



CHAPTER THREE **Armed Violence After War:** **Categories, Causes, and Consequences**

THE END OF war does not necessarily herald a return to security. Ceasefires, peace agreements, arms control activities, or even elections—important as they are—do not necessarily guarantee tangible improvements in the safety—real or perceived—of individuals and communities. In fact, many so-called post-conflict theatres presented more direct and indirect threats to civilians than the armed conflicts that preceded them.

Since many armed conflicts end without a strong commitment to the peace agreement or ceasefire, efforts to impose a ‘victors’ justice’ can actually escalate armed violence (Kreutz, Marsh, and Torre, 2007; Licklider, 1995). Similarly, some armed groups may be dissatisfied with the terms of the ‘peace’, providing a source for instability (Muggah, 2008; Darby, 2001). Pre-existing networks and structures associated with the war economy may remain intact. Post-conflict armed violence may thus be perpetrated by a fluid constellation of state agents and armed groups with competing (and often changing) motivations and interests. Armed violence that may previously have been concentrated in specific geographic areas in the hinterland may shift to new spaces—from war zones and border areas to urban slums.

Post-conflict armed violence is a policy concern, for two reasons: because it often contains the ‘spoiler’ potential to disrupt a peace process or contribute to a relapse into war, and in its own right as a condition that can undermine longer-term

processes of development and democratization (Chaudhary and Suhrke, 2008).

This chapter focuses on the character and shape of post-conflict armed violence. Post-war contexts are as complex and varied as war-affected environments, and several different types of post-conflict violence can be distinguished, including political violence, routine state violence, economic and crime-related violence, community and informal justice, and post-war displacement and disputes. A number of important patterns emerge from an analysis of post-conflict environments:

- Some post-conflict situations have rates of armed violence comparable to (or even higher than) the conflicts that preceded them.
- Indirect (non-violent) deaths can remain high in post-conflict societies, long after the fighting stops.
- Post-conflict countries are at greater risk of war recurrence than those that have not experienced armed conflict.
- Structural risks in post-conflict environments—youth bulges, high rates of male unemployment, and concentrations of displaced populations—can contribute to armed violence.
- In post-conflict situations, violence against women often continues, and in some cases increased incidence of such violence has been reported.

- Refugee and internally displaced populations in camps and settlements are often exposed to high levels of armed violence.

The chapter concludes by noting that there are a range of security promotion strategies to quell the effects of armed violence that can be useful in post-war (as well as non-war) contexts. These range from post-conflict disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) to security sector reform (SSR) and activities focused on armed violence prevention and reduction.

These interventions may be useful if targeted at specific groups at risk for, or vulnerable to, violence, and at potential ‘spoilers’ (individual combatants and groups) of peace transitions. But these programmes often lack clear measures of effectiveness particularly when they contend with the criminal and quasi-political violence that often overtakes politically oriented violence in the post-conflict period. Medium- and long-term strategies that are not pursued in isolation may be more useful to reduce the risks of high levels of post-conflict armed violence.

PHOTO ▼ An old woman and child in the remains of a bombed-out warehouse.
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Disaggregating post-conflict armed violence

A common belief is that when armed conflicts come to an end improved safety and security will soon follow. While direct conflict deaths rapidly decline when war ends, new forms of armed violence can emerge, and the level of indirect deaths can remain comparatively high until access to basic services is re-established.¹ Conflict and post-conflict armed violence substantially increases the exposure of civilians, particularly women and children, the elderly, and the displaced, to a higher risk of mortality and morbidity (WHO, 2008a; 2008b; Ghoborah, Huth, and Russett, 2003). For example, in the wake of the 1990–91 Gulf War, one expert remarked that ‘far more persons died from postwar health effects than from direct war effects’ (Daponte, 1993). Where wars are especially long and severe, post-conflict mortality and morbidity can escalate further still.

The persistence of above-average rates of mortality and morbidity in the post-conflict period is linked to reduced financial investment and human resources in public infrastructure, including health care. Depending on the length and severity of the conflict, the professional health workforce may be seriously depleted, often taking generations to recover (Hoeffler and Reynal-Querol, 2003). But because surveillance and monitoring systems may also collapse, there are considerable challenges to defining and measuring the global burden of post-conflict armed violence.² Another challenge is linked to disagreements over how to define ‘post conflict’: as with definitions of ‘war’, ‘armed conflict’ and ‘violent crime’, there is no internationally agreed definition of when a country is officially pre- or post-conflict.

A post-conflict situation is here described as a *situation following an armed conflict, character-*

ized by a clear victory of one party, a declared cessation of war (i.e. peace agreement or ceasefire), a stalemate, or a significant reduction in armed violence. Post-conflict environments are more easily described than defined. Table 3.1, which lists several recent ‘post-conflict’ countries, highlights the nature of the challenge. Afghanistan is ‘post-conflict’ in the sense that the Taliban government was overthrown in 2001, but significant fighting continues in many areas. Burundi witnessed a power-sharing arrangement in 2003, but the last remaining rebel group was not brought into the fold until 2008. Other conflicts have similar complexities.

These semantic disagreements generate contradictions and challenges. For example, there are routine disagreements over how to ‘count’ violent deaths, human rights violations, and criminal violence during and after wars. Certain governments may feel they have legitimate reasons to shield the true magnitude of armed violence from public scrutiny.³ As a result, there is little systematic or synthetic analysis of post-conflict violence, and few comprehensive datasets exist to explain patterns and trends before and after war.

While it may be difficult to define post-conflict circumstances precisely, certain broad generalizations can be made about different post-conflict contexts. According to Chaudhary and Suhrke (2008) post-conflict countries can be differentiated according to how they experience armed violence. Some countries that have long since emerged from war, such as Nicaragua, Guatemala, and El Salvador, continue to exhibit acute levels of armed violence—sometimes at rates higher than during periods of their armed conflicts. Other countries, such as Peru, Mozambique, the Solomon Islands, and Sierra Leone, successfully transitioned into more peaceful societies.

TABLE 3.1 Selected post-conflict countries: 1995–2005

	End date	Outcome
Afghanistan*	2001	Victory
Angola	2002	Peace agreement
Bosnia and Herzegovina*	1995	Peace agreement
Burundi	2003	Peace agreement
Cambodia	2000	Peace agreement
Cameroon*	1996	Reduced conflict
Central African Republic*	2002	Reduced conflict
Comoros*	1997	Ceasefire
Congo, Democratic Republic	1999, 2002	Peace agreement
Congo, Republic of	2000	Peace agreement
Côte d'Ivoire*	2004	Peace agreement
Ecuador-Peru *	1995	Ceasefire
Eritrea*	1997, 2000	Peace agreement
Ethiopia*	1997, 2000	Peace agreement
Guinea-Bissau*	1999	Victory
Indonesia/Timor-Leste	1999	Peace agreement
Indonesia/Aceh	2005	Peace agreement
Israel*	1999, 2006	Reduced conflict
Lesotho*	1998	Victory
Macedonia*	2001	Peace agreement
Myanmar*	1997	Ceasefire
Nepal	2005	Peace agreement
Niger*	1997	Ceasefire
Nigeria ^{a,*}	2004	Victory/ceasefire
Russia (Chechnya)*	1996	Ceasefire
Rwanda	2002	Peace agreement
Sierra Leone*	2000	Peace agreement
Solomon Islands	2003	Intervention
Sri Lanka*	2001	Ceasefire

^a There were two conflicts that ended in 2004: northern Nigeria (victory) and Niger Delta (ceasefire agreement).

