

TOPIC GUIDE ON  
**CONFLICT**

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**CHAPTER 1:**  
**UNDERSTANDING**  
**VIOLENT CONFLICT**

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# The Causes of Conflict

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## Introduction

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There is no single cause of conflict. Rather, conflict is context-specific, multi-causal and multi-dimensional and can result from a combination of the following factors:

- Political and institutional factors: weak state institutions, elite power struggles and political exclusion, breakdown in social contract and corruption, identity politics
- Socioeconomic factors: inequality, exclusion and marginalisation, absence or weakening of social cohesion, poverty
- Resource and environmental factors: greed, scarcity of national resources often due to population growth leading to environmental insecurity, unjust resource exploitation

Each of these factors may constitute a cause, dynamic and/or impact of conflict. Identifying and understanding the interactions between various causes, dimensions and dynamics of conflict – and the particular contexts in which conflict arises, is essential in determining potential areas of intervention; and designing appropriate approaches and methods for conflict prevention, resolution and transformation.

The way in which a government or institution at an international or societal level addresses conflict between individuals, groups or nations can determine whether the parties to the conflict will resort to violence.

[Ohlson, T., 2008, 'Understanding Causes of War and Peace', \*European Journal of International Relations\*, Vol. 14, No. 1, pp. 133-160](#)

How are the causes of war and peace related? Is it possible to bridge the conceptual gap between causes-of-war theory and conflict resolution theory? This article puts forward a new conceptual framework to facilitate the analysis of the outbreak, conduct and resolution of armed conflict within states. This 'Triple-R' framework involves consideration of reasons, resources and resolve for engaging in violence.

Smith, D., 2004, 'Trends and Causes of Armed Conflict', Berghof Research Centre for Constructive Conflict Management, Berlin

[Access full text: available online](#)

## Political and institutional factors

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### ***Weak state institutions***

State weakness can create the conditions for violent conflict. Political institutions that are unable to manage differing group interests peacefully, to provide adequate guarantees of group protection, or to accommodate growing demands for political participation, can fracture societies. There is a degree of consensus that there is a U-shaped relationship between levels of democracy and likelihood of violent conflict. While mature democracies are able to manage tensions peacefully through democratic inclusion, stark autocracies are able to repress violence and manage conflict through force. The most vulnerable states are those in political transition. Uncertainty and collective fears of the future, stemming from state weakness, clientelism and indiscriminate repression may result in the emergence of armed responses by marginalised groups and nationalist, ethnic or other populist ideologies.

[Mansfield, E.D. and Snyder, J., 2007, 'Turbulent Transitions: Why Emerging Democracies Go to War in the Twenty-first Century', in \*Leashing the Dogs of War: Conflict Management in a Divided World\*, eds., C. Crocker, F.O. Hampson, and P. All, United States Institute for Peace, Washington, DC, pp. 161-176](#)

Is democratisation the best way to promote peace? This research argues that the world would probably be safer if there were more mature democracies but, in the transition to democracy, countries become more aggressive and war prone. The international community should be realistic about the dangers of encouraging democratisation where the conditions are unripe. The risk of violence increases if democratic institutions are not in place when mass electoral politics are introduced.

[Lake, D. A. and Rothchild, D., 1996, 'Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict', \*International Security\*, vol. 21, no. 2, pp. 41-75](#)

What causes ethnic conflict, and why does it escalate? This article argues that intense ethnic conflict is usually caused by collective fears for the future. It presents a framework for understanding the origins and management of ethnic conflict, and recommends how the international community can intervene more effectively. Three key factors contribute to the development of ethnic conflict: Information failure, when individuals or groups misrepresent or misinterpret information about other groups; Problems of credible commitment, when one group cannot credibly reassure another that it will not renege on or exploit a mutual agreement; and Security dilemmas, when one or more disputing parties has an incentive to use pre-emptive force. When these factors take hold, groups become apprehensive, the state weakens, and conflict becomes more likely.

### ***Elite power struggles and political exclusion***

Colonialism and liberation struggles in Africa, the Middle East and Asia have left various legacies, including divisive and militarised politics and fierce struggles for power and land. Post-liberation leaders in some countries have sustained these dynamics, retaining power through neo-patrimonial networks, state capture, militarisation and coercion. Studies have shown that in some cases, they have promoted ideologies of "Us versus Them", excluding and marginalising other groups.

The domination of access to state structures and resources by any one leader, group or political party to the exclusion of others exacerbates social divisions. It may provide incentives for excluded leaders to mobilise groups to protest and engage in violent rebellion. In contrast, inclusive elite

bargains that seek to address social fragmentation and integrate a broad coalition of key elites can reduce the chances of violent rebellion.

[Van Wyk, J-A., 2007, 'Political Leaders in Africa: Presidents, Patrons or Profiteers?', Occasional Paper Series, vol. 2, no. 1, The African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes \(ACCORD\), South Africa](#)

What impact has leadership had on the development of African states? This paper analyses the multiple layers of formal and informal political leadership in post-colonial Africa. Political leaders are the primary holders, controllers and distributors of power and resources in a particular institution and/or territory. Contemporary African leaders operate in an environment constrained by colonial legacies and instability. Leadership is characteristically neo-patrimonial, featuring presidentialism, clientelism, the use of state resources and the centralisation of power.

[Lindemann, S., 2008, 'Do Inclusive Elite Bargains Matter? A Research Framework for Understanding the Causes of Civil War in Sub-Saharan Africa', Discussion Paper, no. 15, Crisis States Research Centre, London School of Economics and Political Science, London](#)

Sub-Saharan Africa is the world's most conflict-intensive region. But why have some African states experienced civil war, while others have managed to maintain political stability? This paper argues that the ability of post-colonial states in Sub-Saharan Africa to maintain political stability depends on the ability of the ruling political parties to overcome the historical legacy of social fragmentation. Creating inclusive elite bargains can bring stability while exclusionary elite bargains give rise to trajectories of civil war.

[DFID, 2009, 'Building the State and Securing the Peace', Department for International Development \(DFID\), London](#)

How can support for state-building and peace-building be integrated? This Emerging Policy Paper outlines a strategic framework for DFID's engagement in situations of conflict and fragility, plus operational implications. DFID's integrated approach to state-building and peace-building aims primarily to promote inclusive political settlements. This facilitates the further goals of: (i) addressing causes of conflict and building resolution mechanisms; (ii) developing state survival functions; and (iii) responding to public expectations. Support across all four of these interrelated areas is necessary to help create a positive peace- and state-building dynamic.

### ***Breakdown in social contract and corruption***

A social contract is a framework of rules that governs state-society relations and the distribution of resources, rights and responsibilities in an organised society. How a government spends public revenue, regardless of whether it comes from taxes or from natural resources, is significant. If it spends it equitably on social welfare and satisfying basic needs, conflict is less likely than if it appropriates revenues for corrupt or fractional purposes. Corruption undermines public trust in government, deters domestic and foreign investment, exacerbates inequalities in wealth and increases socioeconomic grievances. Equally, the inability of states to provide basic services, including justice and security, to all its citizens reduces state legitimacy and trust in state institutions, weakening or breaking the social contract.

In some cases, ruling groups may resort to violence to prolong their rule and maintain opportunities for corruption. This can in turn provoke violent rebellion by marginalised groups. In other situations, research has found that "buying off" opposition groups and belligerents may facilitate transitions to peace.

[Murshed, S. M. and Tadjoeeddin, M. Z., 2009, 'Revisiting the Greed and Grievance Explanations for Violent Internal Conflict', \*Journal of International Development\*, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 87-111](#)

This article assesses two recent explanations for the onset of internal conflict: greed and grievance. The former reflects elite competition over valuable natural resource rents. The latter argues that relative deprivation, and the grievance it produces, fuels conflict. However, this article argues that neither the presence of greed or grievance is sufficient for the outbreak of violent conflict. Violent conflict requires institutional breakdown, or the failure of the social contract.

[Chandhoke, N., 2005, 'Of Broken Social Contracts and Ethnic Violence: The Case of Kashmir', \*Working Paper, no. 75, Crisis States Research Centre, London School of Economics and Political Science, London\*](#)

Are identity politics to blame for the outbreak of violence in Kashmir? This paper, based on research carried out in Srinagar, argues that this is not the case. It concludes that the outbreak of militancy has been caused by the failure of political institutions and organisations, and the violation of the social contract.

Addison, T. et al., 2008, 'Ending Violent Conflict and Building a Social Compact', Chapter 6 in *Escaping Poverty Traps*, Chronic Poverty Research Centre, Manchester

[Access full text: available online](#)

[Le Billon, P., 2003, 'Buying Peace or Fuelling War: The Role of Corruption in Armed Conflicts', \*Journal of International Development\*, vol. 15, no. 4, pp. 413 - 426](#)

What is the relationship between corruption and the outbreak, duration and termination of conflicts? Donors and analysts consider corruption a primary explanation for a whole range of development problems. Yet this study suggests that corruption is partially driven by internal processes of capital accumulation and global structural forces. Corruption may have a corrosive effect on economies and rule-based institutions, but it also forms part of the fabric of social and political relationships. This endogenous character means that conflict may be engendered more by changes in the pattern of corruption than by corruption itself.

### **Additional resources**

For discussion and resources on political and institutional factors of state fragility, see '[political and institutional factors](#)' in the [causes and characteristics of fragility](#) section of the GSDRC's fragile states guide.

Further resources on corruption can be found in the [governance programming](#) section in the peacebuilding component in this guide.

Resources on the relationship between elections and conflict can be found in the [elections in post-conflict or fragile environments](#) section of the GSDRC's political systems guide.

