

## **Vision statement**

**Research and advice for a more peaceful world**

## **Mission statement**

**BICC's mission is to conduct policy-relevant research and give advice in response to the problems of organised violence and explore ways to address them.**

**To do so, BICC engages in active exchange with scholars, politicians, practitioners and civil society organisations.**

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## Preamble

This *Concept Paper* describes the general thrust of the work of BICC foreseen for the years 2019 to 2023.

It follows the first BICC *Concept Paper* which covered the period of 2014 to 2018.

The aim of this *Concept Paper* is to write forth BICC's conceptual-methodological approach to research and advice. It also sketches out the thematic fields in which BICC intends to work during the next five years. As such, the *Concept Paper* serves on the one side as the operative framework for the institute and its staff. On the other side, it addresses BICC's Supervisory Board and the International Board and provides an outline of BICC's work to external readers.

This *Concept Paper* is based on a number of intensive in-house discussions and meetings including all staff members over the last years. In addition, it considers the recommendations of the evaluation by the Johannes-Rau-Forschungsgemeinschaft (JRF) in 2017. The *Concept Paper* was also intensively discussed and commented by the BICC International Board. Finally, the *Concept Paper* was approved by BICC's Supervisory Board on 3 July 2019.

I would like to thank all individuals as well as institutional bodies who were involved in this process for their critical, constructive and inspiring comments. For the roll-out period of this *Concept Paper*, I would like to encourage all staff members to engage with its content critically!

Conrad Schetter  
(Director for Research)  
Bonn, July 2019

## Introduction

In a time of shifting geopolitical constellations and a crisis of multilateralism, the world is witnessing a resurgence of conflicts and wars worldwide. While this is not a presumed causal mechanism, many of these conflicts, for example in Donbass/ Ukraine, Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Somalia, South Sudan, Mali, DR Congo or Central African Republic are highly complex and characterised by protracted violence, various constellations of external interventions as well as trans-national and regional spill-over effects. They are directly interwoven with humanitarian crises, protracted displacement situations or the illicit trafficking of persons, drugs, and weapons on the one side, and policing efforts by major powers and coalitions of states through military and aid interventions on the other. The last decade has made obvious that no place in the world can be isolated from hot spots of violent conflicts. Europe and North America are, for example, interrelated with them via arms transfers, military interventions, refugee movements, exile and diaspora communities as well as the trans-national flow of ideologies and trans-local identities. As a consequence, feelings of high insecurity and uncertainty are not limited to people directly exposed to war, forced displacement, and extreme poverty alone—instead, they have become a dominant sentiment of the more general global *Zeitgeist*.

To mitigate these phenomena, policymakers are in urgent need of understanding regularities and common patterns of armed conflicts on a general level as well as the high complexity and uniqueness of each conflict situation and its respective dynamics in the specific. We see as a key purpose of BICC to answer both of these needs. BICC contributes to a better understanding of the role of organised violence in specific conflict situations by conducting in-depth empirical social science research to identify concrete steps to move violent conflicts towards a lessening of violence. Through active policy advice and consulting we aim to channel our analytical insights into political decision-making processes. To reach this goal, three cutting-edge approaches are decisive for BICC:

First, BICC has a vast knowledge of core themes in Peace and Conflict Research, related to organised violence, such as the mobilisation and demobilisation of armed actors, forced migration, resource conflicts, or humanitarian crises. In particular, BICC provides strong expertise in the analysis of social processes that are central elements of conflict transformation. This includes the social (re-)integration of people who are affected by violence (such as combatants, refugees or local communities). In addition, BICC is a leading institute in several thematic areas that are important for understanding and mitigating violent conflict such as disarmament, small arms control and arms export control.

Second, BICC's research methods are empirically grounded and evidence-based, often derived from intensive qualitative and/ or quantitative social research with a close look at societal processes in (post-)conflict areas. With its highly qualified staff, BICC has an outstanding regional and language expertise for Eastern Europe, Central Asia, South Asia, the Middle East and Northern Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as Latin America. Besides field research, long-term secondments to regional and international partner organisations constitute the sources of our first-hand expertise. The methodological approach of BICC is completed by its own section on geomatics and data management. BICC strongly believes in interdisciplinarity.

Third, striving for knowledge exchange, we believe in strengthening and deepening transdisciplinary relationships between academia, policymakers, practitioners and the general public—what we refer to as the knowledge circle. We link policy advice to research-based knowledge and aim to channel practical experiences back into new research proposals and the insights to academic debates. Our partners are not only national and supra-national institutions and researchers or academics, but also local communities, civil society organisations and the media.

## The Institute

In a nutshell, BICC grounds its conceptual approaches and methodologies in intensive field research and benefits from the mutual gains of combining research and advisory work. BICC sees its unique contribution in its critical, inter- and transdisciplinary approach, its problem-orientation and its policy relevance. To demonstrate how BICC operates, this *Concept Paper* aims to provide a deeper understanding of our philosophy, our thematic areas as well as the main approaches and strategies we have defined for 2019 to 2023.

Since the late 1990s, BICC has been one of the leading institutes for Peace and Conflict Research worldwide. It has been continuously ranked among the one hundred most influential global think tanks for consecutive ten years by the Global Think Tank Index of the Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program (TTCSP) of the University of Pennsylvania.

BICC was founded in 1994. It is a non-profit, non-partisan think tank of Peace and Conflict Research, of the states of North Rhine-Westphalia and Brandenburg. In 2015, BICC was a founding member of the Johannes-Rau Forschungsgemeinschaft (JRF), the umbrella organisation of the legally independent, non-university research institutes that are funded by the state of North Rhine-Westphalia.

In 2012, BICC underwent a re-structuring and has had a dual leadership since then: a Director for Research and a Director for Administration. The position of the Director for Research is institutionally combined with a professorship for Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Bonn.

In 2019, BICC has 59 staff members. Thirty-six staff members (including four PhD candidates) from a highly multi-disciplinary spectrum (e.g. Anthropology, Area Studies, Geography, Peace & Conflict Studies, Political Sciences, Sociology) are directly engaged in both research and advisory work. They are supported by 12 student assistants. In addition, eleven staff members run the management, administration, public relations and research infrastructure (IT, library, publications) of BICC.

