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PREVENTING VIOLENT CONFLICT. BUILDING SAFER LIVES

How guns fall silent

Analysing examples of relative success in integrated stabilisation

May 2022

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Cover photo: A US Army soldier chats with a member of the Sons of Iraq, a citizen security group, at a security checkpoint in the Doura community of southern Baghdad, Iraq, 29 October 2008.

© Petty Officer 2nd Class Todd Frantom, US Navy

Abbreviations

AQI	Al-Qaeda in Iraq
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
ELN	National Liberation Army
EU	European Union
FARC	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
JAM	Jaish al-Mahdi
MNF-I	Multi-National Force-Iraq
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
SDLP	Social Democratic and Labour Party
RUC	Royal Ulster Constabulary
UN	United Nations
UUP	Ulster Unionist Party

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Juan Manuel Santos, President of Colombia and Rodrigo Londoño Echeverri, alias 'Timoleón Jiménez' of the FARC.

Executive summary

This paper explores how to engage in or support ‘successful integrated stabilisation’. Looking beyond externally driven strategies, operations and programmes to tackle instability, it examines *processes through which states and societies have become more stable in violent contexts in which criminal and proscribed groups played a significant role. Noting the failure of many recent counter-terror and stabilisation efforts, it explores the potential of more ‘integrated’ stabilisation processes where progress has involved simultaneously grappling with the political, social and economic dimensions of crises, and where military-security efforts have been less predominant. It also looks at how conflict sensitive and sustainable these efforts were. It thus seeks to explain what worked, why it did, and with what caveats, in order to inform the approach of leaders and practitioners such as UK, US, European and other politicians and officials interested in supporting processes of successful integrated stabilisation in the future.*

This report builds on existing Saferworld studies, such as in the northeast of Kenya, where we documented how violence between al-Shabaab and Kenyan authorities was significantly reduced when people came together to reject violence, and revelations about the failure of existing approaches generated a mandate for new leadership to adopt a less abusive security approach and work with communities to repair trust. Building on this relatively localised example and other literature, we set out to explore similarities and differences in three comparable but larger-scale processes during periods when parties made progress, however tentative or temporary, to tackle complex conflicts: Colombia (2010–2016), Iraq (2006–2008) and Northern Ireland (1981–1998). In each case, we seek to account for relative stabilisation success, while also analysing caveats – where successes were partial, temporary, or positive for some but not all groups involved, issues left unaddressed, and subsequent challenges.

Despite significant differences between each of these case studies, as well as the Kenya example, there were some important common elements that were critical for achieving marked reductions in violence, along with tentative (and reversible) steps towards sustainable peace.

Revisiting assumptions and renewing strategy

with a focus on getting to peace: In each case there was a political, analytical and strategic shift as fatigue with violence, political pressure to achieve solutions, and the arrival of leaders with new ideas helped frame new approaches. In Colombia, President Juan Manuel Santos led a move beyond his predecessor's 'all out war against FARC [the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia]' to construct a way out of a mutually harmful conflict. In Northern Ireland, the election of hunger striker Bobby Sands as a Member of Parliament triggered a gradual shift whereby republicans moved towards politics as London became willing to bring Sinn Féin to the peace table. In Iraq, as many Sunnis turned away from escalating violence, the international coalition also revisited fundamental assumptions and shifted to a strategy for achieving people's security, local and national-level reconciliation, and for addressing wider conflict drivers. These new assumptions and approaches proved the basis for changed security approaches, dialogue and mediation efforts drawing reconcilable violent groups into the political space, and other measures that added up to a better 'offer' for conflict-affected people – or at least created, for a time, windows of opportunity.

Adopting people-oriented and confidence-building security approaches:

In each case, security approaches were reoriented away from indiscriminate abuses towards a focus on providing security for people, building trust and keeping the political pursuit of peace on track. In Colombia, Santos trod a careful line between pressing the FARC militarily while keeping it at the negotiating table, including by announcing ceasefires and de-escalation at critical moments to 'achieve a sense of momentum and maintain the necessary popular support'. In Northern Ireland, the Good Friday Agreement set up a commission to recommend far-reaching police reforms focused on providing a more community-oriented service that better represented both Catholics and Protestants. In the intense violence of Iraq, although it continued to make some important mistakes as it wrested control from violent and sectarian actors, the Coalition moved away from large remote bases to operate within neighbourhoods, working closely with Iraqi security forces and local communities to restore security and trust.

Pursuing dialogue, deal-making and reconciliation across lines of enmity, with creativity and determination:

Each of our cases featured efforts to bridge hitherto distant or opposing groups, move violent actors back towards the political space, dispel mistrust, build confidence, and construct platforms and agreements for tackling pressing issues. In Northern Ireland, as Sinn Féin and the UK

Government grew more open, the US, Ireland, the European Union (EU) and individuals like John Hume helped move republicans and eventually loyalists towards a settlement in which they would come to cooperate in power-sharing. In pursuit of the historic peace deal of 2016, President Santos stopped using the 'terrorist' label to describe the FARC, while victims' groups played an important role in convincing the FARC to reflect on and move beyond its legacy of violence. Although US troops had 'surged' into Iraq, politics was at the centre of stabilisation efforts in the period studied. This involved pursuing reconciliation with many violent groups and working with them to restore security, encouraging Iraqi politicians to abandon sectarianism and unite in tackling core divisive issues, using diplomacy to reduce regional volatility, and encouraging Western leaders to set aside their misgivings and help sustain the fragile progress. In each case, concerted and high-level political effort was critical to acknowledging, opening up and working creatively through the challenging issues that had fed into enmity and violence.

Addressing wider conflict drivers and making

people a better offer: In our cases, where the public and aggrieved groups could see progress being made towards meeting their concerns, this contributed to the momentum and sustainability of the efforts to end the violence and take initial steps towards sustained peace. In Northern Ireland – although socio-economic disparities remain challenging today – the EU, UK and US all invested in tackling them, seeking to bolster community relations. The overwhelming support expressed for the Good Friday Agreement in two referendums held in 1998 reflects public opinion that the process offered widespread benefits to conflict-affected communities. In Iraq, there were redoubled investments to restore power and essential services, tackle arbitrary detention, support offender rehabilitation, boost jobs and government spending, and provide an honest perspective to the public about the offer being provided under stabilisation efforts. Although these cases profiled successful first steps out of violence, they also show instances of worrying neglect for wider conflict drivers – such as injustice, state–society disconnects and gaps in services and opportunities – that put peace at risk.

Supporting and enabling society to nourish peace efforts through bargaining and accountability:

Our case studies also illustrate the potential of civil society to play a critical role in shaping peace processes and political settlements towards a focus on justice and equality, and then to help keep them on track towards nonviolence. Although the Iraq surge restored the possibility of nonviolent participation to Iraqi society and its politics, in other ways it failed to engage secular, less patriarchal

elements of Iraq's society and political spectrum. This is perhaps the biggest weakness of international strategy in the period studied. In Colombia, in addition to the vital role played by victims' groups, women-led organisations successfully pushed for a peace deal that made important commitments on gender and LGBTI+ rights. In the face of much opposition, the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition (NIWC) helped to broker peace, ensured the Good Friday Agreement backed women's equality and advancement, and was an instrumental player in the newly created Civic Forum, ensuring the new legislature would consult a wide range of civil society representatives.

While highlighting these areas of success, in each case the paper details important failures and areas of neglect, as well as vulnerabilities to changing political winds and to later unravelling. While it would be wrong to draw strong generalisable conclusions from the three case studies and the Garissa experience, together with lessons from the related paper *'No shortcuts to security: learning from responses to armed conflicts involving proscribed groups'*, the case studies suggest a number of important lessons and implications (detailed in more length in section 4). These follow here.

- The value of stepping back from and **reconceptualising conflict**, integrating continual analysis, interpretation and use of information into both overall strategy and day-to-day efforts to promote peace, and using fresh understanding to catalyse new political, security, socio-economic and communications approaches to transform the situation.
- **Defining the situation as 'conflict'** with political, social and economic dimensions, deviliating violent groups, and **dropping 'terrorist/criminal' labels** (or at least signalling openness to doing so under the right circumstances).
- **Rethinking military-security responses** to conflict that – through carelessness or by design – inflict collective and/or arbitrary harm, in favour of **security approaches that protect people**, are accessible to – and guarantee the day-to-day safety of – communities, and that do so in a trust-building, respectful way with **communities' own close involvement**.
- **Concentrating carefully, discriminately and proportionately on stopping the violence** of groups that choose not to reconcile – but with a link to a reconciliatory political offer.
- **Maintaining channels of communication** to conflict parties, and staying open to the potential for violent criminal and proscribed groups – or elements within them – to become 'reconcilable'. Reconciliation should be explored, offered and pursued much more routinely than has been the case in past counter-terror and counter-narcotics campaigns.
- **Investing in political conflict resolution and reconciliation processes** to build bridges between hitherto distant or opposing groups, move violent actors back towards the political space, dispel mistrust, build confidence, and construct platforms and agreements for tackling pressing issues.
- Encouraging all involved in peace and stabilisation processes to significantly increase their **meaningful engagement with civil society, including women's rights organisations and representatives of youth and other marginalised groups**, and supporting civil society's ongoing efforts to bargain with authorities and elites, press for the emergence of more inclusive, fair, responsive and accountable governance, security, justice and service provision and ensure momentum and accountability for progress in peace processes.
- Addressing wider conflict drivers and **making people a better offer by taking action on inequality, injustice, discrimination and marginalisation** to build on security gains and windows of opportunity – and following this up with consistent attention long after stabilisation efforts have created a window for moving forward. Wherever possible such efforts should be civilian-led.
- Making every effort to **indemnify emerging efforts to end violence and construct peace against later unravelling** by fostering trans-partisan consensus and either:
 - constructing processes to depend as little as possible on external inputs, or
 - constructing multinational and multilateral stewardship over peace settlements so that they are not dependent on any one government or entity
- Finally, the paper concludes by flagging knowledge gaps where further research would be valuable to consolidate these indicative findings.



EVERYONE
REPUBLICAN
OR OTHERWISE
HAS THEIR OWN
PARTICULAR
ROLE TO PLAY

...OUR
REVENGE
WILL BE THE
LAUGHTER
OF OUR
CHILDREN

Bobby Sands MP
POET, GAELGEOIR, REVOLUTIONARY, IRA VOLUNTEER.

Bobby Sands was a provisional IRA member who died on hunger strike in 1981 while imprisoned in the Maze prison.

1

Introduction

This paper is the third output in a UK-funded Global Security and Rapid Analysis initiative to summarise evidence over a six-month period on ‘Stabilisation and resilience strategies: what works to address threats posed by violent criminal or proscribed groups?’ It was compiled in response to the UK Government’s interest in understanding the evidence on how to engage in or support ‘successful integrated stabilisation’.

The UK Government defines stabilisation as follows: ‘[s]tabilisation seeks to support local and regional partners in conflict-affected countries to reduce violence, ensure basic security and facilitate peaceful political deal-making, all of which should aim to provide a foundation for building long-term stability.’¹ It likewise stresses taking a ‘conflict-sensitive approach’ by ‘ensuring that interventions do not inadvertently fuel or exacerbate conflict, or sow the seeds for future conflict’; and ‘considering how gender norms and roles shape the effects, causes and drivers of conflict’.

UK guidance recognises that competing interests and wicked problems, meaning that some trade-offs are normally necessary in stabilisation efforts. However, in stressing conflict sensitivity and the objective of preparing a foundation for long-term stability, the UK echoed Saferworld’s recommendation that ‘[s]tabilisation should ... be defined as the first logical contribution towards sustained and long-term peace in crisis contexts’ – and thus as ‘*part of* peacebuilding – the first logical step towards lasting peace.’²

The term ‘stabilisation’ is often assumed to refer to a set of externally driven strategies, operations and programmes to tackle instability. In this study we take the term more broadly, to examine *processes through which states and societies become more stable*, whatever the degree of external agency in the process. We define successful stabilisation as reducing violence, crime and perceptions of insecurity; promoting nonviolent conflict resolution; and doing whatever can be done to address conflict drivers during the stabilisation process as a foundation for longer-term peace.

In the first paper under this project, *'No shortcuts to security: learning from responses to armed conflicts involving proscribed groups'*, we note key weaknesses in counter-terror and stabilisation responses to conflicts involving proscribed groups, including:

- weak analysis and understanding of conflicts, proscribed groups, states and public attitudes
- short-term, violent strategies that generate blowback
- the reinforcement of conflict drivers – in particular partners' abuse, corruption and exclusion
- weak design and perverse impacts of security assistance and partnerships
- the tendency to undermine conflict resolution, peacebuilding, relief and development
- neglect for the gender dimensions of conflicts involving proscribed groups
- closure of spaces for change
- hoping to win hearts and minds while failing to improve people's lives
- the failure to monitor, evaluate, learn and adapt

In different ways, and in a range of contexts, these shortcomings of internationally driven, militarised models of stabilisation have undermined prospects for resolving conflict, reducing violence and addressing root causes. During our efforts to document and account for strategic failure in counter-terror and stabilisation efforts, and to support evidence-driven policy discussions on alternatives, policymakers, practitioners and civil society experts often expressed an appetite for new evidence of how to address protracted conflicts involving violent proscribed and criminal groups successfully. In response, this paper looks at the potential of more 'integrated' stabilisation processes where progress has involved simultaneously grappling with the political, social and economic dimensions of crises, and where military-security efforts have been less predominant. It thus explores cases where a greater degree of stability emerged than in comparable cases, through processes in which a range of actors were responsible for bringing together new approaches to conflict; where there were changes to security approaches, significant political efforts to end violence and resolve differences between warring parties; and where these were accompanied to various degrees by wider efforts to tackle conflict drivers, in which society at times played a critical role.

The paper builds on existing Saferworld studies, such as in the northeast of Kenya, where we have documented some positive shifts, albeit at a sub-national level.

Important elements of change in northeast Kenya included: a society recognising the dangers posed by spiralling violence and deciding to move beyond it; the exposure of failure prompting a new political approach that recognised fundamental problems and put in place new leadership with the mandate to reverse harmful practices and heal divisions; and a new security approach that halted and signalled an end to abuses, working with indigenous leadership and communities to repair trust.

Building on this relatively localised example, plus important lessons developed by scholars – notably Rachel Kleinfeld – this paper sets out to explore similarities and differences in comparable but larger-scale processes in complex conflict settings. It examines how intense violence and multifaceted conflicts that appear trapped in self-reinforcing systems (that is, between repressive states, violent criminal and proscribed groups' provocation and the appeal they make to aggrieved public constituencies) can get better.

Within the constraints of time and resources available, this paper thus provides a rapid, desk-based review of how three violent contexts in which criminal and proscribed groups were playing a significant role became less violent, and underlying political, security, social, economic and other issues began to be addressed. It notes that there is significant ambivalence over whether these cases should be described as 'successes' at all, and discusses where successes were partial, temporary, or positive for some but not all groups involved – as well as where they left issues to be addressed later on. It seeks to explain what worked and why – and with what caveats. It then seeks to draw out lessons and implications that can inform the approach of leaders and practitioners such as UK, US, European and other politicians and officials interested in supporting processes of successful integrated stabilisation in the future.

Tackling violence and mistrust in northeast Kenya

Saferworld's 2017 study 'Inside Kenya's war on terror: breaking the cycle of violence in Garissa' describes how, amid the aftershocks from the horrific Garissa University College attack in Kenya in 2015, public solidarity and political pressure translated into new political, security and societal action to stem a rising tide of violence and increase trust.

As al-Shabaab began launching provocative attacks within Kenya, and with Kenya stepping up its military involvement inside Somalia, Garissa county saw a dramatic escalation in tit-for-tat violence from 2011. It arose in a county which had experienced the harsh suppression of secessionist ambitions and historic marginalisation. Citing Kenyan abuses within Somalia and repressive domestic counter-terror measures, al-Shabaab called on Kenyan Muslims to take arms against the government.³ Local ethnic-Somali Kenyans faced problems getting identification papers, jobs and services, were often victims of police corruption and extortion, and had concerns over how outside influences and investments were seeping into and affecting local life. The more al-Shabaab attacked, the more 'Kenyan forces were implicated in abuses that needlessly exacerbated grievances'.⁴

The first turning point in this story came in November 2012, when, '[f]ollowing the killing of three of its men, the army reacted by burning the market in Garissa town and shooting local residents.'⁵ As security forces began meting out collective punishment to 'anyone who looked like a Somali or a Muslim', local religious leaders 'felt impelled to impress upon their communities that "this is about all of us"'.⁶

As a result, political leaders from local to national levels, along with representatives from faith communities, entered into dialogue, and there were strong voices 'calling on communities to reject the escalating logic of tit-for-tat violence'.⁶ Nonetheless, violence continued to mount until the shocking Garissa University College attack of 2015 in which al-Shabaab murdered 148 people, mostly students. The militants had targeted a focal point of local concern over economic expropriation and cultural cleavage – but badly miscalculated. The attack prompted a wave of shared grief and horror that ran across communities, and proved a watershed moment.

When local Muslims saw the innocent victims of the attack they came together to reject al-Shabaab. Many Muslims donated blood and sheltered victims. Under the leadership of local sheikhs, they also organised dialogue forums that enabled them to come together as a community.⁷

In the aftermath, '[l]ocal leaders and sheikhs liaised with the government and campaigned throughout the county calling for an end to the violence.'⁸ When al-Shabaab sent assassins to the home of a sheikh

who had condemned them, the police failed to protect him, but 'the local chief ... mobilised a crowd of people to chase the assassins away'.⁹

The university attack had also laid bare, on the national and world stages, 'the holes in local security provision that need[ed] to be fixed',¹⁰ and this 'triggered a remarkable and successful change in approach'.¹¹ Kenya's president appointed a new regional coordinator to bring together county commissioners, county security and intelligence committees, local chiefs, and security and peace initiatives.

The new coordinator was from the locally dominant Ogaden Somali sub-clan, and was known for having helped end an earlier secessionist conflict. He therefore commanded trust and respect across social divides, and set about 'healing relations between the government, security agencies and communities in a non-partisan way'. He clamped down on corruption and arbitrary arrest, and worked with communities to restore trust and break up al-Shabaab cells. He even gave out his mobile phone number, and unblocked obstacles in command structures to act on tips from locals. He also handed a greater role to Administration Police, who were closer to communities and less heavy-handed in their approach. 'Under the new system ... if an attack occurred, rather than rushing there and rounding up, beating and torturing people, authorities call a *barasa* (public forum) to identify underlying issues.'¹²

As the new political and security approach took hold, combined with communities' rejection of violence and rising confidence in authorities, trust grew, al-Shabaab cells were broken up, and attacks and killings fell sharply.¹³ A year later, our research in Mandera, another violent northeast Kenyan county, found that security forces in the area were beginning to recognise the pitfalls of a heavy-handed security response and to show greater appetite to build trust with communities. For their part, communities had welcomed the formation of a Kenyan Police Reserve staffed with people living within their communities and whom they therefore felt they could trust and share information with.

In both Garissa and Mandera counties, security force corruption and abuses remained an issue, and marginalisation exacerbated by al-Shabaab attacks on public workers (plus the potential for the group to capitalise on political competition between Somali clans) all remained peacebuilding challenges. Terror threats would likely persist until instability and alleged abuses within Somalia could be brought to an end. Yet the studies provided a hint of how, amid the polarisation threatened by escalating violence, things can improve.



Families for Peace, 2016.

1.1 The case study contexts

Without offering a full history of the conflicts in Colombia, Iraq and Northern Ireland, the following subsections briefly outline how they emerged, with a focus on clarifying the challenges that confronted those who worked to bring about greater stability. They also note in what sense each context became more stable in the case study period, as a basis for the subsequent analysis of those factors which led to relative stabilisation success (in section 2) – as well as the significant caveats in each case (in section 3).

