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Practice Without Evidence: interrogating conflict resolution approaches and assumptions

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Abstract

This paper reviews the evidence base that underpins contemporary approaches to the resolution of violent conflict, in an effort to improve the lives of conflict-affected populations. By means of a systematic literature review the paper explores academic work as well as grey literature that engages with the experiences of the "end-users" of conflict resolution efforts. It finds that current approaches to conflict resolution are often based on weak evidence and normative objectives, and make problematic assumptions with regard to the actors and conflict structures involved, and to the conflict resolution strategies employed. It concludes by highlighting the need to strengthen the evidence base of conflict research if conflict resolution practice is to be brought into line with empirical realities.

Table of Contents

Practice Without Evidence: interrogating conflict resolution approaches and assumptions

Tatiana Carayannis,[1] Vesna Bojicic-Dzelilovic, Nathaniel Olin,
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Introduction

What is the evidence that existing approaches to the resolution of violent conflict have achieved their intended effects to improve the lives of conflict-affected populations? Violent conflict is one of the greatest challenges to development. Two decades of concentrated interventions to mediate, end, or transform violent conflict have generated heated debates and produced a burgeoning field of new scholarship as well as new tools on conflict resolution. Yet, communities worldwide continue to experience conflict every day. It is often unclear whether they experience attempts to resolve violent conflict as successful, or as improving their lives. This paper seeks to highlight the experiences of people at the receiving end of practices of conflict resolution, especially international activities. We refer to them as *end-users*, suggesting that those living in conflict situations should be the primary end-users of the 'product' of conflict resolution.

The paper is premised on the idea that the actual experiences, practices and strategies of conflict-affected populations must be reflected in any investigation or policy process that ultimately may impact on their lives. Thus, we privilege an end-user, or people-centred, approach. We also know that many such end-users live under hybrid governance systems which may exist outside of, overlap, or subvert formal state structures; thus, our approach is not a state-based one. Finally, we believe that conflict response frameworks have failed to keep up with the empirical realities of conflict-affected countries. Therefore, the paper has a normative agenda that aims to improve responses aimed at bettering the lives of people living in conflict.

This paper provides a synthesis of current evidence in peer-reviewed and, to a lesser extent, grey literature on the impact of conflict resolution frameworks on end-users since 1990. It investigates to what extent existing literature on conflict uses empirical data that addresses the experiences and perspectives of the end-user, and assesses the quality of that data. It seeks to understand which interventions in various contexts have improved the lives of conflict-affected populations. Focusing on end-users necessarily omits other literatures on the causes and consequences of conflict, but a limited focus allows for sharper conclusions about the conflict resolution frameworks employed by domestic and international peacebuilders.

No review of existing evidence can be truly global without years of work and a large team of multilingual researchers, since much of the literature outside of western (and Anglophone) social science remains outside electronic database collections, is locally published and/or distributed, and is largely not peer-reviewed. However, the value of assessing the evidence base in academic, peer-reviewed literature in the global North lies in its dominance and disproportionate influence on policy narratives and policymakers, as evidenced by the way

[1] The authors would like to thank Mary Kaldor and David Keen for their substantive inputs; Silvio Cordova, Ambreen Malik, Catriona O'Dowd, Danielle Stein, and Craig Valters from the London School of Economics, and Jelena Bjelica and Damir Kapidžić from the South East Europe Research Network, for their research assistance.

in which the theory and practice of conflict resolution has evolved over the last two decades.

Evolving approaches to 'conflict resolution'

What do we mean by *conflict resolution?* The term has gained currency in the last 20 years, as the end of the Cold War and the eruption of civil wars in eastern and southern Europe and increased attention to such conflicts in Africa stimulated scholars and analysts to explain the changing nature of war and how to end it.

Increasingly, conflicts which are initiated within national borders are fought across entire regions, and involve multiple state and non-state actors. Civilians are caught up in these conflicts in manifold ways: as explicit and primary targets of violence, but also as warring parties. Partly as a reaction to this trend, and partly reflecting an evolution in the international architecture designed to deal with violent conflict, efforts to articulate multilateral frameworks and a set of dominant practices to resolve these conflicts have increased over the last two decades.[2] Since the peace process in Northern Ireland, the end of apartheid in South Africa, and in the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide, a new and more diverse generation of conflict management tools and institutions has emerged. These include multidimensional peacekeeping operations with complex peacebuilding and peace enforcement mandates, the expansion of a diverse mediation community of practice, the establishment of new bodies such as the International Criminal Court (ICC), the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission, and a proliferation of multilateral, state, and non-governmental conflict management actors operating in complex security environments.

A comparable growth in conflict resolution studies within international relations and other social science disciplines accompanied this expansion in the number and types of conflict resolution actors.[3] The conflict resolution field on both sides of the Atlantic is underpinned by a neoliberal consensus. Theory and practice over the last two decades have reinforced one another, and increasingly emphasised a rights-based, and in some cases avowedly apolitical interventionist approach to conflict prevention, civilian protection, and justice delivery.[4]

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[2] UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's 1992 Agenda for Peace, initially greeted with enthusiasm for greater UN action worldwide, lost its allure following the UN's ineffectiveness in Somalia in 1993, its inaction in Rwanda in 1994, and its sidelining by the overwhelming NATO interventions in the Balkans beginning in 1995. Success in Mozambique was overshadowed by the more visible failures.

[3] Conflict resolution studies first emerged as an inter-disciplinary field in the aftermath of the Second World War. In the US, the field owes its intellectual roots to the scholarship of Kenneth E. Boulding, Anatol Rapoport, and Harold Laswell, who founded the *Journal of Conflict Resolution* in 1957 and two years later, the Center for Research on Conflict Resolution at the University of Michigan. In Europe, the field was supported by governments and emphasized policy-relevant research. The International Peace Research Institute (PRIO), founded in Oslo in 1959 and initially headed by sociologist Johan Galtung, was the first such European centre. Galtung then launched the *Journal of Peace Research* in 1964 (Bercovitch et al. 2009; Dennis et al. 2009). The early years of the field were devoted to theorising about war and its causes; post-Cold War approaches to managing conflict have re-energised the promise of the liberal peace and (despite the failures of the UN in the mid-1990s) the belief that 'multilateralism matters.'

[4] The norm of intervention in the name of civilian populations was foreshadowed in then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's Ditchley Park lecture on 26 June 1998 in which he boldly announced that 'our job is to intervene' (Annan 1999, 3-16). This was followed by a controversial address to the UN General Assembly in September 1999 in which he called for a right to humanitarian intervention 'to protect civilians from wholesale slaughter' (Annan 1999, 37-55). In 2001, the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty named this emerging consensus the 'responsibility to protect'. The UN General Assembly endorsed it and the following year, the new African Union charter relaxed the OAU's 30-year position on the sanctity of state sovereignty (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty 2001).

That said, what various actors mean by 'conflict resolution' is unclear. The broader academic literature falls into two camps: one that approaches conflict resolution in terms of negative peace, and the other, that foregrounds the transformative processes towards peacebuilding. Often, particularly in policy practice, conflict resolution tends to be used synonymously with attempts to resolve a conflict through a negotiated agreement. 'Conflict resolution' is also used to refer to tools that have yet to show whether they can 'resolve' conflict (this is particularly true for new justice measures). We use the term 'conflict resolution' in its broadest sense, meaning the various elements that are brought together when attempting to end, mitigate, or often simply contain violent conflict. This paper interrogates the assumptions on which dominant conflict resolution approaches are based, assesses the evidence base for these assumptions, and identifies gaps that must be addressed by scholars and practitioners to better understand what works and what does not.

Paper overview

Two overarching themes emerge from the literature surveyed here. The first is the overwhelming yet under-addressed need to manage conflict complexity, including trans-national dynamics and the proliferation of non-state actors in conflict. The second theme is the omnipresence of normative concepts of conflict resolution, which describe how conflict resolution *ought* to work based on the liberal principles underpinning it, rather than the *actual* impact it has.

The paper is divided into three sections. The first section outlines the methods used to collect the evidence. It also summarises key findings about how conflict is conceptualised in the literature and overall thematic trends. The second section analyses the surveyed literature and explores the strengths and shortcomings of a cross-section of evidence on a variety of themes. This approach allows us to identify both what we know and gaps in the evidence that point to fruitful areas for further research. A final section draws on key findings from our literature surveys to propose a future research agenda that will help strengthen the evidence base on which we form our understanding of conflict and its resolution.

Database-driven searches

The database-driven method of collecting and reviewing evidence consisted of the following steps. A list of databases was compiled indexing peer-reviewed academic literature, subject-specific databases, web-based open access resources, and others. A string of keywords was entered into various databases, yielding a number of hits. The abstracts of these hits were read, and works meeting the inclusion criterion were selected: did the work include any local level empirical data or information of any kind on individuals and households in conflict-affected situations, their role in the conflict resolution process or the effect conflict resolution has on their lives? The selected works were read, graded and annotated following the Justice and Security Research Programme (JSRP) grading method.[5] This resulted in an annotated bibliography, which is the basis for our critical engagement with the literature presented in the subsequent sections of this evidence paper.

For the purpose of this evidence paper, the following search string was used:

> "peace process" OR peacemaking OR peace-making OR mediation OR "conflict prevention" OR "conflict resolution" OR "conflict management" OR peacekeeping OR peacebuilding OR peace-building OR "conflict transformation" OR stabilization

[5] This was developed at the London School of Economics (LSE) using the DFID evidence grading template and with input from JSRP partners.

OR stabilisation OR reconstruction OR post-conflict OR "peace agreement" OR cease-fire OR ceasefire OR "peace negotiations" OR "peace settlement" OR "peace deal"

AND

war OR "civil war" OR violence OR insurgency OR rebellion OR conflict OR non-state OR informal OR trans-boundary OR transboundary OR trans-national OR transnational OR intra-state OR intrastate

The first string of synonyms was designed to capture various contemporary approaches to violent conflict resolution. The second string represents conflict-affected situations, or the context in which these approaches are implemented. In order to avoid finding overwhelmingly state-centric literature, terms such as 'non-state', transnational, and informal were included.