### **Identity politics**

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There has been ongoing debate about the role of identity in violent conflict. The 'primordialist' (or 'ancient hatreds') argument that ethnic, religious or cultural differences inevitably result in conflict has been discredited in much of the literature. In contrast, 'instrumentalist' theorists have asserted that identity is simply constructed and exploited as a means of mobilisation (see [mobilisation into violence](#) under conflict dynamics). Most recent authors argue for a middle ground: ethnic, religious or cultural identities do not condemn people to fight against each other

and are usually not the main issues and reasons for conflict; however, when introduced and mobilised, religion, ethnicity and culture provide a system of beliefs and practices that can unite adherents in a community, alter their perception of others and encourage them to take collective action in the name of their group.

In situations of exclusion and discrimination, the salience of group identity can be a deciding factor in whether groups can be mobilised to violence. At the same time, cross-cutting identities and/or weak cohesion within particular religious or ethnic groups are believed to reduce the probability that a group will be able to mobilise in an exclusionary manner.

Identity politics can be used by both dominant and marginalised group to articulate exclusion and discontent. It should not be assumed, however, that all forms of ethnic and religious politics are exclusionary or foster violence. While identity can be a discourse of power as well as of grievance, it can provide a peaceful means of inclusion and empowerment and a basis for claiming rights and citizenship.

Further discussion and resources on identity politics can be found in the [peace agreements](#) section of this guide.

[Luckham, R., Moncrieffe, J. and Harris, C., 2006, 'Understanding the Routes in and out of Political Violence: An Assessment of the Linkages Between Identity Politics, Exclusion, Inequality and Political Violence in EMAD Countries', Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, Birmingham](#)

Nationality and other sub-sets of identity, including ethnicity, religion and class, clan and sub-national region are important identity markers people use to claim citizenship and empowerment. Identity politics are dynamic. They can contribute to violent or peaceful solutions. Not all forms of ethnic and religious politics are exclusionary, nor do they necessarily lead to violence. How identity politics combine within a particular context determines whether violence does or does not occur, and extremist groups that resort to violence are often small minorities within minorities and require micro-analysis of the conditions in which they operate. This paper synthesises the results of case studies of Bolivia, Peru, Tajikistan and Yemen and recommends the application of regional and country context when analysing countries prone to political violence.

[Kadayifci-Orellana, S. A., 2009, 'Ethno-Religious Conflicts: Exploring the Role of Religion in Conflict Resolution', in The SAGE Handbook of Conflict Resolution, eds., J. Bercovitch, V. Kremenyuk, and I. W. Zartman, SAGE, London, pp. 264-280](#)

How can the religious texts, values and beliefs used to incite conflict be harnessed to promote peace-building and reconciliation? What contributions can faith-based actors make to conflict resolution? This chapter examines the ways in which religion can be used to inspire both war and peace. The revival of religiously motivated conflicts, and the increasing involvement of religious actors in resolving them, requires understanding of their dynamics.

[Cocodia, J., 2008, 'Exhuming Trends in Ethnic Conflict and Cooperation in Africa: Some Selected States', African Journal on Conflict Resolution, vol. 8, no. 3, pp. 9-26](#)

Why are certain parts of Africa characterised by ethnic conflict while other parts remain relatively calm? This paper argues that equity, justice, literacy levels and external threats are key factors which determine the likelihood of conflict. Case studies of both conflict and cooperation situations are examined – from Tanzania, Botswana, South Africa, Uganda and Côte d'Ivoire.

[Miklian, J., 2009, 'Nepal's Terai: Constructing an Ethnic Conflict', South Asia Briefing Paper, no. 1, International Peace Research Institute \(PRIO\), Oslo](#)

Recent ethnic violence in Nepal has polarised citizens along ethnic issues that were largely unaddressed during the civil war and the subsequent peace agreement. This paper traces the history of Nepali post-war ethnic violence and the current difficulties implementing peace agreements. Reducing the risk of future armed conflict involves targeting grassroots opinion, preventing demonisation of specific ethnic groups and recognising long-standing discrimination of the Madhesi people of the Terai region.

[Melvin, N. J., 2007, 'Conflict in Southern Thailand: Islamism, Violence and the State in the Patani Insurgency', SIPRI Policy Paper, no. 20, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Stockholm](#)

What is behind the recent return to violence in southern Thailand and how can the conflict be resolved? This paper outlines interpretations of conflict in the Patani region. These focus on historical grievances, the role of violent Islamism, modern Thai politics and the 'global war on terror'. Measures to address two longstanding sources of grievance – language and education – could help improve the situation.

For resources on the role of religion and religious actors in peacemaking, see the [direct prevention mechanisms](#) section of this guide.

## **Socioeconomic factors**

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### ***Inequality, exclusion and marginalisation***

There is increasing recognition that it is the nature of inequality, rather than the extent of inequality, that determines the likelihood of violent conflict. Research has found that inequalities that align with cultural, ethnic or religious identities ('horizontal inequalities') are more likely to result in violence. This is especially the case when there are 'multidimensional horizontal inequalities' – where culturally defined groups experience multiple forms of exclusion from political, economic, social and cultural realms. Often these forms of inequality, exclusion and marginalisation interact and compound one another: unequal access to land and natural resources, for example, may result from the lack of access to power and decision-making.

A strong sense of collective injustice, due to actual or perceived exclusion based on social or cultural identity, can increase a group's feelings of alienation from the wider society. This may lead to animosity and resentment. Over time, such tensions can foster group mobilisation and fuel violent conflict. It is not only the relatively deprived who may instigate violence, however, but also the privileged who fear losing power and benefits.

Government responses are important in determining whether dissatisfaction turns violent. If the state reacts harshly to non-violent protests, as opposed to seeking to address exclusion, then the chances of violent conflict are more likely. Exclusion and inequality as a cause of conflict may be connected to the breakdown of the social contract, discussed under [political and institutional factors](#).

[Kanbur, R., 2007, 'Poverty and Conflict: The Inequality Link', International Peace Academy, New York](#)

How do poverty and inequality causally interact with conflict? While there is a general view that poverty and inequality can lead to conflict, the nature of the links are less well appreciated. This

paper draws out the links based on the recent economics literature and discusses their implications for policy. While inequality is a natural concomitant of economic processes, particularly those driven by the market, its implications for security emerge when unequal outcomes align with socio-political cleavages.

[Sen, A., 2008, 'Violence, Identity and Poverty', \*Journal of Peace Research\*, vol. 45, pp.5-15](#)

How do we explain the cause of violence in the world today? This article argues that approaches to explaining violence should avoid isolationist programmes that explain violence solely in terms of social inequality and deprivation, or in terms of identity and cultural factors. The coupling between cultural identities and poverty increases the significance of inequality and can contribute to violence.

[Stewart F., Brown G.K., Langer A., 2008, 'Major Findings and Conclusions on the Relationship Between Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict', in Stewart, F. \(ed.\), 'Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict: Understanding Group Violence in Multiethnic Societies', Palgrave Macmillan](#)

What are the links between horizontal inequalities (HIs) and conflict? This chapter summarises findings from case studies plus more global analyses. Severe HIs are particularly likely to be a source of conflict when they are consistent across socioeconomic, cultural and political dimensions. While socioeconomic HIs generate fertile ground for conflict and cultural status inequalities bind groups together, political HIs provide incentives for leaders to mobilise people for rebellion.

[Human Rights in China, 2007, 'China: Minority Exclusion, Marginalisation and Rising Tensions', Minority Rights Group, London](#)

Over the past twenty-five years, China has undergone rapid social and economic change. This report argues that this transformation has exposed the Chinese government's negative policies towards minorities. Key issues preventing minorities from exercising their rights include limited political participation, inequitable development and inadequate protection of minority cultural identity.

[McCoy, D., 2008, 'Rectifying Horizontal Inequalities: Lessons from African Conflict', \*African Journal on Conflict Resolution\*, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 105-134](#)

How can countries emerging from conflict create sustainable peace and stability? This article argues countries must address the horizontal inequalities that cause many violent conflicts. The examples of Mali and Rwanda illustrate steps countries can take to rectify horizontal inequalities in post-conflict environments, providing long term conflict resolution.

For further discussion and resources, see the [underlying causes of conflict](#) in the GSDRC's [social exclusion](#) guide.

### **Poverty and conflict**

Conflict and poverty are clearly linked - a disproportionate number of conflicts take place in poor countries. The direction of causality has been debated, however. Most research contends that poverty, in itself, is rarely a direct cause of conflict; yet it is evident that conflict exacerbates poverty (see [impact of conflict](#)). Most authors now contend that it is relative deprivation, rather than poverty per se, that makes violent conflict more likely. Poverty may contribute to or sustain conflict through its association with perceived injustices and forms of exclusion between groups (see [inequality, exclusion and marginalisation](#)). In some specific contexts, there is evidence that extreme poverty has provided the motivation for effective recruitment and mobilisation of the masses.

[Goodhand, J., 2001, 'Violent Conflict, Poverty and Chronic Poverty, Working Paper, no. 6, Chronic Poverty Research Centre, Manchester](#)

What is the nature of links between conflict and poverty? What are the implications of academic debate for policy and future research? This paper provides an overview of the literature on chronic poverty and conflict. Traditionally the concepts of chronic poverty and violent conflict have been treated as separate spheres. It is argued that poverty and conflict are linked. Violent conflict is not a side issue and needs to be better understood in order to achieve development goals.