1.1.1 Colombia (2010–2016)

In examining Colombia the paper focuses on the period from Juan Manuel Santos's first election to the 2016 peace deal with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). The roots of the FARC and the guerrilla movements in Colombia were socio-economic, stemming from a long history of income and political inequalities, and attacks on the poor,

unions and political opposition. The conflict itself can be traced back to the rivalry between the Conservative and Liberal parties which 'reached its nadir in the period 1946–1964 ... known as La Violencia'.¹⁴ The absence of a functioning state apparatus across vast swathes of Colombia's territory, and a corresponding weakness in the rule of law, exacerbated systematic exclusion and the lack of meaningful access to formal political channels.¹⁵ This drove recruitment for the guerrilla groups which evolved during the 1960s. The two main rebel movements to emerge from this time were the FARC and the National Liberation Army (ELN). Drug trafficking has also 'made the war in Colombia more multifaceted, introducing new interests and actors' (see the related paper '*Organised crime and conflict: implications for peacebuilding*' for more on this subject).¹⁶

By the 1980s and 90s, the FARC was increasingly threatening the economic status quo, and 'an intense wave of [right-wing] paramilitary violence, sponsored by the state and the economic elite' rose to meet it.¹⁷ As paramilitary groups acquired greater military and political power, the FARC consolidated itself as a military force with a robust social base, largely in rural strongholds in the southern, eastern and south-central highlands of the country.¹⁸

The Colombian conflict reflects many of the country's own inequalities. Men have been more likely than women 'to be kidnapped, tortured, arbitrarily detained, and forcibly recruited by the different armed actors ... the civilians killed in what became known as the "false positives" scandal were young men'.¹⁹ Yet women are said to make up about 40 per cent of the FARC and between one quarter and one third of the ELN. On the other hand, women and girls are more likely than men to be subjected to 'massive displacement, sexual violence, rape, forced labour, forced prostitution, forced abortions, and enslavement'.²⁰ Indigenous and Afro-Colombian women have faced deep poverty, stigmatisation, the violation of collective rights, and displacement.²¹ The LGBTI+ community was also one of the most targeted groups in Colombia: they were killed, forcibly displaced and threatened – especially by paramilitary groups like the United Self-Defences of Colombia (AUC) – as a form of social stigmatisation in response to the challenge they presented to traditional gender stereotypes. The conflict created stark geographic disparities: while parts of Colombia bore its brunt, the rest of the country continued to modernise.²²

As violence escalated there were three unsuccessful attempts at ending the conflict between the Colombian Government and the FARC. The first was in 1982, when President Belisario Betancur granted the group amnesty and offered to free political prisoners.²³ In 1991 and 1992, Venezuela and Mexico hosted negotiations between the Gaviria administration (1990–94) and an umbrella organisation consisting of the FARC, the ELN and the Popular Liberation Army (EPL).²⁴ With the failure of these processes, the FARC moved towards 'an all-out war strategy' during the 1990s.²⁵

The third major peace effort, known as the 'Caguán process' and led by President Andrés Pastrana, took place between 1999 and 2002 in a demilitarised area covering 42,000 square kilometres in five municipalities of Caguán.²⁶ However, this too was a failure, coming to 'a definitive end when the FARC hijacked a commercial airliner and kidnapped a sitting senator'.²⁷ The FARC lost much credibility nationally for its perceived use of the negotiations 'to gain more power and territory'.²⁸ On the other hand, the Colombian government had heavily invested in modernising the military while negotiating.²⁹

It was 'on the back of this disappointment' that President Álvaro Uribe came to power in 2002. Resentment over the failure of Pastrana's peace programme made the public more favourable towards Uribe's hard-line approach to the guerrillas.³⁰ This approach was supported by the US, including under 'Plan Colombia', which was agreed

with the US under Pastrana. This was a 'security and economic development assistance' framework agreed with the US 'to help combat the spread of narcotics, train law enforcement, and promote economic growth'.³¹ The US shifted Plan Colombia 'from a war against drugs to a war against "terrorists" focused on the FARC'.³² Within 'the framework of Plan Colombia, all-out war was waged against the FARC-EP'.³³

In 2003 Uribe launched the Democratic Security Policy, of which the 'key objective was to counter the insurgency through a series of interrelated goals, including strategic military pacification and stabilisation activities'.³⁴ In practice, this entailed expanding the budget and the size of security forces, as well as tactical improvements (for example, US-provided helicopter mobility) to regain control over FARC-controlled territory. This was followed by counter-narcotics operations (such as crop eradication) and governance reform.³⁵

Key to Uribe's policy was his argument that there was no armed conflict in Colombia – just violence against a democracy, which should be considered terrorism.³⁶ However, this narrative 'misidentified the political nature of the war and its centres of gravity, namely FARC's impoverished rural support base and Colombia's historical agrarian conflict'.³⁷ Instead of addressing the drivers of conflict, Uribe's hardline approach – which involved widespread, indiscriminate abuses – proved deeply counterproductive. For instance, the intensification of crop eradication was intended 'to target FARC's income sources ... through aerial spraying'. However, it 'not only failed to reduce cocaine production or bankrupt the FARC, but it destroyed the livelihoods – and health – of peasant communities without providing alternatives, thus deepening their grievances against the state and playing into the FARC narrative'.³⁸

Santos was defence minister under Uribe, and he escalated the government military campaign against the FARC.³⁹ When, in March 2010, Santos won the presidential election (with one of the highest number of votes in Colombia's history) on a platform echoing many of the promises made by Uribe, it seemed that his presidency would offer more of the same. Yet, two years later, his government began negotiations with the FARC in Oslo, and then in Havana. In November 2016, the Government of Colombia and the FARC signed a peace agreement.

As explored below, between Santos's first election and the signing of the peace deal with the FARC in 2016, important and influential policies were put in place that paved the way to an official end to the 52-year armed conflict. The Colombian peace process is now also 'increasingly referred to as a model for inclusive peace processes, and in

particular for the inclusion of women and a gender perspective'.⁴⁰ On 15 August 2017 the FARC relinquished the last of its accessible weapons to UN representatives,⁴¹ and later that month, it officially transformed into a formal political party.⁴² Colombia's 'homicide rate soon fell to its lowest in 40 years', and the 'oldest guerrilla army in the Western Hemisphere had joined the political process'.⁴³

1.1.2 Iraq (2006–2008)

This paper also discusses the process through which Iraq became more stable between mid-2006 and the end of 2008. During this period, evolutions in conflict dynamics, combined with a changed international approach, achieved some significant positive changes in security conditions and relations between important groups – as well as having some dangerous or negative implications and failing to prevent Iraq's subsequent 'unravelling'.

At the beginning of the period in focus, violence in Iraq was 'totally out of control'.⁴⁴ At the peak of the violence in 2006, there were 140 attacks per day.⁴⁵ By December 2006 over 3,000 Iraqis – roughly the total number of people killed during the duration of the Troubles in Northern Ireland – were dying violently every month.⁴⁶ In early 2007, Baghdad suffered over 50 attacks per day, many targeting civilians and causing mass casualties.⁴⁷ Many areas were 'a wasteland: banks were closed, traffic non-existent, rubbish piled up'.⁴⁸ The government was hamstrung by low revenues, damage to power, transport and oil infrastructure, limited capacity to provide services, and infighting in a dysfunctional political environment.⁴⁹

In 2003, relying on false intelligence and flawed ideas about militarised democratisation, the Coalition had invaded a country traumatised by decades of repression, war and sanctions. Keen to avoid 'nation-building' and large troop commitments, Washington and London provided inadequate capacity and resources to establish security, guard weapons stocks and make a rapid start on rebuilding the country.⁵⁰ The hastily established and inadequately staffed Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA)⁵¹ rapidly sowed disaster, by ordering de-Baathification⁵² and dismantling the existing state. This put both the security forces and professionals, including doctors, engineers, professors, teachers and civil servants, out of work.⁵³ The alienation of countless capable Iraqis – including hundreds of thousands of armed young men – became the military and political basis for rebellion.⁵⁴ Previously ascendant Sunnis in particular stood to lose out:⁵⁵ many boycotted or were cowed into avoiding elections in 2005, and grew angry over their exclusion.⁵⁶

Under the Coalition, the new political order 'shared out' power between ethno-sectarian groups – sidelining secular voices and meritocratic methods.⁵⁷ Slow, centralised and extractive reconstruction failed to provide electrical power and water to many Iraqis.⁵⁸ In the resulting vacuum, diverse groups took up arms to claim resources, attack and defend against ethno-sectarian opponents and oust the Coalition.⁵⁹ The Coalition response – which included security cordons, mass arrests and detentions, cultural insensitivity, killing of civilians in increasingly violent operations⁶⁰ and shocking abuses of detainees – fuelled resentment.⁶¹ As well as Sunnis, from 2004 many Shi'a – including backers of cleric Muqtada al-Sadr who had no stake in Iraq's Governing Council – rose up against the Coalition.⁶²

The impending invasion had drawn up to 5,000 jihadists to Iraq,⁶³ and as chaos took hold al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) grew more capable. As well as attacking the international presence, its inflammatory attacks on the Shi'a Ashura festival in 2004 heralded an intensely violent campaign to provoke a Shi'a backlash that would polarise Iraq and mobilise Sunnis to its cause. When AQI bombed the Golden Mosque in Samarra in February 2006, Iraq exploded into sectarian civil war.⁶⁴ Vicious, widespread sectarian violence was interlaced with criminality – with predatory militias competing for power and wealth.⁶⁵

Having disbanded the security forces, the US launched a USD\$5.7 billion initiative to train 270,000 new Iraqi forces by summer 2006. Infiltrated by sectarian elements, these forces were 'politicised, corrupt and ethnically divided', however, with Shi'a-dominated police often complicit in atrocities.⁶⁶

At the regional level, the 'axis of evil' rhetoric had cemented enmity – incentivising Tehran and Damascus to encourage US failure in Iraq. Syria quietly released jihadists from prisons while facilitating passports for others joining the fight against the Coalition.⁶⁷ Iran built influence by bankrolling Iraqi political parties and arming, training, equipping and funding Shi'a militias inside Iraq, with support from Lebanese Hezbollah.⁶⁸

The 2003 invasion made conditions markedly worse for Iraqi women, who were, in many cases, already suffering as a result of decades of militarism, repression and comprehensive sanctions.⁶⁹ Post-2003, women were subject to unaccountable violence from the Coalition, due to bombings of residential areas, shootings by US or UK troops, killings – sometimes of whole families – at checkpoints, as well as physical assaults on women at checkpoints and during house searches.⁷⁰ Wives and relatives of suspected insurgents were



The US Army and Sons of Iraq establish a new checkpoint in Rashid, Baghdad, March 2008.
© US Army photo by Pfc. Michael Hendrickson (www.army.mil)

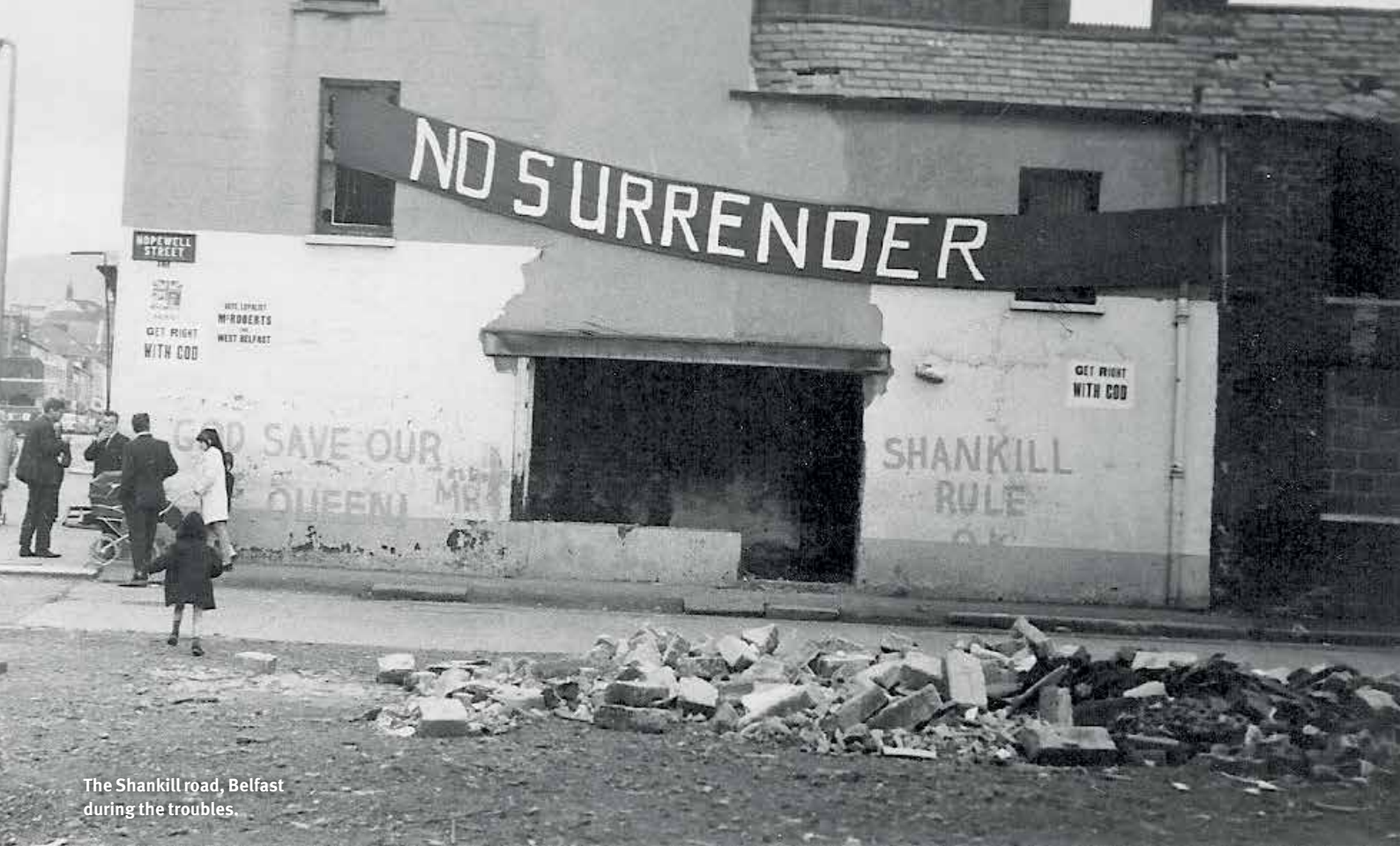
sometimes ‘taken hostage by US forces and used as bargaining chips’.⁷¹ Amid ‘mounting evidence of torture and rape’, survivors were also under threat from honour crimes.⁷²

Islamist violence and the sectarianisation of Iraq likewise endangered women and threatened their rights – for example, they were harassed when moving around, and forced to wear headscarves.⁷³ Women doctors, academics, lawyers, non-governmental organisation (NGO) activists and politicians were targeted for assassination, while criminal gangs kidnapped women for ransom, sexual abuse or forced prostitution.⁷⁴

By 2006 war in Iraq was intensely violent and complex. It was driven at its core both by staunch opposition to Coalition control and violent competition over the distribution of political power and economic resources among the country’s sects and ethnicities.⁷⁵ In the face of these challenges, the US Government and Coalition forces changed course, embracing a new strategy that led to a ‘surge’ of additional troops into Iraq. Over the next two years, violence in Iraq fell by over 90 per cent.⁷⁶ By the end of 2008 there were no attacks on some days.⁷⁷ AQI and the most violent Iran-backed special groups of the Jaish al-Mahdi (JAM) were on the way to defeat.⁷⁸ In this period, the sectarian splintering

of Iraqi security forces also went – albeit temporarily – into reverse, and they became more effective security providers.⁷⁹

There was also much progress in reconciliation, enabling ‘the resumption of political discourse’ so that Iraqi politics became for a time ‘unstuck from the gridlock of the past half-decade’.⁸⁰ The Shi’a-dominated government also moved to confront and disband Shi’a militias, which fed into a significant movement away from violent rebellion and towards nonviolent political engagement and resolution of core issues.⁸¹ In the January 2009 provincial elections, three-quarters of the 400 parties competing were newly established: ‘[s]ome of them had been active in the insurgency and had now decided to give politics a chance.’⁸² The new approach taken during the case study period could not undo or exculpate the disastrous impacts of the 2003 invasion – and, as detailed in section 3, Iraq’s problems were far from over – but in these respects the situation had significantly improved.



The Shankill road, Belfast during the troubles.

1.1.3 Northern Ireland (1981–1998)

The origins of the Troubles date back to centuries of political contestation and conflict in which the predominantly Catholic people of Ireland attempted to break free of British (overwhelmingly Protestant) rule (for more on terms for the various parties see endnote).⁸³ For instance, the political party Sinn Féin (which means ‘we ourselves’ or ‘ourselves alone’), long seen as the political wing of the Irish Republican Army (IRA), gained momentum after the Easter Rising in 1916. Its ‘unequivocal demand’ for a united and independent Ireland won it 73 out of 105 Irish seats in the 1918 British elections.⁸⁴

From 1919–1921 Irish militant groups fought for independence from the UK, culminating in the Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1921. Ireland was partitioned into two parts: the almost entirely Catholic Irish Free State, and the smaller Northern Ireland, which was mostly Protestant with a substantial Catholic minority. Investigative journalist Patrick Radden Keefe notes that ‘Protestants, who formed a majority of the population in Northern Ireland but a minority on the island as a whole, feared being subsumed by Catholic Ireland’, while ‘Catholics faced extraordinary discrimination’.⁸⁵ Under British rule, Catholic communities in cities like Belfast and Derry/

Londonderry suffered discrimination and unfair treatment by the Protestant-controlled government and police forces.⁸⁶ Protests by nationalist and loyalist groups became increasingly common, including significant nationalist protests in 1968 in Derry/Londonderry.

A number of groups representing these different communities were founded. Reacting to sectarian violence, local units of the IRA were organised to defend Catholic communities in the province, eventually leading to the ‘paramilitary organisation seeking the establishment of a republic, the end of British rule in Northern Ireland, and the reunification of Ireland’.⁸⁷ The Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), a Protestant paramilitary organisation, was founded in 1966. Dedicated to upholding Northern Ireland’s union with Britain at all costs, the UVF quickly announced its intention to kill members of the IRA. In 1971, the Ulster Defence Association, a loyalist organisation, was also founded to coordinate the efforts of local Protestant vigilante groups in the sectarian conflict in the province. In 1970 the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) was founded, a nationalist political party distinguished from other republican groups by its commitment to political and nonviolent means of uniting Northern Ireland with the Irish Republic.

With violence escalating steadily year on year – polarising and terrorising communities and forcing the closure of businesses – British forces arrived in Northern Ireland in 1969, at the request of the Stormont government. The British troops’ ‘avowed purpose was to play a peacekeeping role’ between the IRA and unionist paramilitary forces – through the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) and the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR; known from 1992 as the Royal Irish Regiment).⁸⁸ The UK Government was largely disinterested in the political dynamics and the unionist government in Stormont gave political direction to the British army rather than London.

Under this direction, a ‘hardline approach ... tipped the country into an armed conflict that would last for thirty years or more’.⁸⁹ In fact, the UK’s own inquiry concluded that UK operations ‘allowed [the IRA] to develop into an effective insurgency’.⁹⁰ In August 1971 internment was introduced: ‘the arrest, interrogation and detention of Republican suspects without trial’.⁹¹ The policy ‘hardened legitimate opposition and bolstered support for the [IRA], particularly in the Catholic housing estates of Belfast and Derry’.⁹² There were accusations of collusion between the RUC, the UDR, and unionist paramilitary groups. This led many within Catholic communities to see the British Army as ‘an armed wing of an oppressive government’.⁹³ On Sunday 30 January 1972, at a civil rights march in Derry/Londonderry, British troops killed 14 people and wounded another 13. This incident, named ‘Bloody Sunday’, swelled the IRA’s ranks and led to the UK Government’s political intervention in proroguing Stormont and introducing direct rule. It also internationalised the conflict, making it a ‘foreign policy’ issue for the UK. Civil unrest continued to increase year on year, as did violence against the security forces. As well as conflict within Northern Ireland, the IRA launched attacks in London and in British industrial heartlands such as Manchester and Warrington, and killed high-profile individuals.⁹⁴

Added to this, Catholics continued to suffer ‘discrimination in public and private sector employment, and in public sector housing policy; in addition, official government enquiries accepted that there had been manipulation of electoral boundaries and an undue reliance by the state on draconian special legislation’.⁹⁵ Catholics were also not represented among the police force, with the RUC being ‘a predominantly Protestant force’ that, due to its partisan behaviour and abuses, ‘enjoyed little sympathy or support among the Catholic population’.⁹⁶ For women, this discrimination was heightened:

‘The reality of women’s experience within both the Catholic and Protestant religious traditions, and in both the North and South jurisdictions, entailed marginalisation and exclusion from power; but this reality has been confounded by idealised models of women which have had significant influence on popular, especially nationalist and Catholic, thinking about politics and religion.’⁹⁷

For many years, then, the UK’s approach was counterproductive, strengthened support for the IRA, and arguably prolonged the conflict.⁹⁸ Yet the hunger strikes triggered important evolutions on the part of both republicans and the UK Government, and a change in approach – focused on bringing a political end to the conflict – that shifted the conflict’s trajectory. Relations improved between the UK and Ireland with the 1985 Anglo-Irish agreement establishing a formal role for the latter in Northern Ireland’s government. On 10 April 1998, the Good Friday Agreement was signed by the British and Irish governments, as well as by four of the major political parties in Northern Ireland: Sinn Féin, the Ulster Unionist Party, the Social Democratic and Labour Party, and the Alliance Party. Among the major parties, only the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) rejected the agreement and campaigned for its rejection in subsequent referendums, whereas it was overwhelmingly accepted in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in 1998.

