



Stabilisation Unit

What are the key factors that affect the securing and sustaining of an initial deal to reduce levels of armed conflict?

Literature Review

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This Literature Review was commissioned by the UK Government Stabilisation Unit to support its 'Elite Bargains and Political Deals' project. This project has sought to provide a more robust evidence base for the UK's approach to stabilisation and help policy makers deliver more effective interventions in conflict contexts. More details on the project, and project publications, can be found on the Stabilisation Unit's website [here](#). This review has been produced by an independent expert. The views contained within do not necessarily reflect UK government policy.

Contents

Executive Summary	4
Introduction	7
1. General trends	9
1.1 Levels and types of armed conflict.....	9
1.2 How wars end (and re-start)	11
1.3 The changing face of international intervention	11
2. The state of the art	13
2.2 The conflict resolution literature	14
2.3. Limitations of the conflict resolution literature.....	21
2.4 The political settlements literature.....	23
2.4. The limitations of political settlements analysis.....	28
3. A framework for addressing knowledge gaps	33
3.1 Mapping processes: Political settlements, elite bargains and peace processes	34
3.2 Mapping actors.....	38
3.3 Disaggregating violence: What function does violence have?	41
4. Conclusion: Emerging Implications	43
Annex	44
References	48

Executive Summary

Overview

- As currently envisaged in HMG policy, the central challenge of stabilisation interventions is to enable and support the development of some form of initial deal or agreement to reduce levels of violence in pressured and volatile contexts, and to ensure that it holds. In order to address this challenge the Stabilisation Unit is seeking to develop an evidence base that outlines what stabilisation interventions have and have not been effective through a series of comparative case studies.
- This research is focused specifically upon improving understanding of how an initial deal, or ‘elite bargain’ can be reached, and then sustained, to stabilise violent conflict, which may then provide a ‘first step’ towards more sustained peacebuilding.
- The purpose of this literature review is to inform the work of the Stabilisation Unit by providing a critical assessment of important trends and debates in the academic literature on this subject.
- This study represents a time-bound review of the literature. It does not claim to be exhaustive in scope and it addresses only English-language literature on the subject.

Weaknesses in the academic literature: It is still unclear what does and does not work

- Violent conflict and interventions represent an immensely complex field for analysis. Much of the literature struggles to engage effectively with the complex array of factors that shape drivers of violent conflict, elite bargains and the role played by interventions.
- Significant weaknesses in the academic literature include:
 - **Low quality of data and weak evidence base used to make big (and contradictory) claims;**
 - **lack of transparency on the methodologies and data that studies use;**
 - **Most analysis is based on formal peace deals and negotiations.** There are few studies that engage with informal elite bargains and even fewer that provide sustained analysis of what made these (in)effective in reducing violence;
 - **Confused terminology**, especially surrounding the concept of ‘political settlements’;
 - **Methodological nationalism:** Prioritisation of national-level actors and dynamics, with limited focus on how these interact with sub-national and international actors and dynamics;
 - **Dominance of ‘rational actor models’** that assume the behaviour, motivations and calculations of warring parties are driven by the narrow pursuit of self-interest (securing greater wealth and power). This underplays the non-material, ideological and emotional factors that shape decision-making;
 - **Portrayal of external interveners as neutral referees** in armed conflicts, which underplays the distortionary impact that interventions can have.

Recommendations for addressing knowledge gaps

- Drawing upon key insights of the current literature and also addressing its current limitations, this paper recommends that future conflict resolution analysis develops a more effective framework to assess the **processes**, **actors**, and **types of violence** that shape stabilisation efforts:

Processes: Terminology within the literature on violent conflict and conflict resolution is used inconsistently and in a way that creates confusion. Future case study analysis would benefit from be framed more clearly around how **political settlements**, **elite bargains**, and **peace processes** interact.

Actors: Mapping the different actors in a conflict has become a core part of various conflict analysis tools. However, current approaches to actor-mapping suffer from a number of limitations. Addressing these weaknesses requires:

- ***A more sophisticated assessment of actors' interests, motivations and decision-making***, which is able to address the relationship between structure and agency, and the non-material, ideological and emotional factors that shape decision-making;
- ***Moving beyond 'methodological nationalism'*** in order to assess how relationships between national, sub-national and international actors shape violent conflict and the success/failure of interventions.
- ***Critical assessment of the interests and decisions of interveners*** in order to assess how the variable success of interventions is shaped by the conflicts and bargains made between and within interveners, the influence of domestic political considerations, and the impact of emotions, rivalries, and loyalties within intervening organisations.

Violence: If interventions are to work more effectively, conflict analysis must develop a clearer understanding of the different types of violence they are engaging with. This paper develops a typology of violence that differentiates between three broad forms of large-scale violence:

- ***Competitive violence***: aimed at contesting political settlements
- ***Embedded violence***: that forms part of how a political settlement works
- ***Permissive violence***: that operates without state sanctioning but is not aimed at destabilising a political settlement (e.g. some forms of criminal violence).

Emerging Implications from this study

- **Definitive claims of what works and what doesn't are based on problematic evidence.** Future research must be clearer in terms of the data and methodologies they use and their limitations.
- **Data weaknesses need to be factored into decision-making.** The difficulty of generating reliable evidence suggests that when deciding whether or not to intervene, external actors must take into account the fact that they will have to operate based on partial knowledge, rather than an assumption that establishing a comprehensive picture is possible. This is not necessarily a call for inaction, but it does emphasize the need for caution and the need to consider whether some interventions may be more effective than others.
- **Micro-managing conflicts and mediation is fraught with risks and understanding sub-national and regional conflict and power systems is important.** The prospects for stabilisation are strongly shaped by the extent to which international, national and sub-national interests and pressures align or work at cross-purposes.
- **Creating an 'enabling environment' for a deal may be more effective than intervening directly in violent conflict.** The 'pressure points' that encourage warring parties to negotiate may be a long way from the battlefield. Creating incentives for peace may be reliant on reducing international backing for warring parties, targeting the lucrative trade flows, or supporting mediation efforts by trusted regional actors. This suggests that interventions may prove more effective by supporting an 'enabling environment' for negotiations, rather than becoming directly involved on the battlefield or attempting to orchestrate bargains.
- **Violence can be due to a lack of a deal or embedded in the deal, with very different policy implications.** Violence may be: (i) a result of a political settlement breaking down, (ii) integral to how political settlements operate; or (iii) able to operate alongside a stable political settlement. Policymakers need to analyse carefully the types of violence they are engaging with.
- **The need for greater self-reflection.** Too often, interventions are portrayed as external solutions to internal problems. When things go wrong the reasons given are usually placed on dynamics internal to the conflict, such as the lack of conflict 'ripeness' or the presence of 'spoilers'. However, the variable success of interventions is also shaped by the conflicts and bargains made between and within interveners, how domestic political considerations shape (in)-action, and also the influence that emotions, rivalries, and loyalties within these organisations have. There is very little literature on this subject. To improve understanding of what works and what does not work, future research should include stronger analysis of the interests, motivations and decision-making processes of interveners.

Introduction

1. Since the end of the Cold War, conflict resolution and peacebuilding have been essential components of western development strategy. There has been a shift from more 'traditional' peacekeeping operations to increasingly complex and multi-dimensional strategies aimed at achieving sustainable peace through ambitious stabilisation, peacebuilding and statebuilding programmes.
2. However, our understanding of what works and why is still limited and partial. Many violent conflicts remain intractable, new conflicts continue to erupt, and violence and instability regularly recur even in countries where international donors have invested heavily in trying to engineer peace (DFID 2010: 10). The emblematic failures in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the emergence of a wide body of literature critiquing dominant approaches to peacebuilding, have created a growing sense of disillusionment around peacebuilding interventions (Autessere 2010; Bell 2015: 9; Berdal and Zaum 2012; Cramer 2006; Denney and Barron 2015: 4-11; De Waal 2009; Mac Ginty 2012; Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013; Jones 2010; Paris 2004; UN 2015;)
3. However, alongside this growing sense of disillusionment, there has also been renewed emphasis on the need to address insecurity and violent conflict, rather than attempt to work 'around' it, in order to achieve the goals of sustainable development and poverty eradication (DFID 2010: 6). This renewed commitment is reflected by the addition of a new Sustainable Development Goal – SDG 16 – focusing on conflict reduction, and within the UK by the government's commitment to allocate at least 50% of DFID's budget to fragile states in every year of the current Parliament.
4. Recognizing the wide body of research that now exist on post-conflict stabilisation efforts and the fact that the UK increasingly operates in protracted conflicts, the Stabilisation Unit is seeking to develop an evidence base, through a series of comparative case studies, outlining what stabilisation interventions have and have not been effective.
5. This research is focused specifically upon improving understanding of how an initial deal, or 'elite bargain' can be reached, and then sustained, to stabilise violent conflict, and which may then provide a 'first step' towards more sustained processes of peacebuilding. The focus of this research is on a very specific moment in conflict stabilisation, rather than an assessment of the broader spectrum of peacebuilding and statebuilding initiatives that have been deployed over the past twenty-five years to resolve conflicts and support post-conflict transformation.
6. The purpose of this Background Paper is to inform the work of the Stabilisation Unit by providing a critical assessment of relevant trends and debates in the academic literature.
7. The paper is divided into three sections:

Section 1 provides a brief overview of the general trends in levels of armed conflict, how wars end (and re-start) and international interventions and mediation.

Section 2 assesses the state of the art of the academic literature. Firstly, it addresses the key debates and insights from the vast body of conflict resolution literature, and reveals two

major limitations: (i) claims of what works (and does not work) are based on problematic evidence and analytical frameworks; (ii) there has been a failure to address effectively the role of politics and power relations in determining the political economy of violent conflict and stabilisation efforts. In response to these concerns, an increasing body of academics and policymakers working on conflict have sought to 'bring politics back in' in a more concerted way, especially through deploying the concept of 'political settlements'. Although political settlements analysis has provided many important insights, there are also significant limitations in this body of work, which are outlined in the second part of Section 2.

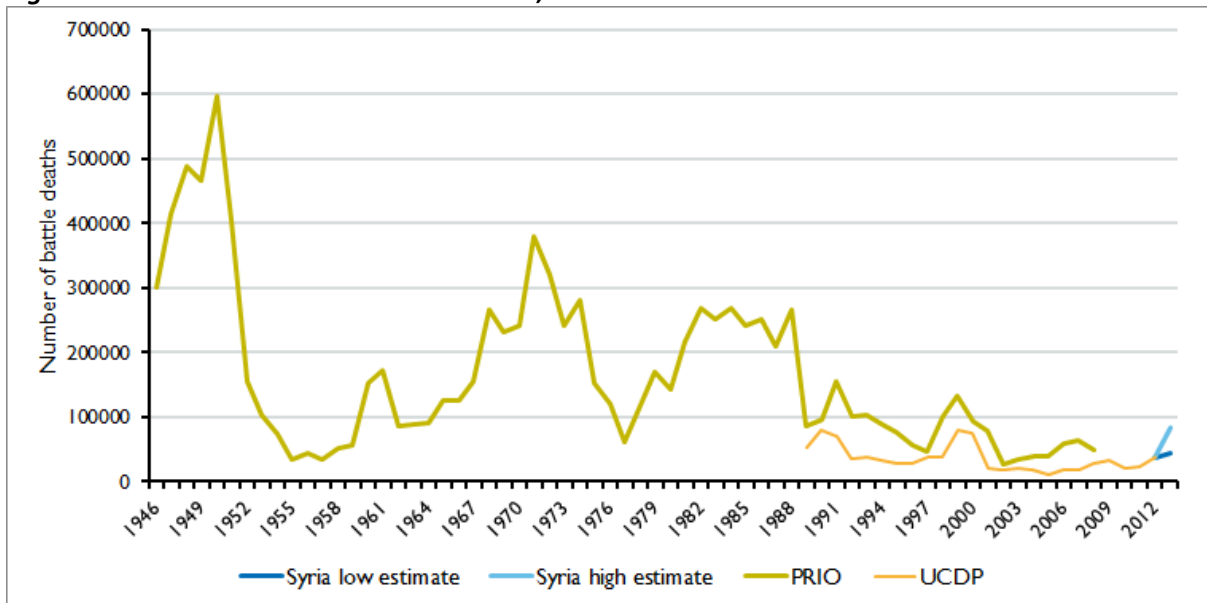
Section 3 develops a conceptual framework to guide future research, drawing upon key insights of the current literature and also addressing its current limitations. This framework recommends that future conflict resolution analysis develops more effective ways to assess the *processes, actors, and types of violence* that shape stabilisation efforts.

1. General trends

1.1 Levels and types of armed conflict

8. Since 1945 there has been a decline in the global number of battle-related deaths (Melander 2015: 7; see Figure 1). Although these figures are skewed by some very violent and destructive major wars – Korea, Vietnam, Iran-Iraq and Afghanistan – there is also a substantial body of research that has found that the frequency of major armed conflicts has fallen since 1945 (Gleditsch 2008; Mueller 2004; Human Security Report Project 2010; Pinker 2011; Goldstein 2011; Pettersson and Wallensteen 2015).