SOURCES: * UCDP, Conflict Termination dataset v. 2.0, 1946–2006. Other entries by editors.

Box 3.1 Post-conflict violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

As conflict subsides and violence is brought under control, direct mortality rates decline rapidly. Indirect mortality rates also decline, but somewhat more slowly, and they remain elevated for an unspecified time (Ghobarah, Huth, and Russett, 2001). These trends have been documented in Sierra Leone, Angola, Liberia, and South Sudan, among other places.⁴

The persistence of above-average rates of indirect conflict deaths in the aftermath of war is a critical challenge facing humanitarian and recovery operations. Far more time and resources are expended on reconstructing basic health infrastructure than in negotiating ceasefires and disarming and demobilizing former combatants. The relative vulnerability of populations combined with the inability of states to rehabilitate and resume basic service delivery can contribute to an increase in mortality that persists well after armed conflicts come to an end.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) was affected by systemic armed conflict for more than a decade, with devastating implications for population health. The acute armed violence (1998–2002) contributed to a massive upsurge in violent deaths, a serious deterioration in health services, food shortages, displacement, and ultimately spiralling rates of excess mortality.

Despite the signing of a formal peace accord in late 2002 and a reduction in levels of armed violence, persistent conflicts in several eastern provinces continued to exact a monumental human toll long after the shooting stopped. Although a reduction in the risk of violent death and more robust UN peacekeeping efforts by United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) have shored up the security situation since 2004, the situation for the Congolese remains precarious.

On the basis of five surveys conducted between 2000 and 2007, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) estimates that more than 5.4 million excess deaths occurred after 1998. An estimated 2.1 million of these excess deaths—more than one-third—have occurred since the formal end of war in 2002. Six years after the signing of the formal peace agreement, the country's national crude mortality rate (CMR) remains stubbornly high at 2.2 deaths per 1,000 per month—more than 50 per cent higher than the sub-Saharan African average. As Table 3.2 shows, CMRs are higher in the volatile eastern provinces, at some 2.6 deaths per 1,000 in 2007.

The IRC claims that DRC represents the 'world's deadliest crisis since World War II' (IRC, 2007, p. ii). Crucially, fewer than 10 per cent of all these deaths were attributed to armed violence. The vast majority of the victims died as a result of easily preventable diseases such as malaria, diarrhoea, pneumonia, and malnutrition.

TABLE 3.2 Approximate crude mortality rates (CMRs) in east and west DRC, 1999–2007

	Percentage of crude mortality rates (CMRs) due to violent deaths	CMR in east DRC (per 1,000 population)	CMR in west DRC (per 1,000 population)
1999	11.1	5.4	–
2000	–	5.4	–
2001	9.4	5.4	–
2002	–	3.5	2.0
2003	1.6	2.9	1.8
2004	–	2.9	1.8
2006	–	2.6	2.0
2007	0.6	2.6	2.0

NOTE: 2005 was a period that was not surveyed.

SOURCE: IRC (2007, pp. 9, 13)

On the basis of Chaudhary and Suhrke (2008), it is possible to discern several overlapping post-conflict scenarios. These include *political violence, routine state violence, economic and crime-related violence, community and informal justice, and post-war property-related disputes*.⁵ Post-conflict environments imperfectly reflect the conflicts that precede them. They may continue to feature government-supported militia, the emergence of organized crime relying on new forms of capital, and the progressive militarization of society, including in the service of economic and political elites, and high levels of sexual violence (see Box 3.2).

Why would the incidence of post-conflict violence remain high, and why would its form change? One reason is that the domestic balance of power is usually fundamentally realigned after an armed conflict. Whether as a result of concessions made during peace negotiations, the disarmament and

TABLE 3.3 Typology of post-conflict armed violence

Type of violence	Indicators
Political violence	Assassinations, bomb attacks, kidnappings, torture, genocide, mass displacements, riots
Routine state violence	Violent law enforcement activities, encounter killings, social cleansing operations, routine torture
Economic and crime-related violence	Armed robbery, extortions, kidnappings for ransom, control of markets through violence
Community and informal justice and policing	Lynching, vigilante action, mob justice
Post-war displacements and disputes	Clashes over land, revenge killings, small-scale 'ethnic cleansing'

SOURCE: Chaudhary and Suhrke (2008)

Box 3.2 Sexual violence in the aftermath of war

Higher levels of rape and domestic violence have been reported in many post-conflict situations, such as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in the former Yugoslavia, in Afghanistan, Burundi, and Liberia, but also in Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Peru (Bastick, Grimm, and Kunz, 2007). Post-conflict sexual violence has been explained by a multitude of factors including the influx of returnees to their communities, high unemployment rates, lack of economic opportunities, widespread availability of arms, breakdown of social norms, post-conflict masculinity crisis, and high prevalence of single female-headed households. Weak justice and police institutions, general lawlessness, and a climate of impunity further increase the risk of violence and the victimization of groups vulnerable to sexual violence, such as women and children.

In this environment, the culture of violence and lack of respect for human rights persists. In some post-conflict countries, it has been observed that, while during conflict the majority of perpetrators of violence and sexual violence were identified as members of armed groups and security forces, an increasing number of perpetrators during the post-conflict period seem to be neighbours and community members.

In Sierra Leone, experts estimate that between 215,000 and 257,000 women and girls were affected by sexual violence (PHR, 2002, p. 4). The legacy of widespread sexual violence during armed conflict continues into post-conflict society. Half a decade after the end of the conflict, women and girls were not safe from sexual assault. The International Rescue Committee together with the Government of Sierra Leone established Sexual Assault Referral Centres, also referred to as 'Rainbo' centres, offering free medical, psycho-social, and legal support to victims (Kellah, 2007). In 2007, 1,176 women and girls were treated at the centres. Victims of sexual assault and rape were very young: 65 per cent of reported cases were girls younger than 15 years. In 149 cases women and girls were gang-raped. Most of the cases came from areas with large numbers of ex-combatants. This number represents only a fraction of all incidents. Most police stations received at least one complaint of rape every day. But the unreported cases remain very high because victims are very reluctant to report what happened to them (IRIN, 2008).

