



Chapter 4: The centrality of political deal making

- Political deal-making and bargaining processes among elites are key to building local support for reductions in armed conflict, formal peace processes and more stable transitions out of conflict.
- External actors can build trust and confidence and support the emergence of stabilising deals and bargains, providing resources to help them 'stick'.
- Externally-driven peace agreements and transformative reform agendas are likely to fail if they are significantly misaligned with the underlying division of power and resources.
- Policy makers face difficult trade-offs. Near-terms deals can de-escalate major conflict, but can impose limits on more inclusive change, and can result in other less visible forms of violence.

Introduction

1. The UK has considerable recent experience of interventions aimed at ending conflict and reducing security threats to the UK. These 'external'⁵⁰ interventions have emphasised formal peace processes and state- and institution-building as a way to reduce and manage violence. Yet attempts at transformative change,⁵¹ for example in Afghanistan, Libya and Iraq, have faced considerable challenges. Those excluded from the political and security arrangements have often used violence to challenge and undermine them and strengthen their position. This has often resulted in continued conflict, failed institution-building efforts and the collapse of peace agreements.
2. This chapter sets out how the UK government, working alongside local and international partners, can take a more iterative approach to reducing the impact of armed conflict by understanding and engaging in the political processes that occur in conflict contexts. In particular, it looks at how we can more effectively understand and potentially support political deal-making and bargaining processes. These are key to building local support for reductions in violence, formal peace processes and more stable transitions out of conflict. Activity in this regard accords with the UK Stabilisation Principles set out in Chapter 1, most clearly the need to '**promote and support a political process to reduce violence**' and '**prepare a foundation for longer-term stability**'.

50 References in this chapter to 'external' interventions refer to those of any state or multilateral organisation engaged directly or indirectly in the conflict, albeit that the emphasis is on the UK's role. The word 'external' is used for clarity: clearly no intervention can be considered truly 'external', given the degree to which intervening actors are part of the wider regional or international political economy of the conflict in question.

51 An attempt to fundamentally reengineer the underlying division of power and resources and existing political structures in order to generate some or all of the following: greater social and political inclusivity; gender equality, reductions in poverty, sustainable economic growth. See United Nations (2015) *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*

3. The issues discussed below are inextricably linked with other thematic areas and the approaches and issues presented in other chapters. Elite bargains and political deals usually happen in political grey areas, between the negotiation of formal peace agreements on one hand, and grassroots, bottom-up peacebuilding on the other hand. This chapter should therefore not be read in isolation and the overlaps and intersections with other issues must be recognised.
4. This chapter is in three sections, each ending with some key questions that policy and programme staff should ask as they develop their analysis, policy and plans. The sections:
 - introduce the key terms, concepts and frameworks that help to understand political deal-making processes in conflict contexts;
 - outline steps the UK and other external actors can take to promote and support a political process to reduce violence, and explores the factors which affect whether such deals and bargains are likely to hold;
 - set out how external actors can potentially help to prepare foundations to build longer-term stability.

Key terms and concepts

Elites: those that hold a disproportionate amount of political power, who are able to influence decisions, mobilise popular support and implement policies at national, sub-national and transnational levels.

Elite bargains: a discrete deal or bargain, or series of bargains that explicitly re-negotiates the distribution of power and resources between elites. Elite bargains are fluid and evolve constantly.

Peace agreements: Formal or semi-formal agreements entered into by warring parties, often but not exclusively brokered by external actors.

5. A 2018 Stabilisation Unit research project, the Elite Bargains and Political Deals (EBPD) project, provides a framework for understanding these complex, highly political conflict dynamics.⁵² It focuses on understanding who the key conflict elites are, how they operate and the nature of the political deals and bargains they do among themselves. It assesses how these factors interact with the underlying division of power and resources and with more formal peace agreements (where one is in place).
6. Elites' authority often goes beyond formal state structures and institutions, and this is especially true of conflict contexts. In exercising and seeking to maximise their authority, elites constantly 'bargain' over the formal and actual distribution and allocation of power and resources. In conflict, those bargaining processes are in constant flux as the distribution of power and resources is contested.
7. Elite bargains and deals play a critical role in influencing the trajectory of conflict. They are points at which support can be generated (or not) for reductions in violence, and which can set the foundations for formal or semi-formal peace agreements. So, they play an especially important role as a first step away from large-scale violent conflict.

⁵² C Cheng et al. (2018) op. cit., The references to specific cases in this chapter are almost all drawn from the case studies undertaken for this project.

