts of peace agreements align directionally albeit not fully in terms of significance. The inclusion of families in the logistic regression model has a positive, statistically significant effect on the odds of a depolarisation episode, and so a net negative effect on polarisation overall. In the fixed effects models, inclusion of families has a consistent, negative effect on polarisation but does not meet any statistical significance standards. On the other

hand, the inclusion of racial groups in the logistic regression model has a significant, negative effect on the odds of a depolarisation episode, indicating a net positive effect on polarisation. The fixed effects models indicate that the inclusion of racial groups also has an increasing effect on polarisation in the short term, which is statistically significant one-year after inclusion. For these two groups it seems that there is a clear impact on polarisation, but the relationship may be weaker, more layered, or chronologically complex than the inclusion of disabled people and women.

Next, the results of the inclusion of refugees appear to contradict each other. In the logistic regression model the variable has a statistically significant and positive effect on depolarisation – although it should be noted that this result has an outsized scale and should be interpreted cautiously. Yet in the fixed effects model, the variable has a statistically significant positive coefficient one year after inclusion. After the first year, the effect appears to taper off and flips to a decreasing effect on polarisation by the five year-lead condition. From this I tentatively conclude that the inclusion of refugees in an agreement has a strong and sizable net negative effect on polarisation, although it may need to overcome initial resistance at first. The result is notable due to its strength, and the complex relationship established by prior research between conflict, migration patterns, the long-term stability of a country, and the relationship between refugees and politics (e.g. Carl, 2019; World Bank Group & United Nations, 2018).

There are four groups whose inclusion is significant in only one of the two models. For the logistic regressions, the inclusion of religious and civil society groups has a negative and statistically significant impact on depolarisation episode odds, yet shows no clear pattern or statistical significance in the fixed effects model. This is a particularly important avenue for future research, due to the prominence of religious and civil society peace mediation – it may be that different forms of inclusion yield different results, particularly for this group of actors (see e.g. Nilsson & Svensson, 2023). For the fixed effects model, the inclusion of social class and political parties has a significant and positive effect on polarisation at the five year lead-mark. However, both results in the logistic regression meet no statistical significance benchmarks, and the results indicate a positive effect on depolarisation – which is the opposite net effect to the fixed effects model. It's not clear why this is the case, and future research is needed to further disentangle this relationship. As with the religious and civil society groups, this would be particularly important due to the prominence of political parties in many peace negotiations.

Ultimately, we have the results of groups whose inclusion has no clear cross-dataset patterns: children, men, the elderly and traditional leaders. Whilst in the logistic regression the inclusion of children has a positive effect on depolarisation odds, and the inclusion of men has a negative effect on depolarisation odds, neither result was statistically significant. For the fixed effects model, there are also no statistically significant coefficients, and the coefficients do not point in any consistent direction. But for the inclusion of the elderly and traditional leaders, there is a consistent positive and negative respective effect on polarisation scores in the fixed effects models, albeit without statistical significance. In the logistic regression both groups have a negative effect on depolarisation odds, and do not meet statistical significance thresholds. As a result, there are no robust conclusions that can be drawn from the results of these variables.

Limitations

The primary objections to this work that I can see fall into two categories: operative and analytical. Operationally, there is an assumption of comparability that I make which can be questioned. The operationalisation of inclusivity in peace agreements only records the mention of a specific group in a peace agreement and thus does not fully account for inclusion in the negotiation process, quality of inclusion in agreement, and follow-through of inclusion in the implementation phase. Future research could use Bell and Kitagawa (2024)'s fine-grained original data, which also uses the PA-X dataset and identifies civil society signatories to agreements. Additionally, as mentioned in the research design section, for the

thesis that this paper is based on, I did tests for the 'quality of inclusion' using the PA-X's scalar inclusion variables (Erenstein, 2025). However, this yielded no meaningful variation in results. In the original thesis I also accounted for inclusion in negotiations by testing the polarisation data against Nilsson and Svensson (2023)'s Non-Warring Actors in Peacemaking dataset.