## From 'Conversion' to 'Conflict'

In the years following its establishment, BICC (Bonn International Center for Conversion) was the only institute worldwide concentrating on issues related to defence conversion, meaning the re-use of resources formerly used by the military for civilian purposes. At the end of the Cold War, the notion of conversion was a cornerstone of the global peacebuilding agenda. In line with this understanding, BICC focussed on themes such as base conversion, the conversion of the arms industry and the reduction of military expenditures.

However, the heydays of conversion passed in the late 1990s as global defence expenditures increased again. The transformation of military resources for civil purposes was no longer regarded as a pivotal approach to preventing or overcoming wars. New issues such as 'cyberwar' and the 'war against terrorism' dominated security-related debates, and there was no longer much political demand for 'conversion'.<sup>1</sup>

In accordance with these changes in global conflict settings during the last two decades, BICC altered its thematic portfolio step by step and developed a broader understanding of conversion in the context of conflict transformation. Instead of base conversion and industrial conversion, themes such as small arms and light weapons (SALW) control, the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants, resource conflicts or forced displacement defined the work of BICC. Nevertheless, the term conversion remained problematic, particularly in BICC's everyday work. BICC researchers conducting intensive field research in multi-religious contexts over the past years have increasingly faced the challenge that the denomination of their institute was often understood in its religious meaning. This misunderstanding has impeded the work of BICC significantly in the last decade.

Against this background, BICC sees the urgent necessity to fill its acronym with new life. Thus we aim to rename BICC in the near future in '**Bonn International Center of Conflict Studies**'. By focusing on 'conflict', the subjects of BICC's work are addressed in all their facets. Indeed, organised violence as the pivotal thematic focus of BICC is closely connected to different forms and aspects of conflicts: On the one hand, the organisation of violence underlies and enables any manifestation of (organised) violent conflict or war. On the other, certain constellations of organised violence can equally provide the necessary conditions for transforming conflicts and tackling them without using violence.

BICC understands conflict, therefore, not only as a form of deviation from a static, harmonious state of normalcy but as a universal—and potentially productive—aspect of human social existence. It is in and through conflicts that social orders are continually negotiated and re-negotiated, be it for the better or the worse. The main challenge is to prevent conflicts from turning violent. BICC, therefore, strives to investigate the ambivalent dynamics of organised violence. In the following, we will discuss the relationship between social order, organised violence, conflict and change that define BICC's research agenda.

<sup>1</sup> \ See von Boemcken, Marc. (2017). *Defence conversion Dead duck or still a relevant object of study*. BICC Working Paper 7

## Our three tiers of work

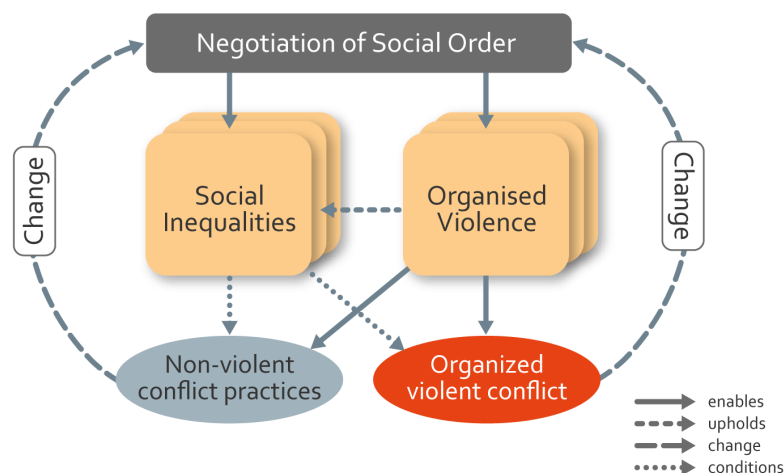
BICC's work is located in the field of Peace and Conflict Research. There, it concentrates on a better understanding of the relations between different formations of social order, organised violence and conflicts. For this, BICC has developed a three-tiered approach that structures our work in the short-, medium- and long-term. In this section, we first elaborate our understanding of organised violence—the analysis of which constitutes the overarching and long-term objective of BICC. Second, we present the three clusters of BICC, which outline different aspects of organised violence and describe the mid-term orientation of our work. In the upcoming five years, our work on organised violence focuses on concrete thematic areas (TA) that form the third tier of our research programme.

### The pivot of organised violence

Dealing with conflict and violence between individuals presents a challenge to every social collective. This is why, whenever people interact, they develop certain forms of social order. Whatever the norms and practices that underlie a certain order, experiences show that conflicts and violence do not disappear within such settings—they merely change their shapes. Social orders can harbour two basic types of violence: The potential threat or actual occurrence of direct and usually physical violence and various forms of social or economic inequality (see Chart 1).

What is more, social orders contain what we refer to as *organised violence*. In our understanding, organised violence comprises all measures that any social collective comes up with to deal with the challenge of physical violence. Organised violence responds, in other words, to the need to contain violence in one way or another—to ensure predictability in social interactions and minimise the danger of any sudden, violent ruptures. This includes, for example, devising and implementing various social norms and institutions (e.g. treaties, laws, 'killing taboo') that determine when, where and by whom which kinds of violence may be exercised. Organised violence thus frequently entails the establishment of organisational bodies entitled to use force in certain circumstances (e.g. the police, the armed forces), the arming of these bodies (e.g. development and acquisition of weaponry)—as well as ways of controlling and curtailing them (e.g. discipline, accountability, oversight, arms control). One popular ideal of organised violence is the idea of a 'legitimate monopoly of force' as represented by the modern notion of statehood. Yet, history and many different contemporary social orders on various scales (local, national, global) show that organised violence, both legitimate and illegitimate, can come in multiple guises.