Understanding elites

8. External actors who wish to engage on political processes in conflict and post-conflict settings can only set appropriate and realistic policy objectives if they **start with an agreed analytical picture**. The EBPD synthesis paper and the Joint Analysis of Conflict and Security guidance are helpful analytical frameworks for analysts and policy makers looking to understand the forces affecting elites operating in conflict contexts.⁵³ They set out the many factors that interact to shape the complex political processes discussed here, such as demography, resource endowments, regional dynamics and the legacies of conflict, as well as the nature of the state, identity, ideology and belief systems. They describe the different ways that relationships between elites and their constituencies can develop and be affected by conflict. They emphasise the importance of understanding the relative strength and importance of different elites in each context. While military elites predominate in some contexts, crowding out non-security actors, in other situations power may be more diffuse with traditional leaders, commercial or religious figures retaining significant influence.
9. It is also important to **view** these political actors and their (often only partially visible) **interactions at multiple levels**. The factors affecting elites, the bargains and deals they do among themselves and their relationships with their constituencies must be assessed at the local, national, regional and transnational levels. Looking at any of these in isolation will fail to recognise the extent to which they inevitably interconnect.
10. With regard to **female elites**, the World Bank's 2017 World Development Report (WDR2017) sets out how, although gender gaps are narrowing, females remain underrepresented within elites. Where they do hold positions of power, they tend to be in roles considered appropriate by male-dominated political cultures. This results in fewer inclusive policies being driven forward. WDR2017 shows that including female elites in elite bargaining processes increases inclusivity and that women in such contexts tend to be less hierarchical and less corrupt and are less likely to be engaged in patronage politics.⁵⁴ Of course it is imperative that as external actors work to support the emergence of the sorts of political processes described below, they are mindful of the risk of entrenching harmful gender norms that will serve to further undermine gender equality.

Elite bargains, peace agreements and the division of power and resources

11. Once elites have been analysed, policy makers must give adequate attention to the political deals and bargains into which elites enter during conflict. External interveners have tended to underplay or ignore these more informal, partially hidden processes while pursuing externally-driven peace processes and formal institution development. The failure to adequately understand elite bargaining processes and the wider political economy of the conflict has often, if not always, resulted in a misalignment between formal processes (e.g. the legal text of the peace agreement, new institutional structures) and the actual division of power and resources on the ground as defined by elite bargains and political deals.

53 Stabilisation Unit (2017) *Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability; Guidance note*

54 World Bank (2017) *World Development Report*, p. 211

12. So, we must also **analyse how far a proposed or existing formal peace agreement aligns with the underlying division of power and resources**. Where there is significant misalignment, there is a high risk that the peace agreement or new institutional structures will fail, leading to renewed violence and instability.



Case study: Afghanistan and Tajikistan – alignment and misalignment

The post-Taliban peace agreement for Afghanistan made in Bonn in 2001 excluded the Taliban leadership, offering them little opportunity or incentive to engage in peaceful politics. The agreement became ever more misaligned with the underlying realities of power, given the extent of the Taliban's political, military and economic resources. Similarly, the internationally-backed 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement on South Sudan can also be said to have failed because it excluded and ignored powerful elites and armed actors.

In Tajikistan, by contrast, there was greater alignment between the peace agreement and the underlying realities of power. International actors backed a peace agreement that essentially formalised a series of bargains and deals to end the civil war between political and military elites on both sides of the conflict, in a manner that reflected their power on the ground. This deal was far from perfect, and many of the underlying drivers of instability remain unresolved, but it ended the conflict and there has been little political violence for the last 20 years.

Assessing the impact of external interventions

13. When planning or undertaking an intervention, we must also **reflect on the potential and existing impact of our engagement on the conflict's political economy**. As soon as external actors intervene they become part of the conflict system, as the conflict parties factor what external actors do – or are expected to do – into their calculations. Any major security, political and economic interventions will radically alter the underlying division of power and resources. Moreover, the scale and nature of the intervention could lead external actors to be seen as a party to the conflict, rather than a more neutral force.
14. This emphasises the importance of **conflict sensitivity**. Given the critical influence of elite bargains and political deals for moving away from conflict, analysts and policy makers should use conflict sensitivity tools (see Chapter 2) to assess, and constantly reassess, how proposed or existing interventions will affect political actors and processes. Failing to be conflict-sensitive not only means plans and objectives are less likely to be effective but can in the worst cases prompt new conflict.
15. Any analysis and planning process must also make a frank assessment of the **trade-offs** that exist between interventions and weigh up the costs and benefits appropriately (this is explored in more detail below).