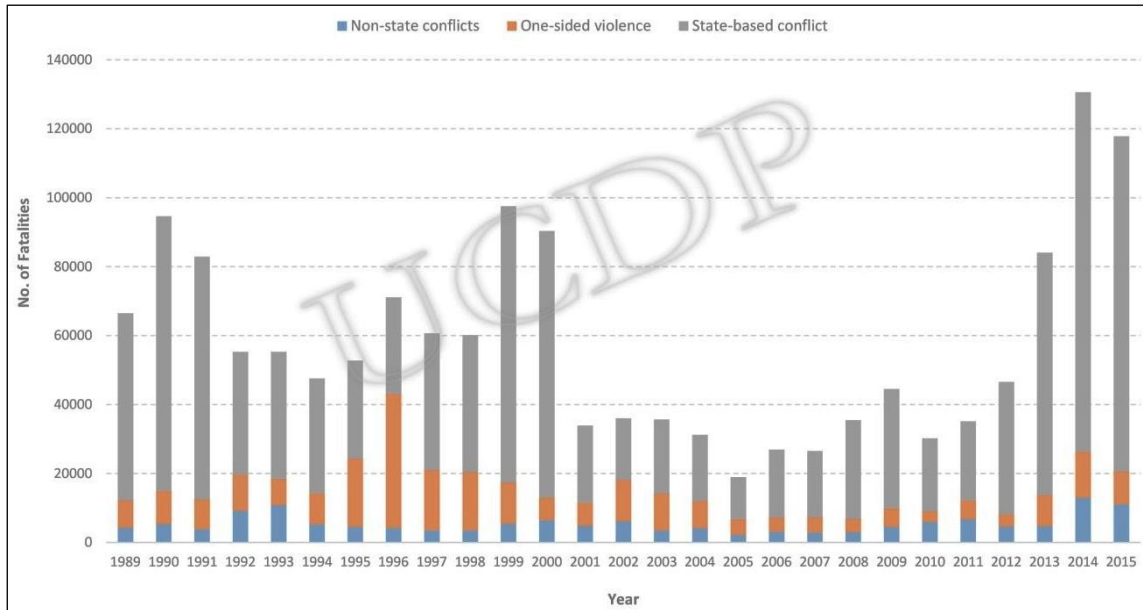
Figure 1: Total battle deaths for all conflicts, 1946-2013



Reference: PRIO (n.d.) Sources: 1946-2008 (Lacina and Gleditsch 2005), 1989-2013 (UCDP Battle-Related Deaths Dataset v.5-2014, Uppsala Conflict Data Program, www.ucdp.uu.se, Uppsala University).

9. Data suggests that the number of wars and battle-related deaths have been lower since 1989 than during the Cold War, with a significant decline in at the start of the 21st century. However, since 2004 there appears to have been an uneven but steady rise in organized violence, with a significant increase since 2010, which holds even when Syria is exempted from the data (Melander 2015). 2014 marked the highest yearly death toll by armed conflict since the end of Cold War (Pettersson and Wallensteen 2015, 536).

Figure 2: Fatalities in organized violence, 1989-2015, excluding the Rwandan genocide



Reference: Melander, Pettesson and Themnér (2016)

10. The 21st century has also seen a decisive shift in dominant types of war. The Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) shows that large-scale inter-state wars are almost entirely absent although there has been a significant rise in internationalised intra-state wars, defined as conflicts in which one or more states provided troops to at least one warring party (Petterson and Wallensteen 2015, 536).
11. Since 1989 Africa has been the most violent region in the world (in terms of battle-deaths, as recorded by UCDP) although levels of violence have fallen over the past decade. The uptick in global levels of violent conflict since 2010 has been driven by events in the Middle East. East Asia has been the most peaceful region of the world in recent decades. It has avoided any major conflict since the 1979 Sino-Vietnamese War, despite prevalent territorial disputes, historical grievances and great-power rivalry (Svensson and Lindgren 2011; Kang 2008, Solingen 2007 Tønnesson 2009).
12. However, even these broad trends are not universally accepted and should be treated with caution (Osterud 2008; Sarkees et al. 1997). Gaining accurate data on violent conflict is notoriously difficult, and although reporting is now much quicker and more comprehensive, the “techniques and politics of distortion” are also more sophisticated (Osterud 2008: 225). Arbitrary thresholds for what ‘counts’ as a war and for defining different categories of war also creates distortion. The focus on ‘battle-related deaths’ underplays fatalities caused indirectly by conflict (e.g. war-related famine, gang and militia violence) and by violence that continues after wars are officially deemed ended (Cramer 2006; Osterud 2008; Richards 2005). These concerns have led some to challenge claims that levels of violence are in decline.
13. The fact that even basic data trends on violent conflict are contested (such as the number of wars that have taken place), reveals the weaknesses in available evidence on violent conflict and the risks of extrapolating generic trends and policy recommendations from such data.

1.2 How wars end (and re-start)

14. Since the end of the Cold War more wars have come to an end than in previous decades. According to UCDP data, one third of all wars that began between 1940 and 2000 ended during the 1990s (Kreutz 2010). War termination was low during the Cold War, attributed to the fact that many were proxy wars between the US and the USSR (ibid).
15. The number of wars ending in decisive military victories has fallen sharply since 1989. According to the UCDP Conflict Termination dataset, between 1946 and 1989 only 10% of wars which ended did so through ceasefire or peace agreements, with almost 60% ending in a victory for one side. Between 1989 and 2005, the number of conflicts ending through a ceasefire or peace agreement rose to almost 40% and those ending through a decisive victory fell to below 14% (Kreutz 2010: 246).
16. Countries that experience war commonly experience further outbreaks of violent conflict (Call 2012; Quinn, Mason and Gurses 2007). The data suggests that negotiated settlements lead to greater civil war recurrence than decisive military victories although this finding, and the quality of the data it is based upon, is contested (Kreutz 2010; Quinn, Mason and Gurses 2007; Suhrke and Samset 2007; Toft 2010; Doyle and Sambanis 2006). Monica Toft (2010) has argued that wars that recur after negotiated settlements failed lasted longer and were more deadly. However, this finding is based on only five cases (Angola, Iraq, Lebanon, Philippines and Sudan).
17. The evidence on these issues remains partial, contested and subject to definitional ambiguity. For example, defining between a military victory and a negotiated settlement is complicated by the fact that the absence of a formal agreement does not necessarily mean a lack of negotiation, while negotiated settlements may be heavily one-sided. The nature of such victories and negotiated settlements cannot be captured in datasets that code these outcomes as distinct (Fearon and Laitin 2008).

1.3 The changing face of international intervention

18. The number of international peacebuilding interventions increased significantly after 1989. The end of Cold War superpower rivalry reduced the number of Security Council vetoes against interventions. Between 1989 and 1994 the Security Council authorized 20 new operations, increasing the number of peacekeepers from 11,000 to 75,000 (UN, n.d.).
19. The early 1990s marked the beginning of a new era of peacebuilding, defined by a shift from traditional peacekeeping to more sophisticated forms of multi-track diplomacy and multi-dimensional interventions encompassing an expanding array of objectives including state-building, democratisation, market-led economic reforms, security sector reform (SSR), disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR), transitional justice and judicial reform. The majority of interventions have promoted negotiated settlements underpinned by some form of 'deal' between influential actors involving a commitment to power-sharing, although support for the subsequent implementation and enforcement of such commitments has often been limited (Stedman 2002). The war on terror has narrowed the policy space for this kind of power-sharing in some contexts (Keen and Attree 2015).

20. The primary focus in such contexts is on rapidly achieving and maintaining a degree of order, security or stability, and this typically involves negotiating – and then building on – a pragmatic ‘deal’ among influential actors.
21. The UN has been the most active organisation in international mediation initiatives over the past quarter century, followed by US, UK and France. However, the role played by other organisations has become increasingly significant, especially: *regional organisations* such as the EU (especially through its independent partner, the European Institute of Peace (EIP), the African Union, ECOWAS and OSCE (Svensson and Lundgren 2015; Lundgren 2014); *national governments*, including Finland, Malaysia, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey (Svensson and Onken); and *specialist civil society organisations*, such as Crisis Management Initiative, International Alert, Conciliation Resources and the Asia Foundation.
22. In recent years the UN has reported an increase in the number of more ‘robust’ missions it has been required to undertake, with greater deployment in contexts “where there is no peace to keep” (de Coning 2016). This reflects a growing focus on stabilisation and conflict management, rather than more ambitious efforts at conflict resolution and post-conflict transformation. Although the notion of stabilisation is not new, it is a concept that has gained prominence during the twenty-first century. This has variously been attributed as resulting from: (i) the shared experience of the US, UK and France in stabilisation efforts through the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) operation in Afghanistan and the Iraq War (de Coning 2016); (ii) a reaction to the failures of more transformative peacebuilding and statebuilding interventions during the 1990s (Barakat 2016; MacGinty 2012); (iii) the increasing prioritisation given to tackling terrorism and preventing the contagion of violence, refugees and crime from war zones (MacGinty 2012).
23. **Annex 1** provides a detailed summary table of the most widely-quoted quantitative studies on the trends briefly outlined in this section.

2. The state of the art

24. Over the past twenty-five years a vast literature has emerged on the drivers of violent conflict, peacebuilding interventions and post-conflict resolution. This body of work has sought to understand why the end of the Cold War had failed to deliver a prolonged peace dividend, to interrogate the rise of so-called 'new wars', and to critically assess the record of peacebuilding in light of the significant number of peace processes and peace agreements enacted since the early 1990s. This review focuses specifically on the literature that has addressed two issues:

- (i) In countries experiencing violent conflict, what factors determine the feasibility of reaching some kind of initial deal to reduce levels of violence?
- (ii) What factors then determine whether this deal will endure and provide a 'first step' towards more sustained processes of peacebuilding, or whether violent conflict will recur?

25. A wide spectrum of arguments has emerged in response to these questions. These range from Edward Luttwak's (1997) influential 'give war a chance' thesis, which argues that allowing wars to "reach their natural conclusion" increases the likelihood of a durable peace and sustained post-war reconstruction, and Jeremy Weinstein's (2005) call for would-be interveners to acknowledge conflict-affected countries' potential for "autonomous recovery" without international intervention. At the opposite extreme, concerns over the proliferation of fragile and failing states have generated support for far greater forms of interventionism, premised on forms of 'neo-trusteeship' and 'shared sovereignty' (Krasner 2004; Fearon and Laitin 2004; Caplan 2002; Keohane 2003). Between these extremes, the academic literature has focused mostly on understanding what drives violent conflict and the potential for various forms of intervention or mediation to support negotiated settlements.

26. Simplifying, there are two key bodies of work which have sought to address these issues:

(i) The conflict resolution literature largely concentrates on the 'latter' stages of violent conflict and post-conflict dynamics. Underpinned by a large body of quantitative analysis, this literature focuses upon how the type of conflict, the way a conflict ends, and the intervention strategies deployed by external actors determine the durability of peace, with an interest in providing lessons for how to make future interventions more effective.

(ii) Political settlements analysis (PSA) deploys a broader political economy lens to analyse the factors that affect the securing and sustaining of an elite bargain to reduce levels of violence. It focuses more explicitly on the need to address how power is organised in society in order to understand (and address) drivers of violent conflict. Rather than a technical focus on designing the 'right' interventions, PSA emphasizes that any intervention will be shaped by power relations and political interests and must be resilient to these pressures.

2.2 The conflict resolution literature

27. The conflict resolution literature covers a vast array of issues addressing both initial stabilisation and conflict management strategies, and longer-term peacebuilding and statebuilding efforts. In light of the fact that this project is focused specifically on what determines whether an initial deal can be reached to reduce violence, the most relevant issues within the conflict resolution literature focus on (i) the importance of how wars end to the prospects of securing peace; (ii) the timing of interventions (the notion of conflict 'ripeness'); (iii) the risk of 'spoilers'; (iv) the content of a deal; and (v) the role of international intervention.

2.2.1 How wars end;

Does the way in which a conflict ends influence the likelihood that peace will endure?

28. The 'Wagner thesis' argues that civil wars ending in negotiated settlements are more likely to lead to renewed violence than those that end in a decisive victory (Wagner 1993; Licklider 1995). A negotiated settlement, it is argued, perpetuates conditions of 'dual sovereignty' by allowing more than one side to retain organizational strength and capacity to mobilise violence in the future. This places huge pressure on the design and implementation of negotiated settlements to ensure that warring parties view their interests as best served through peace rather than a return to war.

29. Further studies have refined these claims. Quinn et al. (2007) argue that conditions of dual sovereignty are more likely to occur after a government victory because rebels often proved adept at blending into the civilian population and may maintain the capacity to re-mobilise in contexts other than total annihilation. In contrast, where governments are defeated exile often provides a viable exit option that prevents continued 'dual sovereignty'. Toft's (2010) study of 137 civil wars between 1940 and 2007, similarly finds that civil wars ending in decisive victory are less likely to see a return to conflict than those ending in a negotiated settlement; and those ending in a rebel victory are less likely to recur than those ending in government victory. Toft argues that this may be because the legitimacy and capacity required for rebels to win are important foundations for post-war stability. Toft's research also finds that wars which recur after negotiated settlements became more deadly and harder to resolve, although this finding is based on only five cases (Angola, Iraq, Lebanon, Philippines and Sudan).

30. Advocates of these arguments draw out two main policy implications for would-be interveners. Firstly, greater consideration must be given to the risks of promoting negotiated settlements. The assumption that such settlements reduce the death toll compared to letting wars take their course must be considered alongside the risks that negotiated settlements may also pose to fuelling renewed and potentially more intractable violence. Secondly, they argue that interveners need to consider how the benefits generated by decisive victories (i.e. an end to dual sovereignty) can be built into negotiated settlements. This includes far greater post-conflict commitment to SSR and stronger 'sticks' to inflict harm on actors that do not comply with the terms of negotiated settlements.