Among other things, this agreement saw paramilitaries committing to disarm, while the UK committed to demilitarise its presence in Northern Ireland. It also created the Stormont Assembly, where unionists and nationalists would share power in proportion to their vote share. Problems remain with Northern Ireland today, but UK forces left after almost four decades, and an era of violence that killed 3,600 people and injured more than 30,000 came to an end.⁹⁹ In the worst year of the conflict – 1972 – 472 people died as a result of the violence in Northern Ireland. The majority (321) were civilians. In the two decades after the Good Friday Agreement, there were 158 ‘security-related’ deaths.¹⁰⁰

Notes

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- 3 Attree L et al. (2017), 'Inside Kenya's war on terror: breaking the cycle of violence in Garissa', Saferworld (<https://www.saferworld.org.uk/long-reads/inside-kenyas-war-on-terror-breaking-the-cycle-of-violence-in-garissa>), p 11. Saferworld's case study on Garissa was published separately in 2017. Available at: <https://saferworld-indepth.squarespace.com/inside-kenyas-war-on-terror-breaking-the-cycle-of-violence-in-garissa/>
- 4 *Ibid*, p 15.
- 5 *Ibid*, p 15.
- 6 *Ibid*, p 15.
- 7 *Ibid*, p 18.
- 8 *Ibid*, p 18.
- 9 *Ibid*, p 18.
- 10 *Ibid*, p 19. The authorities had not protected the students despite forewarnings, had been slow to reach the scene, and were suspected of having enabled the attacks via corruption.
- 11 *Ibid*, p 20.
- 12 *Ibid*, p 20.
- 13 *Ibid*, p 4.
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- 16 Haspelagh S (2021), *Proscribing Peace: How Listing Armed Groups as Terrorists Hurts Negotiations* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), p 78.
- 17 Brett R (2019), 'Elite Bargains and Political Deals Project: Colombia Case Study', UKHMG Stabilisation Unit (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/766016/Colombia_case_study.pdf), p 6.
- 18 *Ibid*.
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- 20 *Ibid*, p 9.
- 21 Mundubat (2012), 'Colombia: Violencia sexual contra mujeres indígenas como arma de guerra', 24 May (<https://www.mundubat.org/colombia-violencia-sexual-contra-mujeres-indigenas-como-arma-de-guerra/>)
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- 33 Brett R (2019), 'Elite Bargains and Political Deals Project: Colombia Case Study', UKHMG Stabilisation Unit (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/766016/Colombia_case_study.pdf), p 9.
- 34 *Ibid*, p 8.
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- 47 Petraeus D (2013), 'Foreword' in *ibid*, p ix; *ibid*, pp 87–88.
- 48 *Ibid*, pp 1–2.
- 49 Petraeus D (2013), 'Foreword' in *ibid*, p ix.
- 50 Sky E (2015), *The Unravelling* (London: Atlantic books), p 102; Barry B (2020), *Blood, Metal and Dust: how victory turned into defeat in Afghanistan and Iraq* (Oxford: Osprey), p 204, pp 304–6 (on the spread of unguarded weapons, munitions, explosives: p 199).
- 51 Barry B (2020), *ibid*, p 191; Sky E (2015), *ibid*, p 103.
- 52 The attempted removal of the formerly ruling Ba'ath Party's influence from the new Iraqi political system and state institutions.
- 53 Mansoor P (2013), *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War* (New Haven: Yale University Press), pp 7–10; Barry B (2020), *Blood, Metal and Dust: how victory turned into defeat in Afghanistan and Iraq* (Oxford: Osprey), p 187.
- 54 Barry B (2020), *ibid*, p 188, p 194; Sky E (2015), *The Unravelling* (London: Atlantic books), p 101; Mansoor P (2013), *ibid*, p 10.
- 55 Especially given Sectarian bias in de-Baathification implementation by an Iraqi Commission led by Shi'a exile Ahmed Chalabi. See Sky E (2015), *ibid*, p 56.
- 56 Mansoor P (2013), *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War* (New Haven: Yale University Press), p 26.
- 57 *Ibid*, p 9.
- 58 *Ibid*, p 199, p 203.
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- 60 For example the bloody, vengeful clearance of Fallujah in April 2004.
- 61 Barry B (2020), *Blood, Metal and Dust: how victory turned into defeat in Afghanistan and Iraq* (Oxford: Osprey), p 204 (p 206, p 210 deal with Fallujah; p 218 deals with Abu Ghraib Prison; p 308 deals with the killing of Baha Mousa in Basra); Sky E (2015), *The Unravelling* (London: Atlantic books), p 93, p 97.
- 62 Barry B (2020), *ibid*, p 210, 217; Governing Council: Sky E (2015), *ibid*, p 153. By August 2004, there were 600 attacks in a single month.
- 63 Barry B (2020), *ibid*, p 110.
- 64 Mansoor P (2013), *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War* (New Haven: Yale University Press), p 28. 'Across Iraq mobs took to the streets chanting their desire for revenge. Iraqi security forces stood by while militiamen shot rocket propelled grenades and machine guns at Sunni mosques. Scores were torched and several imams killed.'
- 65 Sky E (2015), *The Unravelling* (London: Atlantic books), p 178. For example financing themselves through control of petrol stations, or competing to control Basra and Um Qasr – key oil conduits and nodes in the struggle for power and wealth.
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- 70 Al-Ali N (2007), *ibid*.
- 71 *Ibid*.
- 72 *Ibid*.
- 73 *Ibid*. One woman described how in 2005–2006, 'I resisted for a long time, but last year I started wearing the hijab, after I was threatened by several Islamist militants in front of my house. They are terrorising the whole neighbourhood.'
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- 77 Barry B (2020), *Blood, Metal and Dust: how victory turned into defeat in Afghanistan and Iraq* (Oxford: Osprey), p 352.
- 78 Petraeus D (2013), 'Foreword' in P Mansoor, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War* (New Haven: Yale University Press), p xv.
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- 80 *Ibid*, p 261.
- 81 See Meghan Sullivan in Council on Foreign Relations (2017), 'Iraq Reconsidered: Ten Years After the Surge', 1 February (<https://www.cfr.org/event/iraq-reconsidered-ten-years-after-surge>): "you actually see in 2009 and 2010 provincial council elections and national elections where you have Iraqi parties, some of them are on a sectarian basis, but some of them are actually arguing about national concerns, and we see a movement towards politics".
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- 89 Geraghty T (2002), *The Irish War: The Hidden Conflict Between the IRA and British Intelligence* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press)
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- 99 Britannica, 'The Troubles: Northern Ireland' (<https://www.history.com/news/the-troubles-northern-ireland>)
- 100 *BBC News* (2018) "'58 security-related deaths" since Good Friday Agreement', 23 April (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-43862294>)



US Army Lt. Col. Thomas Boccadi, commander of 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, shakes hands with a recently released detainee during a ceremony at an Iraqi police station in Tarmiya, Iraq, 19 March 2008.

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2

Accounting for relative stabilisation success

Having briefly noted the context and the shifts that took place in each case, in this section of the paper we explore how the shifts in Colombia, Iraq and Northern Ireland occurred, in relation to the common themes of shifts in understanding and assumptions, changing security approaches, political dialogue, deal-making and reconciliation efforts, measures to address conflict drivers, and the roles played by civil society and women.

2.1 Revisiting assumptions: the strategic basis for reducing violence and building peace

In each case – whether driven by fear or fatigue within society, changing political circumstances, or pressure to avoid failure – there was an increasing recognition that military and law enforcement measures could not solve the problem. Past enmity was not easy to overcome, and key parties often took steps towards conflict resolution with reluctance and misgiving. Nonetheless, envisioning an end to conflict meant reconceptualising it (even if only in public initially) – revisiting conceptions of the enemy to create space for political engagement, reconsidering security approaches and recognising the importance of wider root causes.

By mid-2006 in **Iraq**, the main options available to the US-led Coalition were: to face up to failure and cede Iraq to the control of AQI, JAM and other militant elements; to continue pursuing the existing failed strategy for transitioning the country; or to pursue a significant change in approach in order to contain and solve some of the country's growing problems.

The escalating violence provided unarguable testimony that the invasion had been ill-conceived and subsequent assumptions and strategy badly flawed. One problem was that 'the Coalition did not understand who it was fighting':¹⁰¹ '[t]here was not a lot of effort toward understanding the enemy',¹⁰² which had been reductively conceptualised as 'anti-Iraqi' or 'anti-Coalition' elements. A second problem was reluctance to admit failure amid a rush to 'get out of Iraq as quickly as possible'.¹⁰³ As Iraq fell apart, the Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I) continued to insist that it had 'set the conditions for the stabilization of Iraq and for the transition to Iraqi self-reliance'.¹⁰⁴ It clung to an 'increasingly inappropriate strategy of transferring security responsibilities to Iraqi security forces' that were 'complicit with the sectarian violence', escalating a civil war and becoming close to splintering.¹⁰⁵ The Coalition also wrongly assumed that its presence was causing most of the violence, and that the message 'we will be gone tomorrow' would quell unrest.¹⁰⁶

As the Coalition did not encourage people to raise doubts,¹⁰⁷ understanding failures and embracing a new strategy took time. International strategy began to shift under General Casey (who led MNF-I from June 2004 to February 2007). Casey asked Colonel Kalev Sepp to diagnose the problems in US operations.¹⁰⁸ After reviewing over 50 insurgencies, Sepp criticised heavy firepower and large-scale clearance operations, and recommended a focus on people and their confidence in government, respect for human rights, honest police, effective judiciary, amnesty and rehabilitation programmes, border security and inspiring leadership.¹⁰⁹ In response, Casey set up a counter-insurgency training facility for leaders beginning tours in Iraq.¹¹⁰

In parallel in the US, a team under Lt Gen Petraeus – who was later commanding General of MNF-I during the 'surge' from February 2007 – developed a new counter-insurgency doctrine. Launched in 2006, this argued that while fighting insurgents, it was vital to protect people, and to integrate civilian and military efforts to meet their needs and address root causes through social, political and economic programmes.¹¹¹

The drive to improve strategy was founded on closer understanding of causes of instability and conflict dynamics.¹¹² Petraeus demanded 'a keen

understanding of the political, historical, cultural, economic, and military situation' and 'the dynamics of each province, district and community' in each area.¹¹³ This also heightened awareness of key risks: for example 'that the Coalition could be used by one group to "cleanse" another', 'could capture or kill the very leaders needed to broker ceasefires' and, critically, that 'the government was part of the problem'.¹¹⁴

The new approach also stressed unity of military and civilian efforts – driven by 'a clear, common understanding of the political and security goals'¹¹⁵ and a close partnership between senior military leaders such as General Petraeus, Lt Gen Odierno and US Ambassador Ryan Crocker.¹¹⁶ The idea was that 'military actions were conscious of a political end ... and mutually reinforcing of the ultimate political objectives for both an Iraqi and American political solution' to the crisis.¹¹⁷

To assist with reassessment and the adjustment of strategy, Petraeus and Crocker together set up a Joint Strategic Assessment Team.¹¹⁸ This further challenged US and Iraqi government assumptions, recommending protecting the population, seeking ceasefire agreements with conflicting groups, regional diplomacy, and building government capacity while rooting out sectarians.¹¹⁹ It also helped reset aims – away from 'visions of a Jeffersonian democracy' towards a more realistic focus on 'sustainable stability', 'reconciliation with various local groups' and 'supporting a legitimate national government'.¹²⁰

Under Petraeus's 'surge of ideas', Coalition strategy shifted from trying to exit Iraq by handing responsibility to Iraqi security forces and towards 'focusing on the security of the Iraqi people', and then 'provid[ing] Iraq's political leaders the opportunity to forge agreements on issues that would reduce ethno-sectarian disputes and establish the foundation on which other efforts could be built'.¹²¹ This was a critical shift for US forces away 'from being enablers of the Shi'ites in an intracommunal civil war to one of protecting all Iraqis against those who wished them harmed'.¹²² Petraeus also tried to insulate Coalition strategy from external political timetables – pushing the US Congress to demand withdrawal only when conditions in Iraq allowed.¹²³

In Spring 2007 a letter from Petraeus to all troops, followed by counter-insurgency guidance, encouraged living among the people to improve security, and talked about restoring hope and helping to solve political challenges. To build trust and persuade Iraqis to side with their government, Petraeus urged personnel to communicate information to the public in a timely way, and pushed for accurate media reporting.¹²⁴

During the surge, conflict analysis became much more than a conceptual exercise. The Coalition made great efforts to be more accessible to (and build trust with) the people. Following this approach, personnel were able to gather greater volumes of information, rapidly analysing it, using it to adapt responsively, and disseminating it at different levels and to diverse partners.¹²⁵ Alongside efforts to improve intelligence standards and reduce instances of wrongful targeting,¹²⁶ more comprehensive analysis and strategy development also led to a strategy for tackling AQI that went beyond targeting and elimination, instead focusing on mapping and aiming to deny the group its critical needs.¹²⁷

Improved understanding of conflict dynamics was a challenging, iterative, and imperfect endeavour for Iraq's would-be stabilisers during this period.¹²⁸ Although new precepts clearly played a role in avoiding damaging mistakes, the approach remained violent. At the same time, the surge was also characterised by continual efforts to learn, adapt and respond dynamically to an evolving war explicitly understood as 'a complex, non-linear system'.¹²⁹

In **Colombia**, many were surprised to hear Santos announce in his August 2010 inauguration speech that his government would not be opposed to peace talks under the right conditions, a gesture that immediately distanced him from the former president.¹³⁰ Santos increasingly realised while defence minister that the conflict with the FARC could not be won militarily.¹³¹ As Francisco de Roux, Jesuit priest and president of the Colombian Truth Commission, said, '[h]aving been Minister of Defence, [Santos] realized that even though you can put the FARC against the wall, weaken them ... you cannot overcome them because of Colombia's complex circumstances.'¹³²

For its part, despite heavy military losses, the FARC had not disappeared and 'was able to adapt rapidly to the military onslaught by returning to conventional guerrilla tactics and by taking advantage of the questionable legitimacy of the Democratic Security Policy (which involved massive human rights violations and links to paramilitary organisations)'.¹³³

In fact, Colombian security forces were increasingly adding to the insecurity of civilians. For instance, it was revealed that paramilitary, police, and army units had killed hundreds of civilians and disguised them as rebels to inflate body counts during anti-guerrilla campaigns. The scandal, known as the 'false positives', is widely seen as one of the darkest chapters of the Uribe presidency. Santos sacked dozens of officers over the matter, though human rights groups criticised the government's delay in bringing those responsible to trial. Santos also worried more than Uribe about how these abuses affected Colombia's international reputation. He wanted to open Colombia to the international market. When the US delayed consideration of its free trade deal with Colombia because of assassinations of trade union leaders, this mattered more to Santos than it might have to Uribe.

For all these reasons, then, Santos was increasingly determined to move beyond a military approach to ending the conflict. As he explained in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech in 2016:

*'Seeking victory through force alone, pursuing the utter destruction of the enemy, waging war to the last breath, means failing to recognize your opponent as a human being like yourself, someone with whom you can hold a dialogue ... Our first and most vital step was to cease thinking of the guerrillas as our bitter enemies, and to see them instead simply as adversaries.'*¹³⁴

This was an important step towards peace talks. According to Santos's brother, Enrique Santos Calderón, the gradual 'understanding by both sides that a total victory was neither possible, nor perhaps desirable, was what opened the door to the current cycle of dialogue with the guerrillas'.¹³⁵



Murals of the Troubles.

In **Northern Ireland**, the UK Government had long acknowledged that there was no military solution to the conflict: ‘even supposed hardliners like [then-UK prime minister] Thatcher and [Labour MP, Roy] Mason accepted the impossibility of defeating the IRA by military means alone’.¹³⁶ However, at the same time, ‘[t]he idea that the fault lines in Northern Ireland society ... [were] between the “men of violence” and the supposedly peace-loving population from both communities, had long dominated British thinking.’¹³⁷ This led to a number of policies aimed at combatting ‘men of violence’. For instance, the Special Air Service (SAS, a UK special forces unit) was introduced into Armagh and increasingly deployed against IRA units – which expanded into Belfast and Derry/Londonderry in 1977.

During the period 1976–1981, there was a system of prison management referred to as criminalisation, which reframed ‘terrorist violence as a “law and order” problem rather than a political one’.¹³⁸ The government also removed political status from prisoners convicted of terrorist crimes. This ‘had previously been granted, allowing them, among other things, to wear their own clothes’.¹³⁹ This was important because they claimed they were political prisoners, fighting to achieve the IRA’s historic goal of a united Ireland. In response, they protested. They responded to the withdrawal of the right to wear their own clothes by wearing nothing. But their protest excited little sympathy outside the walls of the prison. So the prisoners then escalated the protest, refusing to ‘slop out’ the chamber pots left

in their cells (there were no toilets). Instead they sloped their urine on the floor and daubed the solid waste on the walls. It became known as the ‘dirty’ or ‘no-wash’ protest.¹⁴⁰ By 1980, despite the horrific conditions, the ‘dirty protest’ had still failed to galvanise much of the nationalist community.

However, this changed when prisoners began a hunger strike, and were ‘ready to sacrifice their lives for their convictions’.¹⁴¹ As Mairead Maguire (then Corrigan), founder of the Northern Ireland Peace Movement, said, they were ‘men from our community. We know how they have come to be there. And above all we don’t want them suffering within the prisons’.¹⁴²

The narrative of the British Government, though, meant that it ‘gross[ly] underestim[at]ed ... the hunger strikers’ potential to mobilise the minority community’.¹⁴³ Thatcher maintained that ‘[c]rime is crime is crime.’ In a speech in Belfast in 1981 she said, ‘[t]here is no such thing as political murder, political bombing or political violence. There is only criminal murder, criminal bombing and criminal violence. We will not compromise on this. There will be no political status.’¹⁴⁴

A snap by-election was announced for the Westminster constituency of Fermanagh/South Tyrone and one of the hunger strikers, Bobby Sands, was put forward as a candidate. For the UK Government, ‘[i]t was incomprehensible ... that the Social Democratic and Labour Party withdrew from the by-election ... in favour of the hunger striker Bobby Sands; and it was equally inconceivable that

a majority of Catholics ... decided to lend active support to an imprisoned “criminal.”¹⁴⁵ Yet, ‘[c]onfounding the government’s expectations’, Sands narrowly won the election.¹⁴⁶

His victory ‘refuted the idea that “the men of violence” were isolated’, or that the violence could be suppressed through criminal justice measures without recognition of its political nature and widespread underlying grievances.¹⁴⁷ This was underlined by his death, after 66 days on hunger strike, a month after his election. A hundred thousand people attended his funeral, making it impossible to argue that ‘the hunger strike had limited support’: Sands was seen increasingly seen as ‘a martyr, Margaret Thatcher a murderer’.¹⁴⁸

As more hunger strikers died and others joined the strike, Thatcher’s views increasingly diverged from community perceptions. James Prior, Northern Ireland secretary, modified prison rules – allowing prisoners to wear ‘their own clothes ... associate freely’, have more visits and be excused from prison work.¹⁴⁹

The hunger strikes were an important turning point in the conflict and their implications went well beyond prison changes. It underpinned the republican movement’s ‘Armalite and Ballot Box’ strategy – in which IRA violence was increasingly complemented by Sinn Féin’s pursuit of political power. As Sinn Féin became the largest Irish republican political party, the UK Government would find it increasingly hard to sideline.¹⁵⁰

While negotiating with the IRA remained politically difficult for the UK Government, John Major was much more able than his predecessor Thatcher to exploit republicans’ growing openness to pursuing their cause via political means. Major had ‘a long-held conviction that the endless cycle of death and destruction in Northern Ireland was an unacceptable situation which demanded and deserved more attention from the British government’.¹⁵¹ In a meeting in 1992, when asked if the UK could defeat the IRA, Major had said: “[m]ilitarily that would be very difficult: I would not say this in public, of course, but, in private, I would say, possibly no.”¹⁵²

This was also acknowledged by the UK Army in its own inquiry into the conflict, which stated that ‘[s]ecurity forces do not “win” insurgency campaigns militarily; at best they can contain or suppress the level of violence.’¹⁵³ Accordingly, as Peter Neumann observes, military efforts came to be ‘carried out in a way that made it possible for the political representatives of the nationalist community to deal with London without losing the support of their constituency (the demand for “acceptability”)’. In short, security forces adopted a changed approach which sought to ‘buy time’ for a political settlement.¹⁵⁴

In each of these contrasting examples, the revisiting of assumptions and the emergence of a new way forward occurred in its own way, with a variety of individuals and groups from wider society, the political establishment, violent criminal and/or proscribed groups, and external interveners all playing roles. Nonetheless, in each case there was a political, analytical and strategic shift as fatigue with violence, political pressure to achieve solutions and the arrival of leaders with new ideas helped frame new approaches. These new assumptions and approaches proved the basis for changed security approaches, dialogue and mediation efforts that drew reconcilable violent groups into the political space, and added up to a better ‘offer’ for conflict-affected people (or at least created, for a time, windows of opportunity for moving forward).