The search was restricted to works published during or after 1990; as stated in the introduction, the end of the Cold War represented a turning point in scholarly thinking and policy making on conflict resolution. The search was also restricted to works on Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (previously Zaire), Guatemala, Ireland, Kosovo, Liberia, Mozambique, Sudan, Somalia, Sierra Leone, and Uganda. These countries were chosen because they have known considerable conflicts in recent years, as well as extensive international and local efforts to resolve them. Ireland, Guatemala, and Mozambique were included because conflict resolution efforts in these countries are generally seen as 'successes' in order not limit the sample to cases of failed peace processes or continued violence. Colombia was included because of the persistent ongoing violence and emerging drug trafficking networks, both within Latin America and across regions, as one example of non-state actors playing an increasingly prominent role in contemporary conflicts.

The resulting hits from the literature searches were filtered by the following inclusion criterion: did the work include any local-level empirical data or information of any kind on individuals and households in conflict-affected situations, their role in the conflict resolution process or the effect conflict resolution has on their lives? If the number of hits returned for a given database was large (over 1,000), we sorted the results by relevance and scanned the first 500 at minimum, and only continued to scan a larger number if the researcher judged that the results further down the list were still relevant to the research question.

The results from the exercise described above are displayed in Table 1. Only a small percentage (3.1%) of the literature meets the inclusion criterion and includes local-level empirical information. In our experience, this both reflects a lack of empirical data in general and a lack of attention to end-users in particular (many works include country-level data only). 237 hits were marked as meeting all the criteria, amounting to 185 unique works, of which 174 could be accessed and graded. There was relatively little overlap between the results from the various databases.

Table 1: Results of database-driven literature search by database

Database	Database type	No. hits after using main search string and cut-off date	No. hits after adding country names	No. hits scanned	No. hits meeting the inclusion criterion
Scopus	General, peer-reviewed academic	500,000	543	543	63
ISS	General, peer-reviewed academic	17,691	1,635	1,635	60
IBSS/PAIS/ProQuest	General, peer-reviewed, academic	9,751	1,060	1,060	56
CIAO	Subject-specific, non-academic and academic	3,350	51	51	9
EBSCO	Subject-specific, peer-reviewed academic	7,639	2,132	2,132	8
BBC Monitoring service on Nexis	General, journalistic	Too many results to display number	3,500	500	9
Google Scholar	General, academic	Unable to input full search string			
Scirus	General, peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed academic	20,000	4,658	500	2
Refseek	General, IGO, NGO and academic	Unable to input full search string			
OAISTER	General, institutional repositories	7,484	137	137	1
Worldcat	General, books	No abstracts present; few results			
DART Europe	General, doctoral theses	933	74	74	25
DATAD	General, doctoral theses concerning Africa	No relevant results			
Technorati	General, blogs	No relevant results			
Blogines	General, blogs	No relevant results			
Nexis	General, journalistic	Too many results to display number		1,000	1
Amazon	General, books.	Difficulties inputting full search string			3
TOTAL		566,848	13,790	7,632	237
Number of unique hits					185
Number of works graded					**174**

Table 2 categorises the works found by country and theme. Most papers graded focus on single case studies (160) rather than on multiple countries (14). The majority of works in some way concern governance and the role and legitimacy of various actors in post-conflict situations. Papers are relatively evenly spread between general ideas of (state) governance, local and/or hybrid governance and grassroots participation, the role of international actors, women's participation, and the reintegration of conflict actors. Civil society was the subject of 10 papers, while seven papers explored criminality and war economies. Conceptualisations of conflict and justice are explored in 23 and 15 papers respectively. The category 'other' includes papers on individual trauma from conflict and coping mechanisms, and three articles about sports as a conflict resolution tool. We were surprised not to find any papers addressing issues of sexual violence, especially in the DRC.

Table 2: Results of database-driven search by country and theme

	Conceptualisations of conflict	**Governance**	**Conceptions of governance**	**Local/hybrid governance and grassroots participation**	**Criminality and war economies**	**Actors**	**International actors**	**Diaspora**	**Civil society**	**Participation women**	**Integration of conflict actors**	**Justice**	**Other**	**TOTAL**
Northern Ireland	8	8	5	3		9	2		3	2	2	2	5	32
Kosovo and B-H	1	5	3		2	12	4		1	1	6	3	4	25
Sierra Leone		5		2	3	12	1		1	6	4	3	3	23
Sudan	2	2	1	1		6	2		1	2	1	3	4	17
Multiple	3	4	2	2		6	3			2	1		1	14
DRC	1	4	1	2	1	4	2		1		1		1	10
Liberia	1	2		1	1	7		1	2	2	2			10
Afghanistan	2	1		1		3	3					1		7
Uganda	1	3	2	1		3	1			1	1			7
Guatemala	1	2		2		1			1			2		6
Colombia		1		1		3		1			2		1	5
Mozambique	2	1		1		0							1	4
Somalia		0				1				1		1	1	3
Rwanda		1	1			0							1	2
Cyprus		1	1			0								1
Georgia		1	1			0								1
No details	1	3	3			1	1						2	7
TOTAL	**23**	**44**	**20**	**17**	**7**	**68**	**19**	**2**	**10**	**17**	**20**	**15**	**24**	**174**

Generally, themes cut across the country cases, but a few themes are more prominent in some country cases than in others. For example, Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina were the only cases with papers on refugee return, the papers on Afghanistan mainly addressed the success and failure of international actors in the war, and the papers on Liberia and Sierra Leone were disproportionately focused on the participation of women.

The majority of works surveyed used an interview-based method (82), followed at a distance by observation-based methods (37), other methods (27), studies gathering new quantitative data (20) and those using existing quantitative datasets (11).[6] Overall, the last two categories received significantly higher grades. Papers that were found to contain 50% or more empirical data received significantly higher scores than papers found to contain between 10% and 50% empirical data.

A final comment on the general quality of the works graded. The vast majority of works devote little or no time to discussing the methodology employed, which makes determining the method of data collection difficult. Many authors repeatedly cite interviews with officials, civil society, or the general population, and provide approximate time of interview, but do not provide names, locations, position, and so forth. Most authors failed to consider or address biases in their research or their respondents, or note possible limitations of their data. The quantitative research reviewed generally devotes more time to the methods used, which may explain why these papers received higher scores. Failure to discuss methodology does not necessarily imply that the methods employed were flawed, or that the work does not generate or employ evidence. However, it does present a challenge for the reader to assess the quality of the work and evidence base. We consider a section on methodology an opportunity for authors to convince the reader that the research carried out was indeed rigorous.

Journal searches: search terms and criteria

Given the limitations of the database-driven search process, we decided to conduct a second systematic search to supplement our evidence yield and triangulate our methods. We considered this necessary in order to have greater confidence in our findings and be able to claim with greater certainty the lack of local-level empirical data on certain topics. We argue that a systematic search of the top journals in the field of conflict resolution will yield a more accurate overview of the key debates in the field than a database-driven search alone.

We employed the following method for the journal search. Each member of the conflict research team was asked to provide the names of what they considered as the five top peer-reviewed journals in the field of conflict resolution. The inter-disciplinary nature of the team (anthropology, economics, political science/international relations) ensured a broad range of suggestions. We chose the 15 most recommended journals, which we compared against the 2009 Thompson-Reuters citation ranking system. The resulting list of journals is displayed in Table 3.

[6] Papers coded as containing multiple methodologies are counted double for the purpose of these numbers.

The research team went through every article in these journals published in the last 10 years. This is a shorter time span than the database-driven searches, first, because experience taught us that most relevant literature was published in later years (only 10 works from our database searches were from the period 1990 to 2000 inclusive); and second, because of limited time and resources. Articles from this period were selected if they (a) were relevant to our research question (concerned approaches to violent conflict resolution); (b) concerned one of our case study countries; (c) contained local level empirical data. Note that this method mimics the database-driven method, with human judgment replacing the computer-generated keyword searches.

Table 3: Results of journal search, by journal

Journal	**No. works matching all criteria**
Journal of Peace Research	15
Small Wars and Insurgencies	Unavailable through LSE
Journal of Conflict Resolution	3
International Peacekeeping	18
Survival	10
Disasters	4
Foreign Affairs	7
Conflict, Security and Development	12
Accord	9
Peace, Conflict and Development	3
Global Change, Peace and Security	3
Civil Wars	23
International Organization	3
Third World Quarterly	16
Global Governance	1
TOTAL	**122**

Limitations

The systematic database searches and the grading process were subject to several limitations:

1. Missed literature. Much of the literature considered significant by specialists of the cases on which we focused was not captured by these searches. This suggests that systematic database-driven searches alone are insufficient to provide an unbiased overview of the literature, and could be misleading if they are not overseen by specialists in the field. There may be a variety of explanations for this: a) this literature is not indexed by the various databases, or not indexed under the keywords we searched on; b) this literature did not include local-level data; c) this literature was somehow found, but was not recognised as relevant (and therefore ranked 'on top of the list' of results) by the search engines. On balance, the searches produced some known and some lesser known literature, a good safeguard against recycling the 'usual suspects'. While thus removing the personal bias of the research team, it

introduced another one, as we were more likely to include works that were better indexed by search engines.

2. Lack of 'grey' literature and books. Although we took care to select search engines that indexed literature from international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), inter-governmental organisations (IGOs), governments, and other types of 'grey' literature, very few works of this type were found through our literature searches. This is partly due to the limitations of search engines specialising in this type of literature, which could not accommodate the full search string. Books were similarly under-represented in our search engines, and very few books made it into our final literature selection.

3. Biases in inputting search terms. Although the search terms were well-defined, researchers experienced difficulty inputting the search string into different search engines in exactly the same way. Some search engines give the option of searching for keywords only in the title and abstract while others offer no such possibility; in some, one cannot input more than two search strings; some offer the possibility to sort by relevance while others do not. These differences required case-by-case decisions on precisely how to input search terms. It is therefore possible that replication would generate a different list of literature.