2.2.2 Conflict ripeness;

Does the timing of efforts to reach a deal to reduce violent conflict determine their likelihood of success?

31. One of the most influential concepts to have emerged from the conflict resolution literature is the notion of conflict 'ripeness' (Zartman 1989; 2000; 2008). Zartman argues that successful efforts to reduce violent conflict are dependent upon their timing, with even the best peace agreement likely to fail if it is pursued at the 'wrong' moment in a conflict. 'Ripe' moments for resolution emerge when (i) warring parties find themselves locked into a 'mutually hurting stalemate', defined as a conflict which neither side can escalate to victory and the deadlock is painful to both, and (ii) when there is a viable 'way out'. The need for a 'way out' means that would-be interveners need to capitalise upon such opportunities to support a deal or peace process.
32. Zartman argues that conflicts typically present two key 'windows of opportunity' for effective mediation: (i) early into a conflict when the fear of future destruction is powerful, and problem-solving negotiations are likely to gain traction; (ii) if such early opportunities are 'missed' they may only recur after sustained violent conflict has created visceral realisation of a mutually hurting stalemate.
33. Many analysts broadly support the notion that opportunities to reach a deal to reduce levels of violent conflict wax and wane during war. However, more controversial is Zartman's claim that by understanding the trajectory of a conflict and the perceptions of pain and impasse held by warring parties, mediators should be able to *predict* the onset of a mutually hurting stalemate and then initiate timely mediation efforts.
34. However, this claim has been critiqued on various grounds:

"Ripeness is a rear-view mirror": The 'ripening' of conflict is not a linear and predictable process, as the metaphor of ripeness suggests. It can be a way of rationalising events after the fact but its predictive capacity is very limited (Lederach 2008).

Ripeness is a self-protective model: Any time mediation fails it is because the conflict was not ripe, whereas anytime it succeeds the model is said to hold true (O'Kane 2005; Kleiboer 1994).

"Ripeness is in the eye of the beholder": Ripeness is "something perceived by outsiders with the luxury of dispassionate facts and factors" (Lederach 2008). Those in the midst of war may rarely be able to calculate conflict ripeness. Critics have argued that policymakers should work towards creating opportunities for negotiation within constant crisis, rather than waiting for conflicts to reach a mutually hurting stalemate.

Partial Knowledge of mediators: The key strategic calculations of warring parties, which mediators need to know in order to judge ripeness, are "inherently private affairs" that warring parties are unlikely to divulge (Nathan 2006). Decision-making around whether or not to intervene must be based on the acknowledgement that interveners have only very partial knowledge, rather than problematic claims that more effective mediators can glean such information and thus make reliable predictions.

Ripeness implies neutrality: It presents mediators as impartial actors external to the conflict they are engaging with. It does not consider how interventions may shift the calculations of warring parties in different ways. It also overlooks the fact that decisions about when to intervene are based upon a more complicated set of factors (including domestic politics) than whether or not a conflict is deemed 'ripe'.

The risk of escalation: Critics argue that the rising costs of war, which Zartman argues will lead to a mutually hurting stalemate, may just as feasibly make conflict more intractable (Leiberfeld 1999; Mitchell 1995). Such costs may increase the sense of investment in the war effort and make future costs more bearable when "compared with the 'sunk costs' already borne" (ibid). The metaphor of ripeness is based on the assumption that warring parties will act on simple cost-benefit calculations and ignores the role of emotions in decision-making.

2.2.3 Spoilers

How do spoilers shape impact upon the chance of securing and sustaining a deal?

35. Spoilers are actors who view peace as a threat to their interests. The most extensive work on this subject has been by Stedman (1997; 2000; 2001; 2008) who coined the term to define "leaders and parties who believe the emerging peace threatens their power, world view, and interests and who use violence to undermine attempts to achieve it." To have any chance of success a peace agreement needs to assess the challenges posed by spoilers. This includes assessing the *number* of spoilers and their *relationships* to each other; the *position* of spoilers (are they inside or outside of the peace process?); the *locus* of spoilers (are spoiling tactics driven by an organisation's leaders or their followers?); and the *goals* of spoilers. These goals can be determined as *limited* (specific concerns), *total* (complete derailment of a deal), or *greedy* (opportunistic aims to push for the best possible deal) (Stedman 2000).
36. According to Stedman, addressing the challenges posed by spoilers requires deploying one of three possible strategies: *inducement*, defined as "taking positive measures to address grievances of factions that obstruct peace" (ibid). This strategy is most effective when the goals of spoilers are limited and mostly focused on security fears, although it will be counter-productive in engaging greedy spoilers; *Socialization*, which requires establishing "a set of norms for acceptable behaviours by parties that commit to peace or seek to join a peace process" (ibid). This strategy requires time and a combination of sticks and carrots but can reduce the threat posed by limited and greedy spoilers; *coercion*, which relies on an enforceable threat of punishment and may be the only effective action to take against total spoilers.
37. The notion of spoilers has been highly influential in both the academic and policy literature (Newman and Richmond 2006; Menkhaus 2006/7; Stabilisation Unit 2014; DFID/Whaites 2007). However, there are three important critiques of the concept:

The power to name: The term 'spoiler' is typically (though not always) reserved for non-state armed groups and has been used pejoratively to blame their greediness or unreasonable demands for why peace fails. Indeed, the "default setting of the

international community is to fall in behind states” (Shepherd/FCO 2010). However, governments may also deploy spoiling tactics. Where an active conflict provides governments with a “politically and economically useful ‘state of emergency’”, or significant international revenue, governments may also deploy spoiling tactics to derail a peace agreement (Keen and Attree 2015: v).

Government negotiating tactics may also be to blame for the ‘creation’ of spoilers. For example, the 2006 Darfur peace agreement failed not so much because non-state armed groups set out to spoil it, but because the Government of Sudan used the negotiations instrumentally to ‘create’ spoilers (Johnston 2007). In such cases, governments have an incentive to bargain hard, knowing this to be a win-win situation: they give up little while knowing that belligerents who refuse the terms of an agreement can be declared spoilers in ways that delegitimize them internationally and even justify attacks against them.

Labelling certain groups as spoilers may also be driven by the hubris of external actors. Interveners may be tempted to label an actor as a spoiler, rather than acknowledge that they have committed to flawed negotiations (Shepherd/FCO (2010).

Assumptions about what drives spoilers: The motivations of spoilers are often based on a rather narrow assumption that actors are driven by self-interested efforts to maximise their wealth and power. However, this ‘rational actor model’ can create a misleading framework for understanding the reasons why armed groups are reluctant to engage in peace negotiations and the policies needed to overcome this reluctance.

A normative term: Defining spoilers is often based upon the type of peace deal that interveners want to see, rather than an accurate depiction of local politics. Unpalatable actors, such as ‘terrorists’, ‘extremists’ or ‘rogue regimes’, may be declared spoilers in order to exclude them from negotiations and to justify military attacks against them (Keen and Attree 2015). However, this normative-driven approach has often come at the expense of a dispassionate analysis of such groups. As a recent study by David Keen and Larry Attree (2015: 9) warns, “the ease with which peace ‘spoilers’ can be dispatched has very frequently been underestimated”.

2.2.4 The content of a deal

How does the content of a deal determine whether it can secure and sustain a reduction in violent conflict?

38. There has been a significant shift since the end of the Cold War towards reaching negotiated settlements to end wars based on comprehensive peace agreements. This has created a growing body of literature on how the content of a peace agreement impacts upon the likelihood of securing and sustaining a deal to reduce violent conflict (Hartzell 1999; Hartzell, Hoddie and Rothchild 2001; Tull and Mehler 2005; De Rouen et al. 2009; Jarstad and Nilsson 2008).
39. Initial efforts to make a deal ‘stick’ are likely to suffer from significant commitment problems (Walter 1997, 2002; Fearon 2004; Wallentseen 2007; De Roeun Jnr et al. 2010).

Commitment problems refer to the fear that an opposing side may renege on a deal in order to secure greater power, and then use this power to target the loser. Various quantitative studies argue that deals which include comprehensive power-sharing arrangements are more durable (Hartzell and Hoddie 2003; Jarstad and Nilsson 2008; De Rouen et al. 2009).

40. These studies claim that the willingness of signatories to agree to costly power-sharing arrangements – i.e. deals which commit to territorial and security/military power-sharing rather than less ‘costly’ forms of political power-sharing (such as the sharing of political positions in government) – demonstrate that both sides are serious about peace and addresses the commitment problems that often derail agreements. These arguments have often been used to justify the need for third-party intervention in order to facilitate and enforce ambitious power-sharing agreements (Walter 2002).
41. However, these conclusions are contested. Tull and Mehler (2005) warn of the “hidden costs of power-sharing” in Africa. They argue that by institutionalizing a strategy in which rebels can expect to receive a share of state power, western interventions have sent out a message that ‘violence pays’. This is because the external pressure on African governments for negotiated settlements has created a “degree of predictability for politically ambitious entrepreneurs” that unleashing violence offers a route to power. Interveners have justified their support for power-sharing arrangements on the grounds that they provide a swifter resolution to conflict and thus save lives. However, Tull and Mehler warn that the support given to power-sharing arrangements may have contributed to further violent conflict breaking out. Conflict resolution, they argue, has come at the cost of conflict prevention.

2.2.5 The role of international intervention

How do international interventions impact upon the feasibility of reaching a deal that can reduce violence?

Interventions in contexts where there is ‘no peace to keep’

42. The majority of quantitative studies analysing the impact of interventions in active conflicts (where no form of deal has yet been reached to attempt to reduce violence), find that direct external support to warring parties significantly prolongs civil wars (Regan 2002; Cunningham 2010; Lounsbury and deRouen Jnr. 2016; Balch-Lindsay and Enterline 2000; Elbadawi and Sambanis 2000; Balch-Lindsay, Enterline and Joyce 2008; Sawyer, Cunningham and Reed 2015). More detail on these studies is provided in Annex 1.
43. Numerous studies have refined and nuanced this claim. Cunningham’s (2010) study of sixty military interventions between 1945 and 2005 argues that when interveners bring their own interests to a dispute that are distinct from those held by existing warring parties, interventions prolong conflict. This is because such interventions create an additional set of interests and power relations to be addressed before a deal can be reached, rather than supporting the existing interests of a warring party (cf: Regan 2002). They also mean that battlefield outcomes may correlate less clearly with power dynamics surrounding negotiations (Cunningham 2010).
44. Sawyer, Cunningham and Reed’s (2015) study of 113 intrastate conflicts between 1989 and 2011 argues that the *type* of external support provided to combatants is significant. Providing rebels with more ‘fungible’ types of support (money and weapons) rather than explicit or time-bound resources (intelligence, troops and territorial sanctuaries) creates

uncertainty about rebels' power. They argue that this reduces the likelihood of a civil war ending because it creates government uncertainty over rebel strength, increasing concerns of the concessions a negotiated settlement may require and whether rebel groups will honour them.

45. Numerous policy implications are claimed by these studies. First, they warn of the risks that direct military interventions pose to prolonging violent conflict. This is a significant claim in light of the UN's reporting of the rise in more robust interventions in contexts where 'there is no peace to keep' (UN 2015; de Coning 2016). Second, withdrawing fungible support to warring parties may strengthen peace processes by reducing levels of uncertainty surrounding the relative strength of different parties. Third, would-be interveners may be more effective by focusing on breaking the links between conflict actors and external backers, rather than involving than mediating conflicts directly. However, such sweeping implications are founded upon an evidence base that is problematic and should be treated with caution.