[Justino, P., 2009, 'The Impact of Armed Civil Conflict on Household Welfare and Policy Responses', HiCN Working Paper, no. 61, Households in Conflict Network, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton](#)

How does armed conflict impact on households and how do they respond to and cope with it? This paper examines the direct and indirect effects of conflicts and shows that the indirect effects are channelled through markets, political institutions and social networks. Until there is more research on the fundamental processes linking armed civil conflict and household welfare, it will be difficult to develop effective policies for preventing and resolving conflicts.

## Resource and environmental factors

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### *Greed and opportunity in war*

Regardless of the beliefs, ideologies and grievances involved, all armed conflicts must be funded. Such funding often comes from illicit sources and activities. Economic relations may become coercive during armed conflict and peacetime economic activities may be looted by belligerents. Illicit trade in commodities (see next section on [resource exploitation](#)) during conflicts can reinforce other causes of conflict, including state weakness and lack of accountability.

While many conflicts are clearly motivated by political or social issues, others are mainly economically motivated. Some conflicts start due to political and social motives but are prolonged due to economic motivations ('greed'), which creates disincentives for peace. In the current conflict in Columbia, for example, it is unclear whether groups continue fighting due to the original political reasons or due to the income generated from war-related illicit drug trade. These complexities have led recent authors to challenge the simplistic "greed versus grievance" framework as both elements are often found in conflict situations.

[Berdal M. and Keen D., 1997, 'Violence and Economic Agendas in Civil Wars: Some Policy Implications', Millennium: Journal of International Studies, London, Vol. 26, No. 3, pp. 795-818](#)

This article analyses conflicts and peace efforts in several African, Asian and Central American countries, revealing the crucial role played by economics. The pursuit of 'rational' economic goals by conflict participants is often a major factor behind the continuation of a war that otherwise seems illogical. People at all levels of society can profit from conflict to the extent that peace seems unattractive. Or violence may offer a degree of economic security that is preferable to the uncertain prospects of peace. Conflict can only be tackled by taking into account the non-political functions of violence and the economic benefits it can bring.

[Collier, P. and Hoeffler, A., 2000, 'Greed and Grievance in Civil War', World Bank, Washington, DC](#)

Are civil wars really caused by political repression, inequality, or religious and ethnic differences? What roles do factors other than grievance play in rebellion? This paper looks at the causes of civil war, using a new data set of wars during 1960-99. Civil wars are now more common than

international conflict. Of 25 armed conflicts in 2000, 23 were internal. Rebellion needs both motivation and opportunity. Political science explains conflict in terms of motive. When grievances are sufficiently acute, here is violent protest. Such grievances include inequality, oppression, religious and ethnic tensions. A much smaller literature from economic theory models rebellion as an industry that generates profit from looting. Greed, not grievance, is the driving force, and opportunity is more important than motive.

[Cramer, C. and Hanlon, J., 2006, 'Greed versus Grievance: Conjoined Twins or Discrete Drivers of Violent Conflict', \*Civil War, Civil Peace\*, Yanacopulos, H. and Hanlon, J., Open University in association with James Currey, Oxford and Ohio University Press, Athens, Ohio](#)

The debate within neoclassical economics on the main sources of civil war has crystallised around a simple dichotomy between 'greed' and 'grievance'. This chapter argues that it is questionable whether the 'greed versus grievance' debate is useful as a means of understanding violent conflict. These terms are difficult to separate and, moreover, it is unlikely that there can be a clear 'either/or' explanation of the causes of war.

### ***Resource exploitation***

Research has demonstrated connections between lootable resources and conflict. Control and exploitation of natural resources can be involved in all phases of the conflict cycle, contributing to: the outbreak of conflict through inequitable resource and wealth sharing; the perpetuation of conflict, through the exploitation of 'high-value' resources to finance armed forces; and the undermining of conflict resolution and peace agreements by parties that could lose access to resource revenues. Extractable resources are most likely to provoke conflict when resource exploitation becomes linked to social or political exclusion. These issues also often arise where there is a shortage of non-lootable resources and where resources are located inside the conflict zone.

[Aspinall, E., 2007, 'The Construction of Grievance', \*Journal of Conflict Resolution\*, vol. 51, no. 6, pp. 950-972](#)

When and under what circumstances does natural resource extraction give rise to violent conflict? This article analyses the separatist conflict in Aceh, Indonesia. It argues that natural resource exploitation promoted conflict in Aceh only because it became entangled in wider processes of identity construction and was reinterpreted back to the population by ethnic political entrepreneurs in a way that legitimated violence. Rather than any intrinsic qualities of natural resource extraction, the key factor was the presence of an appropriate identity-based collective action frame.

[Snyder, R. and Bhavnani, R., 2005, 'Diamond, Blood and Taxes: A Revenue-Centred Framework for Explaining Political Order', \*Journal of Conflict Resolution\*, vol. 49, no. 4, pp. 563-597](#)

Why are lootable resources such as alluvial diamonds linked to civil war in some cases and peace in others? This article suggests that to answer this question the focus must shift from rebels to rulers, to state spending and to the constraints on the rulers' ability to earn revenue. It argues that in countries rich in lootable resources, the ability of rulers to achieve political order depends on the availability of non-lootable resources, the mode of extraction of lootable resources and patterns of state spending.

Lujala, P., 2010 'The Spoils of Nature: Armed Civil Conflict and Rebel Access to Natural Resources', *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 47, no. 1, pp. 15-28

[Access full text: available online](#)

Ikelegbe, A., 2006, 'The Economy of Conflict in the Oil Rich Niger Delta Region of Nigeria', *African and Asian Studies*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 23-56

[Access full text: available online](#)

De Koning, R., 2008, 'Resource–conflict links in Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo', Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Stockholm

[Access full text: available online](#)

For discussion and resources on the 'resource curse', see the section on 'natural resources and unearned state income' in [structural and economic factors](#) under causes and characteristics of the GSDRC's fragile states guide.

For further resources on conflict economies, see 'transformation of war economies' in the [socioeconomic recovery](#) section of this guide.

### ***Environmental insecurity and resource scarcity***

Seminal work by Homer-Dixon in the 1990s argued that environmental scarcities were contributing to violent conflict in areas in the developing world. Environmental scarcities stem from environmental change and resource degradation; population pressure; and the unequal distribution of resources, such as land and water.

Environmental factors are rarely, if ever, the sole cause of conflict, but can combine with other factors to contribute to instability and violence. For example, environmental pressures may contribute to the weakening of the state – for example when the state is unable to provide food security for its citizens. Environmental shocks can also result in economic instability, especially in predominantly poorer agrarian countries. Scarcities can also result in increasing rising competition over the allocation of resources between certain economic sectors, regions or population groups. The risk of conflict may be higher if the groups disadvantaged in resource allocation are also marginalised socially, economically or politically.

Climate change is likely to increase the risk of conflict in certain regions. The consequences will be most acutely felt in poor and badly governed countries, which may find it most difficult to adapt. Climate change may also exacerbate communal conflict, most seriously affecting politically and economically marginalised groups.

[Homer-Dixon, T. F., 1994, 'Environmental Scarcities and Violent Conflict: Evidence from Cases', \*International Security\*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 5-40](#)

Could environmental scarcities cause violent conflict? This article reports on the impacts of environmental change, population growth and unequal distribution of resources. Environmental scarcities are already contributing to violent conflict in the developing world. There are early signs of an upsurge in violence in the coming decades that will be induced or aggravated by scarcity. Poor societies will be less able to protect themselves from environmental scarcities and the social crises they cause.

[Smith, D. and Vivenkananda, J., 2009, 'Climate Change, Conflict and Fragility: Understanding the Linkages, Shaping Effective Responses', \*International Alert\*, London](#)

What effect will climate change have on violent conflict? This report argues that climate change is most likely to provoke conflict in poor, badly governed countries with a recent history of violent conflict. Adaptation policies must respond to the links between climate change, state fragility and conflict, and must begin by focusing on as local a level as possible. Further, a large-scale systematic

study is needed of the likely costs of adaptation. This should address the social and political dimensions as well as economic sectors.

[Smith, D. and Vivenkananda, J., 2007, 'A Climate of Conflict: The Links Between Climate Change, Peace and War', International Alert, London](#)

What are the likely social and human consequences of climate change? Many of the world's poorest places face a double-headed problem: climate change and violent conflict. This report finds that in fragile states the consequences of climate change can interact with existing socio-political and economic tensions, compounding the causal tensions underlying violent conflict. It argues that conflict-sensitive climate change policies can promote peacebuilding, whilst climate-proof peacebuilding and development policies can be effective climate change adaptation policies.

[Barnett, J. and Adger, W., 2007, 'Climate Change, Human Security and Violent Conflict', Political Geography, vol. 26, no. 6, pp. 639-655](#)

Does climate change increase the risk of violent conflict? This paper integrates three bodies of research on the vulnerability of local places and social groups to climate change, livelihoods and violent conflict, and the role of the state in development and peacemaking. Climate change reduces access to natural resources and undermines state capacity to help people sustain livelihoods. These impacts may in certain circumstances increase the risk of violent conflict, but further investigation is needed.

Lind, J. and Sturman, K., 2002, 'Scarcity and Surfeit: The Ecology of Africa's Conflicts', African Centre for Technology Studies and Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria  
[Access full text: available online](#)

[Houdret, A., 2008, 'Scarce Water, Plenty of Conflicts? Local Water Conflicts and the Role of Development Cooperation' INEF Policy Brief, no. 3, Institute for Development and Peace, University of Duisburg-Essen, Duisburg](#)

How can water scarcity lead to conflict? How can these conflicts be avoided? This Policy Brief analyses the causes of water conflict and suggests corresponding policy options. Water allocation often reflects social, political and economic inequalities, especially in countries where water is scarce. Water management is increasingly a question of fair distribution and political legitimacy.