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Key questions

Steps	Prompt questions	Tools and further reading
Analysing elites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who are the key elites and why do they think the way they do? What role do formal and informal institutions and wider structural issues play in shaping elite activity? From where do they derive their power? How do regional, national and sub-national elites interact and to what extent do they rely on each other or compete? 	Cheng, C, Goodhand, J, Meehan, P, <i>Elite Bargains and Political Deals project Synthesis paper</i> Stabilisation Unit, 2018
Analysing elite bargains, political deals and the division of power and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are power and resources divided? Are existing elite bargains stable or unstable, and what are they based on? What has been the role and impact of external interventions on elite bargaining processes? 	<i>Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability Guidance Note</i> Stabilisation Unit, 2017
Analysing 'misalignment'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the formal distribution of power match the more informal distribution of power on the ground? Is there a peace agreement in place, or is one being proposed? How well do its provisions (existing or proposed) align or fit with the actual settlement? Is the agreement transformative (i.e. in the manner of the reforms and changes proposed) or is it focused on formalising a series of existing elite bargains? Will provisions be made in any proposed agreement to revise it over time, allowing for greater inclusivity? Are the implications of any proposed agreement for the economy, governance, public security and social cohesion being thought through? 	
Analysing conflict sensitivity and trade-offs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the key policy trade-offs? How do the UK's primary policy objectives in this context align with those held locally, and by other external actors? How might they conflict with the goal of violence reduction and support for the emergence of stabilising elite bargains? What are the potential trade-offs between our counter-terrorism, democracy, human rights, gender, longer-term institutional reform and potential interests and the potential requirement to secure stabilising political deals between key conflict actors? 	

Supporting a political process to reduce violent conflict

16. Once the analysis discussed above is in place, external actors may seek to provide direct or (more likely) indirect **support to political deal-making and bargaining processes**.
17. The possible approaches outlined below assume that the objective of such interventions is to reduce violent conflict (at a national or more localised level) and build a platform for longer-term stability, in line with the UK Approach to Stabilisation. These have been set out in a sequential manner for ease of reading, but it should be noted that this could provide the false impression that transitions out of conflict can be linear, when in practice they are always 'messy'. Any engagement in such fluid political environments should be undertaken iteratively, constantly updating our analysis and responding to shifting dynamics on the ground.

Working with misaligned peace agreements

18. In circumstances where external actors are pushing for or backing a formal peace agreement, we must begin by assessing:
 - how far the agreement aligns with the configurations of power on the ground;
 - whether it is adequately supported by underlying deals among key conflict elites.On this basis, we must set appropriate objectives.
19. Where the peace agreement is misaligned with the underlying division of power and resources, external actors should **consider activities to foster political support** for the agreement. We may also (or alternatively) need to reassess the level of ambition in the agreement. In some cases, the degree of political transformation proposed in the agreement reduces or blocks elite support for the agreement. The following questions should guide policy-maker engagement with local, international and regional partners in this regard.


Key questions

Steps	Prompt questions	Tools and further reading
Working with existing peace agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there adequate recognition of the risks inherent in misaligned peace agreements that are linked to externally driven transformative agendas? • Can more be done to highlight the evidence that complex, multi-actor conflicts are likely to require an iterative, step-by-step, deal-focused approach that builds support for a formal peace process and agreement, rather than trying to achieve everything at once? • Should policy-makers reduce the degree of change advocated for in the formal agreement, if that is what has been assessed to be preventing conflict elites from providing support? Conversely, where genuine opportunities to widen coverage or inclusivity exist, have they been fully exploited? • What more can be done to promote frank assessment of the impact of external intervening forces on the political economy of the conflict? Are external political, economic or security interventions distorting and potentially disincentivising local political engagement and dialogue? 	<p>Cheng, C, Goodhand, J, Meehan, P, <i>Elite Bargains and Political Deals project Synthesis paper</i> Stabilisation Unit, 2018</p> <p><i>Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability Guidance Note</i> Stabilisation Unit, 2017</p>

Becoming more directly involved

20. Certain contexts may require more direct external political engagement by the UK and its partners. In some instances, as noted above, more support needs to be built among conflict elites for an existing peace agreement. Where there is no formal peace process in place, external actors may wish to **support the emergence of political deals among conflict actors** as a way of generating more immediate reductions in violence. For example, where there is deep mistrust between political elites and no side is willing to risk military defeat by entering into dialogue, external actors can play a role in building trust between elites and lowering the potential cost of participation. During the Colombian peace process, for instance, Venezuela and Ecuador played a key role in generating trust between the government and Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC) leaders.

21. In some contexts, external actors can **catalyse private, confidential engagement between conflict actors** by providing support, resources, and suitable environments for dialogue. In the Philippines, the unique model established through the International Contact group (comprising Japan, Turkey, the UK and Saudi Arabia as well as four NGOs) provided vital political, technical and economic support to negotiations between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.