4. Difficulty in assessing the quality of evidence. As noted above, many works did not discuss their methodology. However, many of these papers do not purport to be systematic in approach, but are based on a series of informal discussions and conversations, rather than a more formal pre-determined approach. This is especially the case with the grey literature we surveyed (for example, International Crisis Group reports), but for some peer-reviewed literature as well. While this approach is not systematic, it may, as a result, have access to valuable primary information. By the grading system, these papers would receive poor marks, because it is impossible to determine to what extent this information gives an unbiased image of reality.

5. Grading variations. There were considerable and statistically-significant differences in the grades that individual researchers assigned. However, since papers were allocated to graders by country rather than randomly, the source of this variation cannot be determined. Literature on certain countries may be structured in such a way as to score higher in our grading process than the literature on other countries. There were considerable differences as to what papers received a high grade for quality of analysis and the answers that researchers gave to the 'control' question 'Does the paper contain insightful analysis/theory?' (correlation 0.43). This difference was less pronounced in the case of the data quality score and the answer to the question 'Does the paper contain new data/information?' (correlation 0.58). This indicates that the formal scoring and the researcher's individual assessment of the quality of the data and information were considerably different.

Evidence

Conceptualisations of conflict

It would be reasonable to expect that literature addressing 'conflict resolution' would begin with analysis of the conflict to be resolved. However, the literature mapping process described above produced very few papers that directly address how researchers conceived of the conflict and few that analyse the drivers of violence in

those situations. This is not surprising, as we did not explicitly search for papers on conflict drivers. That said, how particular conflicts are conceptualised is significant, as this shapes the responses necessary to resolve them. The starting point of any resolution attempt also says something about the assumption on where the causes of the conflict lie. Most papers take the conflict under discussion as a given; if the conflict is given a particular characterisation, there is overall little evidence provided to support such a premise. Authors tend to quickly move on to the discussion of a particular aspect of the conflict resolution. Papers we reviewed vary in how each conceives of the conflict case under consideration - conflict cases are variously characterised as civil war, civil war with regional dimensions, inter-ethnic conflict, identity conflict, intra-state conflict, border conflict, war on terror, 'merged crises', or youth violence. Only three of the papers reflected on the way in which end-users conceived of a particular conflict. One looked at youth perceptions, one at belligerents - arguing that how warring parties view the conflict affects how they bargain - and one presented a participatory method of assessing conflict impact.[7]

Overwhelmingly, the literature we surveyed focuses on the 'latter' stages of conflict - peace processes, peacebuilding, and reconstruction efforts. This orientation highlights one of the key gaps in the conflict resolution literature: a lack of attention to the underlying causes of conflict and how trajectories of conflict change. The overwhelming focus on the resolution of conflicts typically assumes a linear progression from conflict to peace process to reconstruction/peacebuilding, with relapses into conflict framed as backsliding, or failure of these peace processes. This analytical approach fails to situate conflict resolution efforts and end-user impact in the larger context of the conflict itself. The nature of the conflict and the drivers of violence, which are often active throughout 'post-conflict' reconstruction, are overlooked in discussions about processes and interventions aimed at resolving the conflict. Ultimately this lack of attention to the conceptualisation of conflict and the drivers of violence results in a body of literature that unhelpfully isolates the dynamics of conflict resolution from the context of the conflict itself.

Many contemporary conflicts defy traditional distinctions between 'intrastate' and 'interstate' armed conflicts. While the battlefield may be local, violence transcends territorial boundaries. These conflicts are at the same time inter-personal, local, national, regional, and international in nature, and link both state and non-state actors, sometimes with a global reach.[8] There is rarely a neat dividing line between the external and internal dimensions of conflict—and yet most scholars continue to separate 'internal' and 'external' forces, actors and processes when addressing conflict resolution issues. While researchers acknowledge the presence of transnational forces, most regional[9] dynamics are considered as merely 'spillover' effects from an internal conflict.[10] Those papers that have taken on the task of conceptualising modern conflict as being characterised by a multiplicity of actors and agendas that combine and re-align in intricate ways along a conflict-to- peace

[7] Harland and McCready 2010; Blaydes and De Maio 2010; Bornstein 2010.
[8] Carayannis, 'The Complex Wars of the Congo' (2003); see also Kalyvas (2006).
[9] The 'region' itself is ambiguously defined.
[10] Marchal (2006) explores the interrelationship between the conflicts in Chad and Darfur, arguing that this dynamic should be the central focus of peace efforts. However, the paper is not grounded on local-level data or primary sources. On the other side, Van Leeuwen (2010) provides a well-sourced account of how identifying conflict in the Great Lakes as 'regional' in nature has either failed to translate into actual policy changes on the ground, or resulted in policy divorced from on the ground realities.

continuum, have yet to overcome the challenges posed by the ambiguity and elusiveness of the dynamics they attempt to nail down. Therefore, there is a great scope for research providing a better understanding of the transnationalisation of contemporary armed conflicts. Insofar as some of the papers in our literature search attempt to expand our understanding of modern conflicts[11] including its transnational character, most of these fail to provide empirical evidence on which to base their recommendations for conflict resolution.[12] This is partly a consequence of the opaqueness which surrounds the agency of transnational actors and the challenges this creates to data collection and its verification.

Several of the papers investigate the role of some of the transnational actors involved in contemporary conflicts and conflict resolution, such as diasporas and transnational organised criminal syndicates for example. The three papers on diasporas emphasise the constructive role of these actors in peacebuilding, although the evidence in all three is either weak or missing.[13] Moreover, the papers approach diasporas as stand-alone actors insofar as scant attention is given to how they relate to other key actors driving the conflict resolution process, this interaction being the key to the outcome of the process itself. Broader experience of contemporary conflicts demonstrates that diasporas play a much more ambiguous role, not least as the key war protagonists and spoilers of peace building efforts, often closely linked to the warring parties and the respective political factions. A similar cautionary observation holds true on how the reviewed literature approaches organised crime as another prominent transnational actor. The case in point is the discussion of organised crime in Schroeder and Friesendorf (2009) who interrogate organised crime as a unitary actor operating in the zones of conflict, primarily motivated by the pursuit of commercial goals in the institutionally fluid environment of war-affected countries. The wider literature, however, has increasingly put the spotlight on the complex linkages to other actors, including most importantly to local governance structures.

As a result, the analysis that overlooks the multiple links that connect a variety of actors engaged in modern warfare, including diasporas and organised crime, fails to appreciate how transnational networks operate as conflict actors in their own right, and thus as a force that shapes the transformation of war-affected societies from within - often negatively. This suggests an important conceptual and methodological lacuna, in that the literature approaches globalisation as a context in which contemporary conflicts are situated, rather than as a force internal to the dynamics of conflict, which therefore requires a different kind of analysis. This is another drawback of the analytical separation of the internal and external in the analysis of contemporary armed conflicts that prevails both in the literature we surveyed and the broader scholarship in this field and has implications for the policy and practice of conflict resolution.

[11] Gleditsch (2004) provides a well-evidenced argument investigating the impact of third (regional) parties on belligerents, and concludes that third parties do in fact influence national actors, although the manner in which they influence actors depends on the nature of the third party.

[12] Heathershaw (2008) interrogates the 'liberal peace', arguing that this supposedly pragmatic approach to peacebuilding is in fact very proscriptive. Although it proposes a comprehensive overview of how peacebuilding is conceptualised in order to respond to conflict, it fails to premise any of its recommendations on empirical data or primary sources.

[13] Antwi-Boateng (2010); Arabi (2008); Bermandez (2011).

In short, we know that contemporary war is rooted in a combination of intricate local histories and contemporary influences, and is waged in complex environments consequent to the growing interconnectedness associated with globalisation. The scholarly literature has thus far paid insufficient attention to how this complexity is structured - how (transnational) conflict networks as actors in their own right that link together a disparate assembly of agents, motives and interests emerge and form; how they change and adapt throughout armed conflict and after its formal end; and how the relations between context and agency play out to define the course of conflict resolution. Our understanding of the types of hybrid governance spaces which are created by these forces is limited at present. It rests on patchy evidence, particularly with respect to an empirically-grounded interrogation of how ordinary people situate themselves in these spaces. There are serious gaps in the existing research on what types of interventions best address particular complexities - or sociologies - of violence. The breadth, depth, and quality of evidence-based research on which interventions impact positively, or negatively, on the end-user who is negotiating her/his everyday life under hybrid governance arrangements is particularly inadequate. For example, the way in which end-user agency may add another dynamic - and one that is not necessarily conducive to conflict resolution such as in the case of poppy growing by Afghan villagers - is particularly inadequate.

Quantifying conflict and/or violence

One way in which a particular conceptualisation of conflict is expressed is when authors attempt to quantify conflict or violence. This section evaluates those papers from our systematic literature search that were coded as containing some quantitative data. It evaluates how conflict is conceptualised through measurement, the extent to which this is congruent with an end-user focused approach to conflict, and the reliability of the resulting analyses. From this perspective, event-based and survey-based approaches appear to be the most promising ways forward.