Chart 1: Organised violence, social order and social inequalities



Besides organised violence, social orders contain various expressions of *inequality*, injustice and relative deprivation—for instance, the gap between the rich and the poor, exclusion from political participation, gender-based discrimination and racism. Johan Galtung characterised these phenomena as ‘structural violence’ and ‘cultural violence’. They also inform similar concepts such as ‘epistemic violence’ and ‘symbolic violence’. Yet, and unlike organised violence, they are not directly related to physical force and the threat of violent death. Moreover, they are by no means a necessary feature of every social order. For example, it is perfectly possible to imagine a particular way of organising violence within an egalitarian society. In practice, however, organised violence and social inequalities are often closely intertwined. The former is, arguably, needed to uphold and reproduce the latter. And some forms of organised violence may even immediately encompass expressions of structural, cultural, epistemic and/ or symbolic violence. The work of BICC focuses on organised violence, depending on the theme and the concrete context of our research. It also considers the nexus between organised violence and phenomena of inequality.

Crucially, both organised violence and social inequalities are intimately bound to *social conflict*. Social orders neither terminate violence, nor do they overcome the potential for conflict within and between human collectives. Perceptions of injustice and inequality are usually the very rationale for engaging in violent or non-violent conflicts. How violence is organised, in turn, often determines the way that conflicts are dealt with. In comparison to concepts such as direct, structural, cultural, epistemic and/ or symbolic violence, organised violence is thus characterised by a higher degree of normative ambiguity: For one, organised violence may escalate the deadly potential of any conflict—it is a condition for a possible organised violent conflict or ‘war’. It may also repress social conflicts, as is the case in authoritarian political orders. For another, particular forms of organised violence could equally contribute to—and arguably even enable—non-violent conflict practices.

It is, in other words, only by virtue of organising physical violence in a certain way that conflicts can be carried out without reverting to direct force.

Violent and non-violent conflicts are, finally, the catalysts that continually *change* social orders. And as social orders are re-negotiated in this way, social inequalities as well as organised violence also transform themselves, be it for the better or worse. The investigation of these processes is at the heart of BICC’s work. In particular, BICC analyses different and shifting forms of organised violence on various scales (local, national, regional, global) and in multiple regions across the world. We aim to provide research and policy advice on how the organisation of violence can support and strengthen non-violent conflict practices—and how (organised) violent conflicts can be mitigated, prevented or ended. BICC thus seeks to reduce the potentially harmful effects accompanying any effort to organise violence in social orders. This necessarily also involves consideration and understanding of the deeper political, social, economic as well as cultural and material conditions of conflict.

## BICC Clusters

BICC’s activities can be subsumed in the following three thematic clusters, which overlap and are strongly interrelated with each other (see Chart 2). The three clusters serve as connecting fora for discussing particular conditions, processes and implications of organised violence in the light of our concrete thematic areas. The three clusters run from the more general to the concrete. While the cluster ‘Order and change’ addresses the general interrelations between organised violence, conflicts and social order, the cluster ‘Dynamics of violent conflicts’ addresses particular instances in which organised violence enables organised violent conflict or ‘war’. The cluster ‘Armament and arms control’ focusses on the means of organising violence, and how they can be controlled to mitigate and prevent violent conflict and possibly also contribute to non-violent conflict resolution.



**Cluster A. Order and change**

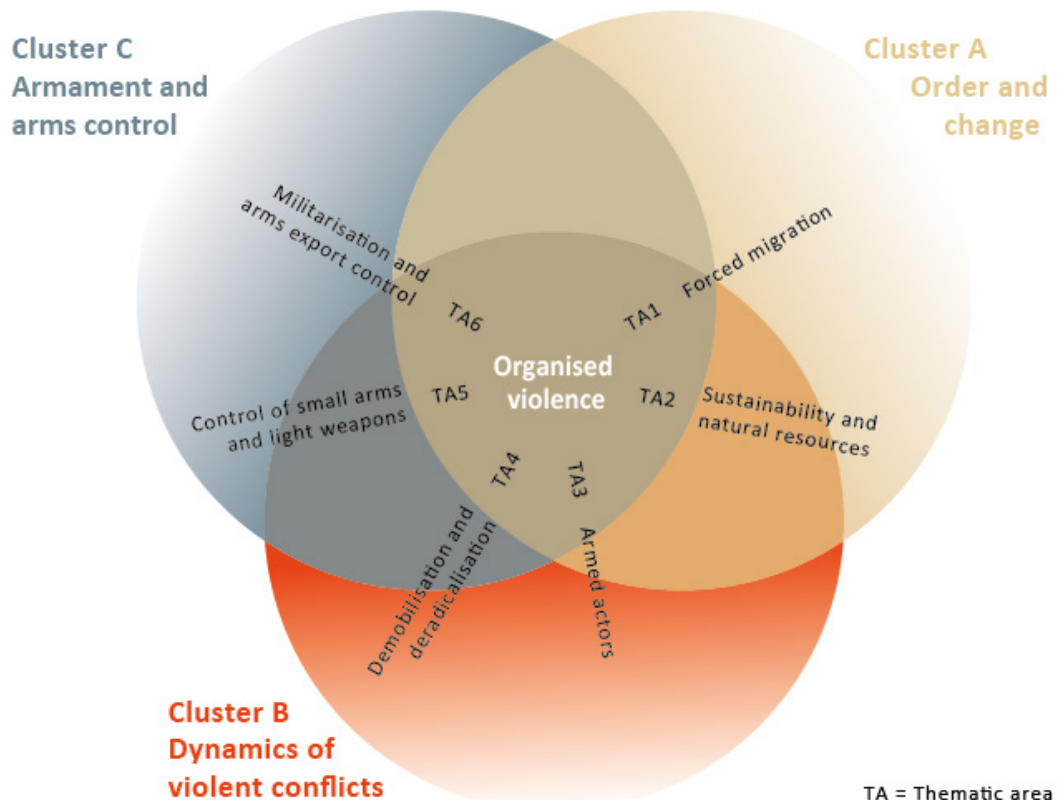
Organised violence and social inequalities are closely related to fundamental dynamics of social order (i.e. the rules, norms and worldviews people enact in everyday social practice). Power relations constitute the framework conditions for how inequalities are embedded in social orders and how violence is organised. However, in societies, people frequently disagree over how violence should be organised and when, for what purpose and to which degree violence ought to be used. Different ordering frameworks usually correspond to different ways of organising violence.