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22. External actors, including the UK, may also decide to directly mediate, or **support the development of confidence-building measures** (CBMs) as they try to establish first steps towards an initial deal or bargain between elites. The annex at the end of this chapter provides a range of potential CBMs which external actors can consider. The following underlying principles should guide any attempt to support or directly develop CBMs:

- **CBMs must engender trust between parties.** Technical economic and security CBMs can be important, but CBMs must be kept as political as possible in order to facilitate processes of engagement and dialogue and develop trust and confidence between parties.
- **CBMs should start small and build up.** Interventions such as ceasefires and humanitarian interventions may have merit in themselves, but they are unlikely to work as CBMs in the first stage of an attempt to bring together various parties.
- **CBMs cannot be imposed from the outside and must be aligned with the configurations of power.** If one side has nothing to gain by agreeing to halt a particular tactic, attempting to agree or impose a related CBM will probably be detrimental to confidence building.

23. When operating in a hot conflict context, where external actors do not have a major security presence, there are likely to be fewer opportunities to directly support political deals 'on the ground'. **Generating support using regional elites** may therefore prove to be more productive, given the likelihood that they have greater access, leverage and influence. Donor pressure in 2003 on Rwanda was a major factor in its reduction in support for the M23 rebel group in DRC, which in turn led to the collapse of the group's support base.

24. In some instances, however, **direct external intervention may reduce the possibility that stabilising local deals emerge.** Initial pressure to do something to respond to violence and conflict can result in major external interventions which preclude more locally driven, 'good enough' solutions. Equally, we must be aware of the risk of instrumentalisation, as conflict elites will inevitably seek to leverage and instrumentalise their relationship with external actors to their own advantage.⁵⁵ This can go both ways, however, as external actors can also inadvertently instrumentalise local actors. Formal peace agreements and processes can result in elites becoming beholden to international policy commitments. For example, undertaking social reform or tackling powerful organised criminal networks can undermine their relationships with their domestic constituencies and power bases, leading to more instability.

⁵⁵ Instrumentalisation: when local/domestic elites view external interveners as potential force multipliers, providing coercive power, resources and rent-seeking opportunities, and legitimacy, to be used to tilt the balance of power in their favour. See C Cheng et al. (2018) op. cit.

Expertise and resource

25. External interveners must have the right resources in place to support complex deal-making processes effectively. Suitable **analytical expertise** is required to shed light on behind-the-scenes political processes. Slower-moving analytical processes are unlikely to be adequately responsive to shifting local dynamics, so it is essential to use real-time **local expertise** and information from sources 'outside the wire'. (i.e. beyond the fortified compounds of international embassies and military bases). People with conflict resolution, mediation and facilitation skills can play an important role in developing policy and programming options. However, such thematic expertise cannot be a substitute for people with local knowledge (including of local languages) and people who have the confidence of the conflict parties.
26. A decision to undertake a political intervention does not mean that the UK must engage directly in (supporting) deal-making processes. A range of factors including resource constraints, risk appetite and analysis of the best way influence the process will often lead us to **consider other avenues for policy or programmatic interventions**. Multilateral partners or non-governmental external providers are often better placed in terms of expertise and access to support behind-the-scenes processes, whether from capitals or at a regional level. In such cases, UK support may involve providing targeted resources and expertise, such as generating and sharing conflict analysis, technical advice (on CBMs, communications, multi-track diplomacy) and potentially funding for third-party expert support.
27. So, policy-makers and programme staff may wish to identify whether external organisations and experts can be brought in to support specific political interventions. A key issue for consideration is the degree to which external mediators are perceived as neutral and legitimate. In some instances, multilateral organisations such as the UN, EU or IGAD can facilitate dialogue between conflict parties. For example, the small UN mediation team in Mali has facilitated informal political engagement with numerous conflict actors in support of the formal peace agreement between the Malian government and various rebel groups in the north. Their engagement has sought to generate support among conflict elites for the formal peace process and/or to respond to localised outbreaks of violence.
28. Non-governmental mediation experts and organisations are also increasingly being used in conflict contexts. They offer access into insecure areas and have skillsets that are often difficult for governments to deploy. For instance, EU funding for external non-governmental experts to support mediators in Somalia has generated positive results. Other attempts to insert external mediation experts have produced pushback. During the conflict in Nepal, some people accused Western governments of 'parachuting' in experts with limited expertise and too little time to properly commit.
29. When considering the opportunities for more direct engagement in the political processes surrounding a stabilisation intervention, policy makers and programme staff should consider the following.