Interventions to support mediation: Securing a peace deal

46. Claims surrounding the role that international intervention can play in facilitating an initial peace deal are heavily contested. Proponents argue that it may be almost impossible for protagonists to credibly commit to stop fighting without third-party guarantees of mediation (Walter 2002; cf: Walter 1999; Fortna 2004; Doyle and Sambanis 2000, 2006). Doyle and Sambanis' (2006) "peacebuilding triangle" argues that conflict resolution is dependent upon the interplay between levels of local capacity to mediate conflict, levels of hostility and international capacity to support peace. Where hostilities are high and local capacity is low, international actors will have to play a more committed role to increase prospects for peace.
47. A number of studies also argue that 'biased' mediators, defined as those that engage to protect the interests of a particular side, are likely to be more effective than 'neutral' mediators (Svensson 2007, 2009). 'Biased' mediators, it is argued, are able to both "protect and arm-twist" the party they are backing, enabling mediators both to push forward a deal and remain trusted (Svensson 2009). The policy implication is that western governments should support mediation efforts by trusted government-biased or rebel-biased actors, depending on the outcome that is sought, rather than mediate directly under the claim of neutrality (Svensson 2009).
48. A more critical body of literature warns of the dangers inherent in international mediation (Beardsley 2008, 2011; Johnston 2007; Nathan 2006; De Waal 2009). These studies warn that heavy external pressure and efforts by mediators to impose agreements through 'deadline diplomacy' may push warring parties to be 'seen to negotiate' in ways that ignore, distort or misinterpret levels of commitment to a deal. This exacerbates the risk of negotiations being used instrumentally – a continuation of war by other means. This may create superficial agreements that have little chance of success, and which may erode confidence in future negotiations. These risks may be exacerbated in contexts where international mediators' interests in getting a deal is driven more by calculations around strengthening a government's domestic legitimacy. Problems may also arise where those responsible for reaching an initial deal (e.g. the military, diplomats, specialist mediators) are likely to move on to the next crisis, leaving others who may not have been party to the deal

responsible for its continued durability. As the OECD (2011: 36) warns, “*peace negotiators are faced with only modest incentives to adopt a long-term perspective... development actors, in the habit of applying aid delivery frameworks to their work, risk continuing to use goals that were agreed under certain circumstances...only to realise too late that they may have contributed to locking in a process that would otherwise still have been adaptable to new actors, new interests or late-comers to the peace process.*”

Interventions to enforce peace: Sustaining a deal

49. A vast body of peacebuilding and statebuilding literature explores the factors that determine the prospects for international intervention to support long-term peace. The focus here is on the *initial* sustaining of a peace deal.
50. Numerous studies warn that war recurrence is most likely soon after a conflict ends and argue that external intervention can play a valuable role in enforcing fragile settlements until the momentum for peace is self-sustaining (Walter 1999, 2002; Fortna 2004, Doyle and Sambanis 2000; Quinn, Mason and Gurses 2007; Hartzell, Hoddie and Rothchild 2001; See Annex 1). Despite this, international funding and commitment for an initial peace deal is often not followed up sustained efforts to support implementation of sensitive and potentially conflict-inducing processes of SSR and DDR (Stedman 2002). The policy implication of these studies is that donors need to consider providing more sustained support to trusted and committed third-party interveners.
51. In contrast, Alex de Waal’s (2009) work on international peacekeeping provides a powerful critique of the role that external intervention can play in enforcing peace deals. He warns that mediators are not neutral referees in such processes but become, intentionally or otherwise, active players in their own right. External interventions inevitably impact upon the bargaining processes and power dynamics surrounding peace deals. They create the risk that initial deals are shaped by the interests of external actors rather than the warring parties, and are built upon a balance of power that holds only for as long as third-party enforcers remain – “endless peacekeeping”. The sudden recurrence of violence after peacekeepers leave has often been interpreted as evidence of the need for mediation and third-party enforcement, when it may in fact be the *result* of such interventions.

Figure 3: Darfur: A peace deal but no peace

The 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) signed by the Government of Sudan and one faction of the Sudan Liberation Army was, on paper, a comprehensive deal containing provisions for wealth-sharing, power-sharing, political reform, victim compensation, security and reconciliation through the Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation.

However, this deal failed to hold and was followed by further sustained outbreaks of violence. The failure of the DPA was partly a consequence of the deep historical, political and economic causes that proved difficult to resolve, and the deep-seated animosity between the warring parties. However, the failures of the deal were also a consequence of the way the peace process operated. Mediators were constrained by the tight deadline imposed by the UN Security Council and increasingly became “arbitrators rather than facilitators” (Nathan 2006). The focus on getting to a deal quickly under heavy international pressure and scrutiny created a context in which the content of the deal became increasingly disconnected from realities on the ground.

The government did not view the rebels as a major threat that warranted significant

concessions. The government's engagement with the peace process was directed at international audiences rather than a dedicated commitment to addressing grievances. It sought to demonstrate commitment to the process while using it as a means through which to divide rebel groups. Rebel groups maintained heavy distrust and animosity towards the government and were faced with signing an agreement that was difficult to sell to the constituents they represented.

Getting to a deal became a superficial process as negotiators "lost sight of the distinction between getting the parties to sign an agreement and obtaining their real commitment to its terms and implementation" (Nathan 2006). Furthermore, the peace agreement then enabled the government to brandish non-signatories as spoilers in order to justify further violent attacks against them. The failure in Darfur does not de-legitimize the role of mediation *per se*, especially in light of the huge humanitarian cost of the war, but it does warn of the risks created by a flawed peace process.

Sources: Nathan 2006; Johnston 2007; De Waal 2006, Hottinger 2006

2.3. Limitations of the conflict resolution literature

52. The body of conflict resolution literature briefly outlined above has generated various hypotheses and claims underpinned by extensive quantitative analysis and a significant body of case studies. However, the literature presents contradictory findings and policy implications and is undermined by significant empirical and conceptual weaknesses. This weakens the scope for a clear set of recommendations to emerge for addressing the key concerns of this project.

2.3.1 Empirical weaknesses

53. Claims of what works and does not work are based on a very problematic evidence base. This is a finding also emphasised by other recent reviews (Cramer, Goodhand and Morris 2016; Carayannis et al. 2014; Call 2012). Major weaknesses include:

Poor data quality and simplification

54. Generating reliable evidence on violent conflict is a major challenge and the quality of data varies significantly within and across cases. Economic models that claim to generate findings from a large sample of cases have been welcomed by those seeking to extrapolate general trends. However, the profound challenges of how to model the complex dynamics surrounding violent conflicts and conflict intervention have led many quantitative studies to grossly oversimplify the issues they engage with (Cramer 2002). Conflict contexts are often coded in binary (wars as 'ethnic' or 'non-ethnic civil war'; as having ended in 'negotiation' or 'victory', with mediation as 'present' or 'absent') in ways that are unable to capture multiple causality or changes over time. Complex social phenomena – such as legitimacy, ideas, notions of political inclusion – are either measured through crude proxies or omitted altogether (Cramer 2002; Call 2012).

55. Furthermore, conflict interventions are typically modelled as a single event, ignoring the fact that such interventions comprise many different types of intervention: formal and informal, militarized and diplomatic, simultaneous and sequential. This makes it very difficult to disaggregate what worked and what did not. Quantitative studies are also invariably focused on 'formal' peace agreements and national-level datasets. They struggle to capture

the informal and cross-border processes that shape conflict resolution and the huge variation of certain dynamics within a country. Similarly, qualitative case study analysis regularly demonstrates a lack of transparency about the methods and data upon which their findings are based.

Inconsistent definitions and problems of comparison

56. The data is plagued by contrasting definitions of war and peace, negotiated settlements' and the 'success' of peacebuilding. In the quantitative analysis, very different thresholds are given for including cases of violent conflict, ranging from 1,000 battle-deaths per year (Walter 2004, Toft 2010), to 200 (Doyle and Sambanis 2006) to 25 (Sawyer, Cunningham and Reed 2015). Upper thresholds exclude many conflicts (such as northern Ireland) which have nevertheless been influential in shaping the conflict resolution literature. Definitions of peacebuilding success also vary, for example between no return to violence within two years (Doyle and Sambanis 2006) to five years (Toft 2010).

Correlation/causation confusion

57. The conflict resolution literature often makes problematic assertions about what worked and what did not that fail to adequately address the complexity of long causal chains and the lack of counterfactual knowledge (Cramer, Goodhand and Morris 2016). For example, in a widely cited article on stabilisation, Hartzell, Hoddie and Rothchild (2001) define a successful negotiated settlement "as having taken place if the parties ended the violence after a process of negotiations". Negotiations are defined as having taken place if "the opposing sides in a conflict held face-to-face talks". This assumes that peace was caused by the fact that negotiations were held, ignoring the fact that the feasibility of holding negotiations and subsequent reductions in the level of violent conflict may both have been a result of other underlying issues such as the shift in power relations between warring parties.

Major findings often based on small sample sets

58. Small datasets are often used to make big (and contradictory) claims and policy recommendations. For example, Charles Call's (2012) study on why peace fails argues that political exclusion, rather than economic or social factors, is the most significant factor in determining the likelihood of civil war recurrence. This finding, however, is based on only 28 cases of war recurrence. As Call (2012: 60) himself points out, "few people would take an experimental drug that has been tested on only twenty-eight people".

59. A key recommendation that emerges from this review is the need for greater transparency regarding the weaknesses in current data and the major challenges that this presents to policymakers.

2.3.2 Analytical/conceptual weaknesses

60. The dominant conceptual framework that underpins much of the conflict resolution literature also presents a number of analytical weaknesses:

Rational actor models

61. Much of the conflict resolution literature draws heavily upon game theory and 'rational actor models' (Zartman 2008). The behaviour, motivations and calculations of warring parties are assumed to be driven by the narrow pursuit of self-interest (such as securing

greater wealth and power). This also assumes that the cost-benefit calculations of individuals can be manipulated. For example, efforts to change economic incentives in order to make combatants view peace as more profitable than war, has become an influential conflict resolution tool (*See Keen 2009 for a critical assessment of the influence of this notion on policymakers*).

62. However, this 'rational actor model' is underpinned by a narrow interpretation of what drives human behaviour. It is unable to capture how norms, customs, ideas, ideology, values and emotions shape decision-making processes, of both warring parties *and* interveners. It typically overlooks the "affective dimensions of conflict", especially how perceptions of fear and insecurity and forms of envy, rivalry, hatred, prejudice, solidarity and loyalty impact upon the actions and decisions of warring parties (Darby and MacGinty 2008: 5; Cramer 2002, 2006; Richards 2005; Hudson and Leftwich 2014; Keen 2009).

Weak political economy analysis

63. Attempts to understand the key factors that determine the likelihood of securing and sustaining a deal typically focus narrowly on the dynamics *within* conflicts and interventions. These include: the war in which wars end; the timing of interventions; spoilers; the type of intervention and the content of the deal. This lens rarely captures the underlying role played by structural factors and changes in the relations between warring parties in driving violence or reducing it. This is despite the fact that these underlying factors may play a much more influential role in determining whether or not a deal is feasible than the actual style or timing of an intervention.

Lack of self-reflection

64. The literature typically conceives conflict resolution as an external solution to internal problems. Interveners are portrayed as impartial referees, mediating between domestic warring parties. This approach creates two major limitations. Firstly, it ignores the distortionary impact that external interventions can have on conflict dynamics (De Waal 2009). Secondly, it ignores how the actions of interveners are also influenced by domestic politics, emotions, hubris, ideology and face-saving, rather than being solely focused on securing an effective resolution. There is very little literature that addresses these issues. Future research should include stronger analysis of how the interests, motivations and decision-making processes of interveners have also shaped the success/failure of interventions.

2.4 The political settlements literature

2.4.1 Political settlements analysis: An increasingly influential tool

65. In response to some of the criticisms outlined above, there have been concerted efforts in recent years to develop a more rigorous political economy analysis of conflict resolution, especially through the influential concept of political settlements.
66. Political settlement is a term used to define the distribution of power on which a society is based. It results from processes of interaction – including both conflict and coalition – between various contending elites, and underpins the formal and informal institutional arrangements through which resources (political, economic and social) are distributed (Di John 2008; Di John and Putzel 2009; Khan 2010),

67. Political settlements analysis (PSA) emerged initially as a critique of the good governance agenda and the claim that building more 'effective' institutions (primarily liberal market democracies) was the key to addressing state fragility and generating economic development (Khan 1995, 2010; Di John 2008; Di John and Putzel 2009). PSA sought to address the classic "transferability problem" in development – i.e. why an institution that works effectively in one context may have radically different outcomes when implemented elsewhere – by focusing on the impact of underlying power structures on how institutions work. The literature on political settlements is vast and has addressed a broad set of development concerns – economic development, industrial policy, state-building, institutional performance.
68. However, over the past decade PSA has also become an increasingly influential "framing concept" for various development agencies working in fragile and conflict-affected states (Ingram 2014/5: 1). It has been at the forefront of DFID's work on "Building peaceful states and societies" (DFID 2010a) and on Governance and fragile states (DFID 2010b; cf: Whaites 2007; Barnes 2009), as well as a key focus of major DFID-funded research projects, notably the Political Settlements Research Programme based at Edinburgh and the Crisis States Research Centre at LSE. The concept has also been embraced by the OECD (cf: OECD 2011), The International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, various government development agencies (e.g. AusAID 2011) and peacebuilding and conflict resolution NGOs (e.g. Conciliation Resources).
69. There remains a degree of ambiguity around the definition of political settlements and its usage varies. Indeed, Laws (2012) identifies 16 different ways that the term has been used. This ambiguity is partly due to the fact that the concept was taken up by development agencies before its definition was settled (Ingram 2014/5: 1). It is also a result of the tensions surrounding efforts to operationalize a term that was designed primarily to provide insights into processes of long-term change and gradual shifts in how power is distributed in society.

2.4.2 Accounting for (in)stability and violence

70. The political settlements literature argues that the starting point for analysing violence is an understanding of how the state works. In many parts of the world the state is not an autonomous institution that is able to wield control 'over' society; nor does the state have a monopoly on the use of violence. In many countries the state faces competing sources of power, legitimacy, violence and ideology. Consequently, attempts by governments to impose taxation, manage property rights, govern access to resources, and control the means of violence, are heavily contested.
71. In such contexts, the state represents the administrative structures, conventions and distribution of resources within society that develop as a result of conflict and coalitions between various social actors (primarily elites) competing to exercise power. The state is "agent of coalitions" (Di John and Putzel 2009, p.5), or a 'pact of domination' (Przeworski 1991, 23 cited in Di John and Putzel 2009: 5). It is a "bargaining equilibrium" designed to encourage powerful social actors to cooperate and engage with the government rather than attempt to challenge it through violence. A political settlement thus emerges "when the distribution of benefits supported by its institutions is consistent with the distribution of

power in society, and the economic and political outcomes of these institutions are sustainable over time” (Khan 2010: 1).