Conventionally, states are thought to represent the dominant form of political ordering and social organisation. However, in many regional contexts, states

turn out to be powerless and to lack de facto statehood. In such contexts, we observe power relations beyond the state that constitute social orders on different scales—globally, regionally and at the local level. Usually, they lack a material, state-like infrastructure, such as multinational corporations and their networks that reach into business and politics. Such phenomena constantly challenge predominantly state-centric normative ordering frameworks.

BICC studies the complex relations between different manifestations of organised violence in war and peace in the context of competing processes of social ordering. Our hypotheses is that social orders are dynamic, fragile, contested and are constantly evolving. In our understanding, there is no such thing as an ‘absolute’, ‘natural’ or ‘universal’ order. We aim to

**Chart 2: Cluster and thematic areas (TA) of BICC**



systematise our knowledge on the nexus between social order and violence based on empirical insights. This also encompasses research on the question, how social orders persist, emerge and change during violent conflicts. A special form of order subject to our investigation is the formation of trans-local networks, their relation with violent conflict and their potential for peacebuilding (Cluster B). BICC further looks into the effects of organised violence on a variety of overarching social dynamics, for example, the development of arms control regimes (Cluster C).

#### **Cluster B: Dynamics of violent conflict**

Organised violence often shows itself in the use of direct and physical violence—particularly in (civil) wars. Our aim, here, is to investigate practices occurring in organised physical violence and war.

Over the last decades, the world has witnessed several protracted violent conflicts that question the legal and political distinctions between war and peace. Today, we are dealing with many different formations of violent conflict, such as civil wars, hybrid wars, terrorism, state repression as well as military operations to end violent conflicts or genocides. The latter type of violent conflict is particularly salient since the dynamics of warfare and peacemaking take place simultaneously. Such conflict settings contradict ‘classical’ one-directional and sequential models of conflict, which rely on a clear-cut spatial and chronological distinction between war and peace. Numerous violent conflicts (e.g. terrorist attacks) are thus characterised by the blurring of the line between the military and the civil or the territorial demarcation between the battlefield and so-called ‘safe areas’.

Built on a detailed understanding of the nature of today’s violent conflicts, BICC aims to provide innovative contributions to ongoing debates. BICC analyses, in particular, the logic of violent conflicts in local settings. Our research focuses particularly on the dynamics of violence in protracted “frozen” conflict

situations, quasi-protectorates and highly fragmented areas of contestation. This includes the mobilisation patterns of combatants such as the material and emotional motivations for going to war. We are also interested in the networking and alliance-building during violent conflicts. Finally, we want to understand the everyday security practices of vulnerable groups, be it in times of ‘war’ or ‘peace’. The exercise of physical violence, which especially comes to the fore in violent conflicts (but not only there), is closely interrelated with the arms trade and arms control (Cluster C) as well as with changing formations of social orders (Cluster A). BICC is also interested in informing (geo-)political meta-discourses by its insight knowledge about the logics of particular wars.

#### **Cluster C: Armament and arms control**

Disarmament and arms control constitute important aspects of organised violence as they can restrain the availability of the means of physical violence. They help to organise violence by delegitimising some practices in the field of armament policy (e.g. the possession of nuclear weapons for most states) while legitimising others (e.g. the international trade in conventional arms). BICC studies how developments in the field of armament affect the conduct of violence and whether and how arms control helps to contribute to a less violent world—or whether it merely legitimises existing practices.

The quantity and quality as well as the availability of weaponry influence incentives and opportunities for perpetrating violence and hence shape the preferences of state and non-state actors regarding their conduct during violent conflict (Cluster B). What is

more, armament is often an important element of social orders (Cluster A). The legitimacy of military structures and the ‘national security apparatus’ depends, not least, on the relative success of monopolising the means of violence. At the same time, the dynamics of social orders shape processes in armament and arms control. Globalisation, for example, has fostered an increasingly transnational arms industry, posing significant challenges to the control of the international arms trade and the proliferation of military and security technologies.

## Thematic areas (TA)

BICC’s operational work is directly related to these three clusters and with this aims to gain a better understanding of phenomena related to organised violence. BICC has identified six thematic areas (TA), in which it is concentrating its research and advisory capacities for the next five years. To a greater or lesser extent, these thematic areas correspond to the three clusters. Some TA might be more relevant to the cluster “Armament and arms control”; others contribute to “Dynamics of violent conflict”. Some thematic areas might also be positioned at the interface of different clusters (see Chart 2). It is also worth mentioning that the thematic areas are interwoven with each other and rely on an ongoing co-production of knowledge.

### TA 1: Forced migration

BICC conducts empirical research on the (im)mobility and livelihood strategies of displaced persons’ as well as on their transnational networks and role in peace processes and -politics in their country of origin. In its research, BICC looks into the perspectives of displaced people, focussing on regions of violent conflicts (Sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East, South Asia, Latin America), on zones of transit as well as on places of settlement. We also investigate causes of displacement, forced immobility and protracted displacement

and how to overcome them. In the context of forced displacement, BICC also conducts research on themes, such as the nexus between humanitarian aid and development cooperation, on border regimes and governance as well as the political economy of forced displacement and (re-)integration. Our insights gained in this field are based on intensive fieldwork that captures the prospects and practices of refugees and places of settlement.