Slower-moving analytical processes are unlikely to be adequately responsive to shifting local dynamics, so it is essential to use real-time local expertise and information from sources 'outside the wire'



 **Key questions**

Steps	Prompt questions	Tools and further reading
<p>Providing direct support to political deal making processes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could external diplomatic interventions and/or security guarantees or certain resources help to overcome a lack of commitment from conflict parties to engagement? (See below for further discussion). • Could external facilitation provide important political and physical 'space' for, and facilitate deals and bargains between, key conflict elites? • Is there greater opportunity to bring diplomatic and economic resources to bear to create an enabling environment for elite bargains at the regional level? • Is there a role for the UK? Should the UK encourage others (e.g. regional actors, UN) to provide a more neutral platform for engagement? • Are there opportunities for more direct support to help the emergence of stabilising bargains, either through official or non-governmental channels? • What moment would suit an external intervention aimed at supporting a stabilising political deal or bargain? Have CBMs built momentum? Has one side lost or gained military advantage? Has there been a change in leadership, or the underlying political settlement? Have regional alliances shifted, opening up political space? • Have we fully considered who will benefit materially and symbolically, and who will lose, as a result of our support? 	<p>Cheng, C, Goodhand, J, Meehan, P, <i>Elite Bargains and Political Deals project Synthesis paper</i> Stabilisation Unit, 2018</p> <p><i>United Nations Guidance for Effective Mediation</i> UN, 2012</p> <p>Mamiya, R. <i>Engaging with Non-State Armed Groups to Protect Civilians</i> International Peace Institute, 2018</p>

Making the deal stick

30. While CBMs may constitute a vital part of any initial attempt to build trust between conflict parties, policy makers also need **to consider which factors are most likely to help these delicate political processes hold**. Two issues are of particular importance: elite access to political privileges and economic opportunities (often referred to as 'rents'), and the degree of inclusion or exclusion of particular elites in a deal or bargain.

Rents

31. Rents are key in many conflict contexts because **political deals and bargains are sustained by elites providing or gaining privileged access to power and material resources**. Rents can be generated locally by conflict elites, through taxation and predation, or sourced externally from regional backers who want supportive local allies. Where the writ of the state is limited, the key issue may be access to and the 'right' to extract resources. This may include access to raw resources, control of illicit flows (such as drug trafficking routes) or exploiting external aid flows. In such contexts, power is likely to be very diffuse and resources limited. Bargains between conflict elites are likely to be unstable and volatile because elite calculations change with shifting resource opportunities. In some instances, it may be possible to **directly affect elite access to rents**, thereby increasing (or decreasing) the likelihood that a deal or bargain will hold.



Case study: External actors, rent flows and political deals

If external interventions affect rent flows, this can influence the nature and stability of deals and bargains between key conflict elites in various ways. In Mozambique during the early 1990s there was extreme dependence on external aid, meaning external actors could use aid flows to pressure the warring parties into negotiations. In Afghanistan's Sangin district in 2011, small, well-targeted and locally driven projects helped key conflict elites convince their communities that of the benefits of local ceasefires, leading to significant reductions in violence. In other instances, external actors may unintentionally provide financial flows that maintain key deals among elites. In Somalia, elite access to external aid flows has been vital in maintaining the 2004 Mbagathai agreement and the deal that exists between Mogadishu-based clans and wider factional elites (albeit those elite actors associated with Al-Shabaab remain outside the deal).

32. There are significant **trade-offs** in any decision by external actors to about rent flows – whether the decision is to try to influence them or to let them be. Rent flows often pose challenges to efforts to build medium- or longer-term stability. One risk is that elites turn their attention to competing for rents (including those provided by external actors), sometimes violently. They may seek the attention of external backers to gain greater access to rents, and if they are excluded from certain rent-sharing arrangements, they may use violence to contest their position. External actors can find themselves in a double bind, where they have bought peace by providing political or economic incentives but find that they cannot now withdraw financial flows without risking a breakdown in any existing deal or bargain, leading to renewed instability.

33. In seeking to understand and potentially influence the way rents impact on the political processes inherent to stabilisation interventions, policy makers should begin by asking the following questions.

 **Key questions**

Steps	Prompt questions	Tools and further reading
<p>Understanding and effecting the 'stickiness' of a political deal: rents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which particular rent is the group in question seeking? Is the conflict about political power, or more immediate economic gain (or both)? • What are the existing sources of rents? Are they locally generated or do elites rely on external backers for support, leaving them relatively independent of local support? If they are externally sourced, can their backers elsewhere be influenced to reduce or alter their support? • What is the relative strength of the state? Are conflict elites generating rents through the central state, or more locally, with little to no engagement from the centre? • To what extent are international interventions providing rent opportunities for elites? Are they preventing the more resolution of the conflict, or helping to incentive conflict elites to enter in a bargain? 	<p>Meehan, P, <i>What are the key factors that affect the securing and sustaining of an initial deal to reduce levels of armed conflict?</i> Stabilisation Unit, 2018</p> <p>North, D, Wallis, J, Webb, S, Weingast, B, <i>Limited Access Orders in the Developing World: A New Approach to the Problems of Development</i> World Bank, 2007</p> <p><i>Natural Resources and Conflict: A Guide for Mediation Practitioners</i> UNDP and UNEP, 2015</p>

Inclusion

34. How powerful elites are included or excluded within a political bargain or deal can have a major effect on the extent to which it will hold. In contexts where external actors only have a limited influence over the key conflict actors, we may have limited scope to affect the degrees of inclusivity. However, where the UK and its partners have undertaken a significant intervention and/or have a major influence over local configurations of power and the parameters of deal making processes, we need to consider how policy priorities affect approaches to inclusivity.