[UNEP, 2009, 'From Conflict to Peacebuilding: The Role of Natural Resources and the Environment', United Nations Environment Programme, Nairobi](#)

Conflicts associated with natural resources are twice as likely to relapse into violent conflict. Yet, less than a quarter of peace negotiations for conflicts linked to natural resources have addressed resource management mechanisms. This study argues that the recognition of the contribution of environmental issues to violent conflict underscores their potential as pathways for cooperation and the consolidation of peace. Integrating environment and natural resources into peacebuilding strategies is now a security imperative.

USAID, 2005, 'Land and Conflict Toolkit', USAID, Washington, DC  
[Access full text: available online](#)

## Conflict Characteristics, Dynamics and Impact

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### New forms of violence and conflict

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Since the end of the Cold War, many conflict analysts have highlighted the rise of new forms of violent conflict. They argue that contemporary conflicts differ in terms of scope (internal rather than inter-state); combatants (non-state actors: private armies, warlords, criminal gangs, organised communal groups and terrorist or guerrilla organisations instead of governments, professional soldiers or conscripts); methods (increased use of terror and guerrilla actions and deliberate targeting of civilians instead of combat in conventional battlefields); and models of financing (external rather than internal).

Whether the objectives of contemporary wars have changed is contested, however. While some argue that new wars are no longer about ideology and nationalism and focus instead on identity and group conflicts; others stress that group labels can only resonate if tied to a specific political project. Wars are still fought, they argue, for economic, political, ideological and geopolitical reasons. In particular, control over and access to resources is still prevalent in many violent conflicts. Both nationalism and identity can come into play as a mechanism to provide justification for unique claims of control over resources and territory to the (forced) exclusion of other groups.

In addition, many authors argue that many contemporary conflicts – even if not inter-state – have a regional or global dimension. For example, in West Africa and the Great Lakes region, internal conflicts have become interlinked to produce regional civil wars and conflict systems. Furthermore, some contemporary terrorist activities are global in their reach, with loosely linked groups fighting on many fronts simultaneously and groups moving from country to country to fight in conflicts, like the Afghan *Mujahedeen* in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chechnya, and Iraq.

Along with the recent rise in terrorism, there are new pressures stemming from migration, urbanisation and ‘youth bulges’ (see [children and youth in conflict-affected areas](#)) that, combined with poor economic opportunities, seem to have resulted in a rise in urban violence. Violence against women is also on the rise during peacetime and during conflict. Rape and other forms of gender-based violence are increasingly used as instruments of war (see [women in conflict-affected areas](#)).

#### “New wars”

[Kaldor, M. and Luckham, R. 2001, 'Global Transformations and New Conflicts', IDS Bulletin, 32\(2\), pp. 48-59, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton](#)

This article reviews the characteristics and legacies of post-Cold War conflicts, and the steps for building democratic peace. Most modern conflicts result from a breakdown in the legitimacy of political authority; the effects of globalisation, and powerful economic incentives for dissidents to take up arms against the state. They are generally struggles for control over, or access to, state

power rather than against substantive grievances. Most current wars are also based on identity, using pre-existing cleavages (racial, ethnic, linguistic, religious) for political mobilisation. Military victories are now difficult and rare. Post-Cold War conflicts predominantly involve a wide range of global and regional actors: Major powers; international agencies; neighbouring states; diaspora groups; arms salesmen; mercenaries and criminal networks. Greater access to global and regional institutions could provide greater accountability of external actors to local populations.

[Malešvić, S., 2008, 'The Sociology of New Wars? Assessing the Causes and Objectives of Contemporary Violent Conflicts', \*International Political Sociology\*, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 97–112](#)

Are recent wars completely different to their predecessors? What are the purposes and causes of new wars? This paper looks at sociological accounts of warfare and uncovers weaknesses in their explanation of new wars. It challenges the notion that there has been a dramatic shift in the causes and objectives of contemporary violent conflict. What has changed is reliance on technology and the social, political and ideological context in which recent wars are fought.

[Bailes, A.J.K., Krause, K. and Winkler, T. H., 2007, 'The Shifting Face of Violence', Policy Paper, no. 18, Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces', Geneva](#)

How has the nature of violence changed in the post-Cold War era? What can be done to stop, or at least reduce, the potential for increased violence? This paper presents a variety of different perspectives on recent trends in conflict and security.

### ***Urbanisation***

[Beall, J., 2007, 'Cities, Terrorism and Urban Wars of the 21st Century', Working Paper no. 9, Crisis States Research Centre, London](#)

What impact do acts of terror have on cities in the global South? This paper examines the largely negative implications of terrorist activities for development and the potential of cities for propelling reconstruction and peacebuilding. While specific challenges faced by cities in the global South cannot be under-estimated, urban terrorism is breaking down any sense of a rigid binary between the 'developed' and 'developing' worlds. The 'them' and 'us' attitude is misleading and damaging to both development cooperation and global security.

Sommers, M., 2003, 'Urbanisation, War and Africa's Youth at Risk: Towards Understanding and Addressing Future Challenges', Basic Education and Policy Support (BEPS) Activity, USAID, Washington, DC

[Access full text: available online](#)

### ***Radicalisation and Terrorism***

[Brynjar, L. and Skjølberg, K., 2004, 'Causes of Terrorism: An Expanded and Updated Review of the Literature', FFI/RAPPORT-2004/04307, Norwegian Defence Research Establishment, Kjeller](#)

Why are some societies more exposed to terrorism than others? What are the common theories and hypotheses concerning the causes of terrorism? This paper surveys theories on the causes of terrorism, as well as those for explaining terrorism on an international or world system level of analysis.

Okumu, W. and Botha, A. (eds.), 2006, 'Understanding Terrorism: In Search for an African Voice', Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria

[Access full text: available online](#)

[European Commission's Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation, 2008, 'Radicalisation Processes Leading to Acts of Terrorism' Submitted to the European Commission](#)

Understanding the origins of violent radicalisation requires understanding that terrorist groups consist of different types of disaffected individuals who undergo different paths of radicalisation. This report analyses empirical facts on violent radicalisation, recent academic literature and the link between external conflicts and violent radicalisation. More research on individuals who join terrorist groups, terrorist recruitment, indoctrination and training, and types and development of current radicalisation processes, would inform future state response strategies.

### **Transnational politics and role of diaspora**

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The role that diasporas can play in fuelling conflict has received increasing attention in recent years. The traditional focus has been on the role that remittances play in funding violent conflicts. Yet, diasporas also play a key political role in conflict in their countries of origin and can reinforce, exacerbate and prolong violent conflict.

Diaspora groups, and group members, cannot be treated uniformly, however. Groups evolve distinctly and adopt varying outlooks on homeland politics, different levels of involvement, strategies and methods of recruitment, mobilisation and participation. In general, diaspora groups have the potential to contribute to conflict escalation as well as to peace processes. They may also change their positions over time. An understanding of such transnational politics is essential in conflict analysis.

Ethnic groups often span international borders. Recent research has found that the existence of transnational ties can increase the risk of conflict, since cross-border groups can be difficult for national governments to control.

[Horst, C., 2008, 'The Transnational Political Engagements of Refugees: Remittance Sending Practices Amongst Somalis in Norway', \*Conflict, Security and Development\*, vol. 8, no. 3, pp. 317-339](#)

How do diaspora groups seek to influence political developments in their home countries? What can be learned from the engagement of Somalis living in Norway with conflict and reconciliation processes in the Somali territories? This article shows that the Norwegian Somali diaspora engages primarily on a sub-national level – through clan relationships rather than through 'state' entities. Diaspora groups promote conflict and peace, and may promote both simultaneously. Their substantial remittance flows can alter the local balance of economic, political and military power.

[Lyons, T., 2007, 'Conflict-generated Diasporas and Transnational Politics in Ethiopia', \*Conflict, Security and Development\*, vol. 7, no. 4, pp. 529-549](#)

How can diaspora groups created by conflict contribute to either increased polarisation or new opportunities for peace in the homeland? This article explores ways in which conflict-generated diaspora groups link processes of globalisation and transnational migration to homeland politics and conflicts. The case of the Ethiopian diaspora in North America illustrates how recent political developments were shaped by this diaspora and points to broader patterns of linkages among diasporas and homeland processes.

[Fair, C., 2005, 'Diaspora Involvement in Insurgencies: Insights from the Khalistan and Tamil Eelam Movements', \*Nationalism and Ethnic Politics\*, vol. 11, pp. 125-156](#)

How are diasporas involved in ethnic conflict in their homelands? This paper examines the role of diasporas in north India's Punjab insurgency and Sri Lanka's Tamil insurgency. Both Sikhs and

Tamils have mobilised financial, diplomatic, social and religious support. But while the Sikh diaspora has never developed a sophisticated over-arching structure, the Tamils have created an infrastructure with considerable global scope and strategy.

Cederman, L., Girardin, L. and Gleditsch, K.S., 2009, 'Ethnonationalist Triads: Assessing the Influence of Kin Groups on Civil Wars', *World Politics*, Volume 61, Number 3, pp. 403-437

[Access full text: available online](#)

Although, research has generally focused on the role diaspora groups can have in fuelling violence, members of the diaspora can also be proponents of non-violent, positive social change. They play an important role in peace processes and post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding.

For discussion and resources on the role of diasporas in peacebuilding, see the diaspora section in [non-state actors and peacebuilding](#) in this guide.

## **Mobilisation into violence**

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### ***Processes of mobilisation***

People or groups do not haphazardly fight each other, even if stark inequalities or other grievances prevail in a society; rather, they need to be mobilised. An understanding of these processes of mobilisation is critical to understanding and preventing violent conflict.