#### *Selected projects of BICC (title/funding/duration)*

- \ Between civil war and integration—Refugees and the challenges and opportunities of societal change in North Rhine-Westphalia/ Ministry for Culture and Sciences of NRW/ 2016-2019
- \ TRAFIG-Transnational Figurations of Displacement: Connectivity and mobility as solutions to protracted refugee situations/ European Union - Horizon 2020/ 2019-2022
- \ Trajectories of reintegration: The impacts of forced displacement, migration and return on social change/ Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development/ 2019-2022

### TA 2: Sustainability and natural resources

The interrelations between organised violence and the political economy surrounding access, control, exploitation and use of both renewable and non-renewable natural resources (e.g. water, land, pastures) drive many violent conflicts. On the global and local scale, the existence of different and competing world views of people regarding the use of resources and sustainable living constitute a new focus around which social conflicts evolve and potentially turn violent. With its expertise in conflict constellations on the local, meso- as well as the macro level, BICC intends to engage in ongoing debates on sustainability

that are particularly relevant for SDG 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions). BICC aims to add its research on power relations and socio-political contextualisation to the debates around the Agenda 2030. Building on the concept of *Situated Sustainability*, BICC's research aims to focus on inseparably connected socio-political aspects of sustainability, acknowledging that sustainability is anchored and expressed in many different variations of local practices, understandings and imaginations of resource use and control. By looking at the role that organised violence plays in climate change, food security, land-use change and processes of socio-ecological transformation, we aim to develop an applied understanding of sustainability that particularly addresses the nexus with violent conflict and social inequalities.

*Selected projects of BICC (title/funding/duration)*

- \ Sustainable Electricity Trajectories in the MENA Region (MENA Select)/ Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development/ 2015-2019
- \ Future Rural Africa: Future-making and socio-ecological transformation/ DFG (Collaborative Research Center 228)/ 2018-2021
- \ Bonn Alliance for Sustainability Research/ Ministry for Culture and Sciences of NRW and Federal Ministry of Education and Research/ 2019-2021

### TA 3: Armed actors

In violent conflicts, armed actors take a pivotal role as the ones who perform acts of violence. BICC is concerned with different aspects of the organisation of armed actors, in particular the prerequisites, resources, emergence, mobilisation and transformation of irregular and regular armed groups. On the one hand, our research tries to analyse the incentives and motivations of armed actors in violent conflicts. On the

other, we are interested in their everyday practices, process dimensions, network structures, resource endowments and -constraints. We assume that in every violent conflict setting, armed actors are embedded in a unique multi-scale context, which is shaped by certain rules, norms and structures. By focussing on the role of armed actors, BICC hopes to gain direct insights into how violent conflict can be avoided, limited or overcome.

*Selected projects of BICC (title/funding/duration)*

- \ On the phenomenon of the so-called Islamic State (IS) in Afghanistan/ German Federal Foreign Office/ 2015-2016
- \ Kurdish actors networks in the Middle East/ German Federal Foreign Office/ 2017-2018
- \ Collective action of non-state armed groups in the Ukrainian conflict/ Volkswagen Foundation/ 2016-2019

### TA 4 Demobilisation and deradicalisation

What drives individuals to revert to violence? And how can former combatants be demobilised and reintegrated into civilian life? BICC addresses these questions through a critical and policy-oriented lens. On the one hand, this requires a critical engagement with the very concept of 'radicalisation'. On the other, it needs a good understanding of the experiences and needs of practitioners working in deradicalisation and demobilisation. Here, BICC can draw on many years of expertise, particular in Sub-Saharan Africa. BICC has worked on programmes targeting the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants as well as approaches of countering violent extremism (CVE). However, the geographical focus of its work on this issue is not related to (post-)conflict settings alone. Recently, deradicalisation has become an important issue for western Europe, which is confronted by the problem of a growing number of extremists who are prepared to use violence. This is why BICC seeks to bridge the gap

between academia and practice and to develop concise policy recommendations on the disarmament, demobilisation, deradicalisation and reintegration of violent actors.

*Selected projects of BICC (title/funding/duration)*

- \ Political and technical advice in the field of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) in South Sudan/ German Federal Foreign Office / 2016-2018
- \ Support to the review and dissemination of the UN IDDRS/ German Federal Foreign Office/ 2018-2020
- \ Preventing radicalisation in North-Rhine Westphalia: How capacities of intermediaries can be strengthened/ Ministry for Culture and Sciences of NRW/ 2018-2021

**TA 5 Control of small arms and light weapons (SALW)**

In most of today's violent conflicts, the availability of SALW is a decisive factor. This is why BICC's research and advice targets in particular questions of how to reduce the access to SALW. In this regard, BICC focusses on two thematic areas: For one, BICC aims to improve PSSM (physical security and stockpile management) practices, as a means to practical arms control by conducting regional training courses and capacity development on PSSM in close cooperation with our regional partner organisations. For another, BICC is interested in understanding patterns of illicit cross-border trafficking of SALW and its impact on local violence and perceptions of security. Furthermore, BICC focusses on the political dimension of arms control at the national, regional and supra-regional levels and plays a role in coordinating the involved stakeholders.

*Selected project of BICC (title/funding/duration):*

- \ Capacity development and advice on SALW control in Africa/ German Federal Foreign Office/ 2017-2020

**TA 6: Militarisation and arms exports control**

BICC sees the trafficking of SALW in a larger framework of arms transfers and military expenditures. Across the globe, governments invest tremendous resources in their military and the development, production and proliferation of arms. As the global arms market increasingly becomes a buyer's market, modern military technology is spreading beyond the traditional, mostly Western, arms producers and end-users. With its *Global Militarisation Index (GMI)*, BICC traces global and regional militarisation dynamics and explores the links between militarisation, violent conflict and other societal factors. BICC is interested in the development of the international arms trade—with a particular focus on German and European arms exports and their major recipient countries. BICC's work in this field contributes to the critical reflection of German and European arms export policy and examines measures and options to improve arms export control on the national, regional and global level. Furthermore, BICC is interested in the qualitative dimension of arms dynamics, such as improvements in speed, autonomy and precision of weapon systems, their proliferation and how they are (re)shaping the future of warfare.

*Selected projects of BICC (title/funding/duration):*

- \ Security, arms, and development in receiving countries of German arms exports/ Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development/ 2018-2020
- \ Global Militarisation Index/ Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development/ 2018-2020

## Our approach

BICC is a non-partisan, non-profit organisation. Whereas BICC receives funding from a variety of organisations, including state and federal ministries, its research is always independent. In the years 2019 to 2023, this independence continues to be top priority and is intended to be strengthened further by diversifying its funding sources.