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35. As set out in the UK Approach chapter, the priority aim in any initial stabilisation intervention should in theory be to prioritise a near-term reduction in violence, on the basis that only then will there be an adequate platform for longer-term, sustainable change. In the initial post-conflict period, policy makers should where possible **consider taking a maximalist approach to elite inclusion** (often described as horizontal inclusivity),⁵⁶ i.e. aim to bring as much of the elite as feasible towards a deal. As set out below, such an approach involves difficult decisions and trade-offs over who is engaged and how, given the potential implications of engaging certain individuals and groups who are likely to be responsible for perpetuating the conflict.
36. In some cases, external actors may seek to exclude certain individuals or groups from a particular deal or more formal agreement on political, security or moral grounds. For example, international pressure has prevented the Malian government from engaging with individuals judged to have links to terrorist groups. Evidently, the exclusion of powerful actors from a specific bargain or agreement will pose challenges to its sustainability. The costs of doing so must be assessed against the ability of those excluded to generate further violent conflict. Experts argue that the policy of excluding the Taliban from the Bonn process in Afghanistan and similarly the exclusion of the Islamic Courts movement in Somalia were implemented with too little recognition of the potential longer-term costs.
37. Furthermore, while the horizontal inclusivity of key elites can bring about stabilisation, and in some cases longer-term stability, policy makers must **remain aware of tensions with other priorities**, such as the political, social and economic inclusion of the wider population. A failure to widen political inclusion beyond elites can undermine stability later on. In Lebanon, an inclusive bargain among elites in the post-conflict period has prevented major outbreaks of violence but has precluded wider reforms to address underlying drivers of instability, as any such change would pose a threat to the carefully balanced division of power and resources.

⁵⁶ 'Horizontal inclusion' is concerned with the relationship between and across different elites, while 'vertical inclusion' involves the relation between elites and their constituencies.

38. A further factor to consider is **how far the conflict is being fought over 'divisible' or 'indivisible' issues**. 'Divisible' conflicts are those where competing interests and grievances revolve around contestation over access to resources, political rights and rent-sharing arrangements. 'Indivisible' conflicts are over territory, secession, or cultural politics where issues of ethnicity or identity have hardened into deep social division. Broadly 'divisible' conflicts offer greater immediate scope for negotiation as there is some room for compromise on the key issues. In Tajikistan, for example, while there was certainly an ideological aspect to the conflict, it was predominantly fought over a set of series of divisible issues around access to political and economic power. On the other hand, where issues have been framed in more indivisible and zero-sum terms, where one side is more evidently going to 'lose' if the other achieves their goals, securing a stabilising elite deal is likely to prove more challenging. This was evident in Sri Lanka, where Tamil groups' demands for succession left no room for the interests of elites in Colombo.
39. Nonetheless, even on seemingly more indivisible issues, there will always be some scope for external actors to support elites to find common ground with their opponents and focus on more divisible issues. In Aceh, the devastation caused by the 2004 tsunami led elites on both sides to alter long-held, more indivisible positions. In the context of a massive international aid effort, external mediators were able to help conflict elites sell a deal to their supporters and secure a lasting peace.
40. Key questions for policy makers to consider include the following.


Key questions

Steps	Prompt questions	Tools and further reading
Understanding and effecting the 'stickiness' of a political deal: inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent are key conflict elites being excluded from a deal, or more formal peace agreement? Who is preventing their inclusion and why? • How great is the risk that external policy agendas are preventing stabilising deals and bargains from emerging? Is there more that could be done to avoid broad-brush labels that fail to recognise the complexity of the conflict? • To what extent should external actors take a maximalist approach to the inclusion of elites in the initial post-conflict period? What does this mean for the UK government's role in this context, and what are the implications for our other interests? • How will the deal between elites impact on the political, social and economic inclusion of social groups? What might this mean for long-term stability? • Is the conflict framed in more divisible (political, economic opportunities) or indivisible (identity, ethnicity) terms? • Is there any scope for external actors to help positions and narratives evolve towards more divisible issues? 	Haspeslagh, S and Yousef, Z, <i>Engaging Armed Groups</i> Conciliation Resources, 2015 <i>Guidance on Gender and Inclusive Mediation Strategies</i> UNDP, 2017