2.2 People-oriented and confidence-building security approaches

In each case the security approach was considerably reoriented away from merely trying to degrade, destroy or suppress violent criminal and/or proscribed groups towards an approach that still involved the use of force, but became more discriminate about who was targeted, and was designed to support greater security for the public and wider progress towards stability and reconciliation.

In **Northern Ireland**, the Good Friday Agreement started an important shift within policing. The Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) had been absent in both loyalist and republican areas, and were at times complicit in abuses by loyalist forces.¹⁵⁵ Added to this, informal policing by paramilitaries had led to some harmful outcomes, especially for women. For instance, Jessica Leigh Doyle and Monica McWilliams describe how paramilitaries would ‘police’ domestic violence.¹⁵⁶

The Good Friday Agreement made an important step forward in setting up the Independent Commission on Policing for Northern Ireland (ICP), which attempted to make the police force more legitimate among Catholic communities. The perception of Northern Ireland’s police force was mixed. The official opinion of British MPs and Ministers was that ‘99.9 per cent of the people of Northern Ireland ... agrees that in point of fact the RUC is a respectable force, and that it is sheer nonsense to criticize it.’¹⁵⁷ However, polls conducted in the late 1970s to early 1990s refuted this statement and indicated significant differences of opinion between Catholics and Protestants. While most Protestants (85 per cent) expressed satisfaction with police work, only 50 per cent of Catholics felt the same.¹⁵⁸ This dissonance between public opinion in Catholic communities and politicians in London led to poorly devised policies.

These considerations were raised much more under Major. In 1992, when Major was speaking with the newly elected Taoiseach Albert Reynolds and senior Irish Ministers, all agreed that they had to recognise the ‘divided community’ in Northern Ireland. Reynolds said: ‘[w]e must draw up structures to accommodate these differences; and these structures must command confidence. I am talking about the longer term – there is no instant solution.’¹⁵⁹

This was certainly reflected in the Good Friday Agreement, which differed from previous peace efforts in starting to grapple with ‘the sectarian dynamics in a deeply divided society’. It was only after this ‘that some fundamental reforms – for example, changes to RUC’s name, oath of office, symbols and a balanced recruitment policy – were eventually implemented’.¹⁶⁰

After the Good Friday Agreement established the ICP, it held a series of open public meetings and released its report on 9 September 1999. The report advocated a new approach to policing which would be based on human rights principles, public accountability and transparency rather than being dominated by concerns for security and secrecy:

‘The new organisation, renamed as the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), would be based around the core focus of community-oriented policing. Its priorities were crime prevention, order maintenance and local participation. The PSNI was to be smaller in size, but more representative of each of the two main communities, as well as aspiring to be more gender-balanced and to attract more members of minority ethnic communities.’¹⁶¹

Under Recommendation 44 of the ICP report, the PSNI was tasked with formulating and delivering a ‘policing with the community strategy’, which would underpin the institutional transformation process.¹⁶² One of its 175 recommendations was also a policy of 50:50 (Catholic: Protestant) recruitment. This saw the number of Catholics in the police force go from eight per cent in the years prior to the report to 32 per cent in 2018.¹⁶³

Given the militarisation of policing during the troubles, many communities had never experienced ‘proper policing’, so they often judged the service on first impressions and whether ‘they were better off’ with the new institutions. The PSNI therefore made a point of attending public meetings, participating in community events and becoming present in areas where formal policing had been contested and absent.¹⁶⁴ The report provided direction and allowed for the establishment of links between the structures at the top and bottom – essentially creating a more joined-up approach to the implementation of reform. This was important, in connecting to the ‘vibrant and energetic civil society and a long history of NGO activity’, which was a factor in making police reforms take hold.¹⁶⁵

This also had an important impact on domestic abuse. Jessica Leigh Doyle and Monica McWilliams surveyed survivors of abuse in 1992 and 2016. They found:

‘[p]articipants from these communities were more inclined to contact the police in 2016 compared to 1992 and police were more able to respond to IPV [Intimate Partner Violence] calls from these communities. The research findings also show that this increased access to policing has reduced the power of paramilitary groups to ‘police’ IPV (through threats to and punishment of perpetrators) in these communities.’¹⁶⁶



Agencia Prensa Rural.

In **Colombia**, Santos trod a careful line between keeping pressure on the FARC through continued fighting but not pushing the group so much that talks broke down. During the Caguán negotiations under Pastrana, the armed conflict had actually gotten worse while the negotiations were taking place because ‘both parties were playing politics and war at the same time. These violent interactions deeply eroded the legitimacy of the negotiations and deepened the war’.¹⁶⁷ Pastrana began his quest for peace with strong public support for a negotiated solution but this eroded because the process was initiated with ‘a significant concession – granting the FARC a large safe area where government forces would not attack’, it ‘took place while warfare and violence continued’ and it ‘struggled to demonstrate concrete achievements’.¹⁶⁸ The negotiations were undermined by ‘[t]he incongruous image of government officials sitting with FARC leaders even as FARC fighters attacked Colombian soldiers and police (and vice-versa)’.¹⁶⁹ The public and members of Pastrana’s military felt that the FARC were taking advantage of the Colombian government; ceasefires were not respected and there were ‘extensions of the zona de despeje [(demilitarized zone)], even as violence continued elsewhere’.¹⁷⁰

Santos, however, learned from the mistakes of Pastrana. He knew that ‘the inevitable violations [of a ceasefire] would only sap public support’ and that it was only because the FARC was ‘significantly weakened’ that it had ‘reduced attacks and lowered its profile in exchange for a shot at peace’.¹⁷¹

To help the peace talks ‘achieve a sense of momentum and maintain the necessary popular support, a number of unilateral and bilateral de-escalation and confidence-building measures were incrementally introduced’.¹⁷² For instance, on 20 December 2014 the FARC initiated a unilateral ceasefire that was still in place in mid-January 2015 when Santos surprised many observers by directing negotiators in Havana to open discussions regarding a bilateral ceasefire (which he had previously refused to consider until a final agreement was reached). The first eight months of 2015 saw a disruption of that ceasefire, along with the initiation of another ceasefire by the FARC – which was greeted by the government scaling back its military efforts. These measures helped to increase public confidence in the peace process, particularly at times when progress was slow.

There were a number of incidents where the use of force could have threatened the peace process, as ‘[p]ublic support and the viability of the Santos-FARC talks hung in the balance, though the risk ... receded’.¹⁷³ Crucially, unlike the Caguán negotiations, both parties remained committed to talks throughout the process, despite various acts of violence.¹⁷⁴ For instance, in November 2011 government forces killed the FARC’s leader, Alfonso Cano, but ‘FARC’s decision not to break off the talks’ was based on ‘their commitment to continue the search for a negotiated settlement’.¹⁷⁵



US Army Staff Sgt. Nick Crosby helps an Iraqi woman cross a water-filled street during a cordon and search mission in Al Risalah, Iraq, 8 May 2007.

© Staff Sgt. Bennie Corbett, US Army (www.army.mil)

In **Iraq** – although Coalition operations in some places had improved security before the surge began – the new counter-insurgency doctrine had made ‘[p]rotection of the population ... the priority for U.S. forces in Iraq.’¹⁷⁶ There were several key elements within the changed security approach and the way in which day-to-day security was reclaimed in the case study period. One was to move troops from large bases outside population centres to ‘live among the people’ in the most violent areas, thereby securing them.¹⁷⁷ This idea began with Colonel H.R. McMaster’s effort to hold Tal Afar after clearing it, establishing combat outposts throughout the town and working with local Iraqis to push sectarian elements out of the government and the police force. Thus the idea of ‘clear, hold, build’ emerged from 2005.¹⁷⁸ Holding and protecting neighbourhoods was seen as vital since early Anbari rejecters of al-Qaeda had been assassinated.¹⁷⁹ The same approach was used in mid-2006 to restore security to Ramadi, which was afflicted by AQI’s brutal violence.¹⁸⁰

Before the surge ‘the majority of the Iraqi people were unwilling to risk their lives by cooperating with coalition forces for ... an uncertain future’.¹⁸¹ For US military leaders, ‘holding’ was also critical, because getting buy-in to the restoration of security required generating confidence that changes could be sustained: ‘instead of telling [the tribal leaders] that we would leave soon and they must assume responsibility for their own security, we told them that we would stay as long as necessary to defeat the terrorists’.¹⁸² Once people saw that troops were staying, ‘on the streets every hour of every day’ and were ‘easily accessible’,¹⁸³ ‘the floodgates of

intelligence opened up as civilians stepped forward with information on extremists’.¹⁸⁴ In turn, the improved understanding supported the Coalition to pursue reconciliation and use force less indiscriminately.¹⁸⁵

MNF-I also attempted to make security improvements sustainable through accompaniment and co-working between US and Iraqi Security Forces (ISF).¹⁸⁶ Although the surge departed from a rush to hand over security responsibilities to ISF, it continued to support a staggering array of military and police recruitment and training, the set-up of complexes, academies, colleges, commands and ministries, as well as provision of equipment, weapons, vehicles, tanks, aircraft, logistics and operational support.¹⁸⁷ Crucially, these efforts included a focus on corruption and sectarian infiltration, with the US pressing Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and his government to replace a large number of corrupt, sectarian and ineffective leaders.¹⁸⁸

Critically, during 2007 ‘US and Iraqi forces were increasingly partnered in ever-increasing numbers of small joint security stations and combat outposts’ – enabling more contact with people and the deployment of enough personnel to hold contested areas of Baghdad.¹⁸⁹ Building on many tribes’ rejection of al-Qaeda’s cruelty and political reconciliation efforts (discussed in section 2.3), local recruits began flowing into police ranks and other neighbourhood watch organisations were formed which ‘offered cultural savvy and local knowledge’.¹⁹⁰ As a result, ‘[p]olice were soon arresting hundreds of al-Qaeda suspects and uncovering the organization’s weapons caches.’¹⁹¹

A controversial but decisive tactic to filter violence out of many Iraqi neighbourhoods was the erection of concrete barriers around areas rife with ethno-sectarian violence, to enable control over the movement of people in and out.¹⁹² At the cost of cutting traditional lines of communication, disrupting commerce and separating families, these protected Sunni communities from Shi'a death squads, Shi'a public spaces from AQI vehicle bombers (if not suicide vests) and Coalition forces from roadside bombs.¹⁹³ When, at the request of local leaders, barriers were set up around the Sunni area of northern Ghazalia to prevent Shi'a militias entering, murders immediately dropped by 50 per cent.¹⁹⁴

Part of the strategic shift in Iraq was explicit recognition that 'we would not be able to kill or capture our way to victory'.¹⁹⁵ Nonetheless, in the face of daily and unrelenting mass casualty attacks on civilians, the US was still heavily engaged in 'killing or capturing the most important' of those it classed as 'irreconcilables'.¹⁹⁶ It did this 'more aggressively than was the case before the surge ... Targeted operations – as many as ten to fifteen per night – removed from the battlefield a significant proportion of the senior and midlevel extremist group leaders, explosives experts, planners, financiers, and organisers in Iraq'.¹⁹⁷ The emphasis in these operations was to build a network that 'understood how insurgent and terrorist networks operated and could react faster'.¹⁹⁸ The defeat of AQI – an organisation founded on 'The Management of Savagery'¹⁹⁹ – involved heavy fighting. Confronting AQI initially increased the intensity of the violence: 'violence rose throughout the first five months of the surge', reaching a peak of well over 200 attacks per day in May and June (and resulting in the most Coalition deaths at any point of the war),²⁰⁰ before it began rapidly falling, but only after 'months of fighting and the killing or capturing of more than twenty-five thousand insurgent and terrorist operatives'.²⁰¹

Part of the military's approach in the period studied was complementing kill or capture efforts against 'irreconcilable' individuals with conventional operations holding neighbourhoods, building public security and confidence, reducing safe havens for AQI and yielding intelligence.²⁰² Improving coordination between these elements was important to help conventional forces manage the consequences of violent raids by special operatives. The effort to defeat AQI proceeded in waves of operations to hold increasing parts of the country and deny AQI retreat or respite. These led to many of those seen as 'irreconcilable' being killed or captured and the recovery of large amounts of AQI's weapons.²⁰³

Even if it was designed to suppress a mercilessly violent opponent, special operations' targeting of AQI was violent and abusive. Undoubtedly many innocent or ultimately reconcilable Iraqis were among the thousands captured or killed, though lack of oversight makes it impossible to know how many.²⁰⁴ Likewise, the allegedly 'brutal regime of abuse and torture of detainees held by' Joint Special Operations Command in Iraq involved 'beatings, exposure to extreme cold, threats of death, humiliation and various forms of torture'.²⁰⁵ Despite the surge's focus on protecting the population, reconciliation and reducing civilian harm, the approach was undermined by the same dangers of causing civilian harm, escalating conflict and unaccountability that were so familiar from other 'war on terror' battlegrounds, and this may have fed into the resurgence of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in the following decade (see also section 3 and the related paper, '*No shortcuts to security: learning from responses to armed conflicts involving proscribed groups*'). However, in making such operations less indiscriminate, and less siloed from other military operations, the surge's architects attempted to ensure that they better served the overall effort to build long-term stability.²⁰⁶

Establishing security also involved tackling Shi'a militias' violence. After the April 2007 withdrawal of Sadrist ministers from his government, 'Maliki ... authorized and Iraq forces to target those Jaish al-Mahdi operatives considered to be security threats'.²⁰⁷ The Coalition was therefore allowed to combat what it classed as irreconcilable Shi'a groups as well as Sunni. In Dora and other neighbourhoods of Baghdad, as well as targeting AQI, the Coalition was working with reliably non-sectarian Iraqi military and police units, attracting more Sunni volunteers into police units, and either reconciling with or confronting JAM and other Shi'a militias.²⁰⁸ As described in section 2.3, the integration and rollout of a new political approach focused on dialogue and reconciliation within the overall stabilisation strategy, and this enabled this security approach to take hold.

As part of a holistic security approach, the surge also involved engaging with countries in the region to prevent their young men travelling to fight in Iraq,²⁰⁹ working to improve security on the borders through re-establishment of customs and immigration facilities and beefing up border inspections to prevent inflows of (often Iranian) arms, plus programmes to stem funding to proscribed groups.²¹⁰ With 50 to 80 suicide bombers thought to be entering Iraq via Syria per month by July 2007, US commanders drove inter-agency cooperation on stopping recruitment and flows of these fighters and counter-terror financing.²¹¹ A special operations raid also killed AQI's cross-border organiser in Syria in October 2008.²¹²

In spite of their obvious differences, in each of our case studies – including in Garissa – there was a shift away from security approaches that had inflicted arbitrary collective punishment on civilians²¹³ and which fed into deep resentment and new waves of conflict and enmity. Taken alongside the harms of violent response strategies extensively documented in the related paper *‘No shortcuts to security: learning from responses to armed conflicts involving proscribed groups’*, it is significant to observe the impacts such shifts had. In each case there were shifts, however imperfect, towards more discriminate use of force, in a way designed to encourage those who wished to reconcile to move into political processes and stay there. In Iraq and Northern Ireland, as in Garissa and Mandera, we also saw the effort to orient security provision towards making a more trusted and legitimate security offer to the general public (rather than remaining primarily focused on combatting, degrading and eliminating violent groups). A common feature across these cases – whether through changing the ethnic or sectarian makeup of security providers, reforming and reconstructing malign structures, or embracing variants of community policing – was a visible effort to build on different forms of people’s participation in the achievement of their own security. Nonetheless, in all cases, progress was not possible via security measures alone: political progress was often closely intertwined with, or preceded, significant security change.

2.3 Creative, determined pursuit of dialogue, deal-making and reconciliation

Building on the renewed analytical and conceptual understandings and shifting security approaches noted in the previous section, in each case there was also effort to develop bridges between hitherto distant or opposing groups, move violent actors back towards the political space, dispel mistrust and build confidence, and construct platforms and agreements for tackling pressing issues.

Converting acute violence into relative stability in **Iraq** involved intensive political efforts alongside the security approach. Five crucial elements were: reconciling with Sunni groups and counteracting their marginalisation; shifting Shi'a militias back towards politics while reversing pro-Shi'a state sectarianism; unblocking national political deadlock on key divisive issues; diplomacy to reduce volatility in the wider regional environment; and communicating on contextual developments and requirements to sustain backing from Western policymakers and the public.