Table 3: Papers coded as quantitative, categorised by method of quantifying conflict

Method of quantifying conflict	Papers found in this category	# papers
Cross-country conflict dummy	(Eck, 2009; Escriba-Folch, 2010; Harbom & Wallensteen, 2010; Johansson, 2010)	4
Event-based	(Gleditsch & Beardsley, 2004; Jarman, 2004; Meernik, 2005; Poole, 2004; Sluka, 2009)	5
Survey-based	(Gupta & Zimmer, 2008; Humphreys & Weinstein, 2007; McAloney, McCrystal, Percy, & McCartan, 2009)	3
Participatory	(Bornstein, 2010)	1
No method of quantifying conflict: survey into perceived success of peace-building	(Byrne, Fissuh, Thiessen, Irvin, & Tennent, 2010; Jones, 2007; Knox, 2010; Wehrenfennig, 2009)	4
No method of quantifying conflict: survey into post-conflict perceptions	(Gilligan, Hainsworth, & McGarry, 2011; Gilpin & Downie, 2009; Hayes & McAllister, 2009; Kolouh-westin, 2004; S. McEvoy, 2000; McLernon, 2006; O'Hearn, 2000; Torsti, 2003)	8
No systematic data	(Darcy, 2008; Goodhand & Sedra, 2010; Haufler, 2010; Maney, 2006; K. McEvoy & Shirlow, 2009)	5
Other (forensic anthropology)	(Roberts, 2011)	1
TOTAL		**31**

Table 3 shows quantitative papers by their method of quantifying conflict. It is striking that over half the papers do not quantify conflict explicitly. Aside from the papers that cite some data related to conflict but do not use it systematically, these papers employ surveys into *perceptions*. Perception surveys give end-users the opportunity to voice their experiences and opinions, albeit within the framework of what the researcher thinks is a pertinent topic. Although knowing an individual's perceptions (e.g. on peace-building, democracy, or community-building) is undeniably useful, very few papers investigate how these perceptions were formed and which factors influenced them.[14] Thus, many papers using perception surveys are descriptive rather than analytical and tend to be silent regarding the policy implications of how to change perceptions, or mitigate the impact of certain perceptions. This category of papers is further dominated by papers on Northern Ireland and on the perceptions of specific groups, overwhelmingly children, youth, and adolescents.

We found one single paper using a participatory method of conflict assessment. This method allows end-users to define what conflict constitutes for them individually and to assess their own situation in these terms. Not unlike perception surveys, it may be a valuable descriptive tool, but its analytical uses are doubtful. It is unclear if and how different aspects of 'conflict' could be aggregated to a measure of conflict and how the result differs from indices attempting to measure concepts such as human development. Furthermore, by allowing any variable to constitute part of the measure

[14] Exceptions are Hayes and McAllister (2009); McLernon (2006).

for conflict, many variables become endogenous to conflict by design, making it difficult to analyse its drivers or consequences (e.g. if unemployment is already part of the measure of conflict, it is impossible to determine whether unemployment spurs conflict, or whether conflict increases unemployment).

The final method of quantifying conflict by soliciting direct input from end-users is survey-based. These papers conceptualise conflict as an individual's exposure to, or participation in, various conflict events, such as killing, violent threats, or forced displacement. They then try to gauge the consequences of this for the individual's later life. Survey data thus enables valuable analysis as well as description, although not all studies we considered discuss potential biases (such as the possibility that individuals who are likely to perpetrate or experience violence have substantially different characteristics than those who are not). The studies reviewed focus on very specific groups (i.e. children and ex-combatants), most likely because of the high costs involved in running a survey. So, the generalisability of the results is likely to be low. It also makes recent initiatives to include a conflict module in major 'standard' surveys of increased interest.[15]

Four papers identified through the searches employ a cross-country dummy for conflict. This characterises a country as a whole as 'in conflict' if violence surrounding a political incompatibility has caused more than 1000 (or 25 for minor conflict) battle-related deaths. No direct input from end-users is solicited, and the data does not capture patterns of conflict within-country and contains only very limited variation over time. This requires analyses using this data to make cross-country comparisons. Unfortunately, at the country level, there may be any number of country-specific third factors biasing the analysis. None of the papers we identified has convincingly solved these problems of endogeneity.

Finally, we encountered an event-based method of quantifying conflict. Conflict in this conceptualisation consists of a series of pre-defined types of events, taking place at a specific date and geographic location. These events are often instances of violence, although some papers code interactions between specified actors on a scale from conflict to cooperation.[16] In the cases found, events are coded from media or police sources and no direct input is solicited from end-users (although the method itself allows reporting directly by end-users, for example through crowd-sourcing). Event-based data contains ample variation over time and within-country, making it easier to address endogeneity concerns, and two papers do so explicitly.[17] This increases the reliability of analyses using event-based data considerably. Despite these advantages, according to our searches, the field has not made full use of event-based datasets that have been published or expanded recently, such as ACLED and UCDP-GED.

Governance

Conceptualisations of governance

Contemporary conflict resolution frameworks revolve around the triangulation of governance, democracy and market-building as a way to stabilise conflict-affected

[15] Bruck et al. 2010.
[16] Gleditsch and Beardsley 2004; Meernik 2005.
[17] Gleditsch and Beardsley 2004; Meernik 2005.

societies. Most of the works on conflict resolution we surveyed do not interrogate what seem to be pre-defined notions of key governance and post-conflict reconstruction 'outputs' - for example, security,[18] political stability, economic recovery, and more generally 'good governance' and the implied benchmarks for achieving these outputs. Everyday concerns and priorities of diverse local populations seem to be largely absent from these notions. Similar observations apply to other key concepts within post-war reconstruction frameworks, such as civil society and justice (which are discussed further in the next sections). In fact, the meaning of such concepts is plausibly shaped by the idiosyncrasies of local context.

Some literature acknowledges this gap between local and international conceptions of governance. Brinkenhoff (2011) dismisses the mainstream conflict resolution approaches informed by the democratic transition paradigm characteristic, particularly of the early years of external intervention in conflict-affected environments and their top-down focus on the establishment of state-level rules and regulations. Instead, he argues in favour of a framework that ties governance to social contract as a set of rules that bind the state and society in a set of relations of mutual obligation, accountability, and responsibility. The empirical evidence in this paper is thin, but the paper is important in that it usefully locates the governance problem in relations between state and society, and identifies legitimacy as one of the key aspects of effective governance. From this perspective, restoration of sustained *legitimate* political authority - the emphasis on legitimacy effectively foregrounding the end-users' concerns and agency - is the essence of recovering and improving governance in conflict-affected environments.

This aspect is largely sidestepped in the research under review, which approaches governance primarily as an issue of what kind of formal institutions are being built and the procedural aspects of how they come into place. Much less attention is given to deciphering the social and political relations that underpin them and how those are reworked as a consequence of conflict. Very rarely is it made explicit that the tools of liberal peacemaking are political tools as well, impacting on local power relations with direct consequences for the position of end-users. Sossai's (2005) work on the delegitimisation of armed groups in the context of the war on terror is a good example of how the space for interventions is closed through legal constraints (defining groups as terrorist, thereby dismissing legal protection or negotiations). Thus, a political tool (labelling) is used to exclude major actors from a political process. Often the literatures seems to misleadingly assume that the tools of conflict resolution - if administered in the correct, regulated, and 'locally-owned' way - are pure, inclusive, linear and self-determined means by legitimate actors for a community to overcome past violence.

Hybrid governance and local dynamics

A prominent normative argument in discussions about post-conflict governance is that local structures need to be taken seriously and that a deeper understanding of them is needed.[19] States are generally seen as playing an uncertain role in this debate. This is

[18] On security, see JSRP Paper 2 by Robin Luckham and Tom Kirk (2012) http://www.lse.ac.uk/internationalDevelopment/research/JSRP/downloads/JSRP2.LuckhamKirk.pdf

[19] See for example the Baker and Sheye (2009) account of post-conflict justice mechanisms in South Sudan, and the Branch and Mampilly (2005) analysis of forms of local governance in South Sudan.

largely driven by the idea that while decentralising state authority comes with its own challenges, a locally-owned hybrid minimal state might be an effective and accountable alternative in a post-conflict setting to the long-term statebuilding approach championed by many international interventions.[20]

The literature reviewed demonstrates a broad consensus around a need for more local 'bottom-up' interventions when addressing conflicts. It assumes that actors in a bottom-up process will have legitimacy. For example, Autessere (2009) argues that the discursive frames with which international actors understand the DRC lead them to over-privilege national and regional peace processes overlooking at their peril local conflict dynamics and conflict resolution mechanisms and strategies; Baker and Sheye (2009) makes the point that local justice mechanisms should be taken more seriously by South Sudan's international and multilateral partners; Buchanan (2008) emphasises the importance of grassroots participatory democracy in the peace process in Northern Ireland.

However, the emphasis on 'bottom-up' as a concept and form of intervention is normatively charged. Much of the literature reviewed tends to treat a bottom-up approach as a way to depart from the national and extra-national politics of the conflict by foregrounding local, indigenous, grass roots levels of action and agency. The political element that comes with this shift is largely overlooked, along with the fact that in a 'post-conflict' context, actors may well understand 'bottom-up' approaches differently, just as they understand 'community-level' or 'local-level interventions' to mean different things. The papers reviewed reflect a tendency in the broader academic debates and policy practice rarely to acknowledge that the role of the government, national and international NGOs, civil society organisations, and international or multilateral organisations can often be contentious and not necessarily conducive to conflict resolution. However, few authors have investigated how peacekeeping missions, international mediators, or various third parties to conflicts can operationalise this local-level engagement. Finally, the literature reviewed recognises that as much as the shift in focus towards the local and indigenous is of critical importance, multilateral peacekeeping lacks many of the tools necessary to engage with local communities or contribute to local-level peace processes.[21] Indeed, it is unclear what 'legitimate actors' can steer the locally-owned hybrid structures. There remains a significant void in our understanding of the sources of legitimacy in post-war contexts where the statebuilding agenda of external intervention has prioritised output-based legitimacy of formal government, driving policy focus towards capacity building to improve public service delivery, which a number of reviewed papers echo.[22] But how a 'local state' is legitimised, and why people submit to rule which in many post-war societies may be arbitrary, discriminatory and even coercive, needs further research. Given the complex nature of most contemporary armed conflicts, it has to shift the inquiry beyond official government structures and a focus on output legitimacy and probe into different forms and sources of legitimacy operating in the hybrid governance framework. Although Brinkerhoff mentions different local forms of governance in passing, and McDonough (2008) looks

[20] Baker and Sheye 2009.
[21] Autessere (2009) outlines how UN peace operations inherently privilege national or regional actors and processes, not simply out of strategic priorities but due to the fundamental nature and assumptions of UN engagement.
[22] Cometto et al. 2010; Burt and Keiru 2011.

specifically into rebel governance, the nature of political authority and the manner in which power is exercised, and legitimised in the post-conflict context remains ill-understood. Broad categories developed to capture the phenomenon such as 'shadow state', 'hidden powers', or 'rebel governance' need to be unpacked in order to locate the sites and sources of real power in post-conflict societies and how it is sustained. Although lacking robust empirical evidence, Branch and Mampilly (2005) make a critical observation regarding the prospect of local government in pre-independence southern Sudan, when they point to the complex links of the members of local government, who are in fact former military, to the local population. The transformation of wartime actors and structures and their post-war adaptation (including evolving relations with the public) is recognised as a critical issue of post-war governance by Andreas (2004). This is a subject that although increasingly gaining in currency, remains insufficiently understood due to both conceptual as well as methodological issues.

