

The UK's approaches to peacebuilding

Literature review

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Table of contents

Introduction.....	1
1. Glossary of key terms.....	1
2. Peacebuilding definitions.....	2
3. Drivers of violent conflict.....	4
4. Schools of thought and practice.....	7
5. Emerging evidence on good practice in peacebuilding.....	11
6. Historical overviews of the conflicts in Colombia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Nigeria.....	13
Bibliography.....	16

Introduction

The aim of this literature review is to inform the review by the Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) of *The UK's approaches to peacebuilding*.¹

Chapter 1 is a glossary of a few key terms.

Chapter 2 outlines the range of definitions and interpretations of the term 'peacebuilding', and the way in which interpretations of the term have evolved, even within a single organisation or government.

Chapter 3 explores key drivers of violent conflict, including identity struggles, greed and grievances, poor governance and weak institutions, the effects of climate change, and drivers that are closely related to geographic location such as small weapons proliferation, movement of armed groups across borders, and foreign interference.

Chapter 4 summarises the two main schools of thought and practice of peacebuilding. The chapter starts with the liberal peacebuilding approach, which is a top-down approach that is largely grounded in interactions between external actors and national elites. It then looks at the more recent 'local peacebuilding' efforts. Turning to the 'pragmatic turn in peacebuilding', it then describes the increasingly common 'adaptive peacebuilding approach', a typical sector and context where this approach is applied, and a typical aim that it serves.

Chapter 5 considers emerging evidence on good practice in peacebuilding. The chapter focuses particularly on local ownership and gender sensitivity.

Chapter 6 provides headline overviews of conflicts in Colombia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Nigeria, as these are the case study countries of ICAI's review on the UK's approaches to peacebuilding.

This literature review is based on a thematic analysis of international peer-reviewed literature and 'grey literature' produced by non-governmental organisations, multilateral organisations and governments. The review does not provide an exhaustive review of the relevant peacebuilding literature, or of the many approaches that have been developed to conceptualise, understand and design peacebuilding processes in what has become a major field of academic study.

1. Glossary of key terms

Conflict

Conflict is described as any action that arises from the incompatibility of two or more parties' values, principles and goals. It is also described as disagreement and conflict of interests between two or more groups that leads to hostility, negative dispute, antagonism and contention (Fisher, 1990). Axt, Milososki and Schwarz (2006) argue that sociologists tend to view conflict through the lens of status and class, economists see it through the lens of decision-making, psychologists view conflict at the interpersonal level, and political scientists view it in terms of group interests and power balances, both within and between states. (See also *Violent conflict* below.)

Fragility

There is no universally accepted definition of fragility. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's 2020 *States of fragility* report defines fragility as "the combination of exposure to risk and insufficient coping capacity of the state, systems and/or communities to manage, absorb or mitigate those risks" (OECD, 2020: i). The US government defines fragility as a country's or region's "vulnerability to armed conflict, large-scale violence, or other instability, including the inability to manage transnational threats" and states that fragility "can result from ineffective and unaccountable governance, weak social cohesion, and corrupt institutions or leaders who do not respect human rights" (US government, 2021: 3).

¹ *The UK's approach to peacebuilding*, Independent Commission for Aid Impact, 2022, [link](#).

The concept of fragility is often used in academic and policy literature, but has been criticised for being too broad and obscuring the range of challenges that states face (Saeed, 2020; Call, 2011; Nay, 2014).

Negative and positive peace

Galtung defines peace as either negative or positive. Negative peace refers to the absence of physical violence or war, whereas positive peace refers to the absence of structural violence or structural impediments preventing humans from reaching their full potential, or the availability of conditions that promote or enable social justice (Galtung, 1969). Barash and Webel (2014) define positive peace as “a social condition in which exploitation is minimised or eliminated and in which there is neither overt violence nor the more subtle phenomenon of underlying structural violence. It denotes the continuing presence of an equitable and just social order as well as ecological harmony.”

State-building

‘State-building’ has emerged as a prominent term in academic and policy discourses. The term is used by various disciplinary fields of study and therefore lacks a precise and agreed meaning, but it is roughly defined as interventionist approaches aiming to return and reconstitute the state and its institutional machinery (Scott, 2007).

The literature often uses an institutionalist lens and focuses on the need to improve the capacity and performance of key institutions in order to ensure the development of societies (Fukuyama, 2004; Ottaway, 2002). The burden of state-building is often placed on external actors who choose where and how interventions take place (Chandler, 2010; Ottaway, 2002), and critics claim that liberal frameworks dominate international state-building approaches and projects (Bojicic-Dzelilovic, Kostovicova and Rampton, 2014). Others argue that state-building is “an endogenous process to enhance the capacity, institutions, and legitimacy of the state, driven by state-society relations”, hence it is “primarily a domestic process that involves local actors, which means that the role of international actors is necessarily limited” (OECD, 2011: 20).

Violent conflict

Violent conflict is conflict in which parties seek to resolve competing claims or interests through the use of physical force. The term may refer to civil war, ethnic warfare, terrorism or military-based conflicts (Szayna et al., 2017). There are no universally agreed-upon threshold criteria for classifying a violent event as a violent conflict (Szayna et al., 2017). Classification schemes include criteria such as the number of casualties per year, the type of actors involved in the conflict, the balance of power between the opposing forces involved and the nature of the issue on which the conflict is built (Frère and Wilen, 2015; Kalyvas and Balcells, 2010; Wallensteen and Axell, 1994). The Uppsala Conflict Data Programme (UCDP) is the world’s foremost conflict data repository, and it defines violent conflict as organised violence that leads to 25 or more fatalities per year and involves state-based armed conflict, non-state conflict or one-sided violence (Uppsala University, undated).

2. Peacebuilding definitions

There is no single, universally accepted definition of the term ‘peacebuilding’, and common interpretations of the term have therefore evolved. In addition, scholars and practitioners whose work covers activities that fall under the wider interpretations of the term ‘peacebuilding’ may not employ the term to describe those activities.

The term ‘peacebuilding’ was introduced into the international lexicon as part of the 1992 UN *Agenda for peace*. Since then, there have been three key emphases made by scholars, practitioners and international organisations when defining peacebuilding, all concerned with different aspects of reducing conflict or preventing conflict from re-occurring in post-conflict and fragile settings.

The first emphasis is on ‘state-building’, or on reforming and strengthening the socio-political and economic structures of fragile and conflict-affected states, typically using liberal democracy as the model to work towards (Haugerudbraaten, 1998; UN, 1995). Haugerudbraaten (1998: 22), for example, states that one way to understand peacebuilding is as “an aggregate process [...] that involves a modification of social structures (political,

economic, social, cultural, psychological) through a number of broad developments, notably democratisation, economic development and demilitarisation”.