Preparing a foundation for longer-term stability

41. The political deal-making and bargaining processes described here are highly complex and fluid. When planning interventions, policy makers and practitioners must recognise that the transition from war to peace is never linear. Political deals and bargains rarely lead to a formal peace process which culminates neatly in an inclusive political outcome. Given the prolonged and cyclical nature of many of today's conflicts and the limitations of externally-driven peace processes, adaptive, iterative and long-term approaches are required.
42. Many conflict contexts do not follow a clear transition towards but rather persist in a situation where nothing is negotiated 'once and for all'. Deals are frequently agreed, collapsed and revised. We must therefore remain conscious **that political deals and bargains can both dissolve and evolve**. There has often been a return to violence even in contexts where a deal has been done, driven by ongoing competition for power and resources. In other instances, negotiations are instrumentalised by one side to gain political or military advantage. In Libya, competition to control resources has seen militia commanders combine violence with temporary deals to position and re-position themselves to maximise their advantage. In other instances, high levels of criminal or state-led violence will continue even if the major 'political' conflict has come to an end. In El Salvador, the 1991 peace agreement was followed by the emergence of pervasive and powerful criminal networks, meaning rates of violence remained high.

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Peace agreements, power sharing and political settlements

As noted, this chapter does not directly address issues relating to the negotiation of more formal peace processes, although it touches on many relevant issues. Edinburgh University's '*Political Settlement Research Programme (PSRP)*' offers a wealth of material relevant to more formalised power sharing processes, including a comprehensive *Peace Agreements Database*. Especially relevant are papers on:

- *Political Power Sharing and Inclusion*
- *Military power-sharing Arrangements*
- *Economic Power-sharing, Conflict Resolution and Development in Peace Negotiations and Agreements*
- *Business and Peace Agreements*

43. Even where major conflicts stabilise, there is still a considerable risk that the underpinning deal-making process leads to **elite capture** of the spoils of peace. Elites come to see peace as the best way of furthering their (and potentially their constituencies') political or economic interests. The stronger the continuities between wartime and post-war power structures, the greater the likelihood there is of elite capture.⁵⁷ In contexts where there are high degrees of continuity, elites are likely to agree to end violence, but only in return for their continued 'right' to control or capture resources or control the means of violence (for example through control of local security forces). For example, new business elites emerged during the Guatemalan peace process who were able to pressure and provide political space for the government to enter negotiations to end the civil war. Yet the deal enshrined in the 1996 peace agreement saw political elites capture the benefits of peace. The more socially and politically transformative aspects of the formal agreement were never implemented.



The stronger the continuities between wartime and post-war power structures, the greater the likelihood there is of elite capture



44. The chances of more inclusive, potentially more equitable outcomes emerging are higher when the post-war transition entails a rupture which departs significantly from pre-war structures, because the rules of the game are in a state of flux. At the same time, there is a much higher risk of misalignment between the formal peace agreement (and the new institutions and structures it is likely to generate) and the actual division of power and resources on the ground, which heightens the risk of instability and a return to large-scale violent conflict. In Iraq, the transformational nature of the post-Saddam government offered radical change for many Iraqi citizens, but it also posed a threat to previously powerful Iraqi elites, many of whom supported the insurgency as a way of contesting the new political order.
45. It is important that the UK and its partners recognise that there will be no single 'moment' at which a particular conflict will be resolved. We should focus on approaches that are realistic about what can be achieved in the shorter term and cautious about externally imposed agendas, but we must also explore how more inclusive and stable change that addresses longer-term drivers of conflict can be supported. Even where a formal peace agreement has been reached, recent research highlights how post-conflict contexts can still embody a state of 'formalised political unsettlement'. While formal institutional structures have been agreed, former belligerents find themselves in an endless transition cycle and a constant state of 'no war, no peace'. These periods of institutional fluidity and contestation offer opportunities for accommodation of those previously excluded, in ways that more stable settlements do not, and as such provide potential entry points for policy makers trying to generate great long-term stability and inclusivity.⁵⁸

57 C Cheng et al. (2018) op. cit.

58 C Bell and J Pospisil (2017) *Navigating Inclusion in Transitions from Conflict: the Formalised Political Unsettlement*. Political Settlements Research Programme Briefing Paper 16