Overall, the literature reviewed reveals a gap in knowledge of what dynamics transform or reinforce existing power structures, and the extent to which there is synergy or contradiction among different forms of de facto authority, as in Afghanistan, Sierra Leone or Sudan. It often fails to demonstrate or even propose how to situate local interventions into the national context, particularly within semi-authoritarian contexts or international tensions.[23] In addition, the literature we have reviewed pays insufficient attention to the role of external actors in shifting local power relations although this may directly undermine efforts to mitigate and resolve conflict. One example of how this dynamic may play out is demonstrated by Branch and Mampilly (2005) who show how the SPLA controlled NGO-provided assistance in southern Sudan, complicating the post-war political consolidation of the SPLA. The most convincing work is produced when empirical research and close attention to political realities merge to create an understanding of the roles of different actors in a post-conflict setting, including internationals in particular, even in providing something as seemingly technical as health care.[24]

In sum, the literature reviewed acknowledges the limitations of top-down imposition (by international actors) of prescriptive, state-centric notions of governance. It calls for more bottom-up processes, local hybrid governance, engagement of civil society and grassroots participation, particularly of women, as is discussed further below. However, overall this debate is supported by a limited evidence base. While authors demonstrate that local dynamics can create obstacles to peace,[25] there is no causal demonstration that increased attention to local conflict dynamics and actors will necessarily address the underlying drivers of these conflicts. Similarly, there is no empirical evidence to suggest that local structures are, in the long run, more effective for peacebuilding nor the impact that international intervention may have to that end. In the prevailing analysis, the end-user's voice in articulating experience of everyday governance is almost non-existent, with a few exceptions that primarily use the end-user's voice as a narrator of events. The end-users' analysis of their own situation and of what would need to happen for their predicament to change is avowedly missing in the works we have looked into. A lack of attention to politics in unearthing how local actors and structures are mobilised and incentivised to mitigate and resolve conflict is

[23] Brown 2008; Bains 2010.
[24] Macrae et al. 1996.
[25] Alther 2006; Hoogenboom 2009.

equally glaring. Often, there is an unspoken assumption that all actors share common goals of peacebuilding and reconciliation. Moreover, there is frequently an insufficient understanding of how particular and seemingly technical 'fixes' are not neutral and may, in fact, benefit or disadvantage particular actors.

Criminality and war economies

Criminality remains a side-subject in conflict resolution, where it is mainly dealt with in terms of outright war criminality, for example as crimes against humanity, or criminality as a by-product of war, such as looting, theft, and various forms of smuggling. Among a handful of papers on the subject that we identified through the systematic literature searches, Andreas (2004) shows how criminality, rather than being a by-product of war, is an integral and instrumental aspect of war activity and its transnationalisation. However, the part of the argument he makes that allows for a deeper analysis of the implications for conflict resolution and reconstruction processes is underdeveloped. The broader literature on the subject overall provides little empirical knowledge of why ordinary people engage in various forms of criminality associated with war conduct, and what implications this has not only for the strategies of economic recovery, but also for intra- and inter-communal relations and societal reintegration.

Escriba-Folch (2010) argues that economic sanctions, particularly multilateral ones, are related to shorter conflicts, implicitly arguing that conflicts are driven primarily by economic factors. This naturally overlooks the possibility that economic sanctions, particularly multilateral ones, are more often applied in cases where they are likely to succeed. Preti (2002) investigates violence in Guatemala through structural violence, and the political economy of war, but fails to link the analytical framework to the case study or to provide primary evidence. McDonough (2008) draws on both 'greed' and 'grievance' by arguing that the 'root causes' of conflicts in Liberia, Uganda, and Rwanda are the distribution of political power, the distribution of economic resources, and the mobilisation of identity. Unfortunately, the evidence for this claim is lacking and the argument's reasoning is at times circular and selective.

None of the papers look specifically into conflict finance, an area where the opportunities, structures, and dynamics associated with globalisation are crucially important in how violent conflicts are initiated and sustained. The existing evidence suggests that there are significant cross-country variations depending on the profile of the economy (resource-rich versus resource-poor being the crudest of distinctions), although dedicated comparative works on the subject are rare. How a particular economic profile (which reflects the particular mode of insertion into the world markets) affects the form and the dynamics of informalisation (and criminalisation) during war and in its aftermath cannot be well understood without unpacking the mechanisms of criminal war economies, an aspect that has not been explicitly addressed in the growing scholarship on war economies. The urgency to address this shortcoming stems also from emerging threats such as new, transnational drug trafficking networks that threaten to undermine peace processes in fragile post-conflict environments. Research on innovations in global resource governance such as the Kimberley process,[26] which addresses conflict finance, does not consider its impact on peacebuilding outcomes, nor does it examine how these international regimes affect the end-user who, in many cases, is both the victim of the criminal war

[26] Haufer 2010.

economy and its active protagonist. Schroeder and Friesendorf's (2009) analysis of international anti-crime programmes illustrates the deficiencies of using legislative processes to address criminality in conflict-affected environments. Yet, it is a widespread practice, which for complex and complicated reasons is often tolerated by broad sections of society. The knowledge gap about this aspect of conflict resolution remains particularly wide.

Actors

Role and legitimacy of international actors

A common theme across papers evaluating international interventions is the failure of international actors to appreciate, consider, or conform to the local dynamics in which conflicts and peace processes are situated.[27] This includes divergent or incompatible understandings of political systems, incompatible sociologies between mediators and parties to peace negotiations, or simply a failure on the part of the international community to understand what motivates actors on the ground.

While this is a frequent challenge facing national and international peacebuilders, it is by no means mundane. Communication barriers between multilateral peacekeeping missions and the civilians they are tasked to protect can pose a significant challenge in terms of responding to impending violence.[28] Conflicting socio-cultural norms between international actors and local society can impact peacekeeping outcomes.[29] Disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR) efforts, often both the keystone and the major stumbling block of a peace process, are linked to a number of quite complex and unique dynamics, including economic, political, and social systems in the country.[30] Western conceptions of the state itself are sometimes incompatible with the more decentralised, minimalist state arising in a 'post-conflict' scenario, which may in fact be legitimate and accountable in the short term.[31] This is related to arguments for prioritising local interventions, but also highlights a perceived disconnect between international actors and the political and social realities with which they engage. Processes of social reconstruction often take place outside the boundaries of formal institutions and agreements, for example the spirit possession and ritual cleansing rituals in northern Uganda.[32] However, papers in our literature searches that stress the need for increased international engagement rarely acknowledge that the role of international actors is contentious. This is particularly true if international actors wish to bypass state institutions by engaging directly at the local, 'bottom-up' level.

That international actors must take into account diverging social, political, and economic structures is at face value quite obvious, and the literature repeatedly identifies this as a fundamental challenge in specific cases. However, while the literature usually tries to provide a mapping of the crucial local dynamics that international actors fail to understand, or to give recommendations for specific cases, few papers go further to address the challenge of working with local dynamics as a

[27] Auteserre 2009.
[28] Oxfam 2010.
[29] Sahovic 2007.
[30] International Crisis Group 2003; Ebbinghaus 2007; Humphreys and Weinstein 2007; Jennings 2007; International Crisis Group 2009; McEvoy 2009; Dyck 2011.
[31] Baker 2009.
[32] Baines 2010.

systemic issue for international actors. While peacebuilders often advocate 'national ownership' and context-sensitive interventions, the scholarship on how to approach this goal is limited, as is evidence for its effects. The 'liberal peace' toolkit has been tested and refined as a technical exercise, but if these efforts are not fundamentally shaped by and built upon the local social, political, and economic understandings in which conflict takes place, we are forced to ask if these efforts will positively impact upon conflict-affected populations in the long term.

Role and legitimacy of civil society

Engaging civil society is presented as a way to ensure a 'bottom-up' process of conflict resolution by articulating end-users' voices in order to hold the state to account for its actions and to prevent abuses of power. However, the literature reviewed does not question the many implicit assumptions of this strategy: that civil society organisations do, in fact, represent the interests of all conflict-affected communities rather than particular constituencies within them; or that it is impervious to the politics that drive other national actors; or that including civil society organisations in peace processes is beneficial for both the peace process and its outcome. The papers that do base their results on concrete evidence raise serious cause for concern, as they highlight the political context within which civil society organisations operate and the potential that their inclusion will actually damage the peace process.[33]

The failure to consider political context extends beyond the peace process itself. Good governance and the promotion of civil society have gone hand in hand within the conflict resolution framework, since voice is thought to be critical for restoring the trust that underpins governance, and that civil society can aggregate and articulate these voices. Much criticism has been levied on the alleged weakness of civil society in terms of capacity, disconnect with indigenous forms, and closeness to donors. The papers examined reflect the general trend in the field in two principal aspects - that they view civil society principally through the work of NGOs, and that their primary interest is in the civil society itself rather than the outcomes of its activity.[34]

The specific political and sociological context within which civil society operates in the aftermath of war can itself lead to a lack of civil society engagement.[35] Moreover, the space emerging may not necessarily be either plural or emancipatory.[36] Overall, the literature reviewed lacks robust evidence on how civil society is configured in specific post-conflict contexts, taking into account political, socio-economic, and security characteristics, the dynamics of multiple transitions that conflict-affected countries are subject to, and the agency of local and transnational actors.