Analytically, the primary aim of this paper is exploratory research, as research on *de*-polarisation is in its infancy. Because of this I make the strategic decision to use relatively simple models, and do the brunt of robustness testing through various different combinations and permutations of the data. Included in this paper is a small sample of these tests, worked out in full. The larger set of approximately 300 tests can be found in the aforementioned thesis (Erenstein, 2025). Even so, the limiting implications are seen when the inclusion of specific group-types yields confounding results. This is likely because the data inherently treats all actors within a group-type as homogenous, despite this not being reflective of reality (see e.g. Von Burg, 2015). Furthermore, the large range in incidences of inclusion for a given group is likely to impact the quality of the results. Indeed, the inclusion of migrant workers, indigenous people, LGBTI people and 'other' groups is recorded within the PA-X dataset, yet are excluded from the models in this paper.

The main alternative explanations challenge two core assumptions in the premise of this study. There is an assumption that after a peace process occurs – codified through the presence of a peace agreement – a country is no longer in conflict. The issue with this assumption is addressed in the theoretical framework, and I try to account for it through the 'end of a conflict episode' control variable. Even so, it is impossible to reliably tell if the polarisation scores reflect those of an active conflict, a latent conflict, an unstable peace or even a robust peace. This is partially addressed through the LDI scores. Additionally, both conflict and polarisation have strong recurrence dynamics. It seems likely that these would interact, but to the best of my knowledge, this has not been previously researched. I was unable to figure out how to account for this possible interaction effect within the scope of this effort. Unpacking this would be an interesting and likely promising direction for future research into the phenomena.

Conclusion

The aim of this research is to shed some light on the grey zone of "peace beyond the absence of war" (Höglund & Söderberg Kovacs, 2010, p. 389) by starting to unpack the mechanisms behind depolarisation. This is done by combining country-year level data on inclusivity in peace agreements with data on political polarisation, from two different datasets: PA-X and V-Dem respectively. Based on this data, four different models are analysed: two logistic regressions and two fixed effects models. The logistic regressions use an operationalisation of depolarisation episodes based on the work of McCoy et al. (2022), and approach inclusivity first in aggregate and then disaggregated form. The fixed effects models use an operationalisation of polarisation levels that directly reflect the political polarisation scores attributed in V-Dem to a given country-year. As with the logistic regressions, they approach inclusivity first in aggregate and then disaggregated by group.

Some preliminary conclusions are reached based on the strongest results. The inclusion of both women and disabled people in the text of a peace agreement consistently and statistically significantly correlates with a net decrease in polarisation. The former is in line with the robust body of work on the impact of women's inclusion in peace processes; the latter is surprising because of its strength clashes with its relative absence within prior research. Less consistently statistically significant, the inclusion of families correlates with a net decrease in polarisation, and the inclusion of racial groups with a net increase in polarisation. Additionally, the inclusion of refugees correlates with a statistically significant increase to the odds of depolarisation, yet simultaneously correlates with a statistically significant increase to short-term polarisation levels. This nuance is difficult to fully address with the current models, but not surprising given the complex relationship established by prior re-

search between conflict, migration patterns, the long-term stability of a country, and the frequent politicisation of refugees. Inclusion in aggregate, and the inclusion of religious groups, civil society, social class, political parties, children, men, the elderly, and traditional leadership all had mixed results with no clear, consistent patterns to draw conclusions from.

On a policy level, these results may – and should – complicate the 'inclusivity hype.' Fundamentally, the findings reinforce the understanding that although the data may treat the groups as uniform actors, this is not reflective of reality. Women's groups will not always advocate for the same rights or reforms (Von Burg, 2015), and the inclusion of women in a peace agreement may refer to increasing access to societal good or to provisions to protect them from sexual and gender-based violence. Similarly, mentions of youth in a peace agreement may refer to justice for child soldiers but also systematic educational reforms. None is inherently 'better' than the other, but these group-level results must be understood as general, aggregated indications of potential relationships. Consequently, they are limited in what they can actually say about the nuanced qualities of these relationships – further research and case knowledge are needed to untangle their intricacies.