Many DDR programmes established in the aftermath of war still observe traditional gender roles and focus disproportionately on male combatants. Thus, women and girl combatants are often excluded or their special needs are not taken into account. This increases the risk of social exclusion and poverty for women and children ex-combatants, making them more vulnerable to trafficking and prostitution, perpetuating a cycle of sexual violence. Thus, excluding women and girls from DDR has important implications for the victims themselves, but also for development more generally. Some DDR programmes, such as the United Nations Mission in Liberia's DDR Action Plan, have started to include an explicit gender focus and special arrangements for female combatants.

SOURCE: Bastick, Grimm, and Kunz (2007, pp. 183–86)



PHOTO ▲ A five-year-old Hutu refugee boy stands next to a Rwandan Army soldier in Gisenyi, 1996.
© Jerome Delay/AP Photo

demobilization of commanders and rank and file, or the introduction of democratic elections, different winners and losers emerge in the post-conflict period. In addition, political elites may rely on political armed violence to shore up their negotiating positions and lay out their agendas. The shape and direction of such violence will be informed by the dynamics of a given peace settlement or internationally supported recovery strategy.

As noted by Chaudhary and Suhrke (2008), if one party wins and controls a strong security apparatus this can lead to violent purges to eliminate

remnants of the enemy and its affiliates, as was the case in Rwanda following the 1994 genocide.⁶ By contrast, if a war ends with a clear settlement overseen by international forces, there may be fewer instances of flagrant persecution. Rather, former and official political authorities, military personnel, and business elites may deploy violent intimidation against those challenging their position. In many cases, such actions may be reported erroneously as common or petty crime. Even more problematic, in some post-conflict settings experiencing fragmentation and division, armed violence can take on more anarchic characteristics. Following the United States-led armed intervention in Afghanistan in 2001, for example, the vacuum created by the factionalization of the security sector contributed to an escalation in warlord-inspired violence.⁷

Many post-conflict environments are equally characterized by more routine *state-led armed violence* perpetrated by its security apparatus. In certain countries such as Guatemala, Mozambique, or Angola, the military, police, and paramilitary forces may be more inclined to pursue violent strategies than to deliver public security after the warfare has come to an end. The progressive militarization of these security institutions may be implicitly sanctioned, even if not explicitly authorized, by politicians and public authorities. Routine state armed violence can include what Chaudhary and Suhrke (2008) label ‘encounter violence’ (i.e. extrajudicial killing of suspected criminals rather than arrest or prosecution) as well as torture to obtain confessions. Security agencies may also condone social cleansing operations in slums and shanty towns as part of law and order operations.

Another common feature of post-war societies is *economically motivated armed violence*. Policy-makers and researchers have focused on the way

illegal war economies, including their networks of patronage, contribute to persistent armed violence at war's end in countries such as Afghanistan, Bosnia, Haiti, and elsewhere (Cooper, 2006; Spear, 2006; Goodhand, 2005; Pugh, 2005). Armed groups that have not been effectively disarmed and demobilized may morph into organized criminal networks. The entrenchment of economic armed violence can persist due to the continued presence of armed ex-combatants with experience using violence and the absence of meaningful employment and economic opportunities, as the case of Iraq so painfully demonstrates. Government and state security forces may also seek to continue to profit from illegal rents. As pointed out by Chaudhary and Suhrke (2008), organized crime of a certain scale cannot continue without some degree of official complicity. Countries such as Liberia, Northern Ireland, South Africa, and others in Central America experienced violent crime waves in the aftermath of war.

An under-reported but nevertheless important category of post-war armed violence relates to *community and informal justice and policing*. Because 'modern' law enforcement is often contested in post-conflict societies, informal policing including vigilantism, lynching, gang patrols, and customary forms of retributive justice can come to the fore. As Chaudhary and Suhrke (2008) observe, the lines between these various categories are fluid and shifting. For example, vigilante groups are often formally structured and draw on popular support (White, 1981).

Such violence may derive legitimacy through the real and perceived protection of civilians from daily insecurity, often with public support from state authorities. In Liberia, for instance, the Ministry of Justice (controversially) called for the formation of vigilante groups to counter increasing violent crime in the capital, Monrovia. Lynching

and mob justice also appear to enforce certain forms of order and moral codes.⁸ Community policing can include elements of 'gang' violence, just as neighbourhood gangs may also establish elements of local control through the provision of 'protection services'. In post-war Nicaragua, for example, urban youth gangs have evolved from 'providing micro-regimes of order as well as communal forms of belonging' in the mid-1990s, to forming predatory organizations 'concerned with regulating an emergent drug economy in the exclusive interest of the individual gang members instead of protecting the local neighbourhood' (Rodgers, 2006, p. 321).

A final category of post-conflict armed violence relates to *property disputes* arising from competing claims registered by displaced populations. Large-scale dislocation can generate renewed armed violence if repatriated or returning families find their house, land, and assets seized by some-

PHOTO ▼ A mother with two children crouched in the entrance of a makeshift shelter at the Kalma refugee camp, Nyala, Sudan, 2007. © Sven Torfinn/Panos Pictures



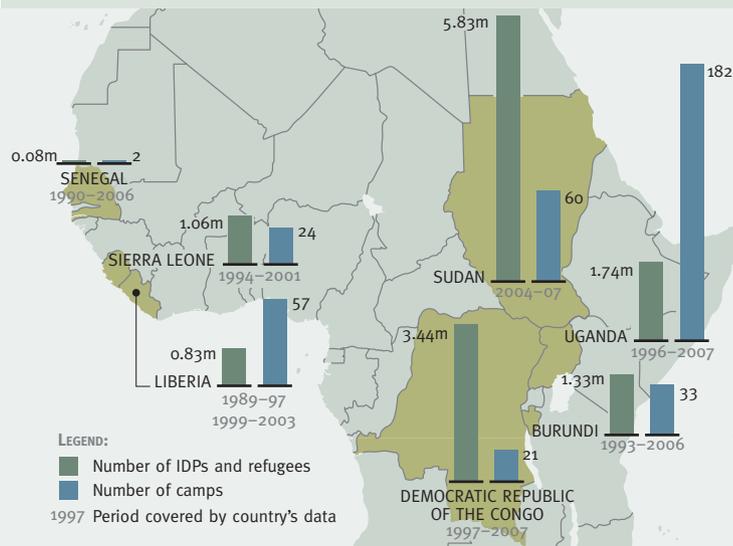
Box 3.3 Protecting the displaced from armed violence

Refugees and displaced persons are most often fleeing from conflicts, but dislocated populations can remain for long periods in protracted and 'post-conflict' situations. In these circumstances, violence may have subsided, but insecurity is high and return impossible.

Overall refugee numbers are disputed. In 2007, The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) recorded 11.4 million refugees under its mandate, of whom about 2.3 million were in Africa alone (UNHCR, 2008, pp. 2, 7). Although there are competing definitions of who counts as an 'internally displaced person' (IDP), the range of estimates is much higher in comparison to refugees. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Center reported 26 million IDPs in December 2007, of whom 12.7 million were located in Africa (IDMC, 2008, p. 7). UNHCR estimates that a total of 51 million IDPs have been displaced as a result of armed conflict or natural disasters (UNHCR, 2008, p. 2).