In the post-war context where state and society remain deeply entwined through various hybrid governance forms, discerning the interests and perceptions of civil society actors is a complex research task. Consequently, the role and the potential of civil society in fostering citizens' participation in post-war governance remains an area where empirical evidence, grounded in the end-user perspective and experience,

[33] Van Leeuwen 2008, 2010.
[34] Kanyako 2010.
[35] Loden 2007; Eaton 2008.
[36] Branch and Mampilly 2005.

is scant, including on the forms of activity conducive to improving relations among civilian communities.[37]

Grassroots participation

The literature reviewed occasionally makes a proposition that grassroots participatory democracy is a possible corrective to the limitations of top-down conflict resolution approaches. However, the findings on how this impacts peacebuilding outcomes are inconclusive, and the reviewed literature captures this ambiguity. Much work focuses on local 'ownership' of the conflict resolution process, a slippery and ill-defined term used by peacebuilding researchers and practitioners that has recently come under scrutiny.[38] International interventions often assume a shared understanding of the aims of the post-war reconstruction process between international actors and the local population. However, there is surprisingly little evidence demonstrating how end-users perceive the goal of post-war reconstruction, the benchmarks of success, or the roles of various actors, including their own.[39] Ball (2009) argues that peacebuilding is a personal ideal, rather than a broader community- or even state-driven process.[40] Some authors view participation and inclusion as a silver bullet for conflict resolution,[41] while others depict inclusion efforts as largely symbolic and irrelevant,[42] but in all cases the empirical evidence on how diverse local populations and categories of end users engage in conflict resolution processes, and on what factors hinder or facilitate their relations with other actors, is very thin.

The papers retrieved through the systematic literature search are representative of the rather vague understanding of whether and how these forums for community participation in post-war reconstruction efforts, promoted by the external actors, actually foster peacebuilding. Peacebuilding is a multi-layered process and if, as Ball (2009) suggests, it is a personal ideal, then gauging the motives for participation in grassroots initiatives is fundamental for the peacebuilding outcomes. For example, the assumption that enrolling former adversaries in an employment or occupational training scheme will lead to reconciliation underpins much of the reasoning for using assistance for socio-economic development to further political goals. However, these programs may help to ameliorate economic inequalities without promoting cross-communities.[43] If actors enter these participatory initiatives with ulterior motives, mere interaction projects may not be sufficient as a medium for reconciliation.[44] In sum, much more empirical evidence across the issue areas of conflict resolution and in different country contexts, and stages of conflict resolution is needed in order to substantiate the claims regarding the grass roots participation as a channel for conflict resolution.

Participation of women

There seems to be a broad consensus that women's participation is essential in conflict resolution processes, but the underlying assumptions of this consensus are

[37] Brinkerhoff 2011.
[38] Donais 2012.
[39] International Crisis Group 2009.
[40] Ball acknowledges that this creates a fuzzy mélange of peacebuilding definitions, making it rather difficult to understand concrete elements of peacebuilding.
[41] Buchanan 2008, Burt and Keiru 2011.
[42] Brunger 2011.
[43] Byrne 2001.
[44] Broom 2002, Skotte 2004.

rarely questioned. Conceptualisations of conflict resolution are gendered and often reductionist in their approach to women's role in peace processes. Inclusion is often presented as a default feminine operating mode. The benefit of women's participation in peace processes (beyond a normative conviction that female participation ought to be supported) tends to be based on female 'soft skills', such as trust- and community-building.[45] Values, rather than empirical data, underscore affirmations of what the role of women ought to be, rather than what it is. For example, successful peacebuilding is argued to depend on the participation of women and girls in peace processes, but the argument is based on common sense - noting that women would rather live in peace instead of violence.[46]

Women's participation in conflict resolution processes is, in most cases, documented hastily and with overly prescriptive overtones, providing little systematic data of women's activities or what women specifically achieved.[47] Some argue that women's participation leads to successful post-conflict reconstruction, while excluding women contributes to the failure of peacebuilding,[48] but no data is presented to prove this implied causation, and other context that might be crucial to success and failure is ignored. The focus in describing women's roles tends to rest on the activity of women, rather on their effect, thus maintaining an idealistic vision of women's influence, rather than one supported by evidence.

Strikingly, some of the research that stresses the importance of women's participation in peacebuilding fails to acknowledge the broader instruments in place to facilitate it, such as UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 or 2000. Arguments that a refined gender-sensitive approach is needed to resolve new wars analyse the role of women's anti-war groups in Yugoslavia, but do not account for why existing structures fail to work, or how context, such as other civil society groups and their agendas, makes women's participation difficult.[49]

The debate on whether women ought to be treated as a separate category in conflict resolution or whether this reinforces gender stereotypes seems to have hardly moved. In most literature, women and girls are treated as a distinct category. However, this distinctiveness is used to create an obvious and superficial contrast between inclusive mechanisms and broad-brush factors, such as international law. Park's (2006) paper is illustrative: without primary local-level data, her argument that girls need to be treated differently in the reconstruction process and in how crimes committed against them are treated by the Special Court for Sierra Leone fails to actually provide any information as to how court decisions driven by international law do influence how girls' lives proceed.[50]

Such gender stereotyping ignores what other authors have identified as major stepping stones during post-conflict transitions. The continued emphasis on women's role in the private sphere, rather than as active participants themselves in war activities, continues to skew post-conflict interventions to define or redefine women's roles. MacKenzie (2009) provides local-level data that shows that the continued definition

[45] Taylor 2006.
[46] Arabi 2008.
[47] Gbowee 2009.
[48] White 2008.
[49] Korac 2006.
[50] Park 2006.

of women as war victims, even if they take on the role of a soldier, effectively excludes them from DDR programmes. McEvoy (2009) presents a similar argument about female paramilitaries in Northern Ireland, underlining that the intractability of the conflict is a direct result of this exclusion of women as military actors,[51] yet fails to provide convincing empirical data for what is undoubtedly a crucial point. Smet (2009) investigates how DDR processes ought to be an opportunity for reshaping gender roles, but fails to draw on transparent empirical data as to how the reshaping of gender roles is perceived in the reality of the local context. Such work promotes the assumption that a change in gender roles with women's empowerment is a necessary tool for an improved environment.

As a research approach, the confinement of women's participation to the private sphere creates a method gap, recreating the very same issues addressed in structuration theory that those writing about women's participation tend to criticise.[52] Ball (2009) is a good example of using only narrative methods when analysing women's roles. While she acknowledges the shortcomings of this method, it serves as a reminder that research methods are themselves overly gendered, creating a discrepancy in data. The association with the private sphere is often equated with the most local community level. This intuitive connection links the most local level to women playing a particularly important, somewhat holistic role. This is particularly true for situations in which higher levels of administration, such as the state, do not exist. Dini (2010) writes about how Somali women have expanded their historical part in taking on state roles by delivering social services and maintaining or building peace.

The reasons for the lack of data on women's participation may be three-fold, although most papers tend to only acknowledge the first two arguments. In the first, women's participation is openly hindered by the powers that be. In the second, women's participation consisted primarily of unseen activity, for example by influencing their husbands to become peaceful, thus making their participation under-acknowledged, informal, and representative of their socio-cultural association with the private sphere. In the third, women hardly participate because they are not interested.[53]

Reintegration of conflict actors

Reintegration of conflict actors is considered a crucial element of conflict resolution. Yet, as is the case with 'bottom-up processes', the exact meaning of 'reintegration' remains unclear. Reintegration of child soldiers, forced recruits, officially demobilised soldiers, and returnees, as well as rehabilitation of perpetrators, tend to be lumped together under this catch-all term. Furthermore, reintegration can mean anything from returning to one's home village (part of demobilisation) to entering training programmes to being reinstated as a citizen.[54] Reintegration describes both an

[51] Her method is questionable in so far as interviewees were selected by snowballing within paramilitary groups. This method might have contributed to what often seems a positively biased analysis of loyalists' agendas.

[52] Jones (2008) uses structuration theory to explain why girl soldiers in Sierra Leone were largely marginalised in the DDR process. While the theoretical approach is convincing, the data collected is not primary and thus allows limited first hand understanding of the agency of the girl soldiers in being marginalised.

[53] In her doctoral thesis, Anderson (2007) makes the third point strongly, asserting that despite her research focus on women's participation, it may not be generalisable as most women probably did not participate widely in the Sudanese peace process either in the public or private sphere. She draws on a relatively small sample for her conclusions, but recognises this limitation in evidence.

[54] Theidon (2007) mixes two vague concepts further by calling for a merging of DDR with transitional

informal process of shifting location and reconnecting with family as well as 'formal' measures of reintegration, often accompanied by some sort of material support.[55] Furthermore, reintegration covers both the official measures as well as the experience of 'being reintegrated'.[56]

The primary argument of scholars critiquing current approaches seems to be limited to calling for a greater awareness towards specific context, background, socio-economic conditions, and local institutional capacity. The most convincing evidence establishes that internationally-driven demobilisation and reintegration programmes tend to not be successful because they fail to take motivations of combatants into account. Humphreys and Weinstein (2007) deliver a credible and locally collected data set to make this claim, while combining quantitative and qualitative methods to address the shortcomings of each.

Dahlman's work stands out in his engagement with the complex layers of returning as a part of conflict resolution, particularly in areas that had experienced ethnic cleansing. He outlines how the international community's support for keeping ethnic groups separated as an attempt to establish security prevented refugee returns. Realising this effect, support was focused on facilitating a process of reclaiming land, which often turned out to be a generator for violence.[57]

The separate set of problems facing returnees and those who stayed during the war is covered widely, and is particularly pertinent with regard to the question of how power structures established in war become the entrenched post-war structures that allow a continuation of the same damaging and often elitist hybrid governance structures.[58] Most findings, however, stop short of answering the essential question of whether the concept of a return to origin remains the most promising way to rebuild a society, or whether a much more flexible approach is more promising. Eastmond (2006) challenges the notion that permanent returns provide the best path to stability, arguing that unassisted returns of Bosnian refugees from Sweden followed a different and more stabilising path. Bosnians returned home voluntarily while maintaining a life in Sweden, the effect being that they feel more in control of their lives.