From the work in this paper, we cannot conclusively say that the inclusivity, or the inclusion of certain groups, during a peace process causes depolarisation or a decrease in polarisation. However, I can conclude that inclusion – under certain circumstances – clearly seems to contribute to creating the initial conditions which allow depolarisation and decreases in polarisation levels to occur. To that end, I am reminded of the words of Kew and Wanis-St. John (2008, 11): "Sustainability of peace surely rests on causes as complex and dynamic as the initiation of war does."

Acknowledgements

I would like to especially thank the village of people who kept me upright, both inside and outside of libraries, as I was writing the thesis this paper was based on. Without the emotional support, kindness, and generosity of spirit of my partner, friends and family, it would not have been possible. A special thanks to David for supervising and guiding me throughout the research quest, and for helping ground my ambitions. Additional thanks to Jan and the team at *Pax Et Bellum* for their helping sculpt this piece from the original block.

Bibliography

Abramowitz, A., & McCoy, J. (2019). United States: Racial Resentment, Negative Partisanship, and Polarization in Trump's America. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 681*(1), 137–156. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716218811309

Anderson, M. J. (2016). Conclusions. *In Windows of Opportunity: How Women Seize Peace Negotiations for Political Change* (pp. 137–152). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190239534.001.0001

Bell, C., & Badanjak, S. (2019). *Introducing PA-X: A new peace agreement database and dataset. 3*(56). https://pax.peaceagreements.org/

Bell, C., Badanjak, S., Farquhar, A., Beaujouan, J., Epple, T., Forster, R., Jamar, A., McNicholl, K., Molloy, S., Nash, K., Pospisil, J., Wilson, R., & Wise, L. (2024). *PA-X Codebook*. University of Edinburgh. Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform (PeaceRep). https://pax.peaceagreements.org/

Bell, S. R., & Kitagawa, R. (2024). From participation to provision: How civil society secures procedural rights through peace negotiations. *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 07388942241255195. https://doi.org/10.1177/07388942241255195

Bell, C., & O'Rourke, C. (2007). The People's Peace? Peace Agreements, Civil Society, and Participatory Democracy. *International Political Science Review, 28*(3), 293–324. https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512107077094

Bell, C., & Pospisil, J. (2017). Navigating Inclusion in Transitions from Conflict: The Formalised Political Un settlement. *Journal of International Development, 29*(5), 576–593. https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.3283

Bell, C., & Wise, L. (2022). Peace Processes and Their Agreements. In R. Mac Ginty & A. Wanis-St. John (Eds.), *Contemporary Peacemaking* (pp. 381–406). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-82962-9_19

Carl, A. (2019). Introduction: Navigating inclusion in peace processes. In A. Carl (Ed.), *Negotiating inclusion in peace processes* (Vol. 28, pp. 5–9). Conciliation Resources.

Chenoweth, E. (2017). A Proactive Definition of Peace. *International Studies Review, 19*(1), 133–141. https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/vix004

Coppedge, M., Gerring, J., Knutsen, C. H., Lindberg, S. I., Teorell, J., Altman, D., Bernhard, M., Cornell, A., Fish, M. S., Gastaldi, L., Gjerløw, H., Glynn, A., Hicken, A., Lührmann, A., Maerz, S. F., Marquardt, K. L., McMann, K., Mechkova, V., Paxton, P., ... Ziblatt, D. (2021). *V-Dem Codebook v11.1*. Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project.