72. One of the most common ways to create stability is through establishing a ‘limited access order’ (North et al. 2007, 2009). This is defined as a system in which the government uses its control over the political and economic system to create ‘rents’ by manipulating access to certain political privileges and economic opportunities (such as political positions, import licenses, state procurement contracts). Powerful groups and individuals who have the ability to challenge state authority (often through violence) are given these rents in an attempt to gain their loyalty and encourage them to co-operate with the state and with each other rather than to fight. A limited access order thus manages the problem of violence “by forming a dominant coalition that limits access to valuable resources – land, labour, and capital – or access to and control of valuable activities – such as trade, worship and education – to elite groups” (North et al. 2009: 30).
73. However, if the distribution of resources does not reflect the underlying balance of power then state institutions are likely to be highly unstable and the risk of violence is high. Since formal institutions for redressing grievances are weak, violence is a common mechanism through which social groups attempt to renegotiate the existing political settlement.
74. North et al. (2007, 2009) argue that limited access orders are by far the most dominant form of social organisation, governing more than 85% of the world’s population. They also develop a typology of limited access orders (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Different types of limited access orders (North et al. 2009)

Fragile: coalitions are very volatile; State institutions are very weak and under-developed; the state is based on little more than the relationships forged between powerful elites; elites can mobilize violence easily through patron-client relationships; short timeframes before bargains are re-negotiated often through violence.

Basic: The state has a stronger institutional structure (e.g. there is a system of public law) allowing some bargains to be managed through these institutions (for example rules of succession). There is a greater set of shared beliefs and behaviour amongst elites.

Mature: State institutions are more durable and some may function in consistent ways regardless of who is in charge; There is a clear system of public law and some private law; organizations independent of government control do exist but power continues to be shaped by the personal interaction between elites.

2.4.3 Bringing violence under control

75. According to PSA, violence will only be brought under control when the distribution of political, economic and/or social benefits is consistent with the distribution of ‘holding’ power in society. **Holding power**, as defined by Khan (2010: 20), “refers to how long a particular organization can hold out in actual or potential conflicts against other organizations or the state. Holding power is a function of a number of different characteristics of an organization, including its economic capability to sustain itself during

conflicts, its capability of inflicting costs on competing organizations, its capability to mobilize supporters to be able to absorb costs and its ability to mobilize prevalent ideologies and symbols of legitimacy to consolidate its mobilization and keep its members committed.”

76. Political settlements that exclude elites with significant “holding power” are likely to be fragile and susceptible to outbreaks of violence (Khan 2010; Poteete 2009; Lindemann 2010). Bringing violence under control is dependent upon: (i) re-balancing the distribution of benefits so that it aligns with underlying power structures in order to ensure powerful elites are not excluded; (ii) Managing the impact of sudden shocks that may de-stabilise elite bargains. For example, some have warned that ‘winner-takes-all’ electoral systems may be highly destabilising (Parks and Cole 2010: 24; DFID 2010c); (iii) strengthening the adaptability of institutional arrangements to respond to changes in the balance of power and dis-incentivizing the use violence as a mechanism for elites to enforce change.

2.4.4 Emerging implications for understanding the impact of interventions

77. Political settlement analysis provides three important implications for international interventions in violent conflict:

Power relations not institutions are most important

78. Western conflict resolution strategies focus predominantly upon designing more effective formal institutions to manage social conflict and the transition of power, to avoid violence becoming the mechanism to resolve conflict. These include support for democratisation and the strengthening of the rule of law. However, “many of the world’s most difficult conflicts occur in countries where these kinds of institutions are subordinate to social affinities and patronage networks, and are likely to remain so for the foreseeable future” (de Waal 2009: 99).

79. Attempts to impose institutional frameworks for managing social conflict often operate counter to the logic that underpins stability in limited access orders. The design of institutions is likely to be less important to their effectiveness in managing violence than how they impact on social relations between different powerful groups. This requires understanding the ‘**distributive**’ impact of deals designed to reduce violence, and the ‘**enforcement costs**’ that deals are likely to require (Khan 2010; see Figure 5). To operationalize PSA, policymakers need to:

- (i) map powerful actors and elites and understand their ‘holding power’;
- (ii) analyse the role of informal as well as formal structures of authority;
- (iii) work with the grain of politics. Policymakers must take as their starting point a careful analysis of the logic of the underlying political settlement in contexts in which they work, rather than a vision of how the state ‘ought’ to work.

Figure 5: Social and distributive impact of deals to reduce violence

Social impact: refers to the impact that a deal has on society.

Distributive impact: refers to how benefits and disadvantages of a deal are distributed between different groups in society.

Example: State control over the supply of weapons and the state's ability to prevent social groups from using violence as a means to pursue political and economic interests may have a positive *social impact* on society by reducing levels of violence. However, where the legitimacy of the state is contested and some social groups may view the state as a threat, attempts to create a state monopoly on violence may enable the state to commit violence to assert control over populations and resources, whilst denying other groups this right to protect their own interests. Such a policy therefore has a significant *distributive impact*.

ENFORCEMENT COSTS OF DEALS TO REDUCE VIOLENCE:

'Enforcement costs' of deals: are the costs required to overcome opposition to a deal. A deal that challenges the interests of powerful groups in society will entail higher enforcement costs and will be harder to enforce. Deals that align with the interests of powerful actors will have lower enforcement costs but will have less scope to deliver transformative change.

Source: Khan 2010.

Difficult trade-offs

80. Working with the grain of politics reveals difficult trade-offs that surround conflict resolution efforts. For example, excluding powerful groups from peace deals (for example based on their links to terrorism, their ideology and/or their role in past atrocities) may be viewed as an important aspect of creating a more progressive peace or may be a part of interveners' normative framework.
81. However, such decisions will be likely to entail trade-offs if the groups that are excluded have the 'holding power' to challenge their exclusion. Similarly, efforts to promote democratisation, reduce corruption, strengthen judicial autonomy and tackle resource predation may all provoke powerful resistance. Significant trade-offs may exist between pursuing stabilisation and more progressive peace; Prioritising stabilisation may reduce violence but may require accepting the continued prominence of groups distasteful to the west and may undermine the human security of local populations vulnerable to such groups. Pursuing a more progressive peace, however, may run the risk of causing renewed outbreaks of violence if distasteful groups with significant holding power are excluded.
82. Acknowledging such trade-offs can be difficult for development agencies. However, this perspective is essential for assessing whether peace deals are likely to hold and the kinds of interventions that are likely to be required if interveners wish to support a more progressive peace.

The distortionary impact of interventions

83. The resources (money, weapons, legitimacy) that international interventions bring to a conflict are likely to become subject to intense bargaining and run the risk of being instrumentalised by conflict actors. For example, the 'holding power' of warring parties may be shaped by the extent to which they have international support and whether their interests are preserved by internationally-enforced agreements. However, international influence creates the risk that deals become artificial, and will only hold for as long as international pressure is maintained (De Waal 2009). This raises important questions regarding the causes of war recurrence. Whereas the conflict resolution literature typically views the recurrence of violent conflict as emanating from the mistiming of interventions, or

poorly designed peace agreements, PSA warns that war recurrence may also be a result of the role that international interventions have in destabilising and distorting power relations.

2.4. The limitations of political settlements analysis

84. PSA has provided a valuable framework through which to place politics and power relations at the centre of conflict resolution analysis. It has been influential in challenging the often technocratic and idealised institutional approaches to 'building peace'. However, PSA also contains a number of significant limitations. Some of these are intrinsic to the concept itself, and others result from how PSA has been appropriated and operationalized by peacebuilding and development agencies.

2.4.1 Limitations of the concept of political settlements

Reductionist analysis of power and elite interests and incentives

85. Much of the literature on political settlements is underpinned by a rather narrow and reductionist analysis of the interests and incentives of elites (Hickey 2013; Hudson and Leftwich 2013). As Parks and Cole (2010: 8) point out, "the central assumption in this framework is that powerful elites are rational actors, and their behavior is driven primarily by pursuit of an inter-related set of economic and power interests".

86. Political settlements, limited access orders, and Alex De Waal's notion of the 'political marketplace' all assume elites are driven purely by a narrow desire to maximise power. This assumption underplays the role of ideas, values, norms and the importance of legitimation in shaping elite behaviour. Elites' pursuit of material interests are almost inevitably shaped by "historical traditions, religious beliefs, cultural norms of hierarchy (whether ethnic, regional, caste, or gender) and other political visions such as modernisation" (Hudson and Leftwich 2014: 96).

87. PSA also often overlooks the fact that elite interests may not be "not fixed or self-evident" and may therefore not translate into behaviour and action in clearly choreographed ways (Hudson and Leftwich 2014: 96). The major implication, as Hudson and Leftwich (2013: 96) warn, is that conflict analysis and interventions "will have to deal with a more fluid, messy, and less tractable set of perceived interests which respond in unpredictable ways." Such an approach requires that greater emphasis is given to the structural constraints on elite agency (such as belief systems and cultural norms), and the significance of contingency.

Reductionist analysis of violence

88. PSA has provided a clearer way of framing and mainstreaming many of the insights already in the critical literature on violent conflict. It shows that violence is not irrational and senseless but may in fact be functional to the interests of certain groups (Cramer 2002, 2006; Berdal and Zaum 2013; Denney and Barron 2015; Keen 1998). It also demonstrates that, although hugely destructive, war cannot be viewed only as 'development in reverse' but may also be a way of "creating an alternative system of profit, power and even protection" (Keen 1998: 11; cf. Kalyvas 2006; Cramer 2006; Newman 2014).

89. However, the way PSA conceptualises violence is also problematic and quite reductionist. Violence is conceptualised as being driven by the breakdown of political settlements and

competition around re-negotiating elite bargains. PSA thus presents a rather narrow explanation of violence as a tool used instrumentally by actors (invariably elites) to re-shape or protect political settlements. There are at least three weaknesses in this conceptualisation of violence.

90. **First, it overlooks the “multiplicity of functions” that violence has and the fact that there is a wide array of violence that does not fit this lens** (Bell 2015: 5; cf: Kalyvas 2006; Kalyvas et al. 2008; Keen 1998; Krause 2012). Indeed, some forms of violence are embedded within how political settlements work, rather than representing competitive attempts to re-structure them. Violence may also be prevalent in a society without necessarily being driven by political aims or with the intention of challenging an existing political settlement (such as criminal violence).
91. **Second, it simplifies the factors that determine when violence breaks out.** The decision to use violence is not only determined by the material calculations of elites but is also motivated and constrained by emotions, traditions, beliefs, norms and ideology.
92. **Third, it struggles to capture the linkages between “public/political violence” (such as competition for control of the state) and “private/interpersonal violence” (such as gender-based violence or criminal violence)** (Bell 2015). A more sophisticated framework is needed to conceptualise the types of violence that agencies, such as the Stabilisation Unit, engage with. One such framework is developed in Section 3, below.

Methodological nationalism

93. One of the most fundamental weaknesses of PSA is the fact that it takes the nation-state as its implicit frame of reference. The underlying conceptual framework is one of elite bargaining at a national scale within a territorially-defined state (for a critique of this assumption see: Goodhand 2013, 2015; Hickey 2013; Parks and Cole 2010). This creates two major weaknesses:
94. **First, it underplays the international dynamics that impact upon political settlements and the importance of regional conflict systems** (Pugh, Cooper and Goodhand 2004; Korf and Raeymaekers 2013; De Waal 2009). For example, the concept of ‘limited access orders’ shows very little consideration for how the ability of elites to bargain with actors beyond national borders may affect the internal dynamics of political coalitions. Indeed, without the power to ‘enclose’ powerful non-state actors (for example through control over national borders), the logic which underpins ‘limited’ access orders cannot be operationalized. The government’s attempt to offer elites preferential access to valuable political and economic rents may be subverted by the ability of such elites to access cross-border sources of patronage and international flows of weapons and finance. As Alex de Waal (2009: 103) argues for east and central Africa, “Kinshasa, Kigali and Kampala compete for the loyalties of elites in eastern Congo; Addis Ababa and Asmara do the same in Somalia. Khartoum’s commercial-security periphery extends into Chad, Central Africa, north-eastern Congo, Uganda and the Ethiopian and Eritrean lowlands.”
95. The policy implication is that in order to understand the key factors that affect political settlements, analysis must be adept at mapping the transnational actors, interests and influences that shape the calculations of those who have the power to mobilise violence. Interventions may be more effective by addressing the transnational drivers of instability in

order to create “an enabling environment for mediation”, rather than focusing narrowly on where violence is taking place (Cramer, Goodhand and Morris 2016: 22) More research is needed to assess this insight.

96. **Second, it overlooks how elite bargains and rent-sharing agreements operate at the sub-national level, especially in borderlands** (Parks and Cole 2010; Goodhand 2015). The literature on political settlements and limited access orders focuses on the national-level with little consideration for how they shape and are shaped by “secondary political settlements” at the sub-national level, especially in borderlands. This is despite the fact that many of today’s development challenges surrounding migration, trade, violent conflict, transnational crime and poverty emanate from the margins of nation-states. Borderland regions are frequently ‘black spots’, embodying zones of persistent conflict and home to some of the world’s most vulnerable and impoverished populations (Goodhand 2015). Yet they are also highly dynamic zones that can generate significant wealth (through legal and illegal border trade and resource extraction). These regions are often integral to the kinds of elite bargains and limited access orders that determine levels of stability at the national level (Goodhand 2009, 2013, 2015; Meehan 2015).