As part of a broader trend to focus on specific groups, the reintegration literature engages more closely with the needs of the perceived 'most vulnerable' - women and children. It is a well-established argument that protection of children from armed recruitment is difficult for multiple reasons: because of variable levels of adherence to international standards; the failure to understand the motivations and roles of child soldiers in different contexts; and because measures often fall short of allowing a quick reinsertion once they return.[59] Often, the major argument seems to be that the reality of international law on the ground is different from that which the text of the law suggests, hardly a surprising and not a very useful finding, unless it is further

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justice processes, as the justice element is crucial for reintegration and reintegration has traditionally been the weakest link of DDR programmes. She however fails to provide a more detailed analysis on what this would entail in practice.

[55] Archibald and Richards 2002.

[56] This focus is particularly clear in literature on northern Uganda. Drawing on detailed local level data, Angucia (2010) argues that these two need to be moved closer together, with reintegratees becoming integral in providing the reintegrators with an analysis of needs and challenges.

[57] Dahlman 2005a.

[58] Dahlman 2005b.

[59] Francis 2007.

established how exactly local interpretations differ and could be used in a way that allows for legal instruments to provide protection and be accountable. Evidence tends to be limited in terms of the number of interviews conducted with child soldiers. The literature search did not bring about any interviews with active child soldiers, and only a few with former child soldiers. When interviewing former child soldiers, the changing perspective of the interviewee is rarely acknowledged. In Francis' (2007) paper, the conclusions drawn from the interviews conducted seem to be intuitive, rather than based on an analysis of the interviews.[60]

Women's reintegration seems to be largely focused on the needs of female combatants.[61] Ibrahim (2006) argues convincingly by drawing on a transparent interview method that gender stereotypes impede women's reintegration in Sierra Leone, as they tend not to be viewed as having been involved enough to need reintegration measures. Roberts (2008) argues that unless gender is mainstreamed throughout a reintegration process, it is unlikely to bring economic opportunities for women and thus will fail to create the 'normality' of life in peacetime.

Unclear concepts of conflict resolution and justice procedures result in unclear explanations as to the causes of conflicts and need for justice. Theidon (2009), for example, calls for a renewed emphasis on gendering the building blocks of conflict resolution, such as DDR and justice, to pay closer attention to ownership of weapons, violence and interpretations of masculinity. DDR initiatives, in her argument, need to be about much more than just disarming; they need to address the underlying gender stereotypes and provide 'alternative masculinities' as role models which can be followed in civilian life.

Justice and reconciliation

Justice and reconciliation take a prominent place in the discourse of conflict resolution and have been the focus of a plethora of donor-funded programmes. The systematic literature mapping brought up no material that specifically shows the impact of conflict resolution justice procedures on the end-user in the long term. Some papers establish broader understandings of how current conceptualisations and operational interpretations of justice in a conflict resolution process have impacted end-users, but data to make credible and broadly applicable claims is scarce. Existing literature tends to focus on specific groups, such as combatants, women, or child soldiers, rather than the broader and less compartmentalised population. Some of the more specific studies seem to suggest - but the evidence is too sketchy to make this a firm claim - that end-users see little connection between criminal trials (whether local, national, or international) and improvement in their own situation.

The need to understand the dynamics of each particular conflict, including the dynamics of post-conflict recovery, when discussing the scope and outcomes of pursuing justice and reconciliation agendas as part of conflict resolution processes is widely stressed. Context is recognised as the greatest hindrance to improvements for the individual - for example in the case of work opportunities for women in Sierra Leone - as well as for recovering communities more broadly.[62] It is striking, however, that the need to understand context is not generally drawn from evidence that shows

[60] Francis 2007.
[61] Ebbinghaus 2007.
[62] Abdullah et al. 2010.

clearly the context and constraints of one particular case, but seems to be generated more from a general awareness.[63]

Two major points about using justice mechanisms as a conflict resolution tool can be inferred from the literature mapping: one major theme is that justice is understood as an all-encompassing tool; another that justice and reconciliation are essentially the same thing. The evidence base for either assumption is startlingly inconclusive.

Justice as an all-encompassing tool

In this literature mapping, justice seems to be readily equated with a measure for peacebuilding, with some critical voices doubting its viability as a reconstructive tool. Evidence that justice does, in fact, build peace in the long run is not presented. It is striking that the literature fails to look at either concept in more detail to allow greater operational insight.

The operational weakness of justice as a conflict resolution tool lies in the vagueness of both concepts. On a more technical level, it is unclear which crimes ought actually to be punished under the 'justice toolkit' label, and by whom.[64] This is indicative of the development that justice has come to describe something much broader and very different from dealing with perpetrators and victims in court. In what is a largely value-driven debate, justice is imagined as having to be inclusive, participatory, holistic, tailored to each individual conflict situation, speak to the expectations of the participants, give a truth-telling voice to ordinary people, establish long-term peacebuilding structures and be cross-disciplinary.[65] These holistic transitional justice procedures are expected to link in with seemingly more technical peacebuilding tools, such as DDR programmes.[66] An obvious dichotomy emerges between concrete measurable processes needed for peacebuilding and the envisioning of these processes as long-term, often non-measurable acts of gradual societal change in complex conflict situations.

The most common methodological approach underlines the fuzziness of the concepts of conflict crimes and justice, with research questions often focusing on perceptions of justice, rather than traceable impact, and an emphasis on pitting local understandings of justice against international conventions. The seemingly soft side of reconstruction, such as memorialising and truth-telling, is often contrasted with the hard rebuilding, including physical reconstruction through reparations.[67]

Not surprisingly, studies on perceptions of justice tend to establish that local perceptions differ from what is considered mainstream in both international law as well as concepts of transitional justice. However, this important point often stops short of establishing why it is surprising that local perceptions are different from mainstream thought, thinking through the consequences of such findings, and

[63] Abdullah et al. are a case in point: their paper's main argument is the need to pay attention to context to understand constraints on women's recovery. Yet the method to arrive at this conclusion is unclear to the extent that it is not even clear whether citations refer to secondary local-level data.
[64] Drumbl (2002) makes this clear in trying to establish in his work on the Taliban that local populations do not necessarily benefit if perpetrators are charged for the 'big' crimes. However, the author leaves entirely open the question of who ought to be charged and how these crimes will be punished.
[65] Lambourne 2009.
[66] Theidon 2009.
[67] Shaw 2007.

outlining an overall applicability to the broader justice debate. Viaene (2010), for example, argues that in Mayan Q'eqchi' culture, not all victims wanted to see perpetrators prosecuted and had quite a different view of justice from that generally found in international law, yet the policy implications of this finding, along with the finding that other Mayan communities did call for prosecution, are unclear.

The literature fails to address in detail how crimes other than individual war crimes can be addressed through the justice toolkit. The assumption that justice can provide a way of dealing with past atrocities is hardly explored, yet the latest debates within the literature on transitional justice have started to dispute the concept that these 'tools' can be readily employed.

Equating justice and reconciliation

Research on the long-term peacebuilding effect of criminal trials for local communities is unsurprisingly scarce. The question of whether criminal trials specifically support reconciliation - or whether indeed this should be the courts' mandate - is barely addressed. Truth-telling remains a buzzword in conflict resolution studies and is often seen as the ultimate tool to facilitate true reconciliation. However, the problem remains of establishing integrated conflict narratives, rather than establishing what might be perceived as biased or partial truths, including the issue of whether a facilitator can ever be perceived as unbiased.[68]

Most evidence about criminal trials and reconciliation comes from Bosnia, with one notable empirical example. Meernik's (2005) work aims to test the linkage between trial and reconciliation. He concludes that events in the criminal court do not have a meaningful effect on what he calls 'societal peace', i.e. whether different groups can live together peacefully. Clark (2009) argues that the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia has not brought reconciliation, but instead facilitated co-existence. Obstacles to reconciliation and to what is generally considered as 'positive peace' remain, and can turn into drivers of conflict, such as lack of contact between different ethnic groups, high levels of mistrust, unconsolidated versions of war narratives, and a continued need for 'truth-telling', particularly in regard to missing people and denial of war crimes.

However, the research provides no deep analysis - nor even data to allow for analysis - to establish what elements of a conflict have not been addressed in the attempts to resolve it and why. In work on Northern Ireland, continued sectarianism and community divisions are linked to a regeneration of these divides in the younger generation through continued separation. However, findings that show unintended consequences of reconciliation processes are also often drawn on flimsy assumptions of what attitudes used to be. Knox's (2010) work on Northern Ireland fails to provide a baseline for what attitudes used to be before the peacebuilding process in Northern Ireland. With such data lacking and no control group it is impossible to establish whether the analysis of continued perception of division draws largely from the author's own perception. Such assessments highlight the methodological challenge of capturing both perceptions as well as linking events to such perceptions over the long term.

[68] Lundy and McGovern 2006.

The problematisation of the connection between justice and peace brings to light significant evidence gaps regarding the long-term benefits of the justice toolkit and operational directives. This can partly be explained with the timeliness of the debate: the concept of the justice toolkit in conflict resolution is still relatively new. Furthermore, methods to test perceptions of justice are generally rather vague and narrative-driven.