According to journalist Linda Robinson, 'Petraeus waded into politics as no general before him ... and directed his troops to do the same'.²¹⁴ The fundamental question for senior commanders became 'how to channel the competition for power and resources into the nonviolent political realm'.²¹⁵ A key challenge was 'promoting reconciliation between disaffected Sunni Arabs and our forces – and then with the Shi'ite-dominated Iraqi government'.²¹⁶ This was a 'generational project', but bringing armed factions in from the cold was a critical first step.²¹⁷

Security measures could not wait on political progress, because 'extreme violence had frozen politics as the operative force for determining the division of power and resources'.²¹⁸ Based on a recognition that 'you don't need to reconcile with people who are on your side ... you need to talk to people with blood on their hands',²¹⁹ the Coalition became not only more specific in who was targeted with forceful approaches, but also focused on pushing and enticing other violent Sunni and Shi'a groups towards reconciliation.²²⁰ One incentive used was 'releasing insurgents from our detention camps if they agreed to try to persuade members of their group to stop attacking us'.²²¹ This represented a 'sea change' for most US commanders.²²²

There was thus a concerted 'effort to identify leaders and groups that could be reconciled to the elected government', under a new 'Force Strategic Engagement Cell' (FSEC).²²³ The working assumption was that 'most Iraqis' were reconcilable.²²⁴ In support of this, Petraeus authorised commanders to partner with former insurgents and others prepared to fight AQI;²²⁵ and under Odierno, 'reconciliation' became the main focus of Coalition strategy, with forces tasked to 'play the role of "honest broker", trying to bring different groups to the table'.²²⁶ The Coalition's FSEC was complemented by support and accompaniment for the Iraqi government's Implementation and Follow-Up Committee for National Reconciliation, an entity US leaders found troublesome but which in the end orchestrated some vital steps to reconciliation.²²⁷

Although re-analysing the distinctions between groups formerly lumped together as 'anti-Coalition

elements' was important in making this approach possible,²²⁸ luck also played a role. By 2006, local opposition to AQI had emerged, which became known as the 'Anbar awakening'.²²⁹ Local Sunni tribes came to see AQI's obscene violence and repression as incompatible with 'honourable resistance', and an alliance with it as a path to defeat.²³⁰ AQI had also muscled in on tribes' smuggling revenues.²³¹ The Awakening began when 50 Anbari tribal sheikhs pledged support for restoring Iraqi security forces and criminal justice systems, fighting AQI, ending attacks on US forces, and entering the political system through dialogue and elections.²³²

If this was luck, US forces and then Petraeus were prepared for and embraced it.²³³ As hundreds of tribesmen began volunteering to join the police, the US began training, arming and equipping them, and, from spring 2007, paying their salaries until the Ministry of the Interior could take over.²³⁴ When AQI launched bitter reprisals and mass-casualty attacks on police recruits, the US took the risk of aiding formerly inimical tribal forces. This 'proved to the tribesmen that Americans could be relied upon to defend them', rapidly expanding tribes' support for the Awakening in Ramadi.²³⁵

In multiple Iraqi neighbourhoods, 'U.S. commanders broker[ed] cease-fire agreements between Shia and Sunni factions at the local level and then facilitate[ed] a return to the status quo ante as much as possible' – including helping to forge agreements to resettle displaced Iraqis and restore services.²³⁶ When operation 'Arrowhead Ripper' evicted AQI from Baqubah, the US managed to integrate the 1920s Revolution Brigades, formerly a vicious opponent of US presence, into its chain of command.²³⁷

Under deals with local volunteer fighters and security provider groups of 'guardians', 'Concerned Local Citizens' emerged and evolved into the 'Sons of Iraq' (SOI) programme, which the US supported as a basis for establishing improved security and promoting political reconciliation.²³⁸ At its peak in mid-2008 the programme had a total of 100,000 irregulars (80 per cent of them Sunni) in its ranks and on the US payroll (at a monthly cost of \$30 million).²³⁹

This was a dangerous gamble: it risked empowering certain tribes over others, and enabling groups that later gained security powers to use them for violent ends. Maliki also feared that such armed Sunni groups could pose a threat to Shi'as and to state control. Success therefore depended on convincing Maliki and the Shi'a establishment that 'engagement with "reconcilable" elements of insurgent organisations was desirable' – indeed this was vital if 'the conflict over the distribution of power and resources' was to be 'driven into nonviolent political channels'.²⁴⁰ Likewise, expanding the Awakening beyond Ramadi required reassuring Sunnis about their future political role and resources.²⁴¹ To succeed

in their push to combine ‘bottom-up’ reconciliation with Sunni groups and top-down reconciliation via the government, Petraeus and Crocker therefore invested significant efforts to tackle these risks at political and practical levels.²⁴²

As the US knew, even if those who joined SOI were ‘already well armed’,²⁴³ there were dangers that the Awakening and SOI movements could turn into unaccountable militias. By providing them with structure, training, salaries and ammunition it risked ‘levelling the playing field for the resumption of civil war at a future date’.²⁴⁴ To mitigate this and reassure onlookers, the US agreed on control measures and a code of conduct, limits on armament and procedures for handling detainees.²⁴⁵ SOI personnel were interviewed, photographed and fingerprinted, and entered into a biometric identity database. Their leaders reported to US commanders and later – when the programme was transferred to government control – to Iraqi military leaders.²⁴⁶ Odierno also adjusted monitoring arrangements to ensure ‘active oversight’ and require ‘bad as well as good reports about volunteers’.²⁴⁷

Then, as Maliki balked at integrating SOI into security forces – especially in Shi’a areas – and honouring commitments to bring 20 per cent of their numbers into the police, Petraeus and Crocker sought to allay concerns and persuade the government.²⁴⁸ Urging Maliki to be a leader for all Iraqis rather than only Shi’a, ‘Petraeus convinced him to go to Ramadi and took him there on his own command helicopter’ and ‘later took Maliki to several other locations where Sunni reconciliation was succeeding’.²⁴⁹ Meanwhile, Petraeus and Crocker kept pushing local reconciliation initiatives for subsequent conversion into broader national reconciliation (or in Petraeus’s words, the ‘stitching together of these patches’).²⁵⁰

A promising result from the initially pragmatic Awakening was for Sunnis to move into politics. For example, Sheikh Ahmad Abu Risha al-Rishawi began to turn the Awakening into a political movement.²⁵¹ As reconciliation with Sunnis gathered pace, the main threat to public security and Coalition forces became JAM militias; key to the political push for reconciliation and stability therefore was the effort to reconcile with Shi’a militias, press the Iraqi government to confront the most violent Shi’a militants and reverse the state’s embrace of pro-Shi’a sectarianism.

While diehard fighters and leaders were confronted, others were offered reconciliation. As Muqtada al-Sadr lost control of the JAM movement, his representatives reached out to MNF-I in summer 2007 to broker a deal.²⁵² The US was hesitant – it was wary about ceasefires merely buying Sadrist time to prepare for further violence.²⁵³ Yet the Coalition pursued reconciliation in many cases, as in Jihad, Baghdad, where warring Sadrists and Sunni

insurgents agreed a deal, facilitated by detainee releases to build confidence. This restored state and coalition forces’ control and maintained local progress even as national-level reconciliation was stalled.²⁵⁴ However, when JAM clashed with ISF and killed governors and policemen in summer 2007, Maliki urged the Coalition to confront them.²⁵⁵ As security improved, communities once reliant on JAM’s protection began to reject its violence and criminality.²⁵⁶ In August 2007, when JAM and Badr²⁵⁷ militias fought to control Karbala’s holy shrines amid Shi’a religious celebrations, Maliki led a security force convoy to confront them, as Coalition jets flew overhead – and Shi’a opinion turned decisively against JAM.²⁵⁸

This promising development was built upon in spring 2008, when Maliki opted to confront fresh Sadrist provocations with an operation (named ‘Charge of the Knights’) to drive JAM from Basra, Um Qasr and other strongholds. Coalition support and accompaniment salvaged the unplanned²⁵⁹ operation, and it succeeded. Although JAM fought back in Baghdad, after heavy fighting to erect a concrete barrier and then secure the Baghdad slum Sadr City from JAM, special groups’ leaders fled into Iran, and Iraqi forces controlled all of Baghdad for the first time since 2003.²⁶⁰

The Coalition and Iraqi government were quick to use the moment of security ascendancy to push violent actors towards politics – urging Sadrist leaders ‘to moderate their behaviour and encourage constructive political participation’.²⁶¹ Maliki was backed in this by other parties, which came together to declare that ‘no Iraqi party with a militia would be allowed to participate in elections’.²⁶² At least for a time, this ‘made politics the operative forum for the division of power and resources in Iraq’.²⁶³

Alongside the reconciliation with Sunni tribes and militants, this politico-security drive to tackle Shi’a militancy and state sectarianism was a critical step towards the reduction of violence in Iraq.²⁶⁴ When Maliki took on the Sadrists – ‘the Shia political force that actually got him the prime ministerial job’ – it ‘didn’t just happen overnight’.²⁶⁵ From 2006, Bush had been pressing Maliki to challenge the excesses of those in his own power base – not only by allowing Coalition forces to tackle JAM and other Shi’a militias and to operate in Shi’a neighbourhoods, but also by pursuing political reconciliation with all parties.²⁶⁶

The US strategy was indeed alive to the flaws of the government and security apparatus it was building and supporting. US military and civilian leaders tried continually – often effectively – to walk the tightrope of challenging sectarianism within Maliki’s security forces without alienating him or collapsing the government.²⁶⁷ They saw Maliki’s moves to establish greater direct control over security force structures and operations as ‘a worrying development that we

were monitoring' but were unable to challenge too directly.²⁶⁸ Yet when handed clear evidence, Maliki acted against sectarianism. In the police, for example, he 'replaced the overall commander, both division commanders, all nine brigade commanders, and seventeen of twenty-seven battalion commanders – and some of the replacements were subsequently sacked as well'.²⁶⁹ The Coalition also implemented a 're-bluing' programme to emphasise human rights, rule of law, democratic policing, police ethics and counter-insurgency tactics.²⁷⁰

As the Coalition strove to promote Sunni and Shi'a reconciliation and reverse sectarianism, Iraq's government remained fractured for the duration of 2007 – with Sunni members frustrated by their exclusion from power, half the cabinet withdrawn, the prime minister, president and vice-presidents barely talking, and its survival in doubt.²⁷¹ There was deadlock over control of oil revenues, provincial versus federal powers, the distribution of government revenues in the national budget, amnesty for reconciled insurgents and militia members, and revision of the draconian de-Baathification decree of 2003.²⁷² A third strand of political effort was therefore promoting cooperation to tackle core political issues at the national level – monumental challenges amid a live conflict.²⁷³

When national progress was stalled, the Coalition supported progress on the back of dialogue and security arrangements at local levels.²⁷⁴ Petraeus and Crocker were 'personally involved, pushing, prodding, cajoling, guiding, and persuading the various leaders to overcome their differences and build a coalition government'.²⁷⁵ They adopted culturally acceptable practices for nudging progress forward. Noting that business was often accomplished alongside lavish locally prepared meals, they began to schedule weekly dinners with key groups on particular issues.²⁷⁶ They 'almost always met together with Prime Minister Maliki, supporting each other and making it clear that either one of them spoke for both'.²⁷⁷ They also 'worked with lawmakers to tee up crucial new legislation', with the US military even playing 'an active role in getting key legislation passed in the Iraqi parliament' and 'military leaders at all levels engaged in a campaign to get votes in the Iraqi parliament for the reconciliation legislation'.²⁷⁸

As a result, deals to reassure Sunnis and others were struck: late in 2007, a law was passed to restore pensions regardless of Ba'ath Party affiliation – quelling resentment over de-Baathification. Then in January 2008, de-Baathification reform finally passed;²⁷⁹ and under pressure Maliki began cooperating more with Sunni counterparts – for example supporting a Sunni commander in Mosul to tackle AQI.²⁸⁰ The formerly divisive speaker of the Council of Representatives, Mahmoud Mashadani, grew energetic in building political compromises,

persuading the Council to pass the contentious budget, amnesty law and provincial powers laws by ensuring all parties gained something in a landmark national-level political compromise.²⁸¹ Cooperation across political and sectarian lines has remained challenging to date, but the surge successfully pushed political actors from contesting ethnicities, parties and sects to cooperate and compromise over laws, policies and initiatives serving the public interest.²⁸²

A fourth element of the political effort during this period was the use of security leverage to prevent regional dynamics from spiralling out of control and complicating the scene. After Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) militants captured Turkish soldiers, Petraeus flew to Kurdistan and sat in the airport with Kurdish regional President Masoud Barzani until the hostages were personally delivered to him, staving off the threat of Turkish intervention into Iraqi Kurdistan. In turn he then visited Ankara, pressing the Turkish government to tackle the root causes of PKK militancy.²⁸³ Elsewhere Petraeus and Crocker encouraged Arab governments to re-establish embassies in Baghdad and build bridges with Iraq's Shi'as despite their mistrust of the Maliki government.²⁸⁴ With warranted scepticism, Petraeus offered to visit Damascus, and advocated that 'the diplomatic door still needed to be left ajar, if only slightly' towards Tehran.²⁸⁵

Alongside their national and regional political and public communication efforts (discussed further in section 2.4), Petraeus and Crocker worked to explain the situation to political leaders in order to maintain support for their efforts. The fact that the original invasion had been made based on false information and had been compounded by multiple failures in ensuing years had led to strong public and political appetite to end US involvement. Long-term backing for a strategy that might mitigate the damage in Iraq, avoid handing the country and its people over to multiple violent groups, and create a basis for stability was hard (and indeed ultimately impossible) to secure. Nonetheless, the Coalition engaged US politicians both in Washington and during visits to Iraq,²⁸⁶ and proactively reached out to journalists and editors who inaccurately covered events to provide the Coalition's perspective. They also facilitated journalists' access to what was happening and made time for interviews under a media engagement programme underpinned by an injunction to avoid spin.²⁸⁷ This resulted in a favourable *New York Times* op-ed on 30 July 2007, written by moderate intellectuals, that shifted the tenor of debate in Washington and bought some vital time for the surge to continue.²⁸⁸ General Odierno also encouraged subordinate commanders and troops to 'seek out opportunities to engage with the media', talking about 'what they knew' while avoiding speculation.²⁸

In **Northern Ireland**, Margaret Thatcher vowed at the height of the Troubles never to negotiate with terrorists. This approach made a peace deal almost impossible because it ‘simplifie[d] the conflict into a fight against criminal actors without a political agenda, rendering eventual negotiations meaningless’.²⁹⁰ It wasn’t until the republican movement began to recalibrate its strategy and the UK government began opening the door to political dialogue with Sinn Féin that there was progress towards peace.

There were important shifts in Sinn Féin’s calculations. Martin McGuinness, widely believed to be the head of the IRA in 1974, was ‘part of a generation of leaders who came to power in the mid-1970s on a platform that was more aggressive ... than that of the IRA elders they forced out’ and for whom discussion of a ceasefire was difficult to justify to their core base.²⁹¹ However, in 1987, an IRA bomb ‘intended to hit police security prior to a Remembrance Sunday war memorial service in Enniskillen kill[ed] 11 ... civilians’ and injured 63 more. This was ‘a public relations disaster for the IRA’ and greatly damaged community perceptions of the group. In 1997, Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams apologised, stating: “I hope there will be no more Enniskillens and I am deeply sorry about what happened in Enniskillen.”²⁹²

During the 1990s, Major, and later his successor as Prime Minister Tony Blair, became more open to integration of Sinn Féin into the dialogue process, initially indirectly, but then more explicitly. In 1990, Northern Ireland Secretary of State Sir Peter Brooke authorised secret contact with the IRA in order to find the conditions under which republicans would consider a ceasefire. In late 1992, Irish Prime Minister Albert Reynolds, unaware of the back channel between the IRA and the UK Government, authorised secret contacts between his officials and senior members of Sinn Féin. These secret talks led both governments towards the same conclusion, as set out in the Downing Street Declaration of 15 December 1993.

Within days of taking office, Blair stated:

*“My message to Sinn Féin is clear. The settlement train is leaving. I want you on that train. But it is leaving anyway and I will not allow it to wait for you. You cannot hold the process to ransom any longer. So end the violence. Now.”*²⁹³

At the same time, a number of important individuals and institutions helped open dialogue between the conflicting parties. Following his 1992 election, US President Bill Clinton embraced an active role in settling the conflict, appointing George Mitchell as Special Envoy for Northern Ireland to assist the negotiations. In 1994, he also granted a 48-hour visa

to Gerry Adams – ‘strengthen[ing] the hand of the Sinn Féin [sic] leader vis-à-vis the hardliners’.²⁹⁴ Officials, such as Congressman Bruce Morrison, also tried to convince the IRA of the benefits of a ceasefire.

The Catholic leader of the moderate SDLP, John Hume, is regarded by many as the principal architect behind the peace agreement. He devoted a great deal of energy to drawing Gerry Adams, and the British Government, into the negotiations. His efforts were helped by common EU membership from 1973. The organisation of the European Parliament into political groups instead of nationalities contributed to bringing nationalists and unionists closer. All these mechanisms had been perfectly understood and mastered by Hume, who was also able to call for EU engagement in Northern Ireland jointly with the DUP’s Ian Paisley and the Ulster Unionist Party’s Jim Nicholson. Preparation of the eventual EU PEACE financial package for Northern Ireland involved close cooperation with the three Northern Irish MEPs.

These interventions meant that when, in 1997, the IRA announced a ceasefire, the UK Government was in a better place to accommodate its willingness to speak. Following the announcement and the decision that it was ‘genuine’, Northern Ireland Secretary Mo Mowlam invited Sinn Féin to the talks.²⁹⁵ Individuals previously considered impossible to reconcile came to cooperate in the process leading to the Good Friday agreement – with McGuinness, Sinn Féin’s chief negotiator, eventually becoming deputy First Minister under Ian Paisley, leader of the DUP.

The settlement was reached as a result of a ‘strategic shift’ as key stakeholders gave Sinn Féin ‘legitimacy as an interlocutor and as a potentially influential political party operating in an open democratic context’.²⁹⁶ Adams argued that the nationalists took part in armed struggle because they felt ‘it was an option which arose from the closing off of alternative means of achieving progress’.²⁹⁷ The UK Government moved towards recognising ‘the grievances of the republicans’ and treating Sinn Féin as a ‘legitimate actor’.²⁹⁸ This afforded Sinn Féin ‘the occasion to become a legitimate group and renounce violence’,²⁹⁹ and ‘brought the republican side to move toward contemplating a negotiated solution ... by opening an alternative way to change ... by strengthening the factions favouring talks; and by offering the republicans the possibility to transform themselves into a legitimate entity’.³⁰⁰

There were also efforts to build up confidence in the peace process on the unionist side as well. Short-term certainty over the territorial status of Northern Ireland generated unionist support, while long-term certainty increased nationalist support. The agreement specified that Northern Ireland would



DUP's Ian Paisley stood with Martin McGuinness, Sinn Féin's chief negotiator during the Good Friday Agreements and eventually deputy first minister under Paisley.

remain part of the UK until the majority of populations in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland wish otherwise. As Neumann notes:

*'The fact that the largest Unionist party was eventually prepared to sit down at the same negotiating table as Sinn Féin resulted from Westminster's effort to construct a political process that was attractive enough for Nationalists whilst generating sufficient confidence amongst Unionists in order to make a negotiated and inclusive settlement between the representatives of both communities possible.'*³⁰¹

The DUP 'and other hardline unionists' walked out of peace talks when Sinn Féin joined in 1997. Although the DUP took part in institutions from 1999, it remained opposed to the system³⁰² until it made the decision to engage in 2000 'on the basis of the arms issue being dealt with'.³⁰³ Whereas relations between McGuinness and Paisley had been poor throughout the peace process, they later improved to the extent that they were dubbed the 'Chuckle Brothers' by the media.

Unlike in Colombia (discussed below), there was also a substantial effort to 'sell' the peace deal to the public – most evident in the overwhelming 'yes' vote. The Good Friday Agreement was approved by 71.1 per cent of voters in the Northern Irish referendum, while in the Republic of Ireland 94.4 per cent voted in favour.

Following 9/11, the **Colombian** government spied an opportunity to gain additional US resources for its military effort. Together they restyled the FARC as ‘narco-terrorists’. In Pastrana’s first major speech after 9/11, he argued that: ‘Colombia, which has been a victim like few countries of terrorist action is already part of the global fight against this scourge.’³⁰⁴ This mirrored past patterns, whereby the US had poured money into shoring up Colombia as a bulwark against communism during the Cold War era.

Pastrana’s vilification of the FARC as terrorists continued and intensified under Uribe. Between this, the failure of the Caguan talks and an erroneous public consensus ‘that the FARC-EP ... was on the edge of imminent defeat’ cemented public hostility towards peace talks with the FARC.³⁰⁵

Santos, then, had to roll back this generalised perception and make negotiations with the group more acceptable. Sophie Haspeslagh outlines the three main components of President Santos’s ‘linguistic ceasefire’ in her book, *Proscribing Peace*. First, he recognised the armed conflict: in May 2011 he stated that ‘[t]here has been an armed conflict in this country for a while’. Second, he stopped using the ‘terrorist’ label to describe the FARC, and ‘from early 2011 Santos toned down rhetoric towards the FARC considerably’. Finally, he ‘uncoupled the actor from the acts’: President Santos continued to use the word ‘terrorist’, but mainly to describe the actions of the group. Use of expressions such as ‘terrorist act’ implied that change was possible.³⁰⁶ This shift was promoted internationally as well: keen to open Colombia up to international trade and secure US support for his approach, Santos visited the US to convince the Obama administration to reframe its own conceptualisation of the FARC.

This made the FARC more open to dialogue. The group told Haspeslagh: ‘[w]e must recognize that unlike Uribe, Santos accepted that in Colombia there was an armed conflict and not a terrorist threat. And that conflict had some old causes that had to be resolved. Recognizing that was already something very important for us.’

As Santos’s government and the FARC began exploratory talks in spring 2011, many initial conversations happened in private. Under Pastrana, discussions happened under intense media scrutiny, exposing the process to public disillusionment.

Following a leak, Santos was forced to announce in September 2012 that peace talks had begun. Flanked by his military high command at the presidential palace, Santos announced the signature of a framework agreement signed with the FARC the previous month after a two-year secret

pre-negotiation process. It included a six-point agenda and set the ‘end of the conflict’ as the overarching objective of what would become the Havana negotiations. It would take another two years for a public handshake to take place between President Santos and Rodrigo Londoño, then leader of the FARC.³⁰⁷

In this time the Government and the FARC agreed to open space for civil society to take part in the peace process, which began to change the dynamics between the two parties and push the FARC to work on de-vilifying themselves. The UN, ‘in collaboration with the National University and the Colombian Bishops’ Conference, was given the mandate to organise visits of five 12-person victims’ delegations to participate directly in the peace talks. The delegations represented victims from all sides in the Colombian conflict.’³⁰⁸

The visits of victims connected the peace table with the realities on the ground in Colombia and transformed the dynamics between the parties.³⁰⁹ They were particularly important for the FARC, many of whose members had been isolated from Colombian society. It was forced to grapple with a perception of itself as not a saviour of Colombia’s peasants, but a violent armed group whose attacks had left many victims. After signing the peace deal, former FARC members visited some of the scenes of its attacks and held ceremonies explaining what happened and seeking forgiveness. More broadly, ‘[t]he victims’ delegations also played an important role in defending the process publicly in times of crisis and demanding that the parties should not abandon the negotiating table.’ The 2016 peace accord set up three mechanisms – the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP), the Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition Commission, and the Unit for the Search of Disappeared Persons – to uncover the truth behind these abuses, obtain justice for those affected, find ways towards national healing and reconciliation, and guarantee non-repetition.³¹⁰

While this had a transformative effect on those in Havana, unfortunately, unlike in Northern Ireland, the swell of goodwill was not felt across wider Colombian society – arguably contributing to the ‘No’ vote in the referendum (discussed in more detail below).