97. Conflict analysis needs to engage more effectively with the interaction between elite-level and sub-national power relations and elite bargains, based on three lines of enquiry. **First**, conflict mapping should assess the extent to which elite bargains at the national level are likely to stabilise or destabilise sub-national political settlements, and vice versa. **Second**, greater analysis is needed of the kinds of brokers and brokerage arrangements that mediate between national and sub-national politics. Brokerage may serve as an effective means to manage instability and violence, or it may serve to fuel violence. **Third**, conflict analysis needs to give greater consideration to contexts where stable political settlements at the national level co-exist with high levels of localised violence. PSA does not provide clear entry points for engaging with violent conflict in relatively ‘strong’ or resilient states where violence does not directly impact upon national stability (Denney and Barron 2016). This is despite the fact that addressing such violence may be a high priority for international policymakers, either on humanitarian grounds or due to the spill-over effects of such violence (refugees, transnational crime) onto neighbouring countries.

Weakly integrated with the conflict resolution literature

98. The conflict resolution literature has been rightly criticised for its weak engagement with how underlying power relations and political settlements impact upon the outcomes of conflict resolution efforts. However, the tendency in the academic literature on political settlements to underplay the significant influence of formal peace processes in shaping the trajectory of violent conflict is also problematic. PSA envisions the possibility of peace as dependent upon when “the interests of belligerents align to make peace a more attractive option than continued warfare” (Putzel & Di John 2012: ix).” However as Christine Bell (2015: 18) argues: *“The broad historical analysis that has produced political settlement analysis...pays little attention to the detail of the types of transition process that are characteristic of the post-1990 era...This is a very different context and process, from that of a process of ‘natural evolution’ whereby incremental inclusion of elite groups over hundreds of years, sees a limited access order become an open access order.”*

99. This critique emphasizes the need for more joined-up thinking regarding the relationship between political settlements, elite bargains designed to forge an initial peace deal, and formal peace processes in order to consider how they interact and impact upon each other. This framework is developed in greater detail in Section 3.

2.4.2 Limitations in how political settlement analysis has been operationalized

Tensions between the implications of PSA and institutional mandates

100. There exists an uneasy tension between political settlements analysis and the normative frameworks that underpin policy and development agencies. The desire amongst development agencies to embrace PSA, alongside their institutional mandates has tended to create a problematic hybrid framework that merges PSA with the liberal peacebuilding agenda. PSA has become a lens through which development agencies seek to understand and map the different actors and power dynamics that shape a particular conflict. The main operational focus then becomes on how to manipulate the underlying political settlement in order to engineer more inclusive, democratic, developmental and pro-poor political and economic institutions.

101. Such interventions may be justifiable on ethical and normative grounds. However, these operational responses are counter to the implications that emerge from much of the political settlements literature. The literature develops a rather sobering analysis that the scope for interventions to instigate stability, progressive peace and social change are inherently limited by underlying power structures that are likely to change slowly. Underlying political settlements cannot easily be changed by institutional reforms, because institutions are only likely to be stable if they reflect the underlying balance of power in society. Institutional reforms (including peace agreements) which attempt to re-negotiate the distribution of resources in ways that stray too far from the underlying political settlement are likely to prove unsustainable and may even lead to further outbreaks of violence.

102. Greater acknowledgement must be given to the fact that attempts to engineer political settlements are inherently political endeavours that contain explicit risks and trade-offs, including:

- i. Efforts to re-work political settlements may only be sustainable with perpetual external backing – ‘endless peacekeeping’ (De Waal 2009).
- ii. A stable and resilient political settlement may impede progressive developmental change, but efforts to design more inclusive and developmental institutions run the risk of becoming detached from the underlying power relations that determine how these institutions operate (Di John and Putzel 2009, 18);
- iii. The exclusion of certain unpalatable elites – such as organisations linked with terrorism or crime – may prove to other elites that the use of such strategies will deny them a seat at the negotiating table. However, their exclusion may also make political settlements volatile and unstable. The pursuit of certain policy goals – such as counter-terrorism, counter-insurgency, peacebuilding and statebuilding – may work at cross-purposes with stabilisation.

Decision-making should be based upon awareness of these trade-offs, rather than the assumption that attempts to engineer more inclusive, developmental and democratic political settlements will automatically provide stronger foundations for stability and peace.

Pressure to operationalize without a strong evidence base

103. The way in which PSA has been embraced by development agencies has helped to mainstream the mantra that ‘politics matters’ in addressing violent conflict. However, the historical political economy analysis upon which PSA is founded does not easily translate into operational responses. Consequently, the evidence base for understanding what works in engineering more inclusive, stable and developmental political settlements remains limited. There is a noticeable tendency in many key policy documents to assert that various social, economic, political, legal and military reforms are essential to delivering more inclusive political settlements, without strong evidence regarding how such reforms may stabilise or destabilise existing political settlements and reduce or escalate violence (e.g. DFID 2010: 22-25).

Methodological nationalism

104. Development agencies have replicated the underlying methodological nationalism in the political settlement literature when operationalizing PSA. The division of the world into country teams, national planning and budgeting processes, statistics aggregated at the national level, the location of country offices in capital cities, the prioritization given to relationships with central government officials and the reliance upon English or national languages to map conflicts have all perpetuated knowledge gaps regarding the international and sub-national dynamics that affect the relationship between violence and political settlements (Goodhand 2014).

Turning the mirror inwards

105. PSA has been deployed by external actors as a lens through which to address internal problems in conflict-affected states. As Parks and Cole (2010) argue, “the idea that political settlements are a ‘thing’ to be engaged with by external actors, positions the external actor as outside the frame of analysis – a sort of *deus ex machina* that periodically leans in to tamper”. This approach is problematic in two ways:

106. First, it prevents external actors from assessing their own position within, and influence on, political settlements and bargaining processes. As Bell (2016: 16) notes, “the observation that ‘development is politics’, does not just point to the need for development actors to understand local political actors better, it points to the fact that development actors will need to understand their own decisions as political and try to reconcile them with their normative commitments.”

107. Second, it overlooks how international interventions in violent conflict are heavily influenced by domestic political settlements and elite bargains within intervening countries and between various interveners. Indeed, decision-making processes around interventions in violent conflict are rarely determined only, or even primarily by, assessments of the context with which they engage. They are also shaped by issues of cost, legitimacy and domestic electoral considerations. These issues may play a significant, although almost entirely overlooked, role in determining whether interventions to support a peace deal are successful or not.

3. A framework for addressing knowledge gaps

108. The research being undertaken by the Stabilisation Unit is aimed at understanding better how an initial deal or agreement is reached to reduce levels of violence in pressured and volatile contexts, and what determines whether such agreements prove durable and whether they provide scope for more sustained peacebuilding efforts. The primary focus is on the kinds of negotiations and deals that are forged between elites and the impact that these deals have on levels of violence and stability. Simplifying, the literature reveals three broad trajectories:

- (i) **Return to violence:** Where an elite bargain does not hold and there is a return to violence because the underlying political settlement is still contested.
- (ii) **Elite capture:** Where an elite bargain does hold and secures a reduction in violence, but provides little scope for stable, progressive change. A subsequent peace process may be non-existent or superficial.
- (iii) **Progressive peace process:** Where an elite bargain holds and provides scope for a more sustained and progressive peace process which formalises a shift in the underlying political settlement.

109. However, the evidence base for understanding the factors that shape these different trajectories, and the impact of external interventions upon them, remains weak. These processes embody complex chains of causality and we still cannot say confidently what does and does not work. Aware of this limitation, the Stabilisation Unit is seeking to underpin the UK Approach to Stabilisation and other relevant policy and guidance with a stronger evidence base, founded upon systematic case-study analysis.

110. The final section of this paper draws out emerging implications from the literature to develop a political economy framework for this work. It is designed to guide future case study research in a way that addresses, rather than repeats, limitations in the existing literature on this subject. It should be noted that this framework is designed to support analysis of the specific dynamics surrounding the forging of an initial deal or elite bargain and the likelihood that it can be sustained. It is not designed to offer a comprehensive framework to support all aspects of peacebuilding analysis. This framework focuses on developing a more systematic analysis of the *processes*, *actors*, and *types of violence* that shape stabilisation efforts, summarised in Figure 6:

Figure 6: A Framework for analysing stabilisation

Analysing Stabilisation		
(1) Processes	(2) Actors	(3) Types of Violence
<p>Analysis of how different processes interact with each other in shaping stabilisation:</p> <p>Political settlements</p> <p>Elite bargains</p> <p>Peace processes</p>	<p>Analysis of actors that impact upon stabilisation:</p> <p>National, sub-national and transnational conflict actors and intervening actors</p> <p>Actors' interests</p> <p>'Holding power' of actors to pursue these interests</p> <p>(Dis)incentives to use violence to pursue interests</p>	<p>Analysis of different types of violence</p> <p><i>Competitive violence:</i> aimed at destabilising political settlements</p> <p><i>Embedded violence:</i> that stabilises how a political settlement works</p> <p><i>Permissive violence:</i> that operates without state sanctioning but is not aimed at destabilising a political settlement</p>

3.1 Mapping processes: Political settlements, elite bargains and peace processes

111. Terminology within the literature on violent conflict and conflict resolution is used inconsistently and in ways that creates confusion. In order to develop a clearer understanding of 'strategies of change' (Bell 2015) surrounding the stabilisation of violent conflict, case-study analysis must be framed more clearly around how **political settlements**, **elite bargains**, and **peace processes** interact. To do so, it is important to first provide clear definitions of these terms:

3.1.1 Political Settlements

112. Drawing upon the work of Di John (2008), Di John and Putzel (2009) and Khan (2010), political settlements are defined as:

The balance or distribution of power on which a society is based, which results from processes of interaction – including both conflict and coalition – between various contending elites. The political settlement underpins the formal and informal institutional arrangements through which resources (political, economic and social) are distributed. These are dynamic processes rather than static entities. Although they shape national structures (such as political and legal systems, tax structures and how national resources are distributed), they are likely to be influenced by actors and interests beyond national borders.

3.1.2 Elite bargains

113. Drawing upon the work of Di John and Putzel (2009; 2012), Khan (2012) and Laws (2012), elite bargains are defined as:

Discrete agreements that re-negotiate the balance of power between elites.

Whereas political settlements represent the on-going and dynamic processes through which power is organised and exercised through formal and informal institutions, elite bargains are specific attempts to re-calibrate the balance of power. They may be a one-off bargain or develop through a series of bargains.

3.1.3 Peace processes

114. Drawing upon the work of Bell (2015), peace processes are defined as:

Processes to establish new modes of political bargaining that rely less on violence than before. They are efforts to strengthen national capacities at all levels for conflict management and resolution. Since the end of the Cold War, peace settlements have been heavily influenced by formal international interventions aimed at engineering more inclusive and developmental political settlements.

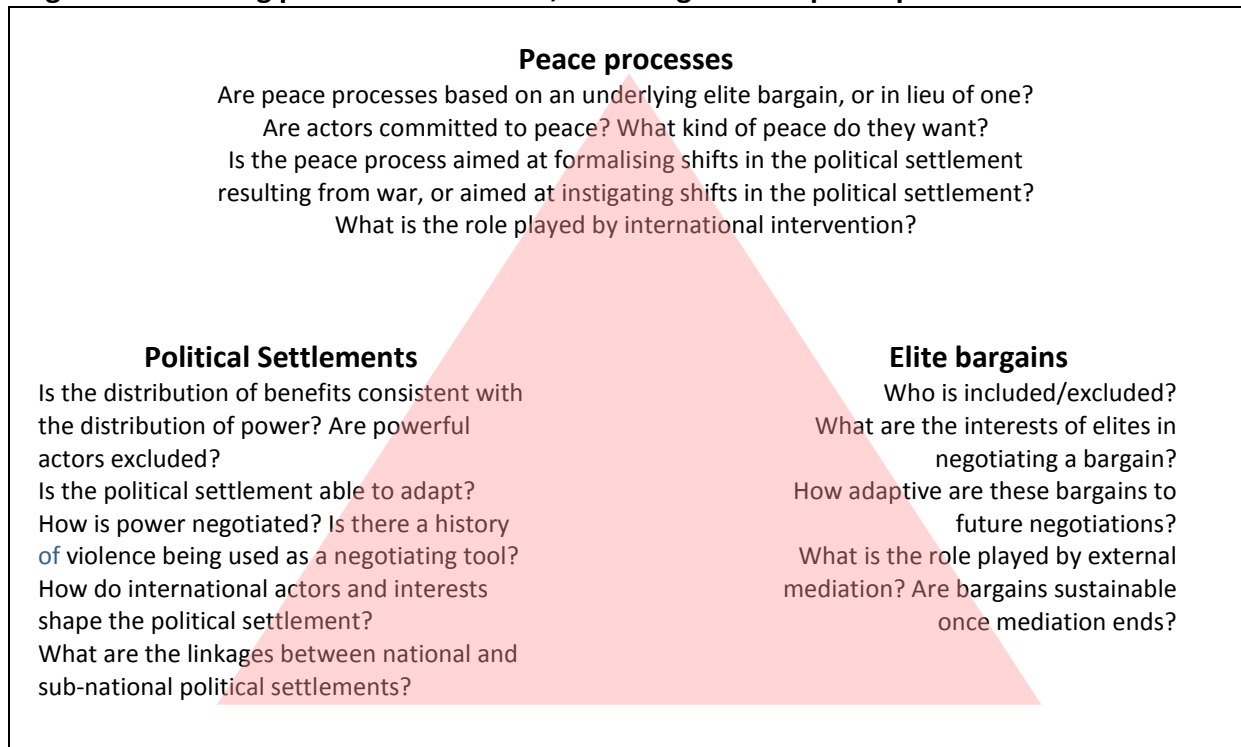
3.1.4 How political settlements, elite bargains and peace processes interact

115. The conflict resolution literature has typically focused on peace processes – their timing, content, implementation and enforcement – without consideration of how such negotiations are shaped by the underlying political settlement. This approach overlooks key factors that determine why some conflict resolution processes work and others fail. In doing so it attaches causality (for success and failure) only to the dynamics *within* a process itself, resulting in problematic claims regarding what works and what does not.