The disconnect between theory and practice in testing assumptions is striking. Empirical local-level data tends to be used to outline the complexity of an issue, whereas theoretical papers, such as Johansson's (2010) work on peace and repatriation, provide strong conceptual statements, but fail to link these to reality. Breidlid (2010) makes an important contribution by showing that education is needed to reshape Sudanese notions of 'the other', including political realities of 'the other', if peace is to be established. Yet what kind of educational measures might be able to change narratives of perception and reality remains an open question.[69]

Another obvious gap is the end-user experience of conflict resolution in all its private and localised complexity. A few studies stand out and help to locate the missing evidence: Bruck and Schindler (2009) argue that the impact of violence on the household is still largely under-researched, and thus government or international actors fail to understand what might be an important perspective on how programming could have an effect on the very local end-user level. A different take on the limited attention paid to the end-user perspective comes from Sahovic (2007) in his study on international intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Drawing on *Cultural Theory of Risk*, he argues that international interventions were based on individualistic or egalitarian solidarities, a notion that suggests an end-user focus. However, the social reality in Bosnia-Herzegovina was one of hierarchy, with a need for leadership and top-down control. In the disconnect it becomes evident that the end-user perspective was disregarded.

Conclusions

This paper has focused on the evidence base of literature generated by a systematic literature review on whether conflict resolution approaches have been effective in improving the lives of end-users in countries with an experience of armed conflict. It has demonstrated that conflict response frameworks have failed to keep up with empirical realities. While violent conflicts are increasingly complex, networked, and transnational, the existing models of conflict resolution remain inward looking, binary, and state-centric and hence often fail to effectively deal with the vulnerabilities and insecurities of the daily lives of people affected by violent conflict. It is thus difficult not to conclude that in the last two decades, non-state actors, informal arrangements, and complex security environments have stressed and challenged existing conflict resolution approaches. Despite notable advances that academic literature has made in certain areas of the conflict resolution field, the empirical knowledge base supporting the scholarship has overall been insufficiently robust. In particular, based on the findings from the literature reviewed, there is a need to pursue further research into,

[69] How to transform the convincing argument into practical intervention also remains open because the bulk of the research for the paper was conducted prior to the CPA and the interviewees are largely officials, rather than 'end-users'.

and strengthen the evidence base of, three inter-related topics which are under-theorised, poorly-understood, or both. Namely:

1. the changing nature of conflict and its diverse origins and manifestations;
2. the conflict networks that emerge and develop through bargaining in the political marketplace;
3. the resulting (and often hybrid) governance and authority structures.

Violent conflicts have complex architectures that often extend beyond the most obvious belligerents. Thus, the *structure* of a particular conflict - the salient configurations of actors and their inter-linkages - presents challenges for peace processes and peacebuilding strategies. The prevalent conflict responses treat conflict actors as atomistic when they are in fact embedded in a variety of social, economic, and security networks that may well transcend national boundaries. The revolving door of fighters going in and out of failed DDR programmes is ample evidence of our inability to capture this complexity effectively in our conflict responses.[70]

The literature we have reviewed provides little evidence that the interventions of international and multilateral actors reflect (let alone understand) the complex architectures of many contemporary conflicts. The papers surveyed do not engage to any great extent in analysis of the conflicts they address. It is not that researchers are not aware of this complexity, but rather that we lack the evidence and the cognitive frameworks to guide the policy response in a manner that is congruent with the complexity of conflict and therefore effective in its mitigation and resolution. The now infamous U.S. military PowerPoint slide used in a 2010 briefing to depict the complexity of U.S. strategy in Afghanistan[71] - a slide described by journalists as looking instead like 'a bowl of spaghetti' and which led General Stanley McChrystal to quip, 'When we understand that slide we'll have won the war' - stands as a stark example of our continued inability to integrate complexity into conflict responses, even when we recognise that such complexity exists.

The changing nature of war/trends in violent conflict

There is an emerging consensus that the key to understanding violent conflict is an acknowledgment of the diversity of its forms and origins. Attempts to produce classifications based on neat conceptual boundaries have been unable adequately to represent this diversity. Substantial debates in scholarly literature have dealt with the issue of root causes, motives, and incentives for violent conflict, only to underline their complex, variable, and dynamic nature. The debates on what counts as a violent conflict given the increasingly thin line between political and non-political violence, the instrumentality of violence, how conflict evolves and what drives it, and why there is less of it today according to some studies, have been less developed. This is despite the prominent currency that the war-peace continuum has gained in conflict resolution debates and major implications of this realisation for rethinking conflict and peace, and formulating appropriate responses to conflict resolution. The gap in the conflict resolution literature is paralleled by perennially unreliable or disputed

[70] See Humphreys and Weinstein (2007), which finds little micro-level evidence that internationally funded programs facilitate demobilisation and reintegration; or International Crisis Group (2003), which argues that disarmament efforts in the eastern DRC have failed due in part to the UN mission's lack of consideration for internal Rwandan politics.
[71] http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/27/world/27powerpoint.html.

evidence on the incidence of and the trends in armed conflicts presented by various sources, given that the data collection is impaired in the armed conflict setting, leading to potential misrepresentations.

Additional research is needed into how violent conflict is understood by its various protagonists (particularly end-users), the implications for measuring violence, and to formulate more effective responses from the end-user perspective. To better understand what drives armed conflicts, more in-depth empirical evidence is needed on how various actors, at various levels of analysis (from the very local, to the national, to the regional and international), are interconnected in different regional and geopolitical contexts. There is a tendency to 'pathologise' local populations and view ordinary people as primarily victims of armed violence. In fact, the evidence of the actual experience of armed violence by the civilian population and various strategies used to cope, resist, or take advantage of ensuing violence and implications in terms of conflict persistence is rather thin.

In addition, while much of the qualitative literature argues that the nature of conflict is changing and is context-specific, this is not meant to privilege local-level analysis. In fact, it is the connection between and among levels of analysis and the networks that connect them that are now the context. Moreover, a significant portion of quantitative analyses use methods of quantifying conflict that do not reflect this, which opens up new avenues for research. This could explore available data incorporating more in-country variation, variation over time, or network analysis and mapping. It would also be useful to investigate whether various methods of quantifying conflict paint different pictures of where conflict is most intense. In line with our end-user focus, there is a need to develop and apply more end-user-centric methods of quantifying conflict that can be used in quantitative analyses.

Networks, bargaining, and the political marketplace

The literature we have surveyed is representative of the prevailing thinking in mainstream social science which associates contemporary armed conflicts with state fragility both as a source as well as a consequence of war. A fragile state is defined as a deviation from a developmental or capable norm, i.e. by what it is not. Scholarly and policymaking interest in conflict resolution in such a state is confined to putting it 'back' on a developmental path as a way of resolving conflict dynamics. In the context of contemporary conflict and hybrid governance arrangements, the 'political marketplace' paradigm is plausibly a more fruitful approach to understand how such hybrid governance structures actually function, how they come about, and in which direction the existing forms of public authority are heading - which may not be towards 'normal' statehood at all. On the contrary, the forces by which poorer countries are incorporated into the global economy on subordinate terms, may generate conditions under which they become fixed as actors within integrated, regionalised, *rentier* marketplaces.

The *rentier* political marketplace state, a sub-category of the broader phenomenon of the 'political marketplace' state, is one in which members of the elite bargain for position within a system run on patronage lines. This is a historically common phenomenon, usually described as a patrimonial system. In several regions of the world today, a specific configuration of this has developed, in which the ruler appropriates sufficient income from mineral and/or sovereign and aid rents (including crime) to be able to finance the governing apparatus without extracting resources

from the domestic productive base. In this case, the transaction becomes one in which the ruler pays in return for the intermediate elites providing loyalty. Unable to bargain on the basis of providing or withholding domestic resources, the intermediate elites utilise violence (or the threat thereof) and challenges to the legitimacy of the state as instruments for bargaining.

Existing evidence could benefit from greater comparative analyses of models of political bargaining, decision making, the use of violence in political systems, and particularly dynamic patronage marketplaces and networks, because they demonstrate the potential of this system to overwhelm an institutionalised state or to develop into a regionalised phenomenon. Thus, we need a greater understanding of how actors act not in isolation but within complex linkages that facilitate bargaining with other actors in the political marketplace, and how these negotiated patronage and other networks shape authority structures and in turn impact the end-user.

Hybrid governance and authority

Both this paper and the JSRP evidence paper on resource governance[72] found that limited information exists on the governance capacity and performance of non-state armed groups. Few studies have been conducted on their provision of basic public services such as security and justice and their attempts to involve civilians living in the territories they control in their own governance frameworks. So while rebel governance is recognised in the literature as a key aspect of contemporary conflict, its linkages and relationship with other aspects of conflict, including local populations, resources, the state, and interventions (external or internal), and its local embeddedness, are poorly understood. This, despite the role armed groups and other non-state actors play in shaping and re-shaping public authority.

Much of the discourse remains focused on the economic functions of violence and the economic agendas of actors, particularly non-state actors, to the exclusion of political grievances against the state or rival groups.[73] Yet, there is evidence that insurgencies, customary authorities, and other non-state actors often use powerful narratives of political grievance to assert new claims on state authority, and some even assume governance functions of the state in territories they control; they do not simply pursue economic interests. However, we know little about how rebel groups in particular work with customary and other authority structures, and the implications of this for the end-user. Some insurgency groups may provide key public goods within territories that they control, (e.g., security, local administrative elections, and control over corrupt local clandestine networks), and thus may enjoy positive relations with end-users in their local communities, but engage in predation when outside them. It may well be in a rebel movement's economic interest to provide public goods. Yet motivations for war are more often dealt with than motivations for peace. For example, what changes the motivation of a disenfranchised youth in Liberia, portrayed in Mats Utas (2003)'s work, to a disenfranchised youth more interested in peace than in joining a rebel group to fight disenfranchisement? What then, is the

[72] See the JSRP evidence paper on *Resources, Conflict and Governance*, which addresses some of these issues in greater depth.

[73] The 'greed over grievance' debate has helped move attention away from the irrationality or the senselessness of war and highlighted important and previously missing elements in these conflicts by drawing attention to economic interests and the political economies of modern warfare. Yet, it has since swung to another extreme by over-emphasising explanations of violence focused on direct material gain and the political economies of war.

evidence that violent opposition/rebel/insurgency movements have created local hybrid administrations that have been responsive to their end-users? What are the implications of this for peace processes? Most of these questions remain unconsidered, and all remain unanswered, in the literature we surveyed.

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