The second emphasis is on assisting fragile and conflict-affected states in building resilience or strengthening societal capacity to deal with potential conflict in a constructive manner (Denney et al., 2015; International Peacebuilding Alliance, 2010). Denney et al. (2015: 1), for example, argue that peacebuilding is “concerned with the long-term consolidation of peace in countries that have experienced conflict, with a view to building resilience”. Similarly, according to the International Peacebuilding Alliance (2010), peacebuilding is any post-conflict developmental work which involves strengthening and building the societal capacity to handle possible conflict more constructively and less violently.

The third emphasis is on addressing the underlying drivers or root causes of conflict as preventive measures to avoid conflict (DFID, 2010; HM Government, 2021; Ledarach, 1997). Ledarach (1997), for example, sees peacebuilding as comprehensive efforts directed at forestalling conflict through addressing the underlying drivers of conflict and providing social support structures to help reposition the conflict-affected areas.

A fourth group of scholars, practitioners and international organisations considers each of these three emphases as potentially credible, and considers peacebuilding to cover *any* conflict management or civilian crisis management that aims to prevent conflict (Barnett et al., 2007; Ott and Lühe, 2018; Sida, 2017; Lund, 2002; Swanström and Weissmann, 2005). Barnett et al. (2007), for example, say that peacebuilding is simply a broad term for any “external interventions designed to prevent the eruption or return of armed conflict”.

Some governments and international organisations have gradually broadened their interpretation of the term. Under its former Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the UN defined peacebuilding as “the creation of structures for the institutionalisation of peace” (UN, 1995). Since then, UN agencies have stressed that peacebuilding is more than just the end of armed conflict. Instead, it is the establishment of ‘positive peace’, which is a form of peace in which the causes of violent conflict have been removed so that people are less likely to resort to violence to resolve disagreements (Call, 2005; Barnett et al., 2007).² This means that conflict prevention can also be seen as a form of peacebuilding (Barnett et al., 2007), and indeed the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) uses the terms ‘peacebuilding’ and ‘conflict prevention’ interchangeably to describe work aimed at stopping conflicts from starting or recurring (Barnett et al., 2007).

European agencies no longer commonly use the term ‘peacebuilding’. They prefer to distinguish between efforts focused on civilians and ones that are military or focused on security and stabilisation (Barnett et al., 2007). They also prefer to use more limited concepts such as conflict prevention and conflict management. Ott and Lühe (2018) and Sida (2017) describe the difference between these two terms. Conflict prevention can be defined as predicting and preventing or delaying the outbreak and recurrence of conflict (Ott and Lühe, 2018; Lund, 2002). It can also be defined as the preventative measures taken and implemented before the onset of conflict (Swanström and Weissmann, 2005). Conflict management, on the other hand, refers to measures taken to reduce the escalation or intensity of conflict. It means that there is already conflict and that steps are being taken to stop it from getting worse (Swanström and Weissmann, 2005).

The evolution in the interpretation of peacebuilding is illustrated by the UK government’s use of the term and related terminology:

- In 2000, the then Department for International Development (DFID) developed a conflict reduction and humanitarian aid policy in which it stated that building peace and stability can take place by addressing underlying causes of violent conflict, such as social inequality and poverty, poor governance, social injustice, and human rights abuse (DFID, 2000).
- In 2006, DFID published the policy paper *Preventing violent conflict*. This paper, which aims to “show how we understand and respond to conflict across the breadth of our work” (DFID, 2006: 2), uses the term ‘peacebuilding’ as a broad category within which to situate DFID’s work, but does not define the term.

² The distinction between positive and negative peace was first conceptualised by Galtung (1969) and has been influential in shaping the academic field of peacebuilding.

This paper focuses on three areas of work: (1) increasing the department's emphasis on preventing violent conflict before it occurs or recurs; (2) responding more effectively to armed conflict through increasing support to peace processes and building conflict management capacity; and (3) making DFID's work more conflict-sensitive and improving how risk is assessed and dealt with through its country governance assessments.

- The 2010 DFID policy paper *Building peaceful states and societies* provides an even broader description of peacebuilding, which includes efforts designed to address the specific and broad causes of conflict as well as measures aiming to deal with the negative consequences of armed conflict (DFID, 2010). Peacebuilding actions can be focused on conditions before, during and after a conflict.
- The 2021 *Integrated review of security, defence, development and foreign policy* does not use the term 'peacebuilding'. The paper instead talks about preventing, managing and resolving conflict. It commits the UK to "harnessing the full range of government capabilities to work on conflict and instability, placing greater emphasis on addressing the drivers of conflict (such as grievances, political marginalisation and criminal economies), atrocity prevention and strengthening fragile countries' resilience to external interference". It further states that "we will focus on political approaches to conflict resolution, harnessing the full range of government capabilities, with clearly defined political goals and theories of change. This will enhance our impact and reduce the risk of 'mission creep' or of inadvertently doing harm" (HM Government, 2021: 79).

In this literature review, we interpret the term 'peacebuilding' broadly, as international initiatives aimed at contributing to long-term peace processes in fragile and conflict-affected states with the purpose of ending violence and rebuilding states (Ljungkvist and Jarstad, 2021).

3. Drivers of violent conflict

Despite increased peacebuilding efforts since the 1990s, many regions of the world are entrenched in fragility and violent conflict (Donais, 2013; Smith, 2014; Coning, 2018). Violent conflict has been on the rise in recent years. The world faces the highest number of conflicts recorded since the creation of the UN and one-quarter of the global population is now living in conflict-affected countries. From 2010 to 2020, the number of active state-based conflicts increased from 31 to 56. The level of global peacefulness deteriorated over the same period, in particular worsening in the 25 least peaceful countries (Global Peace Index, 2022).

There are typically complex, multiple and mutually reinforcing factors leading to or perpetuating violent conflict (Ncube and Jones, 2013; Stewart, 2002b; Kett and Rowson, 2007). Key drivers include identity struggles, poor governance and weak institutions, greed and grievances (including ones created by previous conflict), inadequate capacity of the state to manage the challenges of climate change, and reckless and non-sustainable exploitation of natural resources (Stewart, 2002b; Kett and Rowson, 2007). These drivers are influenced by political history, the nature of regimes, socio-economic conditions and geographical location, among other things (Ncube and Jones, 2013), and may be brought to the fore by 'trigger factors' such as the politicisation of already contentious issues, contested election results, and groups' willingness to resort to violence as an alternative to peaceful resolutions (Ncube and Jones, 2013:3).

Ncube and Jones (2013) classify relevant factors of violent conflict into primary, secondary and tertiary drivers. "Lack of good governance, economic and social exclusion, economic collapse and worsening poverty, state weakness, religious extremism, and ideological exclusion" are among the primary drivers. Secondary factors include "natural [in particular underground] resource curses, proliferation of small arms and light weapons, superpower rivalry, youth bulge, and demographic stresses". Tertiary factors include 'neighbourhood effects' such as mercenaries crossing borders and the cross-border smuggling of firearms.