Coppedge, M., Gerring, J., Knutsen, C. H., Lindberg, S. I., Teorell, J., Altman, D., Angiolillo, F., Bernhard, M., Borella, C., Cornell, A., Fish, M. S., Fox, L., Gastaldi, L., Gjerløw, H., Glynn, A., Good God, A., Grahn, S., Hicken, A., Kinzelbach, K., ... Ziblatt, D. (2024). *V-Dem Codebook v14*. Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project. https://www.v-dem.net/data/data set-archive/

Coppedge, M., Gerring, J., Knutsen, C. H., Lindberg, S. I., Teorell, J., Altman, D., Angiolillo, F., Bernhard, M., Borella, C., Cornell, A., Fish, M. S., Fox, L., Gastaldi, L., Gjerløw, H., Glynn, A., Good God, A., Grahn, S., Hicken, A., Kinzelbach, K., ... Ziblatt, D. (2024). *V-Dem Dataset v14* (Version 14) [Dataset]. University of Göteborg. https://doi.org/10.23696/MCW T-FR58

Cuhadar, E. (2020). *Understanding Resistance to Inclusive Peace Processes* (159; PEACEWORKS, pp. 1–33). United States Institute of Peace.

Cuhadar, E., & Druckman, D. (2024). Let the People Speak! What Kind of Civil Society Inclusion Leads to Durable Peace? *International Studies Perspectives, 25*(3), 359–381. https://doi.org/10.1093/isp/ekad019

Cuhadar, E., & Paffenholz, T. (2020). Transfer 2.0: Applying the Concept of Transfer from Track-Two Workshops to Inclusive Peace Negotiations. *International Studies Review, 22*(3), 651–670. https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/viz031

David Mason, T., Gurses, M., Brandt, P. T., & Michael Quinn, J. (2011). When Civil Wars Recur: Conditions for Durable Peace after Civil Wars: When Civil Wars Recur. *International Studies Perspectives, 12*(2), 171–189. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1528-3585.2011.00426.x

Davies, S., Engström, G., Pettersson, T., & Öberg, M. (2024). Organized violence 1989–2023, and the prevalence of organized crime groups. *Journal of Peace Research, 61*(4), 673–693. https://doi.org/10.1177/00223433241262912v

Drazanova, L. (2020). Introducing the Historical Index of Ethnic Fractionalization (HIEF) Dataset: Accounting for Longitudinal Changes in Ethnic Diversity. *Journal of Open Humanities Data,*

6, 6. https://doi.org/10.5334/johd.16

Druckman, D., & Wagner, L. (2019). Justice Matters: Peace Negotiations, Stable Agreements, and Durable Peace. *Journal of Conflict Resolution, 63*(2), 287–316. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002717739088

Druckman, D., & Wagner, L. (2019). Justice Matters: Peace Negotiations, Stable Agreements, and Durable Peace. *Journal of Conflict Resolution, 63*(2), 287–316. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002717739088

Enyedi, Z. (2005). The role of agency in cleavage formation. *European Journal of Political Research, 44*(5), 697–720. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.2005.00244.x

Erenstein, A. (2025). *Talking the Walk: Peace, inclusivity and depolarisation* [MSSc, Uppsala Universitet]. https://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:uu:diva-560901

Esteban, J., & Schneider, G. (2008). Polarization and Conflict: Theoretical and Empirical Issues. *Journal of Peace Research, 45*(2), 131–141. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343307087168

Harbom, L., Melander, E., & Wallensteen, P. (2008). Dyadic Dimensions of Armed Conflict, 1946—2007. *Journal of Peace Research, 45*(5), 697–710. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343308094331

Haspeslagh, S. (2021). The 'linguistic ceasefire': Negotiating in an age of proscription. *Security Dialogue, 52*(4), 361–379. https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010620952610

Haspeslagh, S. (2020). The Mediation Dilemma of (Not) Talking to Terrorists. *Swiss Political Science Review, 26*(4), 506–526. https://doi.org/10.1111/spsr.12418

Hellmüller, S., Palmiano Federer, J., & Zeller, M. (2015). *The Role of Norms in International Peace Mediation* [Policy Brief]. Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre (NOREF).