Population dislocation is one of the world's most urgent humanitarian and development problems. A considerable proportion of the displaced population resides in so-called protracted situations, often living in dilapidated settlements over generations. Despite the emergence of new normative standards to promote protection from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (among others), insecurity remains widespread and poorly understood (Muggah, 2006).

MAP 3.1 Distribution of IDP and refugee populations in selected African countries



SOURCE: Ford Institute for Human Security (2008)

A recent research assessment of what puts protracted refugees and IDPs at risk of armed violence reviewed more than 1,500 refugee and IDP camps in Burundi, the DRC, Liberia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sudan, and Uganda (Ford Institute for Human Security, 2008). It identified more than 25 factors that intensified risks and enhanced resilience. The assessment highlights four strategies to enhance the safety and security of displaced populations.

Robust protection of camps is much more effective than small symbolic contribution of forces. Protected camps were less likely to be attacked than unprotected camps. Of 1,180 documented attacks, fewer than 20 per cent took place where there a protection force was in place. Government forces, irrespective of their size, are most likely to be attacked, though they are also regularly accused of abusing the populations they are charged with protecting. International peacekeeping forces are less likely to be attacked, but a small symbolic force does not provide a robust deterrent. A small force may in fact embolden would-be attackers.

Early protection of camps can save lives. There is an important relationship between the duration of conflict and the number of attacks on camps. Attacks tend to steadily increase in the early stages of war, then decrease. Early protection can prevent belligerent forces from committing armed violence. In Sierra Leone between 1997 and 2001, for example, in the aftermath of a coup, more than three-quarters of all camps were attacked at least once per year. These rates dropped dramatically after 2001.

Improved access to water can potentially reduce armed violence against displaced people. There appears to be a relationship between water points, camps, and the incidence of armed violence. Specifically, water availability appears to motivate both the migratory movements of refugees and IDPs and attacks by belligerents. In Sudan, for example, a high percentage of attacks occur near water points.

Locating camps at some distance from international borders does not necessarily increase the safety of displaced residents. Current international

standards issued by UNHCR emphasize the importance of locating refugee and IDP camps at least 50 km from neighbouring country borders. But the 50 km buffer between camps and borders or conflict zones does not necessarily protect the camps.

Larger camps tend to be more susceptible to attacks than smaller ones. There is growing evidence that the larger the refugee or IDP settlement, the more likely it is to be exposed to armed violence. In Sudan, for example, according to available data, more than two-thirds of the 101 camps with populations over 10,000 were attacked. Approximately one-third of the 188 camps with populations of fewer than 10,000 were attacked over the same period.

SOURCE: Ford Institute for Human Security (2008)

one else (see Box 3.3). In certain cases, entire villages and population groups may have been coercively evicted, as was the case with certain Tamil and Sinhalese populations in Sri Lanka between 2002 and 2008. Liberian Mandingos who fled during the war found their land occupied by other ethnic groups when they returned, and attempts to reclaim it led to rioting and new forms of communal violence (Chaudhary and Suhrke, 2008). Likewise, in post-war Kosovo, for example, the Serb minority was particularly exposed to Kosovo Albanians seeking to establish an ethnically homogeneous territory. Revenge or retribution killings over the death or maiming of family and community members are also common in many post-war societies. Such killings tend to reflect the interests of narrow groups, which subtly distinguishes them from the community and informal justice just described. In certain instances, such killings can escalate and intensify smouldering tensions (Mac Ginty 2006).

PHOTO Georgian soldiers run near a blazing building after a Russian bombardment in Gori, 2008. © Gleb Garanich/Reuters



Box 3.4 When do countries relapse into civil war?

It is often said that countries coming out of civil war have a nearly 50 per cent risk of sliding back into war within the first five post-conflict years. The figure has circulated in the academic world, the United Nations system, and the international donor community, and was used as a justification for the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission.

However, the broad acceptance of this figure stands in contrast to its general validity. The 50 per cent figure was established as part of an inquiry at the World Bank into the economic aspects of armed conflict that was led by Paul Collier and associates (Collier et al., 2003). Various authors have suggested that this figure is misleading and probably too high. Revised figures point to a 20–25 per cent risk of conflicts recurring, based on the use of alternative datasets and independent retesting of the original data (Walter, 2004; Suhrke and Samset, 2007). Even the authors of the World Bank study revised their earlier figure downward to 40 per cent (Collier, Hoeffler, and Söderboom, 2006, p. 14).

These differences matter. On the policy level, a high figure will bolster the arguments for ‘robust’ international interventions in war-torn countries and post-conflict situations. Since the figure is based on statistical averages, Collier recommends that, as a rule, international peacekeeping missions should last at least ten years to counter the high risk of conflict recurrence. The lower-end estimate of 20–25 per cent, by contrast, would justify a more modest and less intrusive engagement.

The different outcomes partly reflect the use of different time periods for analysis (does war recur within five or ten years?), and different methods. But this should be a strong warning about the complexities and uncertainties of using a single estimate as an evidence base for policy. This is particularly the case in research on armed conflict, where the raw data often is incomplete and uncertain. In this context, statistical analysis can provide false certainty to policy-makers and support tendencies to fit the data to the preferred policy position. While still resonating in policy circles, much statistical research on civil war has been discredited on methodological grounds (Nathan, 2005; Cramer, 2002).

The responsibility for preventing misuse of research lies with both scholars and policy-makers. There is nothing unusual about figures changing as methodologies and data evolve. Researchers need to acknowledge and discuss openly the limitations of their data and, where appropriate, the changing results over time—even if it means less support from policy-makers who ask for certainty and general formulas. This is particularly so where statistical methods seem to convey a high degree of certainty. Policy-makers should acknowledge that most social scientific knowledge evolves, and temper their expectations on certainty and general formulas as the basis for developing policy.

SOURCE: Suhrke and Samset (2007)

Risk factors facing post-conflict societies

International concern with post-conflict armed violence is motivated by its potential to reignite war and contribute to persistent suffering and insecurity. At the macro level, research suggests that post-conflict societies are vulnerable—at least to the risk of conflict recurrence, if not also to high levels of armed violence. The oft-cited statistic that countries emerging from war have a 50 per cent risk of sliding back within the next five years is probably too pessimistic, but the risk still is likely to be in the order of 20–25 per cent—which remains significant from a policy perspective. Box 3.4 provides an overview of this debate. Similarly, although the data is poor, Paul Collier and his colleagues find that ‘during the first five years following a civil war [homicide] is around 25 per cent higher than normal’ (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004, p. 12).

Better evidence is needed on these macro risks, since these differences matter for policy and programming. For example, the higher the estimated risk of war recurrence, the more likely policy-makers are to undertake robust interventions. The less certainty that exists, the more cautious and sensitive will be the likely external intervention.