BICC primarily conducts applied research that seeks to address fundamental research but also provides policy advice. The stimulation of academic and policy debates by contributing our own results is the main goal of BICC's research activities. Our research is intended to produce recommendations, results and approaches that inform policymakers, practitioners and the public alike. However, we are keenly aware of the fact that research not only stimulates knowledge-generation for academia but that events and impulses from the non-academic world also stimulate research. This is why we put the 'Knowledge Circle' (Chart 3) in the centre of our work—the mutually responsive flow of knowledge needs and -production between academia, practitioners, policymakers, public and the media.

Our activities—research, advisory work and all activities to operationalise the knowledge circle—are carried out in close co-operation with local, national and international partners. As a general principle, we aim to feed back our findings to the people concerned and consequently adapt our dissemination strategy to local contexts (e.g. stakeholder workshops, publications in local languages).

### Applied research

BICC's aim is to carry out applied research that should ideally provide innovative impulses towards ongoing debates. Our research follows the guidelines 'Good scientific practice' (*Gute Wissenschaftliche Praxis*) of the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft - DFG) and is guided by four basic principles:

- 1) BICC's research is *problem-oriented and interdisciplinary*. In view of the complexity of how to understand organised violence, we acknowledge that relevant research results can only be obtained by looking at a concrete problem from interdisciplinary and operational perspectives. In its entirety, the multiple facets of organised violence can be grasped best through a problem-oriented approach, which is not constrained by the logic of disciplinary boundaries. We are aware that problem-oriented research cannot be built on one theory or discipline alone, but rather has to acknowledge the complexity of its subject and is in need of interdisciplinary approaches.
- 2) BICC's research is *policy relevant*. BICC intends to make a difference and seeks to inform social change with respect to organised violence. We aim at preparing the outcomes of our applied research in such a manner that they can reach relevant stakeholders and decision-makers.
- 3) BICC's research is *reflective*. First and foremost, 'being reflective' means that our research discloses its normative basic assumptions and critically reflects on these. On a general and abstract level, a critical reflection could be to question the basic dichotomies that enable us to envision any change process related to organised violence in the first place, for example between 'war' and 'peace' or between 'state' and 'non-state'. Critical reflection means to seriously think about the normative validity one attaches to the goals towards which change processes are directed.
- 4) BICC's research is *empirical*. BICC carries out empirical research which stretches from quantitative data approaches and remote sensing methods to discourse analyses, and intensive qualitative field research. We usually conduct our research in the field (which may be located anywhere, not necessarily in distant places) and put an emphasis on a wide range of applied methods and problem-oriented research designs. Particularly with respect to empirical research in (post-)conflict areas, security arrangements and mechanisms for carrying out field research under volatile political and humanitarian circumstances play a prominent role (see Section on Ethics).

### BICC 'Knowledge Circle'

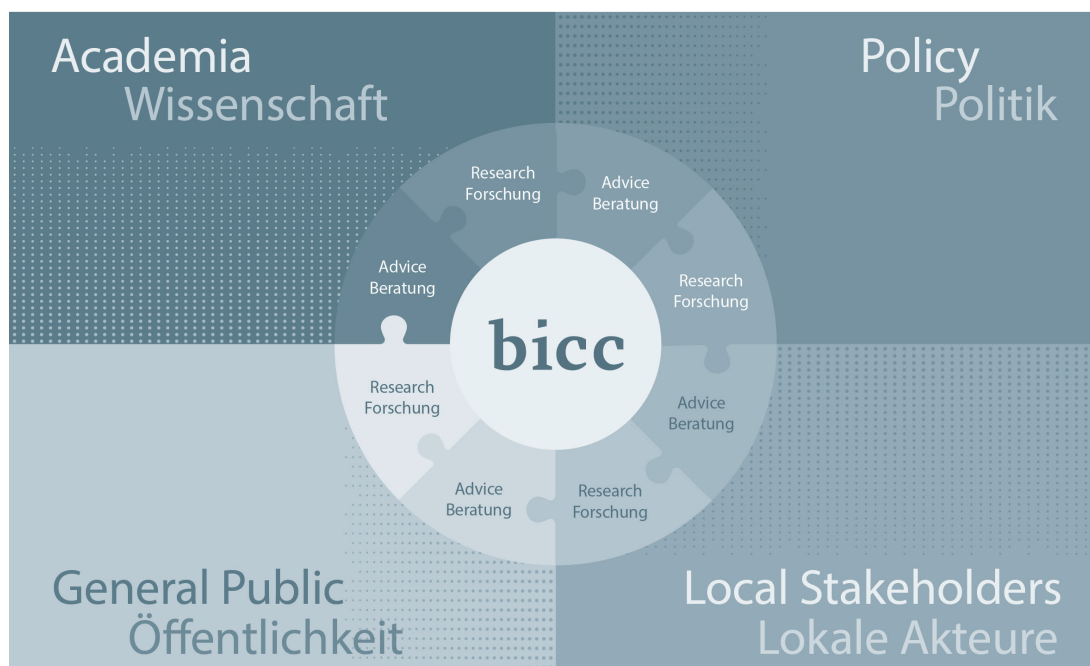
Applied sciences often understand knowledge production as a one-way exercise in which research is fed into the non-academic world. Such an approach hardly takes into consideration that research can benefit strongly from practical experiences of policy-makers and practitioners and that a knowledge transfer should ideally be reciprocal. Often, researchers do not reflect enough on how a certain 'message' can be best communicated in the non-academic world. This is a key reason why the gap between research and practical operations continues to be very large.

BICC understands itself as an institute at the interface between different fields of social practice (academia, politics, practitioners, public, media, etc.) that takes its mandate for knowledge transfer and communication in all directions very seriously (Chart 3). We believe in mutual learning processes. For one, BICC strives to feed its research results into policy and technical advice as well as capacity development (external knowledge circle).