Högbladh, S. (2012). *Peace Agreements 1975-2011—Updating the UCDP Peace Agreement Dataset* (Department of Peace and Conflict Research Report 99; States in Armed Conflict 2011). Uppsala University.

Höglund, K., & Söderberg Kovacs, M. (2010). Beyond the absence of war: The diversity of peace in post-settlement societies. *Review of International Studies, 36*(2), 367–390. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210510000069

Hoover Green, A., & Cohen, D. K. (2021). Centering Human Subjects: The Ethics of "Desk Research" on Political Violence. *Journal of Global Security Studies, 6*(2), 1-17. https://doi.org/10.1093/jogss/ogaa029

James, G., Witten, D., Hastie, T., & Tibshirani, R. (2021). *An Introduction to Statistical Learning: With Applications in R.* Springer US. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-0716-1418-1

Johnston, R., Jones, K., & Manley, D. (2018). Confounding and collinearity in regression analysis: A cautionary tale and an alternative procedure, illustrated by studies of British voting behaviour. *Quality & Quantity, 52*(4), 1957–1976. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-017-0584-6

Kew, D., & Wanis-St. John, A. (2008). Civil Society and Peace Negotiations: Confronting Exclusion. *International Negotiation, 13*(1), 11–36. https://doi.org/10.1163/138234008X297896

Krause, J., Krause, W., & Bränfors, P. (2018). Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations and the Durability of Peace. *International Interactions, 44*(6), 985–1016. https://doi.org/10.1080/03050629.2018.1492386

Kreutz, J. (2010). How and when armed conflicts end: Introducing the UCDP Conflict Termination dataset. *Journal of Peace Research, 47*(2), 243–250. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343309353108

Kreutz, J. (2021). *UCDP Conflict Termination Dataset Codebook v.3* (2021).

Kriesberg, L. (2010). Intractable Conflicts. In N. J. Young (Ed.), *The Oxford International Encyclopedia of Peace* (1st ed., Vol. 2). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acref/9780195334685.001.0001

LeBas, A. (2018). Can Polarization Be Positive? Conflict and Institutional Development in Africa. *American Behavioral Scientist, 62*(1), 59–74. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764218756923

LeBas, A. (2011). One Opposition Parties and Democratization in Africa. In *From Protest to Parties: Party-building and democratization in Africa* (Vol. 113, pp. 3–19). https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199546862.001.0001

LeBas, A. (2006). Polarization as Craft: Party Formation and State Violence in Zimbabwe. *Comparative Politics, 38*(4), 419. https://doi.org/10.2307/20434010

Loyle, C. E., & Appel, B. J. (2017). Conflict Recurrence and Postconflict Justice: Addressing Motivations and Opportunities for Sustainable Peace. *International Studies Quarterly, 61*(3), 690–703. https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqx045

McCoy, J., Press, B., Somer, M., & Tuncel, O. (2022). *Reducing Pernicious Polarization: A Comparative Historical Analysis of Depolarization* [Working Paper]. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2022/05/reducing-pernicious-polarization-a-comparative-historical-analysis-of-depolarization?lang=en

McCoy, J., Rahman, T., & Somer, M. (2018). Polarization and the Global Crisis of Democracy: Common Patterns, Dynamics, and Pernicious Consequences for Democratic Polities. *American Behavioral Scientist, 62*(1), 16–42. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764218759576

McCoy, J., & Somer, M. (2019). Toward a Theory of Pernicious Polarization and How It Harms Democracies: Comparative Evidence and Possible Remedies. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 681*(1), 234–271. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716218818782

Nilsson, D. (2012). Anchoring the Peace: Civil Society Actors in Peace Accords and Durable Peace. *International Interactions, 38*(2), 243–266. https://doi.org/10.1080/03050629.2012.659139

Nilsson, D., & Svensson, I. (2023). Pushing the doors open: Nonviolent action and inclusion in peace negotiations. *Journal of Peace Research, 60*(1), 58–72. https://doi.org/10.1177/00223433221141468

Østby, G. (2008). Polarization, Horizontal Inequalities and Violent Civil Conflict. *Journal of Peace Research*, 45(2), 143–162. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343307087169

Paffenholz, T. (2014a). *Broadening participation in peace processes: Dilemmas & options for mediators* (Mediation Practice Series). Center for Humanitarian Dialogue.