At the social and individual levels, a host of risk factors for armed violence affect both non-conflict and post-conflict societies (Small Arms Survey, 2008). Understanding why violence occurs, who commits violent acts, and who is at risk of victimization is at the core of strategies for violence reduction. At the centre of these interventions are risk factors, which paint a picture of perpetrators, victims, means, and types of violence in a community. These in turn enable policy-makers to design interventions to target those perpetrating armed violence and protect the most vulnerable.

TABLE 3.4 Risk factors for youth violence

Individual	Family	Peer	School
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Attention deficit ■ History of early aggression ■ Substance abuse ■ Low cognitive skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Exposure to violence in the family ■ History of victimization ■ Poor parenting ■ Severe or erratic punishment ■ Poor family functioning ■ Parental substance abuse ■ Poor supervision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Associating with delinquent peers ■ Peer substance abuse ■ Involvement in gangs ■ Social rejection by peers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lack of involvement in school extra-curricular activities ■ Poor academic performance ■ Low commitment to school ■ Poor school environment ■ School bullying

SOURCE: Small Arms Survey (2008, p. 262)

General risk factors for violence include substance abuse, a history of victimization, violence in the home, attitudes that support the use of violence, and high levels of economic inequality. While the presence of these general risk factors increases the likelihood of violence, different types of violence appear to exhibit some unique risk factors, as Table 3.4 shows for youth violence. Important predictors for violence are the presence of gangs in the neighbourhood, having an older sibling who is in a gang, feeling unsafe at school or in the neighbourhood, and lack of economic opportunities. Substance abuse, associating with delinquent peers, and school bullying contribute to youth violence.

In addition, general conditions such as social and economic exclusion, rapid urbanization and social dislocation, unequal access to basic public services, unemployment, and living in poorer and socially marginalized areas appear to be correlated with the onset of criminal violence (UNODC, 2005; Small Arms Survey, 2007). In some cases, as in West and Central Africa, youth are rapidly recruited (voluntarily and forcibly) from urban slums into more structured political institutions such as militia or even rebel groups (Small Arms Survey, 2006). Given that many of these factors are associated with rapid urbanization, greater attention to the dynamics of post-conflict urban armed violence is needed. Cities are mag-

nets for the young, and youth are the most likely to perpetrate and be victimized by armed violence (WHO, 2008b).

Meanwhile, other structural risk factors are being linked to the recurrence of conflict armed violence. Sharp economic shocks, rising levels of income inequality (Picciotto and Fukuda-Parr, 2008), the expansion of unemployed youth populations (Collier et al., 2003), horizontal inequalities, and emerging grievances have all been offered as explanations for the onset of armed conflict as well as its contagion across borders. Although debates persist over the influence of these risks, the fact that many countries afflicted by war slip back into conflict means that conflict-prevention and peace-building interventions should focus attention on reducing conflict-related violence (OECD, 2008).

Despite increasing knowledge about risk factors for violence, a number of important issues remain unresolved. Little research has yet been undertaken to identify the specific risk factors that might condition the onset and nature of post-conflict armed violence, whether or not it erupts into outright war. More attention also needs to be paid to the factors that contribute to the resilience of individuals and societies in the face of the extreme adversity that often characterizes post-conflict settings.

Box 3.5 The demographics of discord

From the alleyways of Nairobi's Kibera slum to the cocaine-processing enclaves of Colombia's highlands and militia encampments in Darfur, the age of violence entrepreneurs is strikingly similar. The overwhelming majority of those wielding arms are male and less than 30 years old. This isn't altogether surprising. Even in developed countries males are responsible for four out of every five violent crimes, and the proportion of young adults in a society is a fair (but incomplete) predictor of homicide rates (see Figure 3.1). Likewise, the proportion of young adults in a society gives a reasonable indication of a country's risk of stumbling into mass violence.

What is the youth bulge?

The youth bulge represents the relatively large proportion of young adults (15 to 29 years of age) in a given society. More than 80 per cent of all armed civil conflicts since the 1970s began in countries where more than 60 per cent of the population was younger than 30. Most other conflicts involved both insurrections and the violent suppression of young populations. While the age structure of a given population may not necessarily figure in the political and strategic calculations that pave the way to war, their mobilization is one ingredient that, together with capital availability, arms supplies, grievances, and state weaknesses, completes the recipe.

When plotted graphically, the profile of the youthful population is easily identified and distinguished from more mature ones. It appears broadly pyramidal, providing a hint of the magnitude of the challenges that developing states face in providing adequate public services. Typically, countries with pyramidal age structures experience growth rates in working age populations of three to

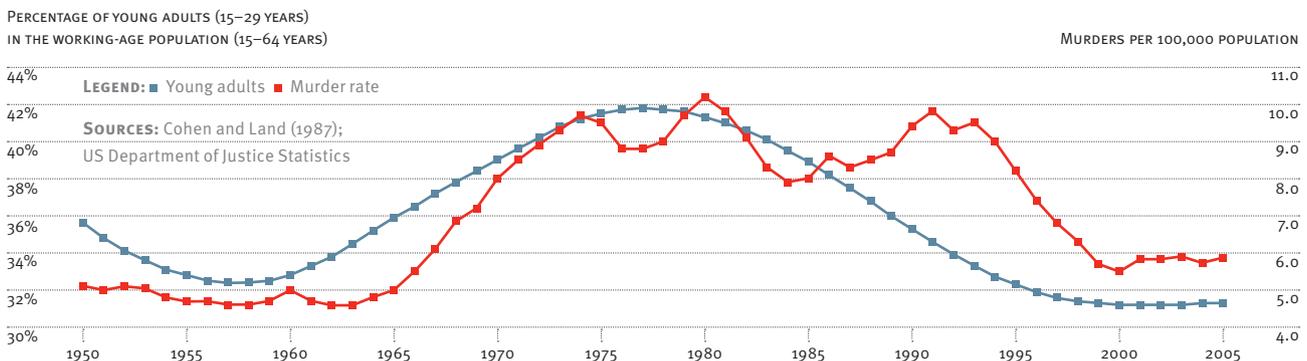
four per cent (compared to about 1 per cent in the United States). An abundance of adolescents and young adults tends to promote a vibrant and experimental youth culture. When this large group matures into its working years, it tends to saturate the job market, depressing wages and exacerbating unemployment. As a society's agricultural sector declines and urbanization intensifies, inequalities rapidly emerge.

Declines in women's fertility dramatically alter this profile.⁹ As a rule, youth bulges appear in countries that have experienced high fertility rates 20 years previously. Because a bulge dissipates only after about two decades of fertility decline, today—despite the spread of modern contraception—15- to 29-year-olds still comprise more than 40 per cent of the working-age population (15 to 64) in over half the world's countries. Most are in sub-Saharan Africa, the Andes in South America, Central and South Asia, and the Pacific Islands.