116. PSA has typically viewed stabilisation as possible only when the distribution of resources (social, political and economic) realigns with the distribution of power in society. However, by focusing on the structural foundations for violent conflict, it provides fewer tools with which to analyse the kinds of interventionist conflict resolution strategies deployed since 1989. This prevents a clear understanding of whether (and if so, how) it is possible to engineer changes in the political settlement through conflict resolution strategies. It also assumes that underlying shifts in the political settlement that make warring parties more conducive to peace will necessarily translate into an end to violence. This overlooks the ways in which peace processes may be instrumentalised by warring parties rather than simply formalising shifts in the underlying political settlement.

117. If future case-study research is to overcome these weaknesses, it must be framed around a more explicit analysis of political settlements, elite bargains and peace processes, and how they interact.

Figure 7: Assessing political settlements, elite bargains and peace processes



3.1.5 How does this approach offer ways to understand the effectiveness of stabilisation interventions?

118. The set of questions in Figure 7 provide an important starting point for how future case study analysis can analyse political settlements, elite bargains and peace processes. Central to this framework is also the need to address the *relations between* these processes in order to better understand the key factors that affect the securing and sustaining of deals to reduce levels of armed conflict and the effectiveness of stabilisation interventions.

119. Addressing these issues through analysing the relationship between political settlements, elite bargains and peace processes raises a number of important questions for the Stabilisation Unit's research to address:

What are the aims of intervention and at what point is intervention occurring?

- Are interventions aimed at supporting an initial elite bargain, translating this bargain into a more sustained peace process, or transforming an underlying political settlement?

Are peace processes based upon an accepted elite bargain or in the absence of one? How does this impact upon the trade-offs between stabilisation and a more progressive peace?

- Are peace processes that are based on an agreed elite bargain more stable? Do they constrain opportunities to engineer shifts in underlying political settlements? Or, is there greater scope to push for far-reaching reforms in peace processes where elites view their position as having been secured through an initial bargain?
- Are peace processes enacted without an agreed elite bargain less stable? Do they create greater scope greater scope to shift the underlying political settlement, but also a higher risk of complete breakdown?

Where have interventions proved successful within this framework? And what are the trade-offs that exist around these interventions?

- Can external interventions overcome the difficulties of reaching an initial elite bargain? Or does international intervention risk distorting these bargains?
- Do interventions work more effectively when they operate within the parameters set by an existing elite bargain?
- What are the trade-offs that such parameters create?

In contexts where violent conflict has recurred, how is this violence related to elite bargains and peace process?

- Has violence recurred following initial efforts to reach an elite bargain? Such violence may be hardest to address as it suggests the political settlement is highly unstable.
- Has violence recurred following efforts to shift from an elite bargain to a more sustained peace process? If so, why? Are elites using the peace process instrumentally to pursue conflict agendas? Is it a result of too much external pressure? Or is there a need for greater support and mediation?
- Has violence recurred following efforts to implement an elite bargain or peace process in order to engineer a shift in the underlying political settlement? If so, what are the trade-offs surrounding stability/progressive peace?

How can this framework help interventions to ‘do no harm’?

- How can interveners make sure that attempts to press for a more comprehensive peace process or inclusive elite bargain are not at the expense of destroying the elite bargains upon which stability is based?
- If the stability of elite bargains is reliant upon extending cycles of renegotiation, do peace processes risk undermining this (for example through elections)?

How can political settlements become more inclusive?

- Do elite bargains lock-in exclusion and create the risk of future violent conflict? Or can they provide a first stabilising step towards greater inclusion in future peace processes?
- Does support for an elite bargain rather than a more formalised peace process generate confidence in stability and create an environment for future negotiations? Or does such support undermine the possibility that future negotiations will be held?

- How does the pathway from an elite bargain, to a peace process, to a more inclusive political settlement work in practice? This is not a linear process, so what do specific cases tell us about these pathways?

3.2 Mapping actors

120. Mapping the different actors that influence violent conflict has become a core part of various analysis tools (DFID 2002; 2004; SIDA 2013). These tools, and the literature already reviewed in this document, emphasize the importance of listing all relevant actors in terms of their:

Interests: what interests determine why actors become involved in violent conflict and how do these interests influence the conflict? (DFID 2002);

Holding power: how long can a particular actor hold out in conflict against the state or other actors in order to pursue these interests? What are the foundations upon which this holding power is based, in terms of: organizational capacity, economic strength, ideological power, legitimacy, the ability to mobilise and maintain support (domestically and internationally), the capacity to absorb costs inflicted by opponents and the capacity to inflict costs on others (Khan 2010).

Incentives for peace: what incentives do actors have to pursue peace? How do these incentives emerge and/or change (e.g. changes in leadership, changing levels of external backing). What incentives or threats are likely to be effective to encourage actors to pursue peace, or to refrain from using violence? (DFID 2002)

Relations: what are the relationships between various actors and *within* organisations? Analysis should engage with the power dynamics between warring parties, and also the tensions and power balances *within* these organisations. Organisations are very rarely monolithic and are likely to contain competing power centres, with some members more interested in pursuing peace than others.

121. However, in order to address the limitations in the existing academic literature, there are a number of significant gaps that future case study analysis should prioritize:

3.2.1 Moving beyond 'rational actor frameworks'

122. Mapping the interests and incentives of actors requires moving beyond the assumption that actors are driven only by the narrow pursuit of self-interest and efforts to maximise power and wealth. Interventions that seek to incentivise peace and create disincentives for violence require a more nuanced understanding of interests and motivations. There are two important ways to do this:

123. ***The relationship between structure and agency:*** Agents do have an ability to enact change (in ways often overlooked by the political settlements literature) and changes in conflict dynamics are often linked to changes in leadership. However, much of the conflict resolution literature is focused too narrowly on the role that interventions should play in devising incentive structures to shape the behaviour of negotiating parties. This approach ignores how "the structural and institutional contexts of power - formal and informal, local and external - always and everywhere constitute constraints" on how individuals can act (Hudson and Leftwich 2013). Greater attention must be placed on how underlying economic

structures (property rights, who controls wealth), social structures (identity politics including race, gender, ethnicity) and ideological structures (values, beliefs, legitimacy) impact upon how decisions are made to escalate or reduce violence.

124. ***Non-material factors that shape interests and decisions:*** The cost-benefit calculations that actors make around violent conflict are shaped by a whole array of complex values and emotions including personal rivalries, prejudice, envy, fear, insecurity, saving face, honour, solidarity, religious beliefs, shared history and loyalty. Understanding these dynamics is likely to be especially challenging for external interveners. Recognition of this fact has a number of important policy implications:

- i. the need for more wide-ranging conflict analysis (for example, historical, anthropological and ethnographic analysis);
- ii. greater adaptability and flexibility in interventions to respond to these unknowns;
- iii. the need to factor in such knowledge-gaps when making decisions over whether or not to intervene;
- iv. awareness of how these factors are not only relevant for understanding the decisions made by warring parties but also by interveners.

3.2.2 The relationships between sub-national, national and international actors

125. A key weakness in much of the literature reviewed in this document is its focus on what happens at the national level. This overlooks the importance of sub-national and international actors and bargaining processes. Conflict analysis requires more sophisticated engagement with the relationships between actors and interests operating beyond and below the state, and how these dynamics impact upon political settlements, elite bargains and peace processes. This includes addressing the following questions:

Do international, national and sub-national dynamics reinforce or weaken each other?

126. The prospects for stabilisation are strongly shaped by the extent to which international, national and sub-national interests and pressures align or work at cross-purposes. For example, establishing national-level elite bargains through 'horizontal inclusion' (i.e. bargains between competing national elites) may have few prospects of reducing violence if it is impossible for elites to 'sell' these deals to the constituencies they represent and do not incorporate some form of 'vertical inclusion' that includes the interests of these constituents (see Figure 3 on Darfur).

127. Similarly, shifts in levels of international backing (especially from neighbouring countries) can have a significant impact upon strengthening or weakening the incentives of warring parties to give up violence. Decisions by international actors to increase levels of support (finance, weapons, territorial sanctuaries, access to cross-border services) may rejuvenate a party's willingness to wage war (for example Thai and Chinese support for Myanmar non-state armed groups in the 1960s and 1970s was important in enabling these organisations to wage war). In turn, shifting international dynamics may also strengthen the prospects for peace. For example, the gradual shift in Latin America away from violent struggle and towards democratic politics – the so-called Pink Tide in Latin American politics – and Castro's statement that the FARC insurgency was an anachronism appeared to play an important role in strengthening the Colombian peace process.

What is the basis of an organisation's 'holding power'?

128. The 'holding power' of warring parties can be based on very different foundations. These may range from solid rural 'support'¹ (e.g. the FARC, insurgents in Myanmar's borderlands), control over lucrative resources or cross-border trade (e.g. the RUF in Sierra Leone) and/or foreign backing (e.g. the M23 movement in the DRC). Understanding an organisation's holding power is important in determining intervention strategies. For example, efforts to pursue negotiations that exclude certain actors (such as criminal organisations, groups with links to terrorism or those which have committed human rights abuses) will have less chance of success (or will require a much greater international commitment) those excluded have significant holding power. Such calculations are dependent upon understanding the sub-national and international dimensions of an organisation's holding power.

At what level are interventions likely to be most effective?

129. Developing a more sophisticated spatial framework for conflict analysis can also determine the level at which interventions are likely to be most effective. The pressure points that force warring parties to negotiate may be a long way away from the battlefield. Creating incentives for peace may be reliant more on reducing international backing for warring parties or targeting the trade flows their finances are reliant upon. This suggests that interventions may prove effective by supporting an "enabling environment" for negotiations, rather than becoming directly involved on the battlefield or attempting to orchestrate bargains (Cramer, Goodhand and Morris 2016).

What is the role of brokers?

130. Understanding how sub-national, national and international dynamics interconnect requires mapping the brokers that link these spaces. Brokers can be defined as 'network specialists' who are able to navigate across borders and between different political systems (such as between national-level politics and local politics, between different ethnic groups, and across international borders) (Blok 1974; Bierschenk et al. 2002; Lindquist 2015; Mosse and Lewis 2006). Examples include community leaders, mid-level politicians, businessmen, administrators, militia leaders and religious leaders (Wolf 1956; Marten 2012; Geertz 1960). The informal and sometimes secretive roles played by brokers means that their actions are often overlooked; yet their role in mediating between different levels of negotiations means that they can have an instrumental role in escalating and reducing violence. This is an important knowledge gap that future case-study analysis should focus on.

3.2.3 Including intervening actors in conflict analysis

131. A major critique of the existing literature is the tendency to view interventions in violent conflict as being external solutions to internal problems and the way this positions external actors outside of the framework of conflict analysis. When interventions do go wrong the reasons cited usually focus on factors internal to the conflict itself, such as: the lack of conflict 'ripeness'; the presence of spoilers who use interventions instrumentally; the complexity of the conflict and the difficulty of securing accurate intelligence.

¹ The term 'support' here is used broadly to include both voluntary and more coercive forms of support, in terms of recruitment, tax, food and intelligence provided by local populations

132. However, understanding why interveners may struggle to have an effective impact also requires much more careful consideration of the role played by internal conflicts and bargains within intervening actors, how domestic political considerations shape (in)action, and the role that emotions, rivalries, saving face and loyalties within these organisations play. The portrayal of external interveners as referees in a conflict suggests a level of objectivity that may not in fact exist. Ignoring these factors suggests that interveners have the freedom to act in whatever way is necessary to support conflict resolution, when in fact their scope for action may be heavily constrained. To improve understanding of what works and what does not work, future research should include stronger analysis of the interests, motivations and decision-making of interveners.

3.3 Disaggregating violence: What function does violence have?

133. If interventions are to work more effectively, it is important to develop a clearer understanding of the types of violence that they engage with. The typology presented here draws a distinction between three broad types of large-scale violence: **competitive**, **embedded** and **permissive** violence:

Competitive violence

134. Violence aimed at contesting underlying political settlements (both at the national and sub-national level). This is the most common understanding of violence within the political settlement literature. It can be divided into two forms:

'conservative' competitive violence, which is deployed by those looking to preserve their existing position and power. It represents the use of violence by those in power against those excluded from a political settlement in order to prevent their entry into the system. It may also represent violence enacted between those within an existing political settlement to prevent renegotiation.

'transformative' competitive violence, which is initiated by those aiming to renegotiate the 'terms' (i.e. the distribution of economic, political and social benefits) of an existing political settlement. This may be violence deployed by actors excluded from the existing elite bargain or by actors within an existing elite bargain looking to renegotiate their position and power. This kind of violence may be deployed by actors with a relatively limited aim to improve their position and power, or by actors aimed at fundamentally challenging the political settlement.

Embedded violence

135. Violence directly embedded in how a political settlement works. The privileges that elites are awarded in order to strengthen their loyalty to the state are not only economic (e.g. control over certain resources, import licences) or political (government positions) but may also include the 'right' to use violence. These 'violence rights' determine who has the 'right' to enact violence, upon whom, for what reasons, and with what level of impunity.