Together, these factors lead to 'traps' that fragile and conflict-affected states are prone to fall into and struggle to get out of (Collier, 2008; Chauvet et al., 2007; Beasley and Persson, 2011). Four such traps are:

- The 'conflict trap': countries with a history of conflict are more likely to see it recur.

- The ‘landlocked with bad neighbours trap’: countries that are experiencing economic decline and are landlocked with other poor countries that lack basic trade infrastructure are particularly vulnerable to violent conflict.
- The ‘natural resources trap’, also known as the ‘resource curse’, which may occur when a country has abundant natural resources but high levels of inequality and pervasive poverty.
- The ‘bad governance trap’, which may occur for instance when a country has kleptocratic leaders who embezzle national wealth to enrich themselves.

Understanding the drivers of conflict in all their complexity is a first step towards addressing them and fostering sustainable peace (Coning, 2018). Taking a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to addressing violent conflict, as many peacebuilding efforts are argued to have done, is counterproductive (Ncube and Jones, 2013).

Common and often interrelated key drivers of violent conflict identified in the literature are outlined below.

3.1 Group motivation: identity struggles

Group identities may be based on cultural, ethnic or religious ties, or civil ties such as class or interest groups (Osaghae and Suberu, 2005). Tension between identity groups may result in violent conflict, including civil wars (Bhaba, 1994; Stewart, 2002b; Osaghae and Suberu, 2005). Studies show that a group’s perceptions of political exclusion and marginalisation, as represented in political decision-making and state design, are often a key factor fuelling violent confrontations (Stewart, 2002b; Douma, 2006; Alcorta et al., 2020; Germann and Sambanis, 2021).

Group identity and rivalry do not take shape in isolation from other sources of conflict, such as social and economic disparities, because resentments between groups are frequently anchored in unequal resource allocation or perceptions thereof (Stewart, 2002a; Osaghae and Suberu, 2005). Evidence shows a common pattern of comparably disadvantaged groups seeking redress and possibly resorting to violence, and comparably privileged groups striking pre-emptively or fighting back in order to preserve the status quo (Stewart, 2000; Horowitz, 1985). Often, this pattern takes the shape of resource rivalry in which the group in control of government uses the state machinery against an aggrieved group, which takes up arms against the state. Nigeria’s Niger Delta conflict is a typical example of this pattern (Ebienfa, 2011; Obi, 2009).

Group identities and cross-group differences may be long-standing, but can also be constructed and are often amplified by political elites which see group cohesion and mobilisation as tools in their struggle for power and resources (Stewart, 2000; Obi, 2009: 111). Underlying causes of identity conflict are often political, economic, social, cultural or perceptual. Often, conflicts that seem to be driven by ethnic, religious and class identity and rivalry are in fact largely driven by economically motivated greed and grievances.

3.2 Private motivation: greed and grievances

A considerable body of conflict analysis literature focuses on greed and grievances as key drivers of violent conflict (Collier and Hoeffler, 2000; Stewart, 2000; Humphreys, 2005). Greed-based arguments focus on situations where greed facilitates or inspires violent action, or where conflict is exploited for personal gain. Grievance-based arguments emphasise the significance of socio-economic imbalance and exclusion.

The greed claim, originally made by Collier and Hoeffler (1998 and 2004), is that the opportunity for personal gain and enrichment drives conflict. In this view, people may set up or join a violent group because it offers a better income than regular work, or because it may generate opportunities to loot or pillage. These prospects incentivise initiating or joining a rebellion (Van der Ploeg, 2011; Frankel, 2010; Keen, 2012; Hoeffler, 2012). Once there is a violent conflict, it provides opportunities for personal gain through looting, misdirection of aid resources, the arms trade, and the clandestine extraction, manufacture or sale of drugs or underground resources such as diamonds (Stewart, 2002b). In this ‘war economy’, conflict parties may not be interested in ending the conflict as they use it for their personal gain (Obi, 2009: 108; Collier, 2000; Berdal and Malone, 2000; Ballentine and Sherman, 2003; Nitzschke and Studdard, 2004).

High levels of inequality and disempowerment, caused by greed or otherwise, may breed grievances that can spark violent conflicts (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004). Stewart (2002a) notes that individuals who are poor, illiterate,

unemployed, or have a low income, may be more easily persuaded to participate in violence. Such grievances are often expressed and perhaps amplified by group identities, because “when cultural differences coincide with economic and political differences between groups, this can cause deep resentment that may lead to violent struggles” (World Development Report, 2011).

3.3 Failure of the social contract: poor governance and weak institutions

Greed may also incentivise corrupt behaviour of vested powerholders, which drains government resources and may impede conflict mitigation efforts. For example, Njoku (2020) notes that counter-terrorism operations in some parts of Africa and the Middle East and North Africa region have provided opportunities for military elites and political leaders to collaborate to secure large budgetary allocations to combat terrorism, only for these funds to be diverted and embezzled by the same politicians and military elites.

The literature suggests that a clientelist political system facilitates the diversion of funds (Njoku, 2020). Such political systems, as well as other forms of bad governance and weak institutions, are likely to exacerbate a state’s failure to fulfil basic requirements. State failure of this kind may result in violent conflict – especially in contexts of economic decline or lack of growth (Stewart, 2002a; Miguel et al., 2004). Studies have established links between economic decline, poverty and underdevelopment on the one hand, and state fragility, including violent conflict, on the other (Ncube and Jones, 2013). At the global level, there is empirical evidence that violent conflicts are more common in countries where economic growth and life expectancy are declining than in countries where this is not the case (Collier, 2000; Hirshleifer, 1994). Many of the world’s poorest countries, such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Haiti, have been engulfed in, or are currently experiencing, various forms of armed conflict. However, the causal link is not straightforward. A recent study of the conflict-poverty relationship in 45 African countries from 1980 to 2015 found that in-country violent conflict generates poverty and declining living standards, more than the other way around. Interstate wars, on the other hand, have a negligible impact on poverty indicators. The article concludes that poverty is not a key initial driver of conflict in Africa, and instead mostly exacerbates pre-existing conflict (Okunlola and Okafor, 2022).