Research has demonstrated that some form of ideology or legitimising narrative is usually required to mobilise people into collective action – including of a violent nature. Many authors argue that identity-based ideologies are particularly effective: it is easier for leaders to mobilise followers based on ethnicity or religion, as targets are more easily identifiable; loyalties are more fixed and unambiguous; and (in the case religion in particular) there are often ready-made networks that can be used for mass recruitment for war efforts. Others stress, however, that identities are socially constructed (see section on [identity politics](#)) and that processes of ethnic or religious mobilisation are similar to those in other types of conflict, such as class conflicts. Most authors agree, however, that to be effective, legitimising ideologies must resonate with existing narratives in a society. For example, in Rwanda, research has found that mobilisation required the existence of a collective memory among the Hutu population of a history of oppression at the hands of the Tutsi population, which was then utilised and distorted in the genocidal propaganda.

[Kalyvas, S. N., 2008, 'Ethnic Defection in Civil War', \*Comparative Political Studies\*, vol. 41, no. 8, pp. 1043-1068](#)

How common is ethnic defection during civil war? This study examines the relationship between ethnic identity and civil war and points to instances of fluidity in the expression of ethnic identities within civil war. It argues that ethnic defection is best predicted by the extent of territorial control exercised by the main political actors and the level of prior insurgent violence. Ethnic defection is a function of the resources available to political actors. It is important therefore to analyse the internal dynamics of civil wars.

[McDoom, O., 2005, 'Rwanda's Ordinary Killers: Interpreting Popular Participation in the Rwandan Genocide', \*Working Paper, no. 77, Crisis States Research Centre, London School of Economics and Political Science, London\*](#)

The theory that state influence alone can trigger genocide is an insufficient explanation of the 1994 genocide of Tutsis by Hutus in Rwanda. This paper reports on a research project that

examines the question of why so many ordinary Hutus participated in the genocide. The bottom-up factor of a Hutu mindset of historic grievances against Tutsis was a necessary pre-condition for genocide of this scale and execution to occur.

Eck, K., 2009, 'From Armed Conflict to War: Ethnic Mobilisation and Conflict Intensification', *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 53, no. 2, pp 369 – 388

[Access full text: available online](#)

[Harpviken, K. B. and Røislien, H. E., 2008, 'Faithful Brokers? Potentials and Pitfalls of Religion in Peacemaking', \*Conflict Resolution Quarterly\*, vol. 25, no. 3, pp. 351-373](#)

What potential do religious actors have for acting as constructive peacemakers? How does the fundamental identity of the peace broker affect the chances of success? This article examines the role of religious actors in peacemaking. Three facets of religion – norms, identity, and organisation – are analysed. Each may feed into the emergence or escalation of conflict, and each is in itself transformed through exposure to armed conflict. Similarly, each facet forms part of the peacemaking potential of religious actors. Religious brokers may be of three distinct types: the 'liaison', the 'coordinator', and the 'representative'. Religious actors should not be assumed to have inherent peacemaking capability, but religion is an integral dimension of most attempts to foster peace and must not be neglected.

For additional discussion and resources on ethno-religious mobilisation, see [identity politics](#) under causes of conflict.

For discussion and resources on the role of religious actors in peacemaking and peacebuilding, see 'religious peacemaking' in [direct prevention mechanisms](#) and 'religious actors' in [non-state actors and peacebuilding](#).

### ***Micro-dynamics of armed groups***

Greater attention has been paid in recent years to micro-level analysis of violent conflict, in particular: why individuals decide to fight, incentive structures, how armed groups are formed and how they function. While such research can be challenging and time-consuming, an understanding of these motivations and micro-dynamics is critical in designing strategies to deter individual and group participation in violence and to influence conflict management and peace processes with armed groups.

On an individual level, recent research on participation in civil war (based on surveys of fighters in Sierra Leone) finds that socioeconomic grievances, the expectation of material incentives and personal safety, and social pressures linked to family and community, are all important motivations. Involuntary participation – the abduction or coercion into service - is also a critical issue. It is important to recognise that the determinants of individual participation and mobilisation are dynamic and vary over time. It is especially challenging for armed groups to motivate people to participate when the risks are high and returns uncertain.

On a group level, the development of armed groups often relies on pre-existing structures and institutional settings. Recent research on the formation of armed groups identifies three key mechanisms through which such groups come into existence: the resort to armed action by opposition that has been violently repressed by government forces; resort to armed action by individuals who feel excluded from neo-patrimonial networks organise; the evolution of state-supported irregular forces into free actors. These differently formed groups vary in their legitimacy

and their ability to attract and sustain members and popular support, with the first type of formation having the most legitimacy and stability.

[Humphreys, M., and Weinstein, J. M., 2008, 'Who Fights? The Determinants of Participation in Civil War', \*American Journal of Political Science\*, vol. 52, no. 2, pp. 436-455](#)

Why do individuals choose to participate in civil war? Why do some individuals fight against the government while others defend the status quo? This study tests the three major theories relating to participation using testimony from ex-combatants who participated in Sierra Leone's civil war. The results indicate the relevance of all three theories: grievance, selective incentives, and social sanctions, directing attention to the interaction between them. Factors such as poverty, a lack of access to education, and political alienation prove to be important in determining participation but the evidence suggests that they may indicate a general susceptibility to engage in violence or a greater vulnerability to political manipulation by elites rather than political grievances.

[Schlichte K., 2009, 'With the State against the State? The Formation of Armed Groups ', \*Contemporary Security Policy\*, vol. 30, no. 2, pp. 246 – 264](#)

How do armed groups develop? This article investigates the formation of armed groups using the concept of figuration, which emphasises the interdependence of individuals. There are three main ways by which armed groups come into being: in response to violent repression, through exclusion from the ruling class and when government-created informal armed forces become free from state control. These mechanisms provide insights into the conditions under which armed groups are likely to form and whether they become institutionalised.

[Kalyvas, S.N., 2008, 'Promises and Pitfalls of an Emerging Research Program: The Microdynamics of Civil War', in \*Order, Conflict, Violence\*, eds. S. N. Kalyvas, I. Shapiro and T. Masoud, Cambridge University, Cambridge, pp. 397-421](#)

How can micro-level research on the dynamics of civil war be improved? This chapter analyses micro-level studies of civil war, identifying a mismatch between their micro-level empirical focus and their macro-level conceptual and theoretical focus. This mismatch leads to difficulties that introduce bias: problematic proxies resulting from concept conflation, observational equivalence, endogeneity, over-aggregated variables, and the omission of significant variables. Engaging with cases, careful and detailed collection of fine-grained data, and thorough theorisation are therefore needed.

### ***Social capital and social fragmentation***

Social capital refers to the norms, values and institutions that govern social relations and bond communities together, as well as the bridges between communal groups and the state. Research has found that the degree of state responsiveness (vertical social capital) and the extent to which cross-cutting networks of relations among diverse communal groups exist (horizontal social capital) can determine the likelihood of violent conflict. High levels of social capital indicate a more cohesive society with inclusive mechanisms that can mediate conflicts and prevent violence. Associational forms of engagement that cut across identity groups, such as civic networks, trade unions, agricultural cooperatives and professional associations, can bridge communities.

While social capital can be constructive and support social cohesion and the mitigation of conflict, it can also be perverted and used to hasten social fragmentation and resort to violence. When there is a climate of tension in societies, it is highly likely that associations are separated by

conflicting groups whereby each group has, for example, their own student association or teacher union. This can foster radicalisation of group identities. The absence of cross-cutting groups facilitates the spread of divisive rumours, which can lead to violence. The genocide in Rwanda was preceded by the disappearance of cross-cutting associations and collapse of social capital between groups, combined with the strengthening of ties and social capital within groups.

[Colletta, N. J. and Cullen, M. L., 2000, 'The Nexus between Violent Conflict, Social Capital and Social Cohesion: Case Studies from Cambodia and Rwanda', World Bank, Washington DC](#)

What is the interaction between social capital, social cohesion and violent conflict? How can governments and international actors foster the socially cohesive relations necessary for conflict prevention, rehabilitation and reconciliation? This report uses data from two communities in Cambodia and Rwanda, in high and low intensity conflict areas. It is argued that the higher state responsiveness and cross cutting network relations intersect, the more likely society will have the inclusion and cohesiveness necessary to mediate conflict and prevent violence.

[Pinchotti, S. and Verwimp, P., 2007, 'Social Capital and the Rwandan Genocide: A Micro-Level Analysis' Households in Conflict Network, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton](#)

What motivates people to kill their neighbours, friends and family members? Can we understand when genocide will happen and prevent it from recurring? This paper is a micro-level analysis of case studies in the remote cellules of Akatwa and Nyagasera. Learning to observe and predict shifts in social capital could serve as a way to monitor potential outbreaks of mass violence or genocide. Rwanda needs to reach a balance of strong horizontal associations and decentralized vertical associations.

### ***Social-psychological elements – humiliation and collective fears***

The role of social-psychological factors in mobilisation has been gaining attention in international relations and conflict literature. These perspectives understand conflict as a process driven by collective needs and fears. In the absence of mutual reassurances, parties to the conflict begin to process information in a way that confirms negative images and ignores disconfirming evidence. This exacerbates fears and results in conflict escalation.

Humiliation is another emotion that has the potential to mobilise. For example, research has found that humiliation, in particular public humiliation, and feelings of betrayal have strong resonance in Arab culture. They are connected to shame and loss of dignity, both of which are considered to be painful emotions, warranting revenge. These discourses have increasingly been adopted by transnational militant Islamists and have been successful in mobilising recruits to terrorist activities, in order to avenge humiliation, in a region that had traditionally been highly secular.