Alongside these private peace talks were very public disarmament campaigns. Two particularly high-profile cases were Operation Christmas and Operation Rivers of Lights.³¹¹ In 2010, Operation Christmas saw the Colombian military creating Christmas trees in the jungle to convey the message, ‘[i]f Christmas can come to the jungle, you too can come home. Demobilize. At Christmas, everything is possible.’ Officials hoped the gesture would be enough to lure rebels away from the jungle. The

following year, Operation Rivers of Lights encouraged people with a friend or relative who was a guerrilla to write them a Christmas letter. The letters were encased in floating balls illuminated with a blue LED and sent adrift down rivers that the insurgents were known to use.³¹² The impact of these campaigns on FARC fighters is unknown – and in fact very few guerrillas appear to have seen them – however, it is possible they played a role in humanising the FARC for the general public.

This was a continuation of the effective disarmament programme which had in fact begun under Uribe – but which he did not take credit for, as it went against his more aggressive rhetoric towards the FARC. Even before the peace deal more than 19,000 fighters – including thousands of women – had abandoned different Colombian guerrilla and paramilitary groups, voluntarily or after being captured by the army. Under Santos, 7,000 former combatants were granted amnesty.³¹³ Additionally, in exchange for disarming, Colombia offered this first group of ex-combatants training in accounting, stock management, market analysis, development of business plans, along with \$2,300 – roughly eight months' worth of minimum wage earnings – to start a small business.³¹⁴

What do these diverse efforts to move violent contestation into politics and to broker resolution and reconciliation serve to illustrate? One common factor is the shift in each case from a conception of rebels as broadly criminal, terrorist or irreconcilable towards an approach where violent criminal and proscribed groups are offered the option to atone, renounce and move on from violence. This offer was not open to all (even if many of its allies changed sides, there would be no olive branch for the core of AQI). Yet in each case, the offer was open to those who renounced violence and backed by the use (or threat) of force, to keep groups open to negotiations.

At the same time, concerted and high-level political effort was devoted to acknowledging, opening up and working through the challenging issues that had fed into enmity and violence – in the case of Colombia and Northern Ireland, over generations – to create the grounds for an end to violence and a window of opportunity for moving towards a shared future. In Iraq there was no unitary deal or peace process – rather a multifaceted push for local solutions to stop violence, restore security and services locally, while pressing nationally for political compromises to overcome sectarianism and tackle major structural issues – all with a view to bringing violent contestation between warring groups into a more functional political realm. Although these processes all left enormous questions for the future (discussed further in section 3) they met many of their immediate aims.

2.4 Addressing conflict drivers and making people a better offer

The accompanying paper '*No shortcuts to security: learning from responses to armed conflicts involving proscribed groups*' suggests that – alongside tackling predation and addressing political conflict – making conflict-affected people a better socio-economic offer that lessens neglect, inequality, injustice and corruption can prove vital in moving beyond conflicts involving violent criminal and proscribed groups. This section explores the extent to which and in what ways wider conflict drivers and/or public concerns were or were not addressed in our case studies.

In **Northern Ireland**, the years leading up to the Good Friday Agreement saw a concerted effort to use economic investment to support political objectives. There was growing recognition that a comprehensive strategy was needed that tackled the economic dimensions of conflict and community relations as well as political issues. For instance, before the first IRA ceasefire in August 1994, the purpose of economic and social policy was to complement ‘political and military pressure upon the Republican movement ... by demonstrating how the IRA’s activities destroyed jobs and damaged the prospects for economic growth’.³¹⁵ In contrast, after the ceasefire, ‘economic policy played a key role in creating the “feel-good” factor that was meant to make it impossible for the IRA to return to war’.³¹⁶

Accordingly, London announced that savings in security would now be spent on things like social programmes, housing and education. Then, in October 1994, Major referred to Northern Ireland as a special case and maintained high levels of public expenditure. This so-called ‘peace dividend’ translated into an additional investment subsidy of ‘£73 million from the British Exchequer, a £230 million aid programme ... from the European Union ... as well as significant contributions from Commonwealth countries and the United States’.³¹⁷ Clinton created an inter-departmental committee to consider economic initiatives and the economic potential of a stable Northern Ireland. International investment in support of peace was therefore substantial. The EU continued heavily investing in Northern Ireland. Between 1995 and 2013, there were three PEACE programmes, with a financial contribution of €1.3 billion. These provided opportunities for participation and dialogue, and brought decision-making and responsibility for community development closer to the people via a ‘bottom-up’ approach. They funded a wide range of projects, including support for victims and survivors, young people, small and medium-sized enterprises, infrastructure, urban regeneration, immigrants and ethnic diversity.

Since the 1990s, both the UK and Irish governments also sought to create a peacebuilding milieu ‘that encouraged intergroup contact to bridge relationships, build trust, nurture the middle ground and address the systemic roots of conflict’.³¹⁸ This commitment to addressing inequality was a key part of the Good Friday Agreement, which, among other things ‘establish[ed] a Human Rights Commission, promot[ed] equal economic opportunity and grant[ed] equal state recognition of the cultures of both ethno-nationalist groups’. The Northern Ireland Act 1998, which implemented the peace agreement, established the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland to promote ‘equality of opportunity and works to eliminate discrimination on grounds of: age, disability, race, sexual orientation, religious belief/political opinion [and] sex’.³¹⁹

Although it was weak in important ways on justice (see section 3), the Good Friday Agreement also set up mechanisms for releasing prisoners from the parties that signed it. This did not require ‘prior decommissioning of paramilitary weapons’ but was ‘conditional, as opposed to a total amnesty or pardon, with each individual receiving a licence which could be revoked if the Commissioners or Secretary of State for Northern Ireland decided they had re-joined a terrorist organisation or supported terrorist activity’.³²⁰ Despite widespread recognition of their necessity for peacebuilding, many opposed these amnesties. However, they were an important part of the peace process as ‘neither Republicanism nor Loyalism would have been able to move away from political violence without the support of their prisoners, and the Good Friday Agreement could not have been concluded without provisions relating to the early release of such prisoners’.³²¹



An Iraqi women speaks with Iraqi and US Soldiers during a search of her home in Ghazaliyah, Iraq, September 2008.

© Sgt. Manuel Martinez, Joint Combat Camera Center Iraq

In Northern **Iraq**, as early as 2003, Petraeus had argued as a Major-General that ‘every army of liberation has a half-life beyond which it turns into an army of occupation’ and thus prioritised ‘reconstruction and other activities aimed at putting Iraqi people back to work and improving their lives’.³²² Counter-insurgency guidelines in 2006 also emphasised meeting people’s needs and addressing root causes through social, political and economic programmes, the integration of military and civilian efforts, and support for the host nation government.³²³ This led to new investments by MNF-I and the US Embassy throughout 2007–2008 in making the Iraqi people a tangibly better offer – and ‘to help repair damaged infrastructure, restore basic services, rebuild local markets, reopen schools and health facilities, and support the re-establishment of the corrections and judicial systems and other governmental institutions’ – in an attempt to compensate for the post-invasion failures, boost Iraqi capacity and provide power and services.³²⁴ Petraeus personally pushed for progress on agricultural productivity, single point mooring to increase oil exports, restoration of power infrastructure, diesel procurement to improve electricity generation, and clearance of wrecks from trade waterways.³²⁵

The merger of civilian and military reconstruction efforts, so problematic in many contexts (see the

related paper ‘*No shortcuts to security: learning from responses to armed conflicts involving proscribed groups*’ for examples), arguably and exceptionally here had benefits. This was perhaps because the military was embracing a comprehensive strategy for moving Iraq towards peace rather than merely trying to defeat its enemies. By embedding reconstruction teams within combat brigades, the Coalition counteracted the remoteness of Provincial Reconstruction Teams. This provided the military with civil capacity and expertise and ‘gave ... [S]tate Department experts access to the local communities for the first time’, backed with substantial US and other funding.³²⁶ With violence under wraps in Amiriyah, the battalion helped roll out services ‘such as trash pickup, sewage removal, and the provision of clean water to the community’, and the economy began improving.³²⁷ In Jihad, Baghdad, the US and Iraqi armies helped supply oil, distribute wheelchairs to the disabled and prod ministries to reintroduce sewerage and other services.³²⁸

The Commander’s Emergency Response Program spent \$915 million on such activities in 2007. The surge also involved jobs programmes, supporting governance and attracting investment back to Iraq.³²⁹ To help reduce violence, the US supported state-owned industries that eventually employed 250,000 Iraqis, and made microgrants to 26,000 Iraqi businesses in 2007.³³⁰

It was hard to persuade the Shi'a-dominated Iraqi government to extend services to Sunni areas. 'In many Sunni neighbourhoods the government put up bureaucratic roadblocks to opening banks, failed to staff health care facilities, and denied essential services such as electricity and trash pickup'.³³¹ Insecurity was used as an excuse for delays, but as security improved such excuses wore thin.³³² Nonetheless, by the end of 2007 Iraq was enjoying six per cent growth, oil production was improving and electricity production had eclipsed pre-war levels.³³³ Iraqi government budget allocation to provincial governments also reached \$3.47 billion in 2008 – a 38 per cent increase on the previous year.³³⁴

Part of the problem driving violence had been anger over palpable injustice: arbitrary detentions, poor detention conditions, failure to process and charge or release detainees, and of course the revelations of shocking abuses. Before the surge, detention of violent individuals and other suspects had been largely a 'warehousing problem'.³³⁵ With detainees all housed together, AQI 'gained control of the detainee population' and was able to recruit at will.³³⁶ Arbitrary detention in overcrowded facilities rapidly bred violence and support for armed resistance.³³⁷ Recidivism was so high that Petraeus halted detainee releases for part of 2007.³³⁸

To change this dynamic, 'reconcilable' prisoners were separated from others and offered voluntary rehabilitation programmes, including paid work in various trades, literacy classes and religious education.³³⁹ They were also allowed family visits.³⁴⁰ To rectify the arbitrary length of detention and the lack of process, panels of military officers were set up to review detainee cases and take good behaviour into account.³⁴¹ Reconciliation ceremonies were held upon release.³⁴² According to Mansoor, resentment and recidivism dropped dramatically.³⁴³ This was coupled with an effort to help 'build the prison infrastructure' and 'reestablish [the] judicial system' together with 'the infrastructure to support it'.³⁴⁴ This included setting up a 'legal green zone' – a safe judicial complex in Baghdad including courts, jails and a police academy.³⁴⁵

Petraeus's strategy also stressed information programmes as part of the 'battle of ideas'.³⁴⁶ This was partly a reaction to AQI's innovative, highly active and far-reaching media presence.³⁴⁷ In response, the Coalition stressed 'transparency' and 'beat[ing] the insurgents to the headlines':³⁴⁸ 'we should seek to "be first with the truth" to be as forthright as possible, to provide information on all developments and not just "good news"', and avoid 'trying to make bad news look good through spin'.³⁴⁹ This meant raising awareness of what Coalition and Iraqi efforts had achieved, 'even while

acknowledging our shortfalls and mistakes'.³⁵⁰ 'No longer were we content to allow the enemy to set the news agenda through false and misleading accusations.'³⁵¹ One campaign sought to explain how 'al-Qaeda had declared war on the Iraqi people'.³⁵² In Ramadi, jihadist messages often resounded from local mosques. In response, the Coalition set up a 'wide area loud speaker system' to communicate its own information.³⁵³

When al-Qaeda returned in June 2007 to bomb the minarets of the al-Askari shrine (whose earlier bombing had catalysed the descent into civil war in February 2006), this time Maliki, Crocker and Petraeus moved fast to forestall sectarian violence, with curfews in Baghdad and Samarra, and the deployment of extra police and military to calm Samarra.³⁵⁴ Key Shi'a leaders such as Ayatollah al-Sistani, Muqtada al-Sadr and Abdul Aziz al-Hakim (Islamic Supreme council of Iraq leader) all called for calm, and Maliki publicly committed to rebuilding the shrine.³⁵⁵ This time, violence did not erupt.³⁵⁶ Then, when AQI killed over 500 Yazidis with twin truck bombs in August 2007, MNF-I's information response was quick to denounce AQI's disregard for human life while highlighting the humanitarian response by the government and coalition.³⁵⁷ MNF-I also told the public about JAM and Muqtada al-Sadr's responsibility for assassinating governors and police chiefs in Southern Iraq, and violently disrupting Shi'a celebrations at Karbala in August 2007; it likewise explained Iran's role in supporting the most violent Shi'a militias, which helped turn the public against Iranian meddling.³⁵⁸ More broadly, public service announcements urging rejection of violent groups, and support for the security forces, 'saturated Iraqi television, radio, and print media, as well as the Internet'.³⁵⁹

The projection of US military propaganda into Iraq could be seen as somewhat dystopian, and such information campaigns are typically a weakness where efforts to change material conditions are wanting.³⁶⁰ Yet in this case, they seem logical in an intensely violent environment riven by disinformation and political-sectarian enmity, as a way to ensure that an alternative narrative to those provided by other conflicting parties – one which made a case for supporting stabilisation efforts – was available to the public. The approach also built on the foundation of visible, intensive efforts to improve security and material conditions for Iraqis and address their grievances. As a result of these combined efforts, in Anbar, imams changed their messages within communities: 'In '05 [imams] were calling for insurrection. By '06 ... for moderation. By '09 they were telling people to get out and vote'.³⁶¹ Likewise, 'Shi'a Iraqis came to view portions of the Jaish al-Mahdi as little more than protection rackets'.³⁶²

To different degrees, in our cases, where it was possible to demonstrate to the public and to aggrieved groups that authorities were starting to make progress towards meeting their concerns, this contributed considerably to the momentum and sustainability of efforts to end the violence and take initial steps towards sustained peace. The starting point for this was often restoring a level of security and addressing concerns over political inclusion and power-sharing, as described in earlier sections – but alongside this, material improvements for people who had suffered conflict, and greater perceptions of fairness, were important for building broad political and public support for a lasting end to violence.

In the case of the Coalition in Iraq, just as the willed collapse of the state had heralded the descent into chaos, putting services back into place while violence was being brought down was a consistent feature of local reconciliation processes that helped bring an end to Iraq's most intense violence, while at the national level pressure to make deals over resource-sharing were also critical. Countering false rumour, clarifying responsibility for ongoing violence and explaining what would-be stabilisers were doing and offering were all crucial to gaining public support. Also important was acknowledging mistakes and what was being learnt, and starting to atone for injustices (such as arbitrary detention and prison conditions). These steps were critical for moving towards public rejection of violent groups and support for nonviolent political contestation.

Where socio-economic measures that could have supported peace were neglected, as in Colombia, this presented a risk – and in Iraq and Northern Ireland where progress was not necessarily comprehensive or sustainable, dangers would lie ahead.

2.5 Bargaining and accountability: roles played by civil society and women

In stressing the value of addressing public concerns, Section 2.4 also underscores the importance of maintaining consistent, progressive and incremental attention to the areas of progress on which peace is built and conditioned long after stabilisation efforts create a window for moving forward. As the influence of those making peace deals or leading stabilisation operations is typically time-bound, and elite bargains often translate into state capture and renewed conflict, Kleinfeld argues that it is *societies* that need to take the next step to keep peace processes and political settlements on track towards non-violence.³⁶³ Within and beyond peace processes, where civic space permits, social movements can sometimes counteract the more malign aspects of elite influence by pressing for trans-partisan political action to tackle issues of public concern. Indeed, durable solutions to conflict cannot typically be crafted and imposed solely by enlightened elites: a crucial element of the process has often been the power of societies to bargain with and pressure parties and power-holders to make peace and take steps to address public grievances and priorities. As noted in our report *'No shortcuts to security: learning from responses to armed conflicts involving proscribed groups'*, where this is absent, it poses risks. In our case studies, the roles of civil society and women's movements in bargaining and pushing for accountability were varied, and were also very differently accommodated by those with the most power and agency.



Referendum results live on a square in Medellín, Colombia.

In **Colombia**, local peacebuilding efforts were long greatly impeded by the targeting of human rights defenders and the criminalisation of links with the FARC. This was deeply harmful to peacebuilding efforts, as one civil society activist told Haspesslagh:

'It did not just polarise us, it fractured us. Things like being encouraged to denounce your neighbours. Or certain symbolic acts that were very intense, like giving money in exchange for the arm of a guerrillero. This sort of thing had never happened. A society that starts learning that if I denounce somebody I will be given money is changed deeply.'

However, despite the difficulties faced by civil society, it played an important role in creating the conditions for peace. The Caguán process began 'after civil society mobilized in what was called the Citizens' Mandate for Peace in October 1997 and collected 10 million symbolic votes supporting re-engagement in peace negotiations'.³⁶⁴ Pastrana thus came to power with a mandate to achieve peace.³⁶⁵ Similarly, it was 'local peace initiatives and the reconciliation communities that first built coexistence agreements between combatants and civilians, and between ex-combatants and victims progressively'.³⁶⁶ Later, as noted in section 2.3, victims' delegations were important in encouraging justice and atonement within peace talks, building public support and negotiating mechanisms for truth, reconciliation and co-existence in the 2016 peace deal.

The work of women's organisations was also fundamental during the peace talks themselves. Women were left out of the early phases of the peace talks.³⁶⁷ However, 'through the advocacy power of women's organizations, the facilitation of Norway and Cuba as guarantors, and the willingness of the Colombian Government and the FARC, significant participation of women was achieved in the

negotiations'.³⁶⁸ The Women for Peace meta-network was formed to demand women's representation. Women's groups organised a series of events and demonstrations, most notably the National Summit of Women for Peace in October 2013. This convening of almost 450 women from diverse organisations and networks produced a comprehensive set of demands towards the peace process.

As a result, a sub-commission on gender was tasked with 'mainstream[ing] gender throughout the peace agreement', in consultation with civil society.³⁶⁹ This 'had a profound impact on the gender focus in the final peace agreement and was an effective instrument for gender inclusion'.³⁷⁰ It 'sought to ensure that women's and LGBTI rights that had been enshrined in Colombia's 1990 Constitution would be articulated as a fundamental pillar of sustainable peace. The Gender Subcommission was advocating not for new legal rights but for the incorporation of extant constitutional rights in the peace agreement'.³⁷¹

Unfortunately, just three months before the peace agreement's national referendum, there was a campaign led by social conservatives against this progressive approach. Many claimed that gender ideology 'pervaded the agreement' and would 'destroy the rights of women and the traditional family'.³⁷² The No campaign won a strategic victory with the motion's defeat. A revised accord, with numerous changes demanded by opposition leaders, was unveiled less than two months later and passed by Congress (this time not voted on in a referendum). However, opposition parties were 'not able to review the new text and [were] incensed that though many of its proposals were included, a few key ones were not'.³⁷³ Specifically on the issue of the anti-gender lobby, 'it had remarkably little influence over the final agreement passed by Congress in November 2016'.³⁷⁴

In **Northern Ireland**, like in Colombia, civil society played an important role in ensuring that potentially under-represented voices were represented in negotiations. The NIWC in particular was set up in reaction to the patriarchal norms pervading society, and the belief among its founders that no other group would champion women's needs. It was composed of 'a small group of women active in academe, women's centers, community development organizations, and other civic associations'.³⁷⁵ They sought 'to push for women's inclusion in the ... elections for the Northern Ireland Forum', a body set up in 1996 as part of a process of negotiations that eventually led to the Good Friday Agreement.³⁷⁶

Fearing that the parties would not promote women and there would be few women's voices at the Forum, the NIWC decided to run its own candidates. It attracted women from both communities,³⁷⁷ and its founders, Pearl Sagar and Monica McWilliams, explicitly sought to find common ground between nationalists and unionists during the negotiations. Their efforts to secure and improve the agreement amid 'the patriarchal political culture in Northern Ireland' were hard won. Despite winning two seats for the Northern Ireland Forum, their authority was not accepted. They were 'harassed repeatedly at the

Forum talks, as some Unionist members heckled and made animal noises whenever its representatives attempted to speak'.³⁷⁸

Nonetheless, the NIWC also successfully pressed for the development of a Civic Forum in the new government institutions to '[s]erv[e] as a consultative body to the legislature'. It drew members 'from business, trade unions, churches, and voluntary associations, with attention to creating a balance in gender, community background, geographical spread, and age'.³⁷⁹ Their efforts also meant that the Good Friday Agreement acknowledged the 'right of women to full and equal political participation' and 'the advancement of women in public life'.³⁸⁰

The implementation of these commitments has since been mixed. For instance, Dr Catherine O'Rourke has noted an 'absence of any official recognition of gender as a structural element of the conflict, or even as a relevant consideration, in crafting state responses to dealing with the past'. This is largely down to 'overly-narrow understanding of "harms" that result from conflict, that focuses in particular on deaths, but not, for example, to the ongoing socioeconomic and relational harms experienced by those left behind'.³⁸¹



Maureen Hetherington, director of The Junction community and peacebuilding centre in Derry/Londonderry.