3.4 Climate change and environmental degradation

Environmental challenges resulting from climate change or local environmental degradation may trigger violent confrontations (Obi, 2009). For example, a study of 41 African countries concludes that, in the period from 1981 to 1999, changes in rainfall increase the risk of conflict due to the effect on GDP per capita (Miguel et al., 2004), and a meta-analysis of 60 experimental investigations suggests that “the likelihood of conflict increases significantly with departures from normal precipitation and moderate temperature” (Abel et al., 2019: 246). However, other evidence suggests that, in most cases, climate change does not cause violent conflict in isolation, but instead adds to and amplifies other underlying issues (Burke et al., 2015). These include the drivers mentioned above, such as ethnic tensions (Schleussner et al., 2016), the careless extraction of natural resources (Obi, 2009) and poor governance (Gleick, 2014; Kelley et al., 2015). To give just one example, a study in Syria showed that a drought between 2007 and 2010 resulted in a decrease in ground water supply and that this, in combination with ineffective management and poor decision-making, contributed to multi-year crop failure, increased food prices and economic decline, all of which in turn contributed to the protests and political instability that led to state violence and civil war in the country (Abel et al., 2019).

3.5 Geographical locations

In many violent conflicts, regional and international actors operate across borders. This adds to the multidimensional and fluid nature of violent conflict and makes cross-border spillover of the conflict more likely (World Bank and UN, 2018). Young et al. (2014) and De Waal (2000) show that the spread of violence into neighbouring countries serves as a driving force for further conflict and fragility. A 2015 report by the UK government states that the protracted conflict in Iraq and Syria, as well as a range of other conflicts in Africa, the Middle East and Asia, are in part driven by regional and international actors and dynamics, such as the proliferation of foreign fighters and the emergence of factions of terrorist groups such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda (HM Government, 2015). Fearon and Laitin (2003) note that a conflict’s effects on neighbouring countries are not limited to the role of violent actors. Refugee movements, too, may exacerbate fragility.

Libya's role under the presidency of Muammar al-Gaddafi and thereafter serves as an illustration. Al-Gaddafi's foreign policy was based on his brand of pan-Africanism and socialism. One part of this was that Libya made significant financial investments in West African countries. Another part was that Libya intervened in other governments' domestic affairs and contributed to violent conflicts and instability through its support of armed groups (Baudais et al., 2021; Sour, 2018). Schwarz (2020) found that, following the Libyan civil war and the overthrow of al-Gaddafi in 2011, weapons stockpiles were stolen and small and light weapons armed people throughout Libya, as well as in conflict zones in the Middle East, the Sahel and West Africa (Schwarz, 2020). According to Adeniyi (2017), the movement of weapons across borders has contributed to violence perpetrated by a range of armed groups, including local militia, bandits, insurgents and terrorist groups.

4. Schools of thought and practice

The peacebuilding literature and practice consist of two broad groups that respectively focus on top-down and bottom-up approaches. The top-down group is dominated by the liberal approach to peacebuilding, which emphasises and supports external actors and their interventions that aim to embed ideals such as multi-party democracy, free and fair elections, the rule of law, individual freedom, social justice, civil rights and a free market economy (Paris, 2010; Roberts, 2012). This approach has been challenged on the basis that, in practice, externally driven and top-down interventions have failed to establish long-term peace in fragile and conflict-affected states (Smith, 2014, Coning, 2018; Ljungkvist and Jarstad, 2021). In response, bottom-up peacebuilding literature and practice has gained prominence (Paffenholz, 2015; Ljungkvist and Jarstad, 2021). Bottom-up efforts are commonly referred to as 'local peacebuilding', and its starting point is a meaningful understanding of, and engagement with, a wide range of local stakeholders (Moe and Stepputat, 2018; Stepputat, 2018; Bachmann and Schouten, 2018). The term encapsulates a multitude of approaches. This chapter covers top-down and bottom-up peacebuilding in turn.

4.1 Top-down peacebuilding

In the early 1990s, literature often equated peacebuilding with the promotion of democratic norms in the politics, governance and institutional processes of conflict-affected states (Paris, 2010; Roberts, 2012). According to Paris (2004) and Richmond (2006, 2008 and 2010), the main idea behind the liberal peacebuilding approach is that for conflict-affected societies to achieve long-term peace and development, state-building processes must include democratic principles like multi-party democracy, free and fair elections, the rule of law, individual freedom, social justice and civil liberties, as well as a free market economy. Paris (2010) claims that political and economic liberalism are critical in resolving political insecurity, economic decline, health concerns and environmental concerns.

Lemay-Hébert (2013) argues that the liberal peace theory incorporates the merging of development and security, which has been labelled the 'security-development nexus' (see also Duffield, 2001). In other words, it combines two formerly independent policy domains as well as two unique groups of actors and agencies. Franks and Richmond (2008: 83) further state that the primary goal of liberal peace has been to promote "self-sustaining peace within domestic, regional, and international frameworks of liberal governance in which both overt and structural violence are removed and social, economic, and political models conform to a mixture of liberal and neo-liberal international expectations in a globalized and transnational setting".

In the spirit of the liberal peacebuilding model, many conflict prevention and stabilisation programmes were designed to promote democratisation and marketisation, which were seen as ways to improve political acceptability, macroeconomic stability and the delivery of goods and services, all of which were deemed necessary to achieve long-term peace (US Government, 2021). The EU's approach to peacebuilding, for example, was based on a liberal 'peace-through-democracy' principle that is grounded in the idea that if violent conflict starts because different armed groups are fighting over control of the state apparatus and the rights of minorities, then putting in place a democratic system at the end of the violence changes "the means of conflict from the bullet to the ballot box" (Strasheim, 2020: 1).

Liberal peacebuilding efforts tend to use top-down methods, as external actors work with national elites to create market-oriented reforms and liberal-democratic political institutions on the assumption that this will lead to lasting peace. The US government concluded in its recent report on strategies to prevent conflict and promote stability that the international community's liberal peacebuilding approach had made important contributions to education, humanitarian aid, food security, justice, and sector reforms. It found that this had saved lives and weakened threats to social and political stability, but also found that peacebuilding driven from the outside carries the risk that it "undermines local responsibility and distorts local economies" (US Government, 2021). Similarly, Hauck (2020) suggests that the EU's conflict prevention and peacebuilding assistance has not been altogether successful in preventing or reducing violent conflicts or establishing structural stability. Critics argue that the problems are both the ambitions and the top-down nature of the liberal approach, and that this approach has frequently been unable to prevent the recurrence of violence and ensure long-term peace (Paffenholz, 2015).

4.2 The local turn in peacebuilding

A growing body of literature contends that an effective and sustainable peacebuilding programme should not merely engage with political elites but should instead put local participation, ownership and governance at the centre of the peacebuilding effort (Richmond and Mac Ginty, 2015; Brinkerhoff, 2011; Leonardsson and Rudd, 2015; Ljungkvist and Jarstad, 2021). Researchers argue that local approaches help ensure that peacebuilding is aligned with cultural norms and sensibilities, and with the needs of people affected by violent conflicts (Leonardsson and Rudd, 2015; Ljungkvist and Jarstad, 2021; Richmond and Mac Ginty, 2013). Local approaches to peacebuilding gained traction around 2012, and international stakeholders increasingly fund and apply such approaches (Moe and Stepputat, 2018; Stepputat, 2018; Bachmann and Schouten, 2018; Paffenholz, 2015). In recent years, peacebuilding programmes are commonly set up so that traditional, religious and community-based groups, including women's groups, are involved in their design and implementation (Leonardsson and Rudd, 2015; Brinkerhoff, 2011). In some cases, the external actors' roles are seen to be limited to assisting local stakeholders in their peacebuilding pursuits (Paffenholz, 2015).