[Kelman, H. C., 2009, 'A Social-Psychological Approach to Conflict Analysis and Resolution', in Handbook of Conflict Analysis and Resolution, eds., D. J. D. Sandole, et al., Oxon and New York, pp. 171-183](#)

How can social-psychological theory and research inform the analysis and resolution of international conflict? This chapter outlines psychological processes that promote the escalation and perpetuation of conflict. A conflict relationship generates images and norms that entrench conflict and create barriers to change. Conflict resolution work must therefore identify possibilities and conditions for change and overcome resistance to change.

[Fattah, K. and Fierke, K. M., 2009, 'A Clash of Emotions: The Politics of Humiliation and Political Violence in the Middle East', European Journal of International Relations, vol. 15, no. 1, pp. 67-93](#)

What role does emotion play in political violence in the Middle East? Why are discourses of humiliation so pervasive in the region? This article explores why humiliation provides such a powerful motivation for political violence. Both militant Islamists and the United States, through its War on Terror, have exacerbated the sense of humiliation in the region. The principle of human dignity needs to be used to rethink the international approach to the Middle East.

For discussion and resources on the role of media in mobilisation, see the section on [the media](#) under peace and conflict architecture in this guide.

## **Conflict dynamics**

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### ***Escalation and sustainability***

Conflict escalation can be defined as an increase in the magnitude of disagreements, hostilities or violence (Shale 2006). Many conflict theorists find that the likelihood of conflict escalation depends on the way the parties involved react in response to others. Where parties or institutions do not manage conflict well and react with force, conflict can escalate. In Zimbabwe, for example, the violence meted out during Operation Murambatsvina escalated the political conflict, polarising communities and rupturing relationships. Such fissures and hostilities can be a cause of future conflict.

Such dynamics contribute to the sustainability of conflict. The literature on 'greed' (see [resource and environmental factors](#) under causes of conflict) introduced the notion that the original causes of conflict may not be the same factors that sustain war. It is thus important to adopt a chronological, contextual and dynamic approach when engaging in causal analysis in order to understand how the conflict has developed over time.

[Shale, V., 2006, 'Operation Murambatsvina: The Dynamics and Escalation of Zimbabwean Intra-state Conflict', \*African Journal on Conflict Resolution\*, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 107-126](#)

Why does Zimbabwe remain trapped in a cycle of political violence and economic crisis? This article argues that Zimbabwe's Operation Murambatsvina of 2005 was a purge directed against opposition supporters, and an example of Pruitt and Rubin's 'structural change' model of conflict escalation. The human cost of violence and impoverishment in Zimbabwe includes a disturbing trend of polarisation, mistrust and hostility within the community.

[Maitre, B., 2009, 'What Sustains 'Internal Wars'? The Dynamics of Violent Conflict and State Weakness in Sudan', \*Third World Quarterly\*, vol. 30, no. 1, pp. 53-68](#)

Are the factors that start internal wars the same as the factors that sustain them? This paper argues that the international community has been misguided in focusing on determining the causalities of internal wars and should instead focus on the contextual conditions and dynamic relationships that allow them to continue. Using the conflicts in Sudan as a case study, the paper concludes that time alters the reasons why internal wars are fought, and argues that the international community is not well placed to intervene.

### ***Feasibility and availability of arms***

Recent analysis has also stressed 'feasibility' as a key factor in explaining where and when conflict can occur. Many authors stress, for example, that the easy availability of small arms and light weapons has rendered resort to violence less costly and more likely.

[Collier, P., Hoeffler, A. and Rohner, D., 2006, 'Beyond Greed and Grievance: Feasibility and Civil War', CSAE Working Paper Series, no. 10, Centre for the Study of African Economies, University of Oxford, Oxford](#)

A key distinction among theories of civil war is between those that are built upon motivation and those that are built upon feasibility. This article explores this distinction by analysing a comprehensive global sample of civil wars between 1965 and 2004. The results substantiate the 'feasibility hypothesis' which contends that where civil war is feasible, it will occur without reference to motivation.

An updated version of this paper is available [here](#).

[IANSA, Amnesty International, and Oxfam, 2006, 'Arms without Borders: Why a Globalised Trade Needs Global Controls: Lack of Responsibility in the Ownership and Production of the Global Arms Industry', Oxfam](#)

The global arms trade will soon reach record levels, yet as weapons production has become more globalised, national regulations are insufficient to prevent unlawful use. What needs to be done to ensure that the burgeoning trade in arms is properly contained? This report examines how the proliferation of improperly controlled weapons has serious negative implications for conflict resolution, human rights and development. It argues that there is an urgent need for a legally binding Arms Trade Treaty that will create minimum global standards for arms transfers.

[Ojaborotu, V. and Okeke-Uzodike, U., 2006, 'Oil, Arms Proliferation and Conflict in the Niger Delta of Nigeria', African Journal on Conflict Resolution, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 85-106](#)

What fuels the present-day oil violence in the Niger Delta? This paper analyses the main sources of conflict, in particular a thriving small arms trade. Weapons smuggled through Guinea-Bissau, Gabon and Cameroon continue to supply ethnic militias. While addressing arms trafficking through border control can reduce the escalation of conflict, a key issue is inequity in Nigerian federalism. Adequate representation of minority interests needs to be addressed as an integral part of the project to create a true democracy, good governance, an enhanced position for ethnic minorities and transparent fiscal control.

## **Impact of conflict**

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Violent conflict has devastating effects across a range of areas, many of which have lasting impacts.

**Human toll:** Violent conflict results in loss of life, disablement, rape and sexual violence, displacement and forced migration, the spread of disease and famine. Loss of life continues into the future with the spread of HIV/AIDS and the presence of landmines.

**Social systems:** Armed conflicts disrupt and destroy families and community life. Family systems are undermined through the deliberate targeting of women, the recruitment of children to join ranks of rebel groups, massive displacements, and losses of life and property.

**Political governance:** Violent conflict impacts negatively on the rule of law, state capacity, and democratic political processes. Corruption and criminality often take root, and the influence of military actors rises. Politically excluded groups are increasingly marginalised and targeted.

Socioeconomic costs: Infrastructure, capital stock and household assets are destroyed during conflict, investment declines, and household and national incomes drop. The loss of livelihoods, due in part to the destruction of infrastructure and natural resources, and lack of employment opportunities coincides with a weakened social safety net and a decline in the capacity of the state to provide services, such as health and education. Socioeconomic indicators demonstrate that impacts of conflict include declining literacy, a drop in life expectancy and increased infant mortality. The collapse of education systems and the loss of educated populations (due to death or displacement) have negative long-term implications for human capital and economic productivity.

The development of war economies, trade in illicit goods and a focus on informal sectors to cope with the weakening of the formal sector, can distort economic production and growth. Resource exploitation, the depletion of natural resources and other forms of environmental degradation can have long-term adverse effects for sustainable development.

Social capital: The processes and impact of violent conflict weakens and in some cases destroys the social fabric of societies. Conflict disrupts social relations and can result in social dislocation, and a decline in interpersonal and communal group trust. While social capital within a group may be strengthened, social capital across groups is weakened by the destruction of the norms and values that underlie cooperation.

Social-psychological: Experiencing violent conflict can be extremely traumatic. Many war-affected persons suffer from post-traumatic stress syndrome, which contributes to poor mental and physical health, reduced quality of life, and in some cases, greater difficulties in work, education and family life - and increased violent behaviour. Women who have endured sexual violence can suffer rejection in their own families and communities. Youth and children are at particular risk: research has shown that experiencing violence at an early age results in higher risk of perpetuating violence. Feelings of humiliation and betrayal, and the desire for revenge, can also perpetuate a cycle of violence in which 'underlings' rise to power, engage in extreme acts, inflicting indignities on those who had done the same to them.

Legacy of large-scale human rights abuses: Violent conflict results from and produces a breakdown in law and order and the perpetration of human rights abuses on a mass scale – by government, non-state actors, and in the case of transnational conflicts, external actors. Addressing this legacy and finding the appropriate methods to come to terms with it is a key challenge in conflict-affected societies. Left unaddressed, there is the risk that grievances will persist and societies will remain locked in conflict dynamics.

Regional/global impact: Violent conflict has various effects in neighbouring countries and beyond as arms, drugs, conflict resources and refugees spill over the border. Mass refugee migration in particular can place a large economic burden on host countries. Neighbouring countries may also suffer from damage to cross-border infrastructure and the environmental impacts of conflict.

[UNDP, 2008, 'Legacies of Armed Conflict', Chapter 2 in Post-Conflict Economic Recovery: Enabling Local Ingenuity, Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery \(BCPR\), UNDP, New York, pp. 14-47](#)

What are the economic legacies of armed conflict? How should policymakers approach these legacies in recovery strategies? This chapter argues that post-conflict countries are not blank slates on which new economic and social systems can be built. For a recovery strategy to work, it must acknowledge the legacies of armed conflict and consolidate those that contribute towards peace and stability.

[Sexsmith, K., 2009, 'Violent Conflict and Social Transformation: An Institutionalist Approach to the Role of Informal Economic Networks' European Journal of Development Research, vol. 21 no. 1, pp. 81–94](#)

What is the role of informal economic networks in violent conflict? This article finds that in Somalia customary institutions of trust were preserved during conflict and contributed to economic coordination and conflict mediation. In Sierra Leone, patrimonial networks led to social collapse. Thus, social transformations arising from conflict can be productive or destructive, depending on the institutions embedded in social networks. The historical relationship of informal networks to the state shapes the institutional content of these networks.