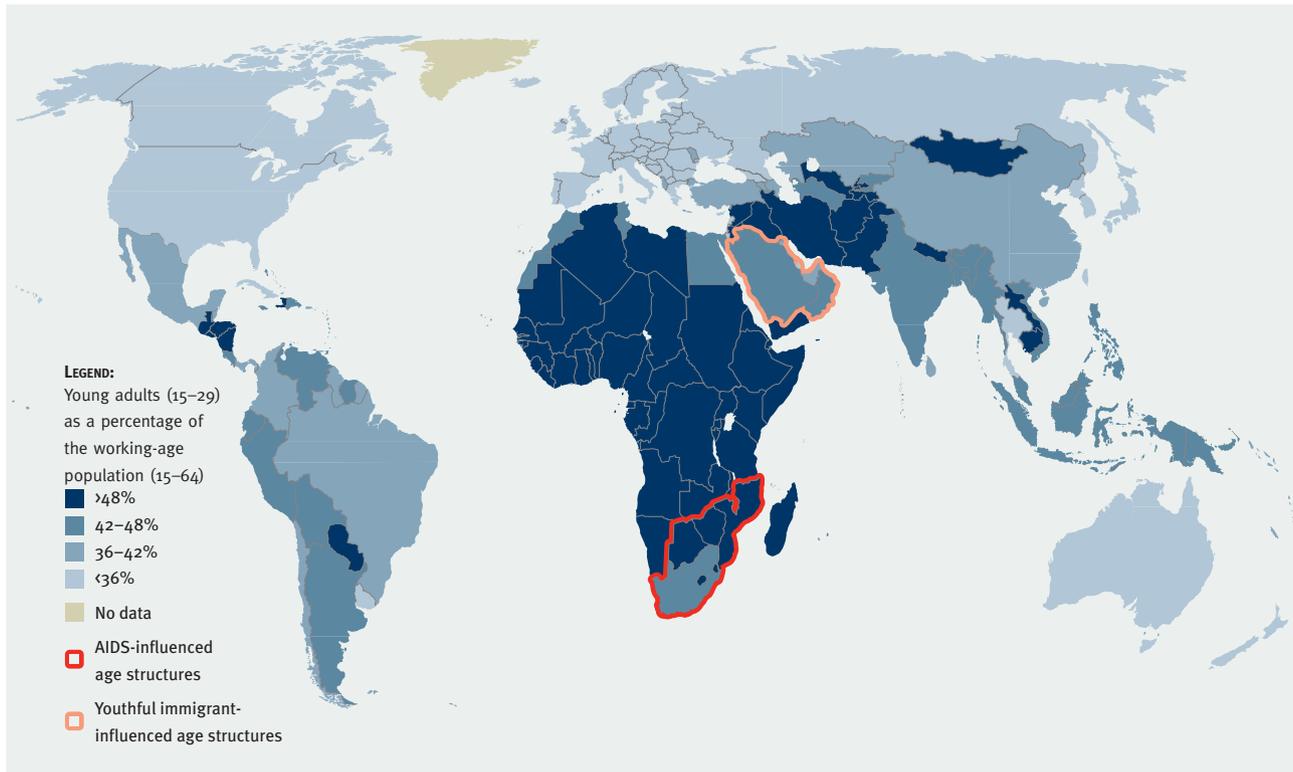
Youthful risks

A youthful society constitutes a potential risk, rather than a cause, of the onset of collective armed violence. Since the 1960s, there has been growing awareness that those countries with a large proportion of young adults have an elevated risk of experiencing the emergence of a new civil conflict, political violence, and domestic terrorism.¹⁰ Comparative studies indicate that the risk of conflict associated with a large youth bulge is roughly comparable to risks associated with low levels of per capita income or high levels of infant mortality—around 2.3 times that of other intervening variables.¹¹ Political demographers hypothesize that a large youth bulge facilitates youth political mobilization and more formal recruitment into state and non-state forces and criminal networks. ▶▶

FIGURE 3.1 Youth population growth rates and murder rates in the United States, 1950–2005



MAP 3.2 The youth bulge in 2005



SOURCE: Cincotta (2008)

Declines in youth bulges are not immediately associated with rapid reductions in civil conflict. During Northern Ireland's 'Troubles' (1968–96) and Sri Lanka's conflict (1983–present), collective armed violence persisted after the population age structure had experienced considerable maturation. There are some indications that increasing age maturity together with economic development can make recruitment into organized armed violence more expensive (ECONOMIC COSTS OF ARMED VIOLENCE).¹² Even so, medium- and long-term strategies can reduce the demographic risks of high levels of criminal and political violence.

Boosting job supply while decreasing job demand

In the medium term, development donors and development banks can speed up the global migration of light industry to

youth-bulge countries by focusing on incentives and risk protection for private investors—particularly those who encourage export-oriented industries, job growth, and apprenticeships for young people, and are willing to work in post-conflict conditions. Governments and NGOs could promote interventions that reduce young males' vulnerability by expanding their skill sets, promoting self-esteem, and developing entrepreneurial motivation and opportunities to encounter peers. More job opportunities for youth in high-risk countries as well as investments in girls' education, maternal and child health, and family planning could also help in the long term to ease demographic pressures while simultaneously reducing the risks associated with surging unemployed populations.

SOURCE: Cincotta (2008)

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Box 3.6 The mobilization of inequalities

The vast majority of multiethnic and multi-religious societies are not excessively violent (Fearon and Laitin, 1996). Nevertheless, policy-makers would do well to better understand the circumstances under which violent ethnic and communal conflicts do break out. A recent project by the Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity (CRISE) at Oxford University focuses on the role of ‘horizontal inequalities’ as a causal factor. The study focuses on Latin America, South-east Asia, and West Africa, and finds that leaders are instrumental in mobilizing latent horizontal inequalities into conflicts and occasionally armed violence. They play a critical role in fomenting social cleavages along particular group identities and in exacerbating tensions between communities for instrumental gain.

Horizontal inequalities refer to the economic, social, and political inequalities between culturally defined groups (Stewart, 2008).¹³ Most people have multiple social identities, including gender, ethnicity, religion, language, profession, and geographic location. The importance attached to some of these identities varies. In some contexts where one’s group affiliation assumes more prominence, however, they can lead individuals to fight, kill, and die in the name of identity (Stewart, 2008). This is particularly likely to be the case where groups have suffered vis-à-vis other groups in terms of their economic advancement, educational and social welfare, access to the state in terms of exercising political voice or using services, or rights to express their cultural identity (Langer and Brown, 2008; Diprose and Ukiwo, 2008; Stewart, 2008). Group identities and the real and perceived relationships between groups, are frequently a central feature of contemporary armed violence.