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In **Iraq**, although there was constant dialogue with national and local power-holders to end violence, establish security and push forward political compromises, it is striking that the accounts of Coalition leaders from the case study period barely mention interactions with civil society or women's groups – or express much awareness that social movements might at some point hold the key to driving political progress in Iraq or holding it on track after foreign withdrawal. As discussed further in section 3, this failure to engage and bolster less patriarchal and secular elements of Iraq's society and political spectrum is perhaps the biggest weakness of international strategy at a time when there was rare leverage to promote a less sectarian political future for the country. The experiences of women's movements at this time provide a useful insight into wider failures.

Against women's very challenging situation after the 2003 invasion, local women's groups working on poverty, housing, health care and social services had flourished.³⁸² Some women pooled resources to provide education, training and generate income.³⁸³ Alongside political and religious bodies that filled the gap left by state services, 'independent, non-partisan professional women' also mobilised. Despite this, the Coalition did little for women's equality from 2003, and there was a gap between external and Iraqi priorities when it did.³⁸⁴

In this context, '[a]t the grassroots level, Iraqis did start to group together, mobilize and resist nonviolently ... Women activists [were] at the forefront of these actions ... such as Iraqi Women's Will (IWW), Knowledge for Women in Iraqi Society (KWIS), and the Iraqi Women's Network, an umbrella organization of over 80 groups working on humanitarian and income-generating projects [and] lobbying.'³⁸⁵ But space was limited, not only by 'occupation and the type of government in place', but also by 'insecurity caused by violent insurgents' and in particular 'Islamist militants' – resulting in 'increasing attacks on women, the pressure to conform to certain dress codes, the restrictions in movement and behaviour, the incidents of acid thrown into women's faces – and even the killings'.³⁸⁶ And whereas '[o]fficial rhetoric pu[t] Iraqi women at centre stage', in reality 'women's rights and women's lives [were] exploited in the name of competing political agendas'.³⁸⁷

Even those initially optimistic about gains for women's rights after 2003, and who had begun to mobilise for women's rights, grew disillusioned by 2006.³⁸⁸ However, 'the lack of security on Iraqi city streets over the past years ... persuaded many people, who in principle wanted US and British forces out of their country, not to ask for an immediate withdrawal'.³⁸⁹ Under these circumstances, according to al-Ali and Pratt's 2009 study, while some women activists simply wanted 'an immediate withdrawal of troops',³⁹⁰

*'[d]espite their misgivings, a considerable number of women activists preferred US and UK troops to remain until the threat of Islamist militancy, random violent attacks, and sectarian violence has been controlled and Iraqi troops and police can take over. Meanwhile, many women's organizations have opted to be part of the political process, despite their opposition to many aspects of this process.'*³⁹¹

Nonetheless, deep concerns remained over 'the exclusion of women and the incompetence of people involved' as well as the fact that political processes and women's rights trainings offered women little control or agency.³⁹² Thus by 2009 'the Iraqi women's movement ha[d] been unable to develop its capacity and focus on the real needs and issues'.³⁹³ More practically, although better security after the surge did enable women to reclaim lives and engage more in activism, it was often in a less than ideal situation where women's movements were physically controlled by young troops (invariably men) and armed 'Sons of Iraq' in the new walled and gated landscape.³⁹⁴

In our cases, the efforts to end violence and move towards peace involved civil society and women's groups to varying degrees. In Iraq, what was a hyper-masculine military hierarchy – with a few exceptional women's voices – drove changes in conflict dynamics with little acknowledgement or interaction with civil society and social or women's movements. In light of the caveats surrounding the surge's achievements – see section 3 – this feels like a particular area of weakness.

At the same time, there was a consciousness that what these efforts were driving towards was an Iraq where diverse voices and strands of opinion could be heard in electoral politics (an ambition ultimately frustrated, but not entirely due to failings in the surge) – and the starting point was a situation of intense violence where safe civil–military interactions would have been more challenging than in the other, less violent settings.

In the other cases, where civil society and women's movements claimed a more active role, this added strength to the consensus for and content of peace agreements and created grounds for tackling injustices and bargaining on other key issues (even if this remains work in progress). Even so, it remains at best ambiguous whether these cases provide sufficiently positive examples of the potential of societal engagement: the considerable downside of deals to end conflict with violent actors remains the tendency to cement the power of men of violence and risk excluding less patriarchal and nonviolent people whose perspectives should be more central to a sustainably peaceful political future.

Notes

- 101 Sky E (2015), *The Unravelling* (London: Atlantic books), p 97.
- 102 Mansoor P, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War* (New Haven: Yale University Press), p 66.
- 103 Ibid, p 66, citing Lt Col. Dale Kuehl describing the outlook on his arrival in Amiriya in Nov 2006.
- 104 Ibid, p 30.
- 105 Ibid, p 32, p 325. For its part the UK handed over large sections of the Basra police to JAM 'whom we armed and trained'.
- 106 Ibid, p 146 (US), pp 246–7 (UK).
- 107 'Doubts were very rarely raised within the CPA, and thus it was impossible to come up with alternative strategies.' Sky E (2015), *The Unravelling* (London: Atlantic books), p 98.
- 108 Mansoor P, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War* (New Haven: Yale University Press), p 18.
- 109 Ibid, p 18. Likewise, before the surge, a 'Red Team' had flagged how '[u]nless framed within a convincing political rationale and precisely targeted, the application of force strengthens the insurgency and causes it to grow' (p 19).
- 110 Ibid, p 18.
- 111 Barry B (2020), *Blood, Metal and Dust: how victory turned into defeat in Afghanistan and Iraq* (Oxford: Osprey), p 257; Mansoor P (2013), *ibid*, p 38.
- 112 Sky E (2015), *The Unravelling* (London: Atlantic books), p 160. I.e. 'failure to identify the various causes of instability appropriately would result in the wrong response'.
- 113 Petraeus D (2013), 'Foreword' in P Mansoor, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War* (New Haven: Yale University Press), p xviii.
- 114 Sky E (2015), *The Unravelling* (London: Atlantic books), 160.
- 115 Mansoor P (2013), *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War* (New Haven: Yale University Press), p 102.
- 116 Petraeus D (2013), 'Foreword' in *ibid*, p xvi.
- 117 Ollivant D (2011), 'Countering the New Orthodoxy: Reinterpreting Counterinsurgency in Iraq', New America Foundation, p 8.
- 118 Mansoor P (2013), *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War* (New Haven: Yale University Press), p 104.
- 119 Knowlton W (2010), 'The Surge: General Petraeus and the Turnaround in Iraq', ICAF, pp 9–10.
- 120 Mansoor P (2013), *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War* (New Haven: Yale University Press), pp 104–5.
- 121 Petraeus D (2013), 'Foreword' in *ibid*, p x.
- 122 Mansoor P (2013), *ibid*, p 263.
- 123 Ultimately without success. *Ibid*, p 191.
- 124 *Ibid*, pp 108–9.
- 125 *Ibid*, p 75.
- 126 According to Mansoor, the integration of greater intelligence analysis capacity into Special Operations served both to accelerate the tempo of operations *and* to reduce instances of mistaken identities. (*Ibid*, pp 81–82)
- 127 *Ibid*, p 172.
- 128 Sky E (2015), *The Unravelling* (London: Atlantic books), p 219. Some way into the surge, Coalition political adviser Emma Sky found herself admonished by an Iraqi interlocutor for misconceiving the multi-layered Sadrist movement, who complained that '[t]hings which are known to Iraqi children do not seem to be understood by US policy-makers.'
- 129 Mansoor P (2013), *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War* (New Haven: Yale University Press), p 271.
- 130 Brett R (2019), 'Elite Bargains and Political Deals Project: Colombia Case Study', UKHMG Stabilisation Unit (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/766016/Colombia_case_study.pdf)
- 131 Haspelslagh S (2021), *Proscribing Peace: How Listing Armed Groups as Terrorists Hurts Negotiations* (Manchester: Manchester University Press)
- 132 *Ibid*, p 148.
- 133 Brett R (2019), 'Elite Bargains and Political Deals Project: Colombia Case Study', UKHMG Stabilisation Unit (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/766016/Colombia_case_study.pdf), p 9.
- 134 Santos J (2016), 'Peace in Colombia: From the Impossible to the Possible', Nobel Lecture by Juan Manuel Santos, Oslo, November (<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/2016/santos/lecture/>)
- 135 Brett R (2019), 'Elite Bargains and Political Deals Project: Colombia Case Study', UKHMG Stabilisation Unit (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/766016/Colombia_case_study.pdf), p 10.
- 136 Neumann P (2003), *Britain's Long War: British Strategy in the Northern Ireland Conflict 1969–98* (London: Palgrave Macmillan), p 155.
- 137 *Ibid*, p 116.
- 138 Gormally B et al. (1993), 'Criminal Justice in a Divided Society: Northern Ireland Prisons', *Crime and Justice* 17, pp 51–135 (<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1147550>)

- 139 BBC News (2021), 'Bobby Sands: The hunger strike that changed the course of N Ireland's conflict', 1 May (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/stories-56937259>)
- 140 Ibid.
- 141 Ibid.
- 142 Neumann P (2003), *Britain's Long War: British Strategy in the Northern Ireland Conflict 1969–98* (London: Palgrave Macmillan), p 116.
- 143 Ibid, p 168.
- 144 Thatcher M (1981), 'Speech in Belfast', Parliament Buildings, Stormont, Belfast (<https://www.margarettatcher.org/document/104589>)
- 145 Neumann P (2003), *Britain's Long War: British Strategy in the Northern Ireland Conflict 1969–98* (London: Palgrave Macmillan), p 116.
- 146 By 1,446 votes on a turnout of 87 per cent. See: BBC News (2021), 'Bobby Sands: The hunger strike that changed the course of N Ireland's conflict', 1 May (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/stories-56937259>)
- 147 Neumann P (2003), *Britain's Long War: British Strategy in the Northern Ireland Conflict 1969–98* (London: Palgrave Macmillan)
- 148 BBC News (2021), 'Bobby Sands: The hunger strike that changed the course of N Ireland's conflict', 1 May (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/stories-56937259>)
- 149 Ibid.
- 150 Ibid. When asked near his death if Sinn Féin's Armalite and Ballot Box strategy worked, Prior said, "I expect with the benefit of hindsight, one has to say yes it did. However unpleasant that sounds, I'm afraid it did work."
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- 152 McGrath D (2021), 'John Major admitted IRA could not be defeated by force', *The Times*, 28 December (<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/john-major-admitted-ira-could-not-be-defeated-by-force-zn992cpop>)
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- 154 Neumann P (2003), *Britain's Long War: British Strategy in the Northern Ireland Conflict 1969–98* (London: Palgrave Macmillan), p 180.
- 155 Keefe P (2019), *Say Nothing: A True Story of Murder and Memory in Northern Ireland* (London: William Collins), pp 308–312.
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- 162 Ibid, p 7.
- 163 Kelly G et al. (2018), 'The Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report Number Five', Community Relations Council, October (<https://pure.ulster.ac.uk/en/publications/northern-ireland-peace-monitoring-report-number-five>)
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- 170 Ibid.
- 171 Ibid.
- 172 Nylander D et al. (2018), 'Designing peace: the Colombian peace process', Norwegian Centre for Conflict Resolution, 16 February (<https://noref.no/Publications/Regions/colombia/Designing-peace-the-Colombian-peace-process>)
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- 175 Haspelslagh S (2021), *Proscribing Peace: How Listing Armed Groups as Terrorists Hurts Negotiations* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), p 85.
- 176 Mansoor P (2013), *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War* (New Haven: Yale University Press), p 267.
- 177 Petraeus D (2013), 'Foreword' in *ibid*, p xi.
- 178 Mansoor P (2013), *ibid*, pp 23–24.
- 179 Ibid, p 123.
- 180 Ibid, p 128. No longer patrolling under attack from large Forward Operating Bases, troops secured the city 'neighbourhood by neighbourhood' – again living on new combat outposts within neighbourhoods, and tackling sectarian policing by asking local Ramadi leaders to provide police recruits.
- 181 Ibid, p 6.
- 182 Ibid, p 131. Also, p 269: 'Tribes in Iraq changed sides only when they were convinced that America was a reliable partner, that the United States would not leave and that it would ultimately prevail' (quoting journalist Jim Michaels); p 146: in Ramadi, the rollout of combat outposts and the message: 'We are going to stand by you side by side and fight al-Qaeda until they are defeated' won over hesitant tribes.
- 183 Ibid, pp 72–3, quoting a Lt Col. involved in the surge.
- 184 Ibid, p 72. Both in terms of greater ability to pursue reconciliation as detailed in the following subsection and because, according to a Lt Col. involved, '[b]etter information led to more precise targeting.'
- 185 Ibid, pp 72–3, quoting a Lt Col. involved in the surge.
- 186 Ibid, p 150.
- 187 Petraeus D (2013), 'Foreword' in *ibid*, pp xv–xvi. Or, in Petraeus' account: 'every aspect of Iraqi military and police recruiting, individual and collective training, leader development' (including 'training complexes, a military academy, branch schools, a staff college, a war college, and a training and doctrine command') as well as 'equipping Iraqi forces with everything from vehicles and individual weapons to tanks and aircraft, the conduct of combat operations ... development of logistical organisations and depots, construction of tactical and training bases and infrastructure', plus developing headquarters, staffs and ministries.
- 188 Petraeus D (2013), 'Foreword' in *ibid*, p xvi.
- 189 Ibid, p 150.
- 190 Ibid, p 130.
- 191 Ibid, p 130.
- 192 Ibid, p 74.
- 193 Ollivant D (2011), 'Countering the New Orthodoxy: Reinterpreting Counterinsurgency in Iraq', New America Foundation, p 7.
- 194 Mansoor P (2013), *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War* (New Haven: Yale University Press), p 74.
- 195 Petraeus D (2013), 'Foreword' in *ibid*, p xiv.
- 196 Ibid, p xiv.
- 197 Ibid, p xiv.
- 198 Mansoor P (2013), *ibid*, p 80.
- 199 *Management of Savagery* is a 2004 ebook published under the *nom de guerre* Abu Bakr Naji that set out a strategy for AQI to create a new Islamic caliphate through unflinching violence.
- 200 Petraeus D (2013), 'Foreword' in P Mansoor (2013), *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War* (New Haven: Yale University Press); See also p 74, p xx, p 148.
- 201 Ibid p 270.
- 202 Ibid, p 81, p 172, pp 251–2.
- 203 Ibid, p 156. Operation 'Phantom Thunder' pushed it out of Baghdad in June 2007; 'Arrowhead Ripper' simultaneously did the same in Baqubah, Diyala province. According to military sources, 500 fighters were killed or captured, 129 weapons caches uncovered and 250 roadside bombs eliminated in the process. Then (p 171) in August 2007, Operation 'Phantom Strike' pressed on into AQI safe havens between Taji and Lake Tharthar. Then (p 226) as AQI began to regroup, feeding itself via corruption and extortion in Baiji and Kirkuk, and Mosul grew more violent in late 2007, early in 2008 Operation 'Phantom Phoenix' was launched to pursue al-Qaeda in the Diyala River Valley, Mosul and North of Baghdad.
- 204 "They kill 27, 30, 40 people, whatever, and they capture seven or eight. Then you find out that the intelligence was bad and you killed a bunch of innocent people and have a bunch of innocent people on your hands, so you stuff 'em in Guantanamo ... you don't have to prove to anyone that you did right. You did it all in secret, so you just go to the next operation ... and believe me that happened." Schahil J (2013), *Dirty Wars* (London: Serpent's Tail), pp 142–3. For unaccountability, see also p 149: 'When you allow no oversight of them ... almost anything is going to go.'
- 205 Ibid, p 145, p 148.