[Orero, M. et al, 2007, 'The Impact of Conflict on the Intergenerational Transmission of Chronic Poverty', Working Paper, no. 71, Chronic Poverty Research Centre, Manchester](#)

What impact does conflict have on the intergenerational transmission of chronic poverty? This paper reviews conflict and poverty literature, and finds that conflict is likely a contributory factor to the intergenerational transmission of chronic poverty. It cautions, however, that the causal link is difficult to demonstrate and requires further research based on longitudinal approaches to better map the relationship between conflict and poverty.

[Justino, P., 2009, 'The Impact of Armed Civil Conflict on Household Welfare and Policy Responses', HiCN Working Paper, no. 61, Households in Conflict Network, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton](#)

How does armed conflict impact on households and how do they respond to and cope with it? This paper examines the direct and indirect effects of conflicts and shows that the indirect effects are channelled through markets, political institutions and social networks. Until there is more research on the fundamental processes linking armed civil conflict and household welfare, it will be difficult to develop effective policies for preventing and resolving conflicts.

### **Additional resources**

For discussion and resources on the impact of conflict on women and girls, see the [women in conflict-affected areas](#) section of this guide.

For discussion and resources on the impact of conflict on social exclusion, see the [underlying causes of conflict](#) section of the GSDRC's social exclusion guide.

For discussion and resources on addressing the legacy of large-scale human rights abuses, see the [transitional justice](#) section of the GSDRC's [justice](#) guide.

## Conflict Analysis: Frameworks and Tools

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Conflict analysis is an essential yet tremendously challenging process. The aim is to gain a comprehensive and shared understanding of potential or ongoing violent conflicts. This usually involves an assessment of key conflict factors (sources of tension and root causes of conflict, including linkages and synergies), actors (interests, potential spoilers, capacities for violence and peace, incentives required to promote peace), and dynamics (triggers for violence, local capacities for peaceful and constructive conflict management, likely future scenarios). Analysis is undertaken at local, national, regional and international levels.

Conflict analysis should inform decision-making with the aim of improving the effectiveness of conflict prevention, conflict management and peacebuilding interventions, including the effectiveness of development and humanitarian assistance (see the following section on [conflict sensitive development](#)). It is important to emphasise that conflict analysis is an ongoing process and not a static, one-off exercise. As such, process design is very important.

The following are a selection of conflict analysis frameworks and tools adopted by international organisations, donor agencies and non-governmental organisations. While there are a variety of analytical frameworks and tools, many follow a similar logic. It is beneficial to find one most suited to a particular need or situation and to further adapt it, rather than understanding them as rigid frameworks.

### **United Nations**

[UNDG/ECHA, 2004, 'Interagency Framework for Conflict Analysis in Transition Situations', UNDG/ECHA](#)

United Nations (UN) post-conflict responses should be based on standardised inter-agency analyses to help overcome structures that lead to violent conflict and to promote integrated peace. This report outlines analytical components necessary to understand conflict causes and dynamics that support peace efforts in a transition situation. Application of such an analytical framework would help construct subsequent UN programming that incorporates context-specific factors and supports the achievement of lasting peace.

UNDP, 2003, 'Conflict-related Development Analysis (CDA)', Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, United Nations Development Programme, New York  
[Access full text: available online](#)

### **World Bank**

[Wam, P. and Sardesai, S. 2005 'The Conflict Analysis Framework', Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Team \(CPR\), The World Bank, Washington DC](#)

Conflict sensitive approaches to development assistance can help prevent the onset, exacerbation or resurgence of violent conflict. The World Bank's Conflict Analysis Framework (CAF) is a tool to assess the causes and consequences of conflict, determine a country's resilience to conflict, and developing appropriate conflict sensitive approaches to programming. This paper outlines the stages of the CAF, examining when and how it should be applied.

[World Bank, 2006, 'Effective Conflict Analysis Exercises: Overcoming Organisational Challenges?', Report No. 36446-GLB, 21 June 2006, The World Bank, Washington DC](#)

Understanding the social and economic factors that affect conflict improves the effectiveness of development strategies and programmes. This paper examines the process of conducting conflict analyses and recommends how they should be organised, applied and disseminated. Creating buy-in for the analysis by country teams, use of local partners and dissemination of analysis findings are key to executing an effective conflict analysis.

### ***Bilateral donors***

[Goodhand, J., Vaux, T., and Walker, R., 2002, 'Conducting Conflict Assessments: Guidance Notes', Department for International Development \(DFID\), London](#)

These guidance notes explain the principles and methodology of conducting effective strategic conflict analyses (SCAs). DFID's SCAs have three key aims: to map out causes and trends in a conflict; analysis of international responses to it; and development of future policy options. An abridged example is given as an appendix to the guide, along with sources of further information. SCAs should include international factors, risks and impacts of development interventions, and suggestions for making policies more conflict-sensitive. Flexibility is key: adapt SCAs to the end user's needs; be aware of the nature and phase of conflict; identify particular actors and triggers which could cause latent tensions to erupt into conflict.

[US Agency for International Development, 2004, 'Conducting a Conflict Assessment. A Framework for Analysis and Program Development, Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation', United States Agency for International Development \(USAID\), Washington, D.C.](#)

What can international donors do to help prevent conflict? This paper presents a conflict assessment framework. It is designed to help USAID Missions gain a deeper understanding of the causes of conflict and think about how to use development assistance more strategically in order to address them. It emphasises the interactions between the motives, means and opportunities for conflict, and recommends that donors take an integrated approach.

SIDA, 2006, 'Manual for Conflict Analysis', Division for Peace and Security through Development Cooperation, Methods Document, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Stockholm

[Access full text: available online](#)

Leonhardt, M., 2002, 'Conflict Analysis for Project Planning and Implementation', GTZ

[Access full text: available online](#)

### ***NGOs***

[FEWER, International Alert, and Saferworld, 2004, 'Chapter 2: Conflict Analysis', Conflict Sensitive Approaches to Development, Humanitarian Assistance, and Peacebuilding: A Resource Pack, London](#)

What is conflict analysis and why is it important? This chapter places conflict analysis at the foundation of a conflict sensitive approach. Without understanding the context in which interventions are situated, organisations implementing them may unintentionally fuel conflict. While conflicts are too complex for a single process to do them justice, key features of analysis are conflict profile, causes, actors and dynamics.

Specht, I., 2008, 'Conflict Analysis: Practical tool to Analyse Conflict in Order to Prioritise and Strategise Conflict Transformation Programmes', ICCO, Kirk in Action, and Transitional International

[Access full text: available online](#)

### ***Gender mainstreaming***

Anderlini, S. N., 2006, 'Mainstreaming Gender in Conflict Analysis: Issues and Recommendations', Social Development Papers, no. 33, World Bank, Washington, DC

[Access full text: available online](#)

For additional resources on gender in conflict analysis, see [gender analysis and gender-sensitivity in post-conflict recovery](#) in this guide.

## Conflict Sensitive Development

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There has been greater focus in recent years on the links between conflict, peace, security and development. Not only is development seen as an integral aspect of security, conflict resolution, management and peacebuilding; but there is also recognition that humanitarian and development policies and activities can cause harm. The recent emphasis on conflict sensitive development largely emerged as a result of the stark realisation after the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 that prior development aid had reinforced the politics of exclusion and repression in the country.

Conflict sensitivity is an overall term to describe different efforts, methods and tools for working in conflict-prone and conflict-affected areas, with the aim of (1.) reducing the risk that aid unintentionally contributes to the escalation or sustainability of violent conflict ('Do no harm'); and (2.) contributing to peacebuilding. It involves thorough analysis of the context in which an intervention takes place; and of the interaction between the context, the intervention, and conflict or peace dynamics. Programming should be based closely on this analysis, and should adapt in response to regular monitoring and evaluation.

Conflict and peace academics and practitioners emphasise that 'avoiding harm' and 'doing some good' does not automatically contribute to peacebuilding. In order to impact on peacebuilding, it is necessary to link conflict sensitive programming with a broader national and international peace strategy; and to collaborate with relevant actors outside the field of development, including political and diplomatic actors. Collaboration may also need to extend to parties to the conflict, including armed non-state actors (see 'negotiating with non-state armed groups' in [conflict negotiation](#)).

It is also necessary to recognise that post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding strategies are not inherently pro-peace. Democratisation planning and processes for example, which form part of many post-conflict international interventions, require a comprehensive understanding of existing indigenous governance norms and approaches. This can help to ensure that interventions do not entrench existing inequitable and unjust power structures, or entrench identities in a way that produces tensions (see 'power sharing' in [peace agreements](#) and [governance programming](#) in the peacebuilding component of this guide).

### Conflict sensitivity: overview, approaches and programming

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[Paffenholz, T., 2009, 'Understanding the Conflict-Development Nexus and the Contribution of Development Cooperation to Peacebuilding', in Handbook of Conflict Analysis and Resolution, eds., D. J. D. Sandole, S. Byrne, I. Sandole-Staroste, and J. Senehi, Routledge, Oxon and New York, pp. 272-285](#)

How does development cooperation contribute to peacebuilding? This chapter examines connections between conflict, security, peace and development. It summarises: (a) research debates about the causes of armed conflict; (b) discourse in the development community on

conflict and peace and (c) the influence of these debates and discourses on development cooperation in conflict-affected contexts. Development policies should be an integral part of the peacebuilding agenda. But transfer from research to policy has largely ignored the complexity of development in conflict situations and the contribution of development to peacebuilding.