These local peacebuilding approaches are seen to serve one or more of three broad aims (Brechenmacher, 2019):

1. **To improve local conflict prevention and community security.** This entails assisting local communities in articulating security challenges and related socio-economic issues and presenting them to the government and its security forces as a means of improving early warning and response structures. In the assumption that the government and its security forces respond constructively, this interaction is also meant to build trust between the government, security forces and communities in conflict zones.
2. **To restore local government and secure the provision of basic services.** This requires effective citizen involvement. The assumption is that, if results are tangible, the public perception of government as the primary provider of basic services is gradually restored. Increased citizen participation in service delivery may also promote social cohesiveness, probity and transparency in the delivery of public goods, and it may reduce socio-economic inequalities within communities. In turn, this may lessen individuals' vulnerability, particularly among youth, to extremist recruitment and participation in various forms of political violence.
3. **To facilitate reconciliation and the reintegration of former members of violent groups.** A positive peace requires reconciliation. Efforts in this field aim to reintegrate former members of violent groups into their original families and communities, incentivise further defection from armed groups, and prevent individuals from re-engaging in violent conflicts or returning to violent armed groups.

Many researchers agree on the importance of local approaches to peacebuilding, on the aims these approaches serve, and on the notion that 'local stakeholders', however defined, are inclined to work towards the collective good (Ljungkvist and Jarstad, 2021). However, the term 'local', in the context of peacebuilding, signifies different things to different people (Höglund and Fjelde, 2011; Hirblinger and Simons, 2015; Ljungkvist and Jarstad, 2021). According to Richmond (2008), Belloni (2012) and Rigual (2018), a focus on 'the local' creates a hybrid situation in which liberal principles coexist with a local leadership structure that includes authoritarian elements. Ljungkvist and Jarstad (2021) state that locals are commonly regarded as state actors, particularly representing groups lower

down the government hierarchy, such as local government. Others define local stakeholders as non-state entities such as civil society organisations, traditional religious leaders, and diaspora groups (Paffenholz, 2015). The inclusion of diaspora groups in policy design and peacebuilding programme implementation requires a de-territorialisation of 'the local', and emphasises people over space (Ljungkvist and Jarstad, 2021; Mac Ginty, 2015).

Women's rights activists and feminist researchers have noted a lack of gender sensitivity in how the local is conceptualised and in how peacebuilding actors engage with women and girls (Rigual, 2018). They and others criticise local approaches to peacebuilding for being, in practice, gender-blind and non-inclusive, and for failing to embed theories and methodologies from gender and feminist studies into peacebuilding efforts (Rigual, 2018: 163). They argue that the result of these blind spots is that local approaches to peacebuilding often effectively exclude women from peacebuilding programmes and reinforce patriarchal dynamics (Pratt, 2014; Aoline, 2013; Njoku, 2019), and that the local people engaged by external actors are typically male chiefs or traditional authorities (Hudson, 2009 and 2016; Rigual, 2018). They also note that data show that local women do nonetheless play important roles in ensuring the sustainability of peace or supporting peace initiatives (Krause et al., 2018), and that women's participation in peace talks increases the chances of achieving long-term peace, political participation, and reforms (Krause et al., 2018; Tripp, 2015; Gizelis, 2009). We present evidence of these claims in **Chapter 4**.

The UN acknowledged that women play an important role when they are empowered to do so, and established the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda in its efforts to develop an inclusive peacebuilding strategy. This followed the adoption of UN Security Council resolutions 1325 and 2242, and subsequent resolutions that sought to address the exclusion of women from conflict- and peace-related decision-making (Njoku, 2019).

These resolutions have been seen as important steps towards addressing the challenges of sexual and other forms of violence that women face in conflict and post-conflict settings, as well as towards the inclusion of women in the design and execution of peacebuilding programmes or other conflict resolution efforts in fragile states (Anderlini, 2007; Cockburn, 2004 and 2007; Bunch et al., 2002). However, there is also criticism of the WPS agenda. One such criticism revolves around the risks women may face in patriarchal societies when brought into peacebuilding activities by outside actors. Pratt (2014), for instance, has highlighted that the enlistment of local women in peacebuilding work by international actors – especially by military actors such as the US-led coalitions in Iraq and Afghanistan – can place these women at risk of violence and abuse, including killings, by local armed actors. In the above circumstances, little was done to safeguard women from the risks they faced as a result of participating in such efforts (Pratt, 2014; Aolain, 2013 and 2016).

4.3 Pragmatism in local peacebuilding

Researchers propose 'pragmatism' in local peacebuilding efforts, and argue that this requires step-by-step and highly context-specific journeys that place the engagement of well-understood local stakeholders at the centre of the efforts (Moe and Stepputat, 2018). The journal *International Affairs* ran a special issue on the "pragmatic turn" of peacebuilding efforts (*International Affairs*, 2018). To illustrate the complex nature of local specificities, this sub-section presents a common operational context (ungoverned spaces) and aim (community resilience to conflict), and then presents a common pragmatic local peacebuilding approach ('adaptive peacebuilding') and a common sector in which this approach is applied (infrastructure).

Peacebuilding in ungoverned spaces

Peacebuilding efforts often take place in ungoverned areas or places where the state's presence is intermittent, reduced or challenged. Stepputat describes such contexts as 'governscapes', a concept which emphasises that non-state actors in these places, including ethnic and religious groups, self-defence groups, vigilantes, gangs and other non-state entities, engage in governance activities and are therefore important for peacebuilding processes (Stepputat, 2018).

Such 'governscapes' may be situated in trade corridors, ports or extractive industry sites, and governance structures may be combinations of private, public and communal groups. Non-state entities may have fully functional governance systems that enable them to engage in relations with international actors without

requiring the approval or authorisation of national authorities (Stepputat, 2018). Legitimacy in ‘governscapes’ can be enforced by the threat of violence, or obtained when non-state entities demonstrate to relevant groups that they effectively deliver public goods and social justice, and have the capacity to provide security and other important services needed in these landscapes (Stepputat, 2018).