In Côte d’Ivoire, for example, differences in socio-economic status between northerners and southerners were mobilized by political leaders and the media (Langer, 2008). Likewise, in both Nigeria and Indonesia localized identity differences were critical in mobilizing votes and gaining access to local government institutions (Diprose and Ukiwo, 2008). Group affiliations can be mobilized according to religious affiliation (e.g. Northern Ireland, India, and the Philippines), ethnicity (e.g. Rwanda and Sri Lanka), class and caste (e.g. Nepal), or some combination of these. Ultimately, however, large-scale group mobilization is not likely to occur in the absence of serious grievances experienced by both elites and citizens.¹⁴

Both leaders and followers may become strongly motivated where there are severe and persistent economic, social, and political

differences between culturally defined groups. Østby (2008) also shows a significant rise in the probability of the onset of conflict across countries with severe social and economic horizontal inequalities, for 1986–2004. Mancini (2008) also finds that horizontal inequality in child mortality rates and its change over time are positively (and significantly) associated with the patterns of ethno-communal violence in Indonesia.

There are also connections between different types of horizontal inequality. Inequalities in political power often lead to social and economic inequalities. Lack of access to education leads to decreased economic opportunities, while low incomes tend to result in poor educational access and achievement in a vicious cycle of deprivation. There are also reinforcing cycles of privilege and deprivation because of the way that one type of capital requires others to be productive (Stewart, Brown, and Langer, 2008).

The nature of the state and its reaction to conflicts are important elements determining the severity and persistence of conflict over time. In Guatemala’s civil war (1960–96) the extremely violent and repressive state reaction to rebellion has been described as ‘a campaign of state terror’ (Caumartin, 2005, p. 22) with massive killings, particularly focused on the indigenous population. In areas where the state is absent (whether by design or by default), local institutions and local leaders’ reactions to emerging conflicts can determine the likelihood and persistence of violence.

There are ways to minimize the risk that such horizontal inequalities will be mobilized into violent conflicts. For example, in both Nigeria and Indonesia the presence of formal and informal institutions in peace-building can prevent armed violence from breaking out. Where the state gives equal treatment to competing sides (e.g. accountability and incentives to resolve tensions), suspicion can be reduced and social capital fostered.

There is also empirical evidence that power sharing (through state structures) can reduce political horizontal inequalities. Likewise, taxation, affirmative action, employment and education quotas, and other factors are shown to have a significant impact on reducing socio-economic horizontal inequalities. Successful examples include Malaysia, where systematic policies introduced in the 1970s have improved the position of the Bumiputera, and Northern Ireland, where effective employment and education policies (among others) have sharply narrowed the difference between Catholics and Protestants and are one major factor behind the progress to peace (Stewart, Brown, and Langer, 2008).

SOURCE: Diprose and Stewart (2008)

Given the potential importance of ‘youth bulges’ and ‘horizontal inequality’ as general factors conditioning conflict and violence, a better understanding of these specific risk factors—whether for criminal or inter-personal violence—is warranted. Boxes 3.5 and 3.6 explore the impact of demographic factors and of horizontal inequality on the incidence of armed violence and conflict.

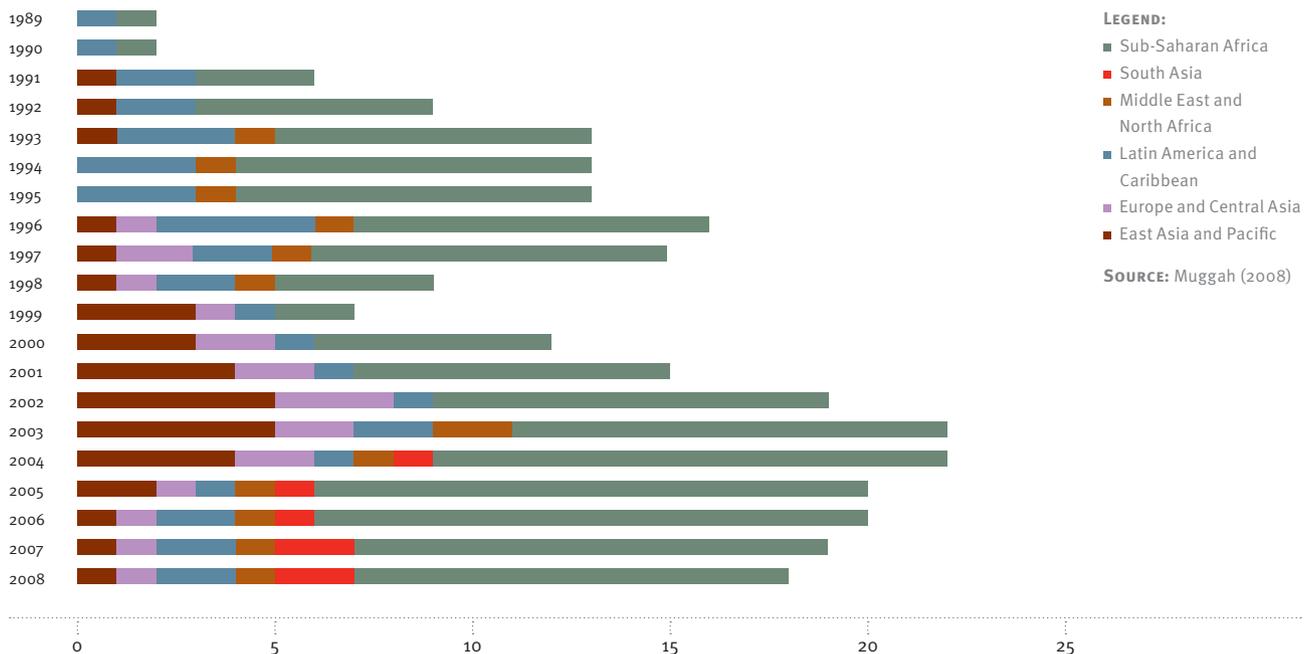
Conclusion: promoting security after conflict

Armed violence and its aftershocks tend to persist well after the formal fighting stops.¹⁵ Anticipating the many forms armed violence can take in the post-conflict period is essential

to promoting sustainable security and development. Yet many contemporary post-conflict security-promoting activities are simply ill-equipped to deal with the diverse and complex faces of armed violence.

Multilateral peace and security operations have expanded to deal with irregular forms of war, up to and including peace enforcement operations, and to engage in the longer-term process of post-conflict peace- and state-building and democracy promotion. The vast majority of DDR and arms control operations are also launched in post-war and post-conflict settings, and (as Figure 3.2 indicates) they have expanded in scale since the 1990s. The development community has also come to treat underdevelopment as ‘dangerous’ and to invest in interventions to bolster govern-

FIGURE 3.2 Number of DDR operations around the world, 1989–2008



Box 3.7 Transitional justice and DDR in Africa

Conventional transitional justice measures include, *inter alia*, criminal prosecutions, truth commissions, reparations for victims, and vetting or other forms of institutional reform. Post-conflict countries in Africa have witnessed some of the most well-known efforts in the emerging field of transitional justice. Examples include the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, the *gacaca* process in Rwanda, the Special Court for Sierra Leone, the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the first arrest warrants issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC) against political leaders and leaders of armed groups in the DRC, Sudan, Central African Republic, and Uganda.¹⁶

Africa has also been the site of the greatest number of DDR operations. Since the late 1980s there have been at least 11 UN peacekeeping operations in Africa in which the DDR of combatants has been included in the mandate. In six of these there has also been some form of an internationally assisted transitional justice process.¹⁷ But in the remaining two dozen DDR programmes undertaken in Africa since the early 1990s, connections with transitional justice did not feature at all.¹⁸

There are good reasons to expect a rise in post-conflict situations where DDR processes and transitional justice initiatives will coexist. While transitional justice is focused on promoting justice and accountability, DDR is more focused on stability and security promotion. Though supporters of the two processes often compete, both are nevertheless intent on contributing to longer-term peace and structural stability.