[Goodhand, J., 2006, 'Working "in" and "on" War', in Civil War, Civil Peace, eds. H. Yanacopulos, and J. Hanlon, Open University in association with James Currey, Oxford and Ohio University Press, Athens, Ohio](#)

Individuals working 'in' or 'on' war cannot be considered as neutral actors because their decisions have an impact on war itself. This chapter argues that those who intervene in conflict situations need to think of themselves less as project managers and more as change agents who understand and influence the conflict. Interveners need to look beyond the traditional project-based approaches and engender a strategic shift from 'development as delivery' to 'development as leverage'.

[Anderson, M., 1999, 'Reflecting on the Role of Aid' in Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace - or War, Lynne Rienner Publishers, USA, pp. 145-147.](#)

How does the micro level of warfare relate to the macro level? What is the appropriate relationship between outsiders and insiders in conflict areas? This chapter reflects on the experiences of aid workers in order to understand the challenges faced by development agencies in conflict settings. International agencies need to find a way of insisting that appropriate political actions are taken, while remaining non-political in providing aid.

[Barbolet, A., Goldwyn, R., Groenewald, H., and Sherriff, A., 2005, 'The Utility and Dilemmas of Conflict Sensitivity', Berghof Research Centre for Constructive Conflict Management, Berlin](#)

Should conflict-sensitivity just be about tools and methodologies? How can the concept be applied more broadly? This paper explores new directions in conflict sensitivity. Conflict sensitivity is an investment in learning about the conflict context and a responsibility to act on that learning. It has relevance beyond traditional humanitarian and development sectors, to government, the private sector and peacebuilding. Whilst operational guidance is an important aspect of conflict sensitivity, it should not come in the form of a 'one-size-fits all' approach. A more encompassing approach - that goes beyond tools and methodologies - is needed.

SDC, 2006, 'Conflict Sensitive Programme Management', COPRET Team, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Bern

[Access full text: available online](#)

[Paffenholz, T., 2005, 'Peace and Conflict Sensitivity in International Cooperation: An Introductory Overview', International Politics and Society, issue no. 4, pp. 63-82](#)

Peace and conflict sensitivity has successfully entered the mainstreaming agenda of development donors and agencies and there has been a tremendous institutionalisation and conceptualisation of the topic. In practical terms however, a co-ordinated system for peace and conflict sensitive aid implementation remains a long way off. This article explores the gap between rhetoric and practice and identifies some of the challenges ahead.

## **Conflict sensitive guidance**

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FEWER, International Alert and Saferworld have pioneered approaches to conflict sensitivity, and have developed a pack for external agencies. This pack covers theory and principles, as well as practical guidance on conflict sensitivity planning and implementation.

[FEWER, International Alert and Saferworld, 2004, 'Applying Conflict Sensitivity at Project and Programme Level', Chapter 3 in Resource Pack on Conflict-Sensitive Approaches, FEWER, International Alert, Saferworld, London](#)

How does designing and implementing projects and programmes in areas of existing or threatened conflict differ from more straightforward development contexts? This chapter of a manual by a consortium of six organisations provides tools for incorporating conflict-sensitivity into project and programme planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E).

[FEWER, International Alert and Saferworld, 2004, 'Integrating Conflict Sensitivity into Sectoral Approaches', Chapter 4 in Resource Pack on Conflict-Sensitive Approaches, FEWER, International Alert, Saferworld, London](#)

What is meant by sectoral approaches and how can conflict sensitivity be incorporated into their development and implementation? This chapter argues that assistance to a country or sector will have an impact (either positive or negative) on conflict risks and dynamics particularly in countries which are affected by, or at risk of, violent conflict. It is therefore imperative that this assistance be implemented in a conflict-sensitive way.

[FEWER, International Alert and Saferworld, 2004, 'Institutional Capacity-building for Conflict Sensitivity', Chapter 5 in Resource Pack on Conflict-Sensitive Approaches, FEWER, International Alert, Saferworld, London](#)

How can practitioners begin the process of mainstreaming conflict sensitivity into an organisation? All practitioners at all levels are both impacted by, and can impact, the development of their institution's capacity for conflict sensitivity. This chapter explores how to mainstream conflict sensitivity in a systemic way, using a six-step framework.

Other sections of the resource pack are available [online](#).

## **Aid for peace and peace and conflict impact assessment**

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'Do no harm' and Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA) are tools that are used to evaluate the impact of external activities in the context of conflict, in terms of minimising harm and promoting peacebuilding. They involve conflict analysis, conflict sensitive project planning, conflict monitoring, and impact assessment.

Focusing on a specific set of tools, however, has been critiqued for limiting the reach and utility of conflict sensitivity. Paffenholz and Reyhler introduce instead the 'Aid for Peace' framework, which is a set of unified and inclusive methodologies that can be used by a broad range of different actors for all sorts of interventions. The framework consists of: analysing the peacebuilding needs of the conflict-affected country; the relevance of the planned or existing policy, programme or projects to these needs; the existing or possible conflict risks; and the potential positive and negative effects of the interventions on the conflict dynamics and peacebuilding process.

[Collaborative for Development Action \(CDA\), 2004, 'The Do No Harm Handbook \(The Framework for Analyzing the Impact of Assistance on Conflict\)', The Collaborative for Development Action Inc, Cambridge, MA](#)

How does development assistance interact with conflict? How can assistance be provided without it being misused to pursue political and military advantage? This handbook offers a framework for

addressing these issues. It aims to help assistance workers deal more effectively with the complexities of providing assistance in conflict contexts.

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2007, 'Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment: Methodical Guidelines', Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung  
[Access full text: available online](#)

[Paffenholz, T., 2005, 'Third-Generation PCIA: Introducing the Aid for Peace Approach', Berghof Research Centre for Constructive Conflict Management, Berlin](#)

How can the Peace for Aid approach help to address the questions surrounding the debate on Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA)? This paper moves on the PCIA approach and debate by presenting Aid for Peace. The Aid for Peace approach is a multi-purpose and multi-level process that facilitates the planning, assessment and evaluation of peace as well as aid interventions in conflict situations.

[Paffenholz, T. and Reyhler, L., 2007, 'Planning and Evaluating Development and Humanitarian Interventions in Conflict Zones', Part 3 in Aid for Peace: A Guide to Planning and Evaluation for Conflict Zones, Nomos, Baden-Baden, Germany pp. 71-127](#)

What is the best way to introduce peace and conflict sensitivity to development and humanitarian programmes? This study provides a guide to planning development and humanitarian interventions in conflict zones. It suggests that while peace and conflict sensitivity has been successfully mainstreamed as a topic of discussion, the international community has not yet arrived at an automatic, systematic peace and conflict sensitive aid policy and operational implementation. There needs to be a systematic link between the analysis of the conflict and peacebuilding environment and the implementation of interventions. The theory of conflict transformation should combine with professional operational requirements for programme planning.

## **Case studies and lessons learned**

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[World Bank, 2005, 'Toward a Conflict-sensitive Poverty Reduction Strategy: Lessons from a Retrospective Analysis', Report no. 32587, World Bank, Washington](#)

Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSPs) have become the primary tool for articulating a vision for growth and poverty reduction in nearly 60 low-income countries. Some 15-20 of these countries are affected by conflict, and other conflict-affected countries are still to begin the process. In what ways do PRSPs in conflict-affected countries take account of their particular contexts? To what extent have assessments of the sources of conflict and the ways they interact with poverty informed the strategies? This report aims to contribute to more effective poverty reduction in countries affected by conflict by analyzing these questions.

[International Alert, 2008, 'Building a Peace Economy in Northern Uganda: Conflict-sensitive Approaches to Recovery and Growth' Investing in Peace, Issue No. 1, International Alert, London](#)

How can policymakers create and support an effective economic recovery strategy in northern Uganda? This paper recommends that policy-makers and implementers adopt more conflict-sensitive approaches to their efforts to contribute to the economic recovery of the region as a part of the overall peacebuilding strategy. Conflict sensitive approaches suggest that all humanitarian and development assistance should be designed so that they intentionally contribute to successful recovery, rather than inadvertently prolonging conflict. Combining conflict sensitive approaches with political economy analysis results in peacebuilding strategies that aim to address underlying power disparities and vulnerabilities.

[International Alert, 2007, 'Peacebuilding in Eastern DRC: Improving EU Support for Economic Recovery', International Alert, London](#)

How can economic activities help to address the factors that undermine sustainable peace? This International Alert report centres on economic recovery in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Efforts are needed to promote job creation and shared income-generating opportunities, as well as to address the drivers of conflict and fragility, if long-term economic recovery is to be realised. In order to ensure that assistance contributes positively to transformational peacebuilding, donors must be prepared to bear high transaction costs, particularly in terms of staff on the ground and longer time frames.

[Barron, P., Diprose, R., and Woolcock, M., 2007, 'Local Conflict and Development Projects in Indonesia: Part of the Problem or Part of a Solution?', World Bank Policy Research Working Paper, no. 4212, World Bank, Washington, DC](#)

Are local conflict and development projects in Indonesia part of the problem or part of the solution? This paper argues that development projects are capable of stimulating as well as reducing conflicts. Those projects that have explicit and accessible procedures for managing disputes arising from the development process are much less likely to cause conflict.

[CECORE, REDROC, Saferworld, and YODEO, 2008, 'Water and Conflict: Making Water Delivery Conflict-Sensitive in Uganda', Saferworld, London](#)

How can conflict-sensitive approaches (CSA) enhance development? This report documents how two water development projects in Uganda became more conflict-sensitive and, as a result, benefited recipient communities. CSA can deepen beneficiary participation and community ownership of development projects. More practical work is needed on implementing CSA within different sectors, and on understanding how best to adapt conflict-sensitive development to different levels and types of conflict.