Non-state actors’ claims of control over certain landscapes are dynamic rather than static (Stepputat, 2018). Claims to sovereignty are relational rather than absolute, supreme, or indivisible (Agnew, 2009). Within a specific ‘governscape’, two distinct governing structures may exist. While national authorities function in a specific season, such as the dry season, or during the day, non-state authorities may function in another season, such as the rainy season, or at night (Stepputat, 2018; Scott, 2009; Comaroff and Comaroff, 2006).

Resilience in peacebuilding

In such complex and dynamic ‘governscapes’, peacebuilding efforts often aim to strengthen the ability of the collective of local stakeholders, including governments, communities and individuals, to cope with change and chronic challenges through adaptation (Menkhaus, 2013; Council of the European Union, 2013). According to Juncos and Joseph (2020: 289), this aim of resilience to conflict “is increasingly present in the policy documents of international organisations engaging in peacebuilding activities” and “the focus on ‘sustaining peace’ at the UN level has resilience building at its core”. A focus on resilience offers “a more flexible, pragmatic, ‘best-fit’ solution to existing protracted crises” and commits to “working with what is already there” in terms of structures, institutions and capacity (Juncos and Joseph, 2020: 292).

Because of the innate local complexities of conflict, such resilience-building efforts cannot start from the position of an external expert applying a set of predetermined tools and objectives. Instead, they require a deep understanding of the concrete contexts and the ways in which social practice and everyday relations and modes of interaction produce conflict dynamics and provide opportunities for peacebuilding. They also require an acceptance of the inherent uncertainty and complexity of fragile and conflict-affected settings, and of the unexpected and unknown risks and threats that come with these (Chandler, 2017). For this, organisations that engage in peacebuilding efforts have developed an ‘adaptive peacebuilding approach’.

Adaptive peacebuilding

Adaptive peacebuilding acknowledges that conflict is complex, and a natural and important component of transformation towards peace. The goal should not be to avoid conflict but to help communities deal with and navigate this transition process in a way that avoids conflict taking a violent turn (Coning, 2018). This is difficult, and the peacebuilding trajectory is uncertain, because “social systems are highly dynamic, non-linear and emergent. One implication of this characterization is that we are not able to identify general laws or rules that will help us predict with certainty how these systems will behave in the future” (Coning, 2018: 305).

Achieving progress towards sustainable peace therefore requires an “iterative process of learning and adaptation” (Coning, 2018: 317), in which one keeps the end goal (sustained peace, for example, or resilience to conflict) in mind while mostly focusing on the next logical step to get there. Real-time monitoring and ongoing analysis of conflict and assessment of needs help decide what actions are needed, and should be kept, enlarged, introduced or cancelled, not in predefined steps in a determined design programme cycle but in “a continuous process of experimenting with a range of options, coupled with a continuous process of selection and refinement” (Coning, 2018: 306). In the specific context of peacebuilding, adaptive approaches are useful even in cases such as infrastructure investments where, in other contexts, standard project planning approaches generally suffice.

Infrastructure as peacebuilding

When done correctly, infrastructure projects can serve as peacebuilding processes if they bring together warring communities who share an interest in these projects. Such projects may help to change the conflict dynamics between these communities by turning into platforms of engagement (Moe and Stepputat, 2018). The main emphasis of such infrastructure projects is that infrastructure development can be an effective part of peacebuilding if viewed as a relational process. Specifically, “a physical system is only infrastructure if it supports human-driven processes that are external to itself. This means that its effects on peace can emerge only in

interaction with what people actually use it for – a point that largely escapes peacebuilding planning today” (Bachmann and Schouten, 2018: 389-390).

According to Bachmann and Schouten (2018), this ‘infrastructure as peacebuilding’ approach differs from other infrastructure approaches, which tend to measure the effectiveness of the peacebuilding-inspired (re)construction of physical structures once these structures have been completed, on the basis of criteria such as opening up access to remote areas and economic growth. Instead, the ‘infrastructure as peacebuilding’ approach focuses on the importance of infrastructure in peace processes during the design and construction phase. It specifically encourages the coming together of groups, including hostile ones, in novel ways, and it helps to initiate dialogues between warring communities and the creation of platforms for mutual understanding. This is frequently the first stage in the process of negotiating peace (Tongeren et al., 2012; Bachmann and Schouten, 2018).

This approach advocates that infrastructure projects built in war and post-conflict contexts should be linked with other peacebuilding programmes rather than operating in parallel or being used as a substitute (Bachmann and Schouten, 2018). Furthermore, infrastructure programmes should follow the adaptive peacebuilding approach: they should be driven by careful assessments of the socio-political context before the construction starting as well as on an ongoing basis during and after construction (Fantini et al., 2020; Bachmann and Schouten, 2018; Tongeren et al., 2012).

5. Emerging evidence on good practice in peacebuilding

Over the past two decades the UK government has been a leading actor in strengthening the knowledge base and expertise on what peacebuilding interventions work or may work in contexts characterised by uncertainty, complexity and volatility. That work contributed to the understanding of conflict dynamics and of the relationship between conflict prevention, inclusivity and sustainable development. It has helped create consensus that long-term peace and development requires resolving the current conflict as well as addressing its underlying causes, or drivers, through inclusive dialogue and agreements (Ramsbotham and Dumay, 2021). These insights have been translated into the multifaceted approaches to peacebuilding that many recent peacebuilding programmes have adopted (Brechenmacher, 2019).

However, notwithstanding these and other efforts, the overall body of evidence on ‘what works’ in peacebuilding is still limited. Apart from areas of consensus, including that programmes need to build on context-sensitive conflict analysis to stand a chance of success because one-size-fits-all blueprints have proven not to work well, we still have a less clear idea of the approaches that may work than those which generally do not work. Brechenmacher (2019) suggests that the lack of thorough evaluations or clearly specified theories of change that help measure the success of these programmes is hindering programmes designed to minimise violent conflicts and build peace, as such measuring could provide insights that help choose from and build on existing approaches. There is progress in this field. For example, monitoring partnerships with local communities and their organisations prove to be an increasingly effective way to monitor and assess the success of local peacebuilding programmes (Dumasy and Elliot, 2018).

This section looks at available evidence, reported in literature and evaluation reports, of ways in which peacebuilding approaches may contribute to addressing the drivers of conflict and support trajectories towards peace. Even though the body of evidence on ‘what works’ is limited, a range of areas of potential good practice is suggested in the literature. This literature review does not aim to be exhaustive. The following account of good practice is limited to local ownership and gender sensitivity, areas that are also central to the main review on UK aid’s approaches to peacebuilding (for example in its focus on the Women, Peace and Security agenda). The main function of this section is to provide context to the documentary analysis, interviews and site visits conducted as part of the main ICAI review.