SOURCE: Muggah (2008)

ance and growth opportunities in so-called fragile or weak states.

As this chapter shows, investment in armed violence prevention and reduction will have to account for the many dimensions of post-conflict violence, investing in reducing known risk factors, and promoting violence-sensitive development. A failure to address effectively and comprehensively the immediate and underlying causes of armed violence means that the embers can smoulder, waiting for the next spark to reignite into war.

Yet most contemporary forms of security promotion in post-conflict environments tend to be adopted in response to war. As a result, these interventions typically adopt a narrow conception of armed violence and specific categories of armed actors and struggle to contend with the more dynamic temporal, spatial, and demographic dimensions of armed violence before, during, and after wars come to a close. Part of the reason for this is political and bureaucratic—programmes such as DDR, international policing, and small arms control are routinely introduced as part of a UN Security Council Resolution or pursuant to a peace agreement with direct prescriptions on how such interventions should be executed.

As such, they assume that conflict has passed its ‘peak’ and that some form of normalization (or stability) will ensue in the anticipated post-conflict period. Only rarely are interventions developed on the basis of robust evidence on the ground, to deal with the combined forms of armed violence identified above, or to anticipate the medium- and long-term importance of risk reduction.

Beyond a focus on the former warring parties, and on instrumental policies (such as DDR) to remove weapons and combatants from conflict dynamics, a number of other approaches can be explored. One involves linking transitional justice to issues such as DDR, and is explored in Box 3.7.

Other approaches to containing arms and spoilers in post-conflict contexts could draw upon emerging experiences of armed violence prevention and reduction in seriously violence-affected societies. These approaches tend to focus on identifying and responding to risk factors, enhancing resilience at the municipal level, and constructing

interventions based on identified needs. A variety of armed violence prevention and reduction programmes were launched in municipal centres in Colombia, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Haiti, and Brazil during the 1990s and the early part of the next decade. These included voluntary weapons collection, limits on weapon-carrying, alcohol restrictions, and targeted environmental design. These and other interventions explicitly targeted the diverse dimensions of arms availability, including the preferences of actors using them and the real and perceived factors contributing to armed violence.

Such programmes also, however, rely on comparatively robust and decentralized local authorities and civil society—institutions that may be weakened by prolonged periods of warfare and comparatively underdeveloped. More positively, they also encourage public and private actors to define and design targeted programmes. Mirroring the logic of participatory development, the initiative, control, and responsibility of overseeing such violence reduction activities rests at least as much with local partners as with external actors. Although such interventions are nascent, and evidence of their effectiveness is patchy, they offer a promising approach to dealing with some of the complexities of post-conflict violence.¹⁹ 

Abbreviations

CMR	Crude mortality rate
DDR	Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ICC	International Criminal Court
IDP	Internally displaced person
IRC	International Rescue Committee
SSR	Security sector reform
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees

Endnotes

- 1 For a review of the epidemiological literature on post-conflict armed violence, consult Small Arms Survey (2005).
- 2 Reporting biases are common in post-conflict environments. In some cases, post-war killing may be classified as common crime rather than banditry. In other cases, the sudden and rapid expansion of reporting may give a false impression that criminal violence is on the increase. See, for example, Collier et al. (2003).
- 3 Reporters and human rights agencies may also under-report the scale of violence owing to repression and self-censorship. In an era dominated by the ‘war on terror’, governments may also describe simmering violence as ‘terrorism’.
- 4 See, for example, CRED surveys in its Complex Emergency Database (CE-DAT) <<http://www.cedat.be/database>>.
- 5 This typology draws explicitly from Chaudhary and Suhrke (2008) and is based on a project on Violence in the Post-conflict State at the Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI) in Norway.
- 6 The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), which took control of the state after the 1994 genocide, used military means to pursue the *genocidaires* and the wider ethnic group associated with them as they fled into neighbouring DRC, reportedly killing approximately 200,000 people (Chaudhary and Suhrke, 2008).
- 7 For instance, militia leaders and rivals Abdul Rashid Dostum and Atta Mohammed have repeatedly clashed in their attempts to control the country’s northern provinces.
- 8 This is not new. Lynchings of African-Americans in the post-civil war United States were sometimes announced in newspapers beforehand.
- 9 As youthful populations progress through the demographic transition—descending from high to low birth and death rates—their age structure matures gradually, accumulating larger proportions in the middle and upper parts of their profile while the proportion in younger age groups shrinks. This transition, which began slowly during the 18th century in western Europe, has picked up dramatically: since the mid-1960s it generated an unprecedented diversity of country-level age structures.
- 10 See, for example, Staveteig (2005) and Urdal (2006).
- 11 See, for example, Urdal (2006).
- 12 For example, as Northern Ireland’s youth bulge dissipated during the early 1980s, the Irish Republican Army shifted to its ‘long war’ strategy that disengaged from personnel-intensive armed incursions. By the mid-1990s both nationalist and unionist militia were reduced to relatively small, though ruthless and savvy, criminalized units. That effect

- seems also to be influencing Sri Lanka's ongoing civil war and the changing parameters of Colombia's insurgency.
- 13 These are distinct from 'vertical inequalities', which are typically described as inequalities between individuals.
- 14 One study in Indonesia that compared two areas in Central Sulawesi Province with similar concentrations of Muslims and Christians and inequalities in household asset wealth demonstrated that only one experienced a serious outbreak of armed violence. A major difference between the two was that the difference in household wealth at the elite level was much sharper in one community than in the other (Diprose and Stewart, 2008).
- 15 See, for example, Monthly Deaths by Collective Violence from News Reports for a review of the way armed violence can persist after outbreaks of collective violence. <http://www.columbia.edu/~cds81/docs/violence_graphs.pdf>
- 16 The ICC is currently prosecuting political leaders and leaders of armed groups in the DRC, Sudan, and Uganda.
- 17 These six UN missions include: United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) in 1993, United Nations Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) in 1999, the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC) in 1999, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) in 2003, the United Nations Operation in Burundi (UNOB) in 2004, and the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) in 2005. See UN Department of Peacekeeping Web site at <<http://www.unndr.org/partners.php?id=5>>.
- 18 See, for example, Muggah (2008).
- 19 See Muggah (2008) for a review of such interventions in Africa.