For another, we strive to take up questions from our practical work with (collaborative) research projects and open up avenues for academic research (internal knowledge circle). Moreover, with its empirically informed academic outputs, BICC intends to contribute to and shape academic knowledge production in Peace and Conflict Research. This, ideally, results in a 'knowledge circle' which bridges the knowledge production and communication gap between research and practice. Thus, the transfer should be multi-directional: to academia, towards the public and to policymakers as well as vice versa. BICC intends to continue or even strengthen the following formats for this purpose:

- \ *Policy advice and capacity-building:* BICC aims both at informing policy debates based on empirically derived knowledge and research and at providing advice to key policy circles across the world: in Germany (e.g. members of federal and state parliaments, ministries, political foundations, civil society), in Europe (e.g. EU institutions, civil society), and in regions in which

Chart 3: BICC 'Knowledge Circle'



BICC conducts research and technical advice (e.g. United Nations, African Union, national governments, civil society, local communities). With its broad range of scientific knowledge and both technical and political advisory expertise, BICC conducts training courses, carries out evaluations and fact-finding missions and strengthens the capacities of local, national and international partners in our thematic areas. These types of activities are a crucial part of our knowledge circle. They also inform BICC's research about the challenges and operational procedures which practitioners and policymakers deal with in their everyday practice.

- \ *Dissemination*: BICC's 'knowledge circle' includes systematic, target group-oriented public relations activities, which address the public and the media via publications, events, multiplier education and training, exhibitions as well as national and international press work. We not only participate in debates but also aim to stimulate and initiate them.
- \ *Data management*: BICC maintains a data management system that serves as an in-house support unit as well as an important knowledge management and dissemination component. All data collected by BICC is kept accessible and usable in a coordinated and standardised manner for its staff and, in future, also for external users. We have long-term expertise in translating research findings into interactive, internet-based, knowledge-sharing databases, mapping applications and themed websites—all of which are accessible to the public.

To strengthen its capacities in knowledge exchange, BICC provides a system for professional skills training (e.g. Junior Advisors; project SALW control) and offers career development for its staff. BICC staff of all career stages are encouraged to participate in BICC-organised training activities to improve their research skills (e.g. security training, trauma training) and public outreach, such as moderator- and media training.

In the coming years, BICC's research is to be strengthened by increased academic exchange and more visibility in academic circles. BICC follows an open-access publication strategy that intends to make its publications available to readers beyond academic circles, facilitating widespread knowledge exchange. To reach this goal, we have developed innovative publication formats such as websites, databases and graphics. For more visibility in the academic world, our research is guided by the following approaches:

- \ BICC aims to achieve congruence between projects and the academic qualifications of its research staff. This goal is reached by acquiring long-term projects (2-5 years), which also provide the space for researchers' further qualification (PhD, habilitation, advisory training, etc.). The career development of the staff members is also part of the daily work at BICC: They have the opportunity to gain experiences in teaching by giving courses and seminars at the University of Bonn and elsewhere.
- \ BICC's publication strategy includes several dissemination tracks and formats (see BICC Publication Strategy). Ideally, a publication in one of the BICC Series (*Policy Briefs*, *Working Papers*, etc.) is an in-between step towards other publications. While peer-reviewed journals are the envisaged platform for BICC-researchers, we believe that each project will necessitate its own publication strategy, which may also include policy and working papers, monographs or edited volumes.

BICC staff participates in international conferences and workshops and thus strengthen BICC's international reputation. An important means of presenting our work and of consolidating the Center's profile in Peace and Conflict Research is our annual academic conference.



## Ethics

Ethics is an integral part of BICC's work—from the conceptualisation of research to all forms of knowledge exchange. Based on established ethical guidelines of different academic expert associations, we orient ourselves on overarching ethical principles such as 'do no harm', avoidance of exploitation, fair distribution of benefits and burdens, respect for persons and human dignity, and scientific validity. The rights and interests of participants are always taken into account. In its work, BICC positions itself ethically as follows:

- \ *Unbiased and gender-sensitive research:* BICC staff should be aware of their own possible biases and those of others concerning gender, race, ethnicity, ability, religion, geographical location, class/ caste and sexual orientation, among others. The diverse make-up of groups shall always be recognised and given proper attention. Any ethnocentric behaviour must be avoided.
- \ *Partners and research participants:* BICC is aware of its moral responsibilities towards its partners and research participants. The highly sensitive context and the potentially high-level vulnerability of research participants and key experts have to be kept in mind throughout the entire process of research and advisory activities. BICC seeks the voluntary informed consent of its research participants and informs interviewees and participants about the project results and their use. BICC shows respect vis-à-vis its partners and research participants and always publishes its research objectives and funding.
- \ *Data ethics:* BICC adheres to the principles of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which includes anonymisation and pseudonymisation of data, applying cryptography, data minimisation, and seeking informed consent. We take the safeguarding of anonymity and confidentiality of received information very seriously.
- \ *Transparency:* As BICC is financed primarily by public funds, one important feature is that we make our research results generally accessible and transparent (publications, conferences, databases, etc.). Information that is likely to be detrimental to research participants will not be published. This is especially important when the data obtained is sensitive. In cases in which we carry out contracted research, we will at least make the conditions of the project (funding agency, purpose, timeline, etc.) public. BICC is transparent about the challenges arising from expectations concerning third party funding by different donors. BICC ensures the replicability of its research.
- \ *Conflict environment:* Since many of BICC's activities are carried out in countries with deeply divided societies or with non-democratic governments, ethical considerations are a particular obligation and challenge for us. Time and again, our staff face power structures, forms of organised violence and rules that can well be regarded as unjust or unacceptable. BICC will carry out activities in such conflict environments only if the core principles outlined above are met. BICC always considers the safety of its staff, partners, and research participants over other concerns.