5.1 Local ownership

Recent studies and reports confirm that the international community has moved away from liberal peacebuilding. This is partly because the approach failed in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is also the consequence of the democratic

decline of what were traditionally seen as the world's liberal democracies. For the EU, for example, "failing to defend democracy in Europe, most recently in Poland and Hungary, means the EU is putting its credibility as a [liberal] peacebuilder abroad on the line" (Strasheim, 2020). Often, donor governments shifted from liberal peacebuilding to local approaches to peacebuilding (US Government, 2021; Ejdus and Juncos, 2018). After two decades in which the US government promoted the top-down model of liberal peacebuilding, for example, it now states that "engaging credible local partners committed to inclusive political solutions, meaningful reforms, and lasting peace" is key to "breaking the costly circle of fragility and promoting peace in self-reliant nations and must be secured through the actions and agency of host-country leaders, organizations, and community" (US Government, 2021: 5-7).

There is evidence that this refocus on 'local partners' is useful. Reports from the UN (2022) and Cagoco-Guiam (2016) suggest that successful peacebuilding efforts in Burundi, Niger and the Philippines show the importance of local ownership going beyond consultation and dialogue. They stress how important it is for local peacebuilding projects to be 'owned' by local stakeholders, and that this ownership extends to critical voices among them. Community conflict prevention and resolution efforts led by grassroots religious leaders in the Philippines helped to foster peace locally (Cagoco-Guiam, 2016), for example, and local peacebuilding efforts in Niger were aided by the formation of community groups known as 'Dimitra Clubs' (UN, 2022).

Failures are also common, and one cause is likely to be the limited interpretation of 'local' (Mac Ginty, 2010; Paffenholz, 2015). Inclusivity appears to be a condition for success, but in actual practice the idea of local ownership among peacebuilding practitioners is often shaped by the ways in which foreign actors interact with the formal frameworks of national governments and formal civil society organisations. Evidence from literature on peacebuilding programming in the three countries covered by the ICAI peacebuilding review (Colombia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Nigeria), for example, suggests that programmes developed under the banner of 'local ownership' do not necessarily engage with the full range of relevant local stakeholders in their implementation, and sometimes lack an understanding of local context (Kappler and Richmond, 2011; Velez-Torres et al., 2021; and WYG, 2017, respectively). According to Kappler and Richmond (2011), such failures are primarily due to the international community's attempts to construct a prescriptive peacebuilding framework that uses the term 'local' without being underpinned by actual knowledge of local agency.

5.2 Gender sensitivity

The number of women engaged in peacebuilding initiatives is still relatively small (World Economic Forum, 2015), and women are still commonly sidelined in peacebuilding processes (Linborg, 2017). This is particularly common in patriarchal societies (Rigual, 2018), for two reasons. First, in patriarchal societies women often lack a safe space in which to contribute meaningfully to peace and security debates (Linborg, 2017). Second, the international actors' interactions with local stakeholders tend to follow existing socio-political systems, and these systems may exclude or sideline women (Hudson 2009 and 2016).

Women's underrepresentation in peacebuilding processes is unfortunate. Mlinarevic and Porobic (2021), for example, argue that the exclusion of women from the negotiations around the Dayton Peace Agreement had adverse effects on Bosnia and Herzegovina's peace settlement, and Mlinarevic, Porobic and Rees (2015) illustrate how portraying the war and the peace process through an exclusively patriarchal lens hampered the subsequent peacebuilding process. More generally, several studies found that the inclusion of women in such processes increases the chances of sustained peace. An International Peace Institute study of 182 signed peace agreements between 1989 and 2011 found that those in which women had been involved have a significantly higher probability of lasting for multiple years (O'Reilly et al., 2015; Linborg, 2017). Krause et al. (2018) also found that the participation of women and women-based groups in peace negotiations increased the chances of long-term peace, and research by Gizelis (2009) found that higher levels of gender equality and encouragement of women's political participation improve the prospect of peace. The reason for women's relative success in peacebuilding could be that "while the men focused on political power and settlement, women focused on sustainable livelihoods, education, truth and reconciliation" (World Economic Forum, 2015: 1). Similarly, there is evidence that women who take part in peace negotiations care less about the war booty and more about reconciliation, sustainable growth, education and social justice, which are all important parts of a durable peace (Linborg, 2017:

1). Research suggests that the inclusion of women in peacebuilding processes has a wider impact as well: Tripp (2015) found that integrating women into peacebuilding programmes during conflicts increases women's political participation and influence over political reforms.

This finding has begun to be reflected in peacebuilding programmes, which increasingly incorporate a gender-sensitive approach (Rigual, 2018). One example is UNICEF and UNHCR's involvement of women as key conflict mediators and in post-conflict reconstruction efforts in the Republic of Niger to resolve a long-standing farmer-pastoralist conflict in local communities. This paid off, as women's participation increased harmonious coexistence and reduced the frequency of farmer-herder clashes (UN, 2019; Mindzie, 2015). Similarly, in Burundi, women's groups have gained prominence in peacebuilding efforts at the national and local levels. Their active participation in the comprehensive peacebuilding strategy has been argued to have reduced violence and accelerated economic recovery (Myrntinen and Nsengiyuma, 2014), although there have been setbacks in Burundi since this article was written.

6. Historical overviews of the conflicts in Colombia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Nigeria

Colombia

For more than 50 years, Colombia has been immersed in conflict. There have been eight civil wars, 14 local wars, three foreign wars, and three coups d'état (Skretteberg et al., 2015; Justice for Colombia, 2022). The identity of the groups involved, the scope of the conflict and the role of the state have all shifted through time (International Centre for Transitional Justice, 2009). Armed groups formed and sometimes disappeared again. They gained resources through trade in drugs and minerals, and faced a state that was unable or unwilling to respond effectively to their presence (International Centre for Transitional Justice, 2009). The battle for territorial dominance and control was fought by the government of Colombia, crime syndicates, guerrilla factions, and paramilitary groups (Centre for International Security and Cooperation, 2019). Among other forms of harm, the conflict increased the prevalence of sexual violence (Kreft, 2020) and caused widespread displacement (Shultz et al., 2014). Abductions were common: some 3,000 people were kidnapped in 2000 alone, which accounted for 70% of the world's abductions in that year (United States Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2001).

The premise for fighting offered by the main guerrilla movement, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), was social justice and the need to protect the poor from the aggression of the Colombian government (Human Rights Watch, 2022). The Colombian government, on the other hand, claimed that it was battling to fulfil its responsibility of providing security to the country's population. Paramilitary forces claimed that their fight was in response to the guerrilla threat (International Crisis Group, 2022). These conflict fault lines can be traced back to a ten-year civil war that lasted from 1948 to 1958. That war, which claimed over 200,000 lives, ended with a power-sharing deal between the conservative and liberal parties, but it was seen as exclusionary (Chernick, 1999). In the aftermath of the war and the peace accord, numerous armed groups formed or regrouped in an attempt to challenge the communist party's exclusion from power-sharing. FARC and the National Liberation Army (ELN) were the most visible of these groups (Nazih, 2002). FARC was founded in 1964 with the intention of challenging and overthrowing the government. To achieve this, the group resorted to violent acts such as kidnappings, assassinations, extortion, illegal mining, and drug trafficking (Centre for International Security and Cooperation, 2019). According to Shifter (2012), FARC had 18,000 members in 1999.