Paffenholz, T. (2014b). Civil Society and Peace Negotiations: Beyond the Inclusion–Exclusion Dichotomy. *Negotiation Journal, 30*(1), 69–91. https://doi.org/10.1111/nejo.12046

Paffenholz, T., & Zartman, I. W. (2019). Inclusive Peace Negotiations – From a Neglected Topic to New Hype. *International Negotiation, 24*(1), 1–6. https://doi.org/10.1163/15718069-24011186

Paladini, B., & Molloy, S. (2019). More inclusive monitoring of peace agreement implementation: Barometer Initiative in Colombia. In *Negotiating inclusion in peace processes* (Vol. 28, pp. 5–9). Conciliation Resources.

Paladini, B., & Molloy, S. (2019). More inclusive monitoring of peace agreement implementation: Barometer Initiative in Colombia. In *Negotiating inclusion in peace processes* (Vol. 28, pp. 5–9). Conciliation Resources.

Pemstein, D., Marquardt, K. L., Tzelgov, E., Wang, Y., Medzihorsky, J., Krusell, J., Miri, F., & von Römer, J. (2024). *The V-Dem Measurement Model: Latent Variable Analysis for Cross-National and Cross-Temporal Expert-Coded Data*. University of Gothenburg: Varieties of Democracy Institute. V-Dem Working Paper (No. 21 9th Edition).

Pettersson, T. (2024). *UCDP Dyadic Dataset Codebook v 24.1.* https://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/

Schädel, A., & Dudouet, V. (with Hülzer, J.-M., & Sallach, C.). (2020). *Incremental inclusivity: A recipe for effective peace processes?* (pp. 1–70) [Research Report]. Berghof Foundation.

Skitka, L. J., & Morgan, G. S. (2014). The Social and Political Implications of Moral Conviction. *Political Psychology, 35*(S1), 95–110. https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12166

Slater, D., & Arugay, A. A. (2018). Polarizing Figures: Executive Power and Institutional Conflict in Asian Democracies. *American Behavioral Scientist, 62*(1), 92–106. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764218759577

Somer, M., & McCoy, J. (2018). Déjà vu? Polarization and Endangered Democracies in the 21st Century. *American Behavioral Scientist, 62*(1), 3–15. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764218760371

Stavrakakis, Y. (2018). Paradoxes of Polarization: Democracy's Inherent Division and the (Anti-) Populist Challenge. *American Behavioral Scientist, 62*(1), 43–58. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764218756924

Stedman, S. J. (1997). Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes. *International Security, 22*(2), 5–53.

Theros, M., & Turkmani, R. (2022). Engendering civicness in the Syrian peacemaking process. *Journal of Civil Society, 18*(2), 183–200. https://doi.org/10.1080/17448689.2022.2068625

Tilly, C. (2004). *Contention and democracy in Europe, 1650-2000.* Cambridge University Press.

UN Guidance for Effective Mediation. (2012). United Nations Mediation Support Unit (MSU). https://www.c-r.org/resource/united-nations-guidance-effective-mediation

Von Burg, C. (2015). *On Inclusivity: The Role of Norms in International Peace Mediation* (Essential) [Research Report]. swisspeace & NOREF. https://www.swisspeace.ch/articles/on-inclusivity-the-role-of-norms-in-international-peace-mediation

Walter, B. F. (2010). *Conflict Relapse and the Sustainability of Post-Conflict Peace* (World Development Report 2011) [Background Paper].

World Bank Group & United Nations. (2018). *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict.* World Bank. https://doi.org/10.1596/978-1-4648-1