136. These 'violence rights' may subsequently be used to secure material interests (e.g. land grabs) but the point is that the 'limited access orders' which underpin many political settlements may be founded upon who has the right to use violence, rather than only the explicit apportioning of material benefits. These kinds of state-sanctioned violence should alert policymakers to the fact that violence may not only be driven by state fragility and

failure but may also be embedded in the bargains made to forge order and stability. A stable political settlement may expose populations to significant levels of violence.

Permissive violence

137. Violence that results from the state's inability to monopolize control over violence, but that is neither directly aimed at challenging the political settlement nor embedded within how a political settlement operates. This kind of violence occurs because the state is unable or unwilling to monopolise control over violence and has instead made selective decisions of how and where to allocate the limited coercive resources at its disposal. This creates opportunities for 'permissive' violence in the sense that a government 'allows' violence to happen in certain places because it has chosen to focus its limited coercive resources (i.e. police and military deployment) elsewhere. This may include violence used by actors to control places where state authority is weak or non-existent but which is not aimed at destabilising the over-arching political settlement. It may also encompass forms of criminal activity in which violence is a key component, but where such activities are not aimed at challenging the government. Indeed, violent criminal actors may have a vested interest in upholding the status quo since it is within this system that they are able to operate.

138. These various types of violence are often closely interlinked and can mutate over time. Groups that accumulate power and wealth through permissive violence may then look to challenge the state to demand greater inclusion into a political settlement. The informality governing embedded and permissive violence may make the 'rules of the game' surrounding these types of violence unclear and volatile. Governments may periodically seek to crack down on such forms of violence due to international pressure, efforts to improve their legitimacy, or fears of the growing power of potential competitors.

139. This broad typology emphasizes the need for policymakers to disentangle the different types of violence that they engage with. Disaggregating violence has significant policy implications because it reveals the trade-offs surrounding different policy interventions. For example:

- i. interventions designed at stabilising 'competitive' violence may result in elite bargains underpinned by forms of embedded violence.
- ii. even interventions designed with the more limited goal of containing violence may impact upon the dynamics of a political settlement by distorting the 'violence rights' that they are based upon.
- iii. Differentiating between embedded and permissive violence can help to determine the impact of interventions aimed at strengthening state capacity. Increased state capacity may serve to constrain the kinds of permissive violence operating in areas beyond state control. However, it may also increase exposure of populations to the kinds of violence that are embedded in how the state functions.

140. There are no clear answers in the literature to these issues. However, such issues do demonstrate the importance for policymakers to develop more sophisticated ways to map violence in places they seek to intervene.

4. Conclusion: Emerging Implications

A number of emerging implications can be drawn from the existing literature. These also offer insights into the kinds of issues that future case study analysis commissioned by the Stabilisation Unit should seek to address:

- **Definitive claims of what works and what doesn't are based on problematic evidence.** Future research must be clearer in terms of the data and methodologies they use and their limitations.
- **Data weaknesses need to be factored into decision-making.** The difficulty of generating reliable evidence on the complexity surrounding violent conflict suggests that deciding whether or not to intervene, actors must take into account the fact that they will have to operate based on partial knowledge, rather than an assumption that establishing a comprehensive picture is possible. This is not necessarily a call for inaction, but it does emphasize the need for caution and the need to consider whether some interventions may be more effective than others.
- **Micro-managing conflicts and mediation is fraught with risks and understanding sub-national and regional conflict and power systems is important.** The prospects for stabilisation are strongly shaped by the extent to which international, national and sub-national interests and pressures align or work at cross-purposes.
- **Creating an 'enabling environment' for a deal may be more effective than intervening directly in violent conflict.** The 'pressure points' that may encourage warring parties to negotiate may be a long way from the battlefield. Creating incentives for peace may be reliant more on reducing international backing for warring parties, targeting the trade flows their finances are reliant upon, or supporting mediation efforts by trusted regional actors. This suggests that interventions may prove more effective by supporting an 'enabling environment' for negotiations, rather than becoming directly involved on the battlefield or attempting to orchestrate bargains.
- **Violence can be due to a lack of a deal or embedded in the deal, with very different policy implications.** Violence may be: (i) a result of a political settlement breaking down, (ii) integral to how political settlements operate; or (iii) able to operate alongside a stable political settlement. Policymakers need to analyse carefully the types of violence they are engaging with.
- **The need for greater self-reflection.** Too often, interventions are portrayed as external solutions to internal problems. When things go wrong the reasons given are usually placed on dynamics internal to the conflict, such as the lack of conflict 'ripeness' or the presence of 'spoilers'. However, the variable success of interventions is also shaped by the conflicts and bargains made between and within interveners, how domestic political considerations shape (in)action, and also the influence that emotions, rivalries, and loyalties within these organisations have. There is very little literature on this subject. To improve understanding of what works and what does not work, future research should include stronger analysis of the interests, motivations and decision-making processes of interveners.

Annex: Quantitative studies of peacemaking

STUDY	RESEARCH FOCUS	TIMEFRAME	CASES	KEY FINDINGS
Kreutz 2010	How do wars end and what factors determine the recurrence of conflict?	1946 – 2005	231 interstate and intrastate armed conflicts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More wars coming to an end in the post-Cold War period than during the Cold War. • The number of wars ending in decisive victories has fallen from almost 60% during the Cold War to 14% since 1990 and the number ending in peace agreements or ceasefire has risen from 10% to almost 40%. • The majority of conflicts have unclear endings rather than decisive outcomes of victory, peace agreement or ceasefire
Walter 2004	Why do some countries experience civil war and war recurrence?	1945 – 1996	58 civil wars that ended between 1946 and 1996	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil war recurrence is generally weakly affected by the attributes of previous wars and is more strongly affected by current incentives of individual citizens to join rebel forces. • Low quality of life and a lack of opportunity for political participation increases likelihood of the possibility of civil war occurrence. • Longer conflicts are less likely to be followed by renewed civil war. • Wars fought for total or ‘no-divisible’ goals and/or fought along ethnic lines were no more likely to recur than wars fought for more limited goals or among the same ethnic group. • The attributes of a previous war do not lock countries into a conflict-cycle
Doyle and Sambanis 2006	What determines effective peace-building strategies? What has been the impact on peace of UN interventions?	1945-1999	121 cases of peace processes/ ‘post-civil war transitions’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peacebuilding success is dependent on the combination of international capacities, local capacities and local hostility (the peacebuilding triangle) • In contexts where there is high hostility and low local capacity (measured as underdeveloped and undiversified economy) international capacities have to be greater to have a chance of success. • Treaties and UN peacekeeping operations together are positively correlated with war’s end • Conflicts without a peace treaty or a UN mission has very little chance of success. • “peacekeeping does make a positive difference, and early intervention pays”
Fearon and Laitin 2008	What factors determine how wars end? What are the commitment problems to choosing peace over	1955 - 2007	119 terminated conflicts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil wars last much longer than interstate wars with a median of 7 years (compared to three months) • Key to civil war termination are shocks to the relative power or costs of continuing conflict for one side or the other – usually associated with changes in levels of foreign or a change in leadership. • Changes in foreign support ended many conflicts while balanced foreign support

	war?			<p>leads to the persistence of war</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If decisive victories are going to happen they tend to happen relatively quickly after the onset of war. • Civil war termination has three commitment problems: 1. Parties fear commitment to power-sharing may enable the other side to renege on the deal and seize total power; 2. the winner in such a coup may then target the loser; 3. The loser in power-sharing cannot commit not to return to war if power-sharing is not to its liking.
Sawyer, Cunningham and Reed 2015	What impact does external support for warring parties have on civil war termination?	1989 - 2011	133 intrastate conflicts UCDP data on support to rebel groups and civil war termination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The <i>type</i> of external support provided to combatants has an impact on war termination. • Providing rebels with more ‘fungible’ types of support (money, weapons) rather than finite resources (intelligence, troops, territorial sanctuaries) creates uncertainty about their power and reduces the likelihood of a civil war ending because it creates government uncertainty over rebel strength, increasing concerns of the concessions a negotiated settlement may require and whether rebel groups will honour them. • Breaking the link between rebels and external support makes a settlement more likely as it reduce uncertainty about the relative power of warring parties • Wars are 2.5-3 times less likely to end when funding and weapons are provided to rebels. • Direct troop support to rebels, however, increases the likelihood of a war ending. • Civil wars terminate more quickly when rebels have on-the-ground strength.
Toft 2010	What impact does the way in which war ends have on the likelihood of war recurrence.	1940 - 2007	137 civil wars of which 118 ended	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil wars that end in a victory are less likely to see a return to conflict than those ending in a negotiated settlement; and those ending in a rebel victory are less likely to recur than those ending in government victory. • Furthermore, wars that recurred after negotiated settlements failed were more likely to last longer and were significantly more deadly (50% more deadly), though this is based on only 5 cases: Angola, Iraq, Lebanon, Philippines and Sudan). • (Rebel) victories also favour postwar democratisation over negotiated settlements over the long-term. • Negotiated settlements see an initial rise in democratisation – most-likely linked to an initial post-war election – the transformation is not sustained and gives way to authoritarianism. In contrast victories stay relatively constant and rebel victories see a rise in Polity Score (measure of political openness) after 20 years
Hartzell, Hoddie and Rothchild	Are there factors that are more likely	1945 – 1998	38 civil war settlements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if a state’s last stable regime prior to civil war was a democracy then failure of negotiated settlement falls by 90%

2001	than others to (de)stabilize the peace after the end of a civil war?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More violent wars are more likely to recur. • The longer the war the less likely a settlement will fail • Negotiated settlements that include territorial autonomy provisions are more likely to prove stable than those that do not. • Third party enforcement reduces the likelihood of civil war recurrence • Implications: Some civil war environments are more likely to result in stable peace settlements than others. This may shape where and when third parties choose to invest in interventions and mediation
Lounsbury and DeRouen Jr. 2016	To what extent do the factors that bring parties to the negotiating table influence their commitment to a deal and thus the duration of a peace agreement?	1975 - 2011	194 peace agreements following intrastate conflicts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreements that occur in the aftermath of external military intervention in support of rebel groups are most likely to endure, but agreements following rebel victory on the battlefield based on their own internal strength do not endure. • Interventions supporting the government decrease the duration of peace agreements • Third party mediation makes peace agreements more likely to endure • Sanctions have no impact on securing peace agreements
Regan and Frank 2009	When, how and under what conditions does mediation and other forms of diplomatic intervention reduce violent conflict?	1945 - 1999	438 diplomatic interventions in 68 conflicts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Externally-driven diplomacy facilitates the termination of civil wars and post-conflict stability. • UN is most frequent intervenor (89) followed by the US (56), Catholic Church (30), UK (21). • Success/failure is unrelated to the rank of mediator.
Cunningham 2010	What is the impact of external military interventions on the length of intrastate conflicts?	1945-2005	60 external military interventions All intra-state and internationalized civil wars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Military interventions prolong civil wars but this is driven by a core subset of cases of 'independent' interventions: i.e. interventions by external actors driven by an agenda separate to the warring parties. • Conflicts with independent interventions have an 80% chance of surviving 5,000 days (c. 14 years) compared to 50% with quasi-independent interventions and 40% with any intervention and 20% of wars with no intervention.
Walter 2002	What factors determine the success of peace agreements?	1940-1992		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credible guarantees of security and power-sharing are the most important factor in determining whether peace agreements endure. • Third-party commitment to enforcing peace agreements is essential in the initial post-war period to enforce demobilization and disarmament. • Even if warring parties agree to peace terms, securing peace requires a

				trusted and deeply committed third party
Regan 2002	What is the impact of external interventions on the duration of civil war?	1945 - 1999	150 civil wars, of which 101 had outside interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any kind of external interventions increase war duration. The probability of a conflict lasting for four years is about 37% without an intervention but rises to 60% with intervention. Neutral interventions are the least likely to bring an end to conflict; biased mediation is more effective but still increased the duration of conflict compared to no intervention at all.
Svensson 2009	What is the impact of mediation on peace agreements?	1989 - 2004	124 peace agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biased mediation is more likely to lead to durable peace Neutral mediators are often unable to deliver agreements with provisions for political and territorial power sharing and third-party security guarantees
Call 2002	Why does peace fail? What are the causes of civil war recurrence	1946 - 2007	Quantitative analysis of 97 civil wars and qualitative analysis of 15 cases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political exclusion, rather than economic or social factors, is the most significant factor in determining the likelihood of civil war recurrence Exclusionary behaviour by governments that reneges on rebel expectations is most likely to lead to the recurrence of war “Political exclusion acts as a trigger for renewed armed conflict. Conversely, political inclusion, including but not limited to power-sharing agreements, is highly correlated with consolidation of peace”
Jarstad and Nilsson 2008	Is the implementation of power-sharing provisions the key to durable peace?	1989 - 2004	83 peace agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political pacts/power-sharing require less costly concessions than military and territorial pacts Implementing more costly concessions is more likely to lead to enduring peace because it demonstrates a stronger signal of commitment to the peace process. military and territorial pacts are strongly correlated with enduring peace; political pacts do not have a significant effect on peace.
Sambanis 2008	What are the short-term and long-term effects of UN peace operations?	1945 - 1999	Peace processes after 145 civil wars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UN Peacekeeping missions have robust, positive effects on peacebuilding in the short term, especially in terms of supporting ‘participatory peace’ (rather than just a negative peace (the absence of war) However, the effect of UN peacekeeping missions wanes after a few years. The level of economic development is more important than UN peacekeeping for self-sustaining peace.

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