After years of preparation and negotiations, the government of Colombia and FARC signed a peace agreement in 2016 (Peace Agreement Database, 2016). This peace agreement was relatively inclusive in nature (Olasolo and Ramirez Mendoza, 2017) but did not end all conflict in Colombia, and the impact of conflict on Colombia's population is still severe. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 274,000 people were affected by conflict in Colombia between January and February 2022 (OCHA, 2022).

Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was renamed Yugoslavia in 1929 and became the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1946, made up of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia. Different causes are cited for the breakup of Yugoslavia in 1991 and the beginning of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992. These include cultural, political and economic elements (Uvalic, 1993; Goati, 1997).

According to Hashi (1992), Yugoslavia was one of the most economically, culturally and socially diverse nations in all of Europe. Politics of ethnic nationalism exploited the heterogeneity of its population. This contributed to Yugoslavia's final dissolution (Fink-Hafner, 1995), and to the ignition of ethnic rivalry and outbreak of war (Hashi, 1992). The death of the long-standing leader of Yugoslavia, Josip Tito, in 1980, created space for this ethnic nationalism, which propagated narratives that go back to cross-ethnic crimes perpetrated during the Second World War and in conflicts in previous centuries (Hart and Colo, 2014; de Guevara, 2009; Fink-Hafner, 1995). The fall of communism in Eastern Europe in 1989 and the unification of Germany in 1990 (Ramet, 2018) were contributing factors. They generated a wave of liberalisation that swept across Eastern Europe and inspired the Yugoslav republics' clamour for independence (US Department of State, 2013). This led to the 1992 independence referendums in Slovenia, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The referendums were followed by declarations of independence, which were soon followed by the outbreak of war (de Guevara, 2009). Of the wars that accompanied Yugoslavia's demise, the Bosnian war was the most violent (Harland, 2018). The nature of the fighting in Bosnia has been described both as a civil war and as an interstate war (Gray, 1997). Bosnia and Herzegovina's multi-ethnic composition of Serbs, Bosniaks and Croats, each group with opposing claims to territorial ownership, define the war in stark ethnic-nationalist terms (de Guevara, 2009; Burg and Shoup, 2009; Slack and Doyon, 2001; Hart and Colo, 2014). There were three main protagonists in the three-year-long war (1992-1995): the Muslim-dominated government of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Serb-dominated Republika Srpska, and the Croat Republic of Herceg-Bosna (Hart and Colo, 2014). As was the case with Yugoslavia's breakup more broadly, the Bosnian war was influenced by geopolitical dynamics (Burg and Shoup, 2009), and ethnic and religious divisions were both causal and precipitating factors in the conflict (Hart and Colo, 2014; Sida, 2017).

The violence that followed the former Yugoslav republic's referendum for independence caused the deaths of 100,000 people, including civilians and military personnel (Filipov, 2006). The majority of the casualties were Bosniaks, killed by Serbs (Baker, 2016; US Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2013). Atrocities included slavery, forced labour, enforced disappearances, and sexual violence against women (Mlinarevic and Porobic, 2021). Approximately 1.3 million people were either internally displaced or fled the country in search of safety in neighbouring states. In addition, Hart and Colo (2014) point out how the 1992 war wreaked havoc on the social fabric. Bosnian society's deep segregation has led to a distrust between citizens and their political leaders and government (Greenberg, 1999).

Almost 27 years after the end of hostilities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the threat of a possible re-emergence of conflict and violence persists. Experts fear that the same ethnic and political tensions that sparked the country's 1992 war will resurface, with threats of secession and a lack of commitment to reforming the electoral system driving new tensions (International Crisis Group, 2021a; Wong, 2021; Kupchan, 2021).

Nigeria

Nigeria is one of the most fragile countries in the world and in 2020 was ranked the 22nd least peaceful country in the domain of ongoing domestic and international conflict (Pérouse De Montclos, 2016, Institute for Economics and Peace, 2022). Conflict affects most of Nigeria's territory and includes acts of terrorism by secessionist movements, violence between farmers and herders, and banditry. Inequality and environmental deterioration are among the key drivers of conflict. The Nigerian government's commitment to peacebuilding appears to be limited. For example, according to the Commitment to Reducing Inequality Index, the Nigerian government's commitment to reducing inequality is among the very lowest in the world (Inequality Index, undated). This overview focuses on conflict in the Lake Chad Basin and the Niger Delta.

The Lake Chad Basin includes territory in Cameroon, Niger, and Chad. Since 2009, Boko Haram and the Islamic State of West African Province have sought territorial control in the Lake Chad Basin. The conflict has resulted in the loss of tens of thousands of lives and billions of dollars in property, affecting all sectors of the economy. According to a report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 5.2 million people in the Lake Chad Basin face food insecurity, 500,000 children are at risk of malnutrition and 1,100 schools have been closed (UNODC, 2021). Three-quarters of the region's water and sanitation infrastructure has been destroyed, as has nearly half of hospitals and other health facilities (UNDP, 2016). According to the UN under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs, the humanitarian situation in this area has led to the displacement of nine million people in the Lake Chad region. Of these, nearly seven million people have been displaced within the northern Nigeria part of the region (OCHA, 2016). Women, girls and young boys have been disproportionately affected by sexual violence (Njoku and Akintayo, 2021 and 2022). Amnesty International stated that the violent conflict has resulted in a 'rape epidemic' (Amnesty International, 2021). Commentators argue that the rampant sexual violence has limited the chances of success of the Nigerian government's counter-terrorism strategy, as it has eroded trust and thus affected the government's capacity to gain the necessary community-based intelligence (Njoku and Akintayo, 2021).

The oil-rich Niger Delta has suffered from long-standing conflict and fragility. Socio-economic inequalities, competition for resources, and environmental pollution caused by oil exploration are key drivers of conflict (Ajibola, 2015), as is the perception of government indifference to the plight of the people (Kuku, 2012). Violent groups with secessionist ambitions cited social injustices, a lack of basic amenities, unemployment, and a lack of compensation for affected communities as motivations for their actions (Ajibola, 2015; Isumonah, 2003; Kuku, 2012). A presidential amnesty programme was established in 2009 to address the challenges and ensure long-term peace and development in the region. The programmes have been described as an "innovative approach" to addressing violent conflict and criminality in the region, and have recorded successes such as a significant reduction in violence and militancy (Ajibola, 2015: 1).

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