46. DFID's Building Stability Framework sets out the key broad building blocks for longer-term shifts towards more inclusive change in post-conflict contexts. Stabilisation efforts, including political deal-making, directly contribute to some of the building blocks,⁵⁹ most obviously fair power structures, conflict resolution mechanisms and a supportive regional environment. The framework describes how external actors can support reconciliation activities such as truth-telling processes and community reconciliation. It highlights that peace processes and conflict resolution mechanisms which meaningfully include women are more effective. Recent PSRP research highlights how locally-driven human rights mechanisms established as elements of more formal peace processes can become vital hooks for balancing power-sharing arrangements.⁶⁰ Such interventions, if delivered sensitively, can help societies to avoid falling back into violence, address historical grievances and build resilience against future conflict.
47. The Building Stability Framework also points to evidence that, over the long term, countries with fairer, more inclusive and open political institutions are more stable and that interventions should help broaden inclusion, voice, accountability and transparency over time. The nature of the political deal supported through stabilisation activities will inevitably shape the political context and what opportunities exist for making power structures more inclusive over time. The WDR 2017 also describes how external actors can help elites move from "deals-based bargains to rules-based bargains" and change elite incentives, reshape preferences and make the policy arena more contestable.⁶¹
48. In some cases, such activity will be complimentary to the wider stabilisation intervention. In others there will be trade-offs that need to be honestly and continuously assessed. The following questions should help policy makers to assess the tensions and trade-offs that shape the relationship between stabilisation and longer-term stability, as well as wider external policy objectives.

59 Fair power structures, inclusive economic development, conflict resolution mechanisms, effective and legitimate institutions, a supportive regional environment and resilience to transnational stresses and shocks.

60 C Bell (2018) *Political Power-sharing and Inclusion: Peace and Transition Processes* (PSRP Report) (Edinburgh: Global Justice Academy, University of Edinburgh)

61 The 2017 World Development Report contains a wider and insightful discussion of the role of elites in state transformation processes. See Chapter 5.


Key questions

Steps	Prompt questions	Tools and further reading
Supporting stabilisation and building longer-term stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent does the deal, bargain or formal agreement involve elite capture? What are the implications for the conflict and for long-term development? • After a formal peace process has been completed, how aggressively are (former) elites continuing to compete for power and resources? • To what extent has the deal or formal agreement locked in other forms of violence? Have certain groups been given the 'right' to control certain security institutions? Has there been a tacit agreement that certain destabilising activities (i.e. drug trafficking) will be allowed to continue despite the 'formal' peace? • Where there has been a more transformative break in the pre-existing division of power and resources, what are the risks that excluded elites will compete to contest the new arrangements? Could this result in further outbreaks of violence? • What are the implications for long-term stability, including whether the deal can support an increasingly inclusive political system over time and whether it will affect the effectiveness and legitimacy of institutions? • Will the deal make economic development more or less inclusive of different identity groups? 	<p>Bell, C, and Pospisil, J, <i>Navigating Inclusion in Transitions from Conflict: The Formalised Political Unsettling</i> Journal of International Development, 2017</p> <p><i>World Development Report</i> World Bank, 2017</p> <p>Menochal, A, <i>Inclusive Political Settlements: evidence, gaps, and the challenges of institutional transformation</i> Development Leadership Programme, 2015</p>

	Political	Security	Humanitarian
<p style="text-align: center;">Ambitious ←—————→ Modest</p>	<p>Declaration of principles or framework agreement on political substance to guide subsequent detailed negotiations</p>	<p>Confinement to barracks or fixed positions</p>	<p>Humanitarian safe zones or DMZs</p>
	<p>Agreed penalties for CBM non-compliance</p>	<p>Ban on new recruitment or conscription</p>	<p>International monitoring of human rights</p>
	<p>Agreement on immunities (temporary or long-term, for specific crimes or more generally)</p>	<p>National ceasefire (unilateral/ reciprocal)</p>	<p>Agreement to respect human rights (specific rights or in general)</p>
	<p>International/regional declaration of will to let locals decide their own future</p>	<p>Ban on import of (certain) weapons</p>	<p>Unrestricted delivery of humanitarian aid and access for needs assessments</p>
	<p>Release of imprisoned leaders to participate in talks</p>	<p>Restrictions on particular weapons (e.g. aerial, artillery, mines)</p>	<p>Demining</p>
		<p>Localised ceasefire (with in-built humanitarian access)</p>	<p>Agreement on humanitarian conduct (on medical facilities or equipment, fuel, civilian infrastructure e.g. water, etc.)</p>
	<p>Agreement on process, agenda, roadmap for talks</p>		<p>Prisoners/ hostages: releases, exchanges, commitments on treatment</p>
	<p>Socialising leaders and negotiators through informal contact</p>	<p>Refraining from recruiting or using child soldiers</p>	<p>Family visits (across front lines, prisons)</p>
			<p>Exchanges of information (on missing persons, prisoners etc.) and of bodies</p>
	<p>Ceasing propaganda and incitement to publicly promote the political process</p>	<p>Agreed mechanisms for armed actors to participate in the political process</p>	<p>Access for ICRC or similar organisations (particularly to besieged areas)</p>
	<p>Measures to build parties' confidence in the mediator's good faith credentials</p>	<p>Time-limited ceasefires</p>	<p>Vaccination campaigns</p>

Ceasefire / security monitoring mechanisms (joint / international)