BICC staff continue to develop a deep awareness of the full range of possible risks and impacts of their activities. Aware of a range of ethical dilemmas that come with research and advice in conflict contexts, the BICC Working Group on Ethics has developed an Ethics Manual for its research and advisory activities. The Ethics Manual serves as guidance to BICC-staff on various ethical challenges that may arise at different stages of a project life cycle and is meant to stimulate a self-reflexive critical debate among colleagues. The Ethics Manual asks concrete questions to point BICC staff to potential challenges and possible approaches of dealing with everyday ethical challenges in research and advisory work. Should ethical challenges arise during the different stages of a project life cycle, in-depth discussions among staff are organised to forge a common understanding of the issue.

## Cooperation and partnerships

BICC highly values its interactions and cooperation with transdisciplinary partners from academia, politics, media and practice. Its networking policy is implemented at four different levels:

- \ *International level:* BICC seeks to enhance its international visibility by participating in international networks and conferences, by publishing in peer-reviewed journals and by establishing regular exchanges with universities, think tanks, and partners both in the Global North and South. BICC aims to build up its strategic partnership in research with leading think tanks (e.g. PRIO <sup>2</sup>, SIPRI <sup>3</sup>, USIP <sup>4</sup>), networks (e.g. ISA <sup>5</sup>, SDSN <sup>6</sup>) and universities (e.g. Waterloo, Bradford). BICC's advisory work is particularly based on secondments to international organisations (e.g. UN, AU <sup>7</sup>, ECOWAS <sup>8</sup>), but also includes the cooperation with leading NGOs. BICC also organises an annual international academic conference every year. In its recruitment strategy, BICC aims to internationalise its staff.
- \ *National level:* BICC is a member of several national advisory committees on peace and conflict. Moreover, BICC has a regular knowledge exchange with institutes specialising in our core themes (e.g. IMIS <sup>9</sup>) as well as with the other major institutes of Peace and Conflict Research in Germany (e.g. IFSH <sup>10</sup>, PRIF <sup>11</sup>, INEF <sup>12</sup>). This co-operation is reflected by the annual publication of the jointly edited volume of the *Peace Report*. BICC cooperates not only with institutions of the federal government but with influential civil society bodies (churches, NGOs, academic networks).

- \ *State level:* BICC is a member of the Johannes-Rau-Forschungsgemeinschaft (JRF) in North Rhine-Westphalia and aims to intensify its collaboration with other JRF-institutes. Its specific expertise in the thematic areas of forced migration and deradicalisation is highly significant for the government as well as for many communities in North Rhine-Westphalia.
- \ *Bonn region:* The research landscape in Bonn is very international and has exemplary expertise on issues of development research and global change. In this academic environment, BICC covers the field of violent conflicts and organised violence. Through its Director for Research who holds a professorship of Peace and Conflict Research at the University of Bonn, BICC has a structural connection with the University of Bonn. Through the Bonn Alliance for Sustainability Research, BICC also participates in the knowledge exchange between the University (Geography, Center for Development Research etc.), the German Development Institute (GDI), the Hochschule Bonn- Rhein-Sieg (H-BRS) and the United Nations University/ Environmental and Human Security (UNU-EHS). Through committee activities, joint projects, lecture series, seminars, etc., BICC aims to be an active partner in the international research landscape of Bonn and to co-shape its agenda.

As a general strategy, BICC strongly believes that joint projects, workshops and publications are not only a way to combine the strengths of various institutions, but also a means to intensify collaboration between partner institutions. This is why BICC favours joint projects with partner institutions in its third-party funding strategy.

2 \ Peace Research Institute Oslo

3 \ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

4 \ United States Institute for Peace

5 \ International Science Association

6 \ Sustainable Development Solution Network

7 \ African Union

8 \ Economic Community of West African States

9 \ Institut für Migrationsforschung und Interkulturelle Studien

10 \ Institut für Friedensforschung und Sicherheitspolitik Hamburg

11 \ Peace Research Institute Frankfurt

12 \ Institut für Entwicklung und Frieden

## How do we realise our vision?

In line with our vision and mission statements, research at BICC has to fulfil our criteria of applied research (problem-oriented, interdisciplinary, policy-relevant, reflective and empirical). Our advisory activities should, above all, be research-based and include components that channel experiences and freshly gained knowledge back into research. Both research and advice have to be in line with our ethical standards. To concretise this approach, we pursue the following twelve goals in our work:

- 1) *Profile*: BICC constantly increases its international reputation. It is recognised for its applied and empirical research as well as its knowledge exchange.
- 2) *Innovation*: Our work is innovative and original. It yields new knowledge and innovative answers to important questions. We aim to contribute to theory development in the field of Peace and Conflict Research and initiate scientific and policy debates based on our research insights.
- 3) *Integrity*: BICC's work makes the multitude of voices of people, particularly of those who live in conflict zones, heard. We aim not to reduce, but rather to expound the complexity of organised violence and violent conflict.
- 4) *Output*: BICC improves its reputation in the academic world by its contributions to peer-reviewed journal articles, monographs, edited volumes, etc.
- 5) *Outreach*: BICC is not only visible within international public debates and policymaking but also makes an impact (e.g. by *Policy Briefs*, consultations).
- 6) *Coherence*: BICC lives its knowledge circle by structurally integrating research, policy advice, technical advice and public outreach.
- 7) *Funding*: BICC aims to increase its core funding by the State of North Rhine-Westphalia and maintain its high percentage of third-party funding (>60%). Moreover, BICC expands its range of donors, also tapping more international funding.
- 8) *Strategic partnerships*: BICC intensifies strategic partnerships to create synergies, enable the sharing of knowledge, and broaden the geographic reach of BICC.
- 9) *Measurement of impact*: BICC increases its efforts to develop and use tools to measure the impact of its advisory work. These tools are to be based on recognised scientific methods and incorporate both quantitative and qualitative elements.
- 10) *In-house capacity development*: BICC supports the furthering of professional skills and competences of its staff. In particular, BICC supports its staff in taking appropriate measures for their career-building (e.g. PhD, habilitation).
- 11) *Internationalisation*: BICC enforces the international atmosphere of the institute by its international recruitment policy and the increase in international partnerships.
- 12) *Organisational reflexivity*: BICC continuously evaluates and improves all internal structures and processes to optimally match the needs set out in this *Concept Paper*.

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