- 206 'The kinetic operations themselves were designed and conducted with that ultimate goal in mind – separating the insurgents from the population, defending those members of the population willing to oppose the insurgents, and protecting the population against retaliation and efforts to re-infiltrate': K Kagan, *The Surge: A Military History* (New York, Encounter, 2009), p.146, and see Mansoor P (2013), *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War* (New Haven: Yale University Press), p. 82, p. 268. As noted, according to Mansoor, the integration of greater intelligence analysis capacity into Special Operations served both to accelerate the tempo of operations and to reduce 'instances of mistaken identities'. (See pp 81–82).
- 207 Mansoor P (2013), *ibid*, p. 150.
- 208 Knowlton W (2010), 'The Surge: General Petraeus and the Turnaround in Iraq', ICAF, p. 27.
- 209 Petraeus D (2013), 'Foreword', in P Mansoor (2013), *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War* (New Haven: Yale University Press), p. xx.
- 210 *Ibid*, p. xx; Mansoor P (2013), *ibid*, p. 167, p. 172.
- 211 Mansoor P (2013), *ibid*, p. 167.
- 212 I.e Abu Ghaybiya – see Barry B (2020), *Blood, Metal and Dust: how victory turned into defeat in Afghanistan and Iraq* (Oxford: Osprey), p. 351.
- 213 Such approaches included Kenyan authorities randomly beating, arresting and torturing local youth after terror attacks; Coalition troops' much more indiscriminately violent tactics from 2004 to 2006 prior to the shift under the surge, for example in Fallujah in April 2004 as well as its arbitrary detentions process and mistreatment of detainees (further discussed below); internment of innocent Catholics as well as, for example, British troops' rampage, tear gassing and concertina wiring the Lower Falls area of Belfast in July 1970 (see Keefe P (2019), *Say Nothing: A True Story of Murder and Memory in Northern Ireland* (London: William Collins), pp. 35–36); and Uribe's indiscriminately abusive prosecution of the war against the FARC.
- 214 Knowlton W (2010), 'The Surge: General Petraeus and the Turnaround in Iraq', ICAF, pp. 9–10, p. 27.
- 215 Mansoor P (2013), *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War* (New Haven: Yale University Press), p. 189.
- 216 Petraeus D (2013), 'Foreword' in *ibid*, p. xii.
- 217 Mansoor P (2013), *ibid*, p. 86.
- 218 *Ibid*, p. 44.
- 219 *Ibid*, p. 85 quoting Scottish Deputy Commander of MNF-I Lt Gen. Graeme Lamb's argument based on his experience in Northern Ireland.
- 220 Mansoor P (2013), *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War* (New Haven: Yale University Press), p. 85.
- 221 Sky E (2015), *The Unravelling* (London: Atlantic books), p. 180.
- 222 Mansoor P (2013), *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War* (New Haven: Yale University Press), p. 85 – although Petraeus himself had supported reconciliation in Mosul as early as 2003.
- 223 *Ibid*, p. 86.
- 224 *Ibid*, p. 86.
- 225 *Ibid*, p. 137.
- 226 Sky E (2015), *The Unravelling* (London: Atlantic books), p. 237.
- 227 Mansoor P (2013), *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War* (New Haven: Yale University Press), p. 137.
- 228 *Ibid*, p. 123. For example, in Anbar, upgrading their 'very immature understanding of the authority and the power of the tribes', US forces learned that tribes were 'not monolithic', had 'subidentities' and 'how the insurgency overlaid onto the tribes'.
- 229 Barry B (2020), *Blood, Metal and Dust: how victory turned into defeat in Afghanistan and Iraq* (Oxford: Osprey), pp. 250–1.
- 230 Mansoor P (2013), *op cit*, p. 122.
- 231 Mansoor P (2013), *op cit*, p. 86, 124–5, 262: 'It crushed resistance [...] and imposed its morality', using torture, executions, chopping off fingers of those caught smoking, forcing temporary marriage on local women, sacrilegiously booby trapping corpses of assassination victims. It also used chlorine gas bombs against local Sunnis, mimicking Saddam Hussein's gassing of the Kurds, and (p. 120) 'assassinated one too many Sheikhs'. As one sheikh put it 'They did not know what humanity meant. [...] They did not know what life meant.'
- 232 Mansoor P (2013), *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War* (New Haven: Yale University Press), p. 126.
- 233 *Ibid*, p. 271.
- 234 *Ibid*, p. 130.
- 235 *Ibid*, p. 132. In another example, in Amiriyyah, the US assisted former insurgent Abu Abed, who rejected al-Qaeda for its cruelty after losing four brothers to al-Qaeda and Shi'a death squads and then called for US support in a desperate firefight. His group helped persuade other power-holders in the province to support Coalition efforts and provided knowledge needed to oust AQI.
- 236 Knowlton W (2010), 'The Surge: General Petraeus and the Turnaround in Iraq', ICAF, p. 27; Sky E (2015), *The Unravelling* (London: Atlantic books), pp. 184–5; Mansoor P (2013), *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War* (New Haven: Yale University Press), p. 137. Such deals were struck in Dora, Abu Ghraib, many other Baghdad neighbourhoods, and Fallujah. In Abu Ghraib, Baghdad, the US began working with a group of local Sunnis fighting AQI, while trying to persuade the Iraqi government to reconcile with the group and integrate them into state forces. In Fallujah (Mansoor, p. 135) US forces persuaded local Sheikh al-Jumaily to help restore security and undertake reconstruction projects while marines worked to clear and 'gate' the city sector by sector.
- 237 Mansoor P (2013), *ibid*, p. 156.
- 238 *Ibid*, p. 137, p. 157. In Diyala, over 100 tribal leaders launched an 'Awakening' movement, siding with the Coalition and government against violent groups of all sects, forming groups to maintain security and providing large numbers of police recruits. Other US commanders started similar initiatives in Salah ad-Din, Babil and Baghdad.
- 239 Barry B (2020), *Blood, Metal and Dust: how victory turned into defeat in Afghanistan and Iraq* (Oxford: Osprey), p. 351; Mansoor P, *ibid*, pp. 131–2.
- 240 Mansoor P (2013), *ibid*, pp. 86–7.
- 241 *Ibid*, p. 132.
- 242 Sky E (2015), *The Unravelling* (London: Atlantic books), pp. 232–3; Petraeus D (2013), 'Foreword' in *ibid*, p. xiii, Mansoor P (2013), *ibid*, pp. 86–7, p. 132, pp. 140–141.
- 243 Mansoor P (2013), *ibid*, p. 140.
- 244 *Ibid*, p. 144.
- 245 *Ibid*, p. 139.
- 246 *Ibid*, p. 142.
- 247 *Ibid*, p. 236.
- 248 *Ibid*, p. 142.
- 249 Knowlton W (2010), 'The Surge: General Petraeus and the Turnaround in Iraq', ICAF, p. 10.
- 250 Mansoor P (2013), *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War* (New Haven: Yale University Press), p. 144.
- 251 *Ibid*, p. 143.
- 252 *Ibid*, p. 173.
- 253 Sky E (2015), *The Unravelling* (London: Atlantic books), p. 222.
- 254 *Ibid*, p. 222, pp. 228–9.
- 255 Mansoor P (2013), *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War* (New Haven: Yale University Press), p. 174.
- 256 *Ibid*, p. 174; Sky E (2015), *The Unravelling* (London: Atlantic books), p. 230.
- 257 The Badr Brigade in post-2003 Iraq was a Shi'a Islamist political movement and militia aligned with the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), which had infiltrated the Interior Ministry and police in significant numbers in the period when it was controlled by SCIRI.
- 258 Mansoor P (2013), *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War* (New Haven: Yale University Press), pp. 174–5.
- 259 Maliki launched the operation impulsively, and the Coalition initially viewed it as both a gamble and an unplanned distraction from its planned focus on operations in Northern Iraq in this period. *Ibid*, pp. 240–241.
- 260 *Ibid*, p. 244.
- 261 *Ibid*, p. 239.
- 262 *Ibid*, p. 248.
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- 265 Meghan Sullivan in Council on Foreign Relations (2017), 'Iraq Reconsidered: Ten Years After the Surge', 1 February (<https://www.cfr.org/event/iraq-reconsidered-ten-years-after-surge>)
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- 267 *Ibid*, p. 77. See also Knowlton W (2010), 'The Surge: General Petraeus and the Turnaround in Iraq', ICAF, p. 13: 'the government that was the United States' ally was also a party to the conflict. That put Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker in the delicate position of both supporting and browbeating their Iraqi partner' (citing Robinson).
- 268 Sky E (2015), *The Unravelling* (London: Atlantic books), p. 250.
- 269 Mansoor P (2013), *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War* (New Haven: Yale University Press), p. 170.
- 270 *Ibid*, p. 170.
- 271 *Ibid*, p. 176.
- 272 *Ibid*, p. 177.
- 273 *Ibid*, p. 217.
- 274 *Ibid*, p. 218: for example Anbari Sunni sheikhs reached out to Shi'a sheikhs in Karbala on issues of common interest. Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq leaders met with over a hundred Awakening members in October 2007, expressing support for each other and forming a committee to assist the displaced. In Southwest Baghdad, the Government's national reconciliation body helped broker a reconciliation accord between fifty community leaders of both sects. Maliki, the Vice President and other dignitaries attended ceremonies to release detainees not viewed as security threats.

- 275 Knowlton W (2010), 'The Surge: General Petraeus and the Turnaround in Iraq', ICAF, pp 12–13.
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- 283 Mansoor P (2013), *ibid*, p 221.
- 284 Ibid, p 221.
- 285 Ibid, p 252.
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- 300 Ibid, p 416.
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- 324 Petraeus D (2013), 'Foreword' in P Mansoor, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War* (New Haven: Yale University Press), p xvii; Mansoor P (2013), *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War* (New Haven: Yale University Press), p 213, p 226.
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- 329 Mansoor P (2013), *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War* (New Haven: Yale University Press), p 214; see also Petraeus D (2013)'s Foreword in the same, p xx.
- 330 Ibid, p 214.
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- 337 'We were creating the next terrorist class', and Camp Bucca was a 'terrorist university': Mansoor P (2013), *ibid*, p 152; see also Sky E (2015), *ibid*, p 178.
- 338 Mansoor P (2013), *ibid*, p 152 – and see Sky E (2015), *ibid*, p 178.
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- 347 Mansoor P (2013), *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War* (New Haven: Yale University Press), p 160: AQI 'exploited all forms of media, especially the internet, to pursue a massive and far-reaching media campaign'.
- 348 Ibid, p 117.
- 349 Petraeus D (2013), 'Foreword' in *ibid*, p xix.
- 350 Ibid, p xix.
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- 356 Ibid, p 154.
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- 362 Ibid, p 265.
- 363 Echoing the findings of Kleinfeld R (2018), *A Savage Order* (London: Vintage): 'Dirty deals don't buy peace. They purchase time ... Governments that use this breathing room to fight corruption, rebuild state strength, and gain the trust of their people can continue their upward trajectory' (p 101). However: 'dirty deals can lock politicians into relationships with violent and criminal characters that make it hard for even reform-minded leaders to change the rules and build a trustworthy state. The next step out of violence must be taken by society.' (p 121) 'Social movements are crucial when the political leaders who benefit from the system are the only ones with the power to change it. Movements form a source of internal pressure that, if

- large and focused enough, can force the hands of elected politicians ... Yet movements often fail without particular talented individuals. Skilled social leaders translate anger and unrest toward positive change and away from repression. They determine whether movements are broad and unite society across partisan divides or are narrow and divisive. By joining with politicians, social leaders can wrest control away from entrenched interests.' (pp 170–171).
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- 366 Amaya-Panche, J (2021) 'Implementing the Peace Agreement in Colombia', European Union Institute for Security Studies, 18 May (<https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/implementing-peace-agreement-colombia>)
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- 368 Zambrano L, Gómez F (2013), 'Participation of civil society in the Colombian peace process', Norwegian Centre for Conflict Resolution, July (<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/colombia%20peacebuilding.pdf>)
- 369 Corredor E (2021), 'On the Strategic Uses of Women's Rights: Backlash, Rights-based Framing, and Anti-Gender Campaigns in Colombia's 2016 Peace Agreement', *Latin American Politics and Society* 63 (3) (<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/latin-american-politics-and-society/article/abs/on-the-strategic-uses-of-womens-rights-backlash-rightsbased-framing-and-antigender-campaigns-in-colombias-2016-peace-agreement/6C DFA703DD46B92F411Do22EBCED7F1>)
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- 373 International Crisis Group (2017), 'In the Shadow of "No": Peace after Colombia's Plebiscite', 31 January (<https://www.crisisgroup.org/latin-america-caribbean/andes/colombia/060-shadow-no-peace-after-colombia-s-plebiscite>)
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- 385 Ibid, p 10.
- 386 Ibid, p 10.
- 387 Ibid, p 11.
- 388 Ibid, p 12. Much disillusionment was over how 'politicians sit in the Green Zone ... Terrorists control the streets and the Americans only watch' while 'Women are targeted, especially those who have a public profile'. The full quote from an activist speaking in 2006 reads: 'I thought the Americans and the British will make sure that women's rights will be protected. We worked so hard despite difficulties from the very beginning. There were conferences, meetings; we even organized demonstrations and sit-ins. Many educated women started projects to help poor illiterate women, widows and orphans. Things were not great but I believed that it was just a matter of time until we would manage to find a new way and live in a true democracy. But see what they have done to our country? Our politicians sit in the Green Zone while ordinary people are being killed every day. Terrorists control the streets and the Americans only watch. Women are targeted, especially those who have a public profile'. Most Iraqi women's rights activists interviewed by al-Ali shared a 'profound criticism of and opposition to the occupation', though the paper notes also that there was a spectrum of views among feminist and women's movements, from those who had supported Saddam's ouster and saw the occupation as an opportunity, to those against the occupation who favoured nonviolent resistance, to those supporting all forms of resistance.
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- 390 Mansoor P (2013), *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War* (New Haven: Yale University Press), p 261.
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- 392 Ibid, pp 12–13.
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Soldiers from the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 101st Division search for possible explosives hidden on the side of a main road on East Baghdad, Iraq.
© Army photo by Spec. Teddy Wade

3

Caveats: limitations and challenges that remained

The case studies are not presented as entirely successful, and we have already noted a number of problematic aspects of the approaches taken, including militarisation, exclusivity and weakness in follow-up. This section summarises some of the manifest flaws in these examples of relative success, and how – perhaps despite appropriate attempts to tackle key issues – these attempts to move towards stability and peace were vulnerable to neglect, reversal or unravelling.



Bloody Sunday anniversary,
Oxford Street, London, 1979

On several counts, the peace process which led to the signing of the Good Friday agreement can be seen as a success. The **Northern Ireland** Peace Monitoring Report concluded in 2018 that there have been 'significant improvements in economic life and wellbeing'.³⁹⁵ By the mid-2010s, the political institutions envisioned in the Good Friday Agreement were generally functioning well, as parties with starkly differing views served together in government. However, enduring tensions and gaps within the original process have led to flare-ups in instability, as well as the current non-functioning of Stormont.

As noted, dialogue with violent actors can marginalise their nonviolent counterparts. In Northern Ireland, this is perhaps most clearly captured on the issue of decommissioning. The eagerness to include the republican movement in the peace deal often undermined attempts at decommissioning:

*'By removing any incentive for the Republican movement to make its commitment to peaceful means absolute, the British government institutionalised an asymmetry between fully constitutional parties and those with links to paramilitaries. As long as Republicans are allowed to employ the threat of violence in addition to their electoral mandate, they are bound to be more effective at securing concessions for their constituency than the parties who rely on the ballot box alone. As a consequence, the peace process in its current form has furthered extremists at the expense of genuine "moderates".'*³⁹⁶

For the chief UK negotiator, Jonathan Powell, the language on decommissioning was deliberately ambiguously phrased to bring the two sides together but this 'ambiguity ... became destructive over time' leading to the return of low-level violence and lost support among unionists. Eventually, 'Blair made it clear in 2003 that republicans had to give up the dual strategy for good and opt for a purely political strategy.'³⁹⁷

Relatedly, the Good Friday Agreement neglected the question of justice for victims of the Troubles:

‘Negotiators had focused on the future rather than the past ... there was no provision for the creation of any sort of truth-and-reconciliation mechanism that might allow the people of Northern Ireland to address the sometimes murky and often painful history of what had befallen their country ... Because there was never any mechanism established for dealing with the past, the official approach to decades-old atrocities was entirely ad hoc, which left everyone unhappy.’³⁹⁸

The UN Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence said of his mission to the UK and Northern Ireland: ‘British institutions are not seen by all stakeholders as neutral arbiters, owing chiefly to the participation of the United Kingdom in certain relevant, and contested, events of the past. This imposes serious constraints on the way forward that are not always sufficiently recognized.’³⁹⁹ The UK Government finally ‘pledged to implement legacy-related institutions outlined in the 2014 agreement as part of the January 2020 accord to restore Stormont. However, uncertainty persists, especially regarding how the UK government will handle investigations into former members of the UK security services over their actions in Northern Ireland’s conflict’.⁴⁰⁰ Recently, Michael McKinney, brother of Bloody Sunday victim William McKinney, said on the 50th anniversary that the families of those killed were ‘opposed to government proposals that would see an end to Troubles-related prosecutions’, stating: “We will not go away and we will not be silenced.”⁴⁰¹

Efforts to address inequality between Catholic and Protestant communities have also stalled. In 2018 the Northern Ireland Peace Monitor said: ‘[t]here are persistent, and in some cases, growing inequalities in relation to socio-economic conditions, educational attainment and health status.’⁴⁰² Recent research from Ulster University has shown that in the areas worst affected by the Troubles, welfare dependency has risen, suicide rates have doubled and men’s life expectancy has fallen. Research from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation has found that a map of the areas where child poverty is most concentrated in Northern Ireland matches very closely the areas where the conflict was most intense. Ivan Lewis notes:

‘There are a significant number of people in all communities who have seen no peace dividend, have been left behind and have little hope for the future.’

They are trapped in an environment of low aspirations and low expectations. Whether in east Belfast or Strabane, Portadown or Crossmaglen, too many see themselves as losers, not winners, from the changes we have seen since the end of the Troubles. In my view, this is the biggest single impediment to moving from deep-rooted sectarianism to a shared future in Northern Ireland.’⁴⁰³

This has exacerbated the ‘the bitterness and hatred that continues to polarize relations between and within communities in Northern Ireland today’.⁴⁰⁴ Similarly, while a number of the peace lines – also referred to as peace walls: separation barriers between Protestant and Catholic communities – have been removed, there are still 108 throughout Northern Ireland.⁴⁰⁵ April 2021 also saw the worst street violence in Belfast in decades.⁴⁰⁶ While the initial efforts of women-led groups during the peace talks played an important role (at least in the text of the agreement), civil society ‘has been increasingly marginalised since the [Good Friday Agreement]’. The impact of this has been that ‘[e]fforts to foster cross-community co-operation have been quite limited’. Mac Ginty even argues that some of these failures were built into the agreement itself. He states that, ‘[o]ne weakness of the peace process was the tendency to reinforce ethno-sectarian blocs, providing legitimacy to these positions and potentially undermining pluralist positions that seek to build on the centre-ground.’⁴⁰⁷ With growing numbers of people in Northern Ireland identifying as atheist, there is an obvious deficit in the representativeness of current institutions.⁴⁰⁸

Politically, one of the most visible illustrations of ongoing challenges has been the collapse of the Stormont Assembly, which has seen five suspensions since the Good Friday Agreement, ‘most recently a three-year mothballing from 2017 to 2020’.⁴⁰⁹ Stormont collapsed in January 2017 when the DUP and Sinn Féin ‘split in a bitter row over the DUP’s handling of a green energy scandal’.⁴¹⁰ Even when it is functioning, ‘extreme partisanship results in nationalist and unionist representatives herding into green and orange blocs’.⁴¹¹

In **Colombia**, Dag Nylander, Rita Sandberg and Idun Tvedt said of the 2016 peace agreement: '[t]he negotiations were not a panacea to resolve all ills, nor would they immediately bring complete peace to Colombia. Rather, the goal of the talks was to end the conflict in order to contribute to the establishment of a stable and lasting peace.'⁴¹² In this sense, six years on, the peace deal can be seen as a relative success. However, recent developments and shortcomings in the original process have created a number of threats to peace and stability.

The Colombian peace deal hit a major roadblock immediately after it was signed. Despite the fact that '[o]pinion polling indicated solid popular support for the agreement ... Colombians ... narrowly rejected the agreement (50.21 percent of those who voted opposed the agreement, while 49.78 percent approved it).'⁴¹³ Although the views of participants in the peace process evolved considerably, this transformation was largely confined to those in Havana, whereas a country-wide process to re-humanise former enemies largely remains lacking.

Many 'no' voters felt the agreement was too lenient on the FARC rebels. Many disagreed with the absence of 'prison sentences for those who confessed to war crimes, which the government said would have caused FARC to leave the negotiating table'.⁴¹⁴ Haspelagh ascribes this to the fallout of the proscription regime, which labelled the FARC terrorists: '[t]he "No" vote illustrates the extent to which the "linguistic ceasefire" failed to convince the larger public that the FARC was no longer a "terrorist" organisation. Like a genie out of a lamp, proscription is incredibly hard to roll back.'⁴¹⁵

Equally, the shortcomings of the change period cannot be blamed on terminology alone. The brief respite during the 2010s may perhaps mark but a brief lull before polarisation reasserts its dominance. Colombia had been extremely polarised throughout and before the three decades preceding the 2016 deal. A powerful and wide-ranging right-wing bloc campaigned against the deal.⁴¹⁶ This included Colombia's current president, Iván Duque Márquez, 'a vociferous opponent of the peace deal' who came to power in 2018 'having campaigned to modify the accord'.⁴¹⁷ He is now 'determined to undermine the

pact's central bargain of peace for conditional amnesty in order to satisfy his conservative coalition partners who never fully accepted the deal'.⁴¹⁸ Under his leadership 'fewer than a quarter of the agreement's nearly 600 provisions have been fully implemented'.⁴¹⁹ This includes a significant number of commitments with a gender perspective that have not been initiated (51 per cent).⁴²⁰ According to a recent Gallup poll, 57 per cent believe this administration will not fulfil its commitments to the peace process.⁴²¹

This has hampered the integration of former FARC combatants. A small but concerning number have rearmed. In August, Iván Márquez, once a senior FARC commander who represented the FARC during peace negotiations, said he will be taking up arms again because of the current government's failure to keep promises in the peace deal.⁴²² According to Pares, a Colombian think tank focused on peace and reconciliation, about 1,800 former guerrilla fighters have returned to violence.⁴²³ Many former FARC fighters have also marched against their stigmatisation. Likewise, since the signing of the peace accord many ex-combatants (including from both the FARC and ELN) have been victims of attacks and assassinations.

Nor have there been efforts to address the lack of governance in previously FARC-run areas. Rural areas most affected by the war have seen little investment. A failure to deliver governance and services in the areas previously governed by the FARC has led to a growth of other armed groups in these areas. Many are linked to the previous paramilitary AUC, and have now been rebranded as BACRIM (*bandas criminales*) – as the name suggests, they now have more criminal agendas. Although conflict-related violence between the state and the FARC-EP has gradually reduced since peace talks began in 2012, killings of, and threats against, human rights defenders and land activists have increased over the past five years. These are repeating patterns familiar from prior Colombian peace processes. At the same time, other incidents of violence, in particular criminal and drug-related violence, have also continued unabated and, in some cases, have increased.

Despite the huge reduction in violence in **Iraq** in 2006–2008, the stabilisation effort had many limitations, and some of the gains made at this time would later unravel. Indeed, debates will rightly continue over whether the surge should be interpreted as a relative stabilisation success that created an opportunity for peaceful change that was then wasted, or as a deeply flawed military imposition of ‘order’ whose instability paved the way for repressive sectarian rule and the rise of ISIS.

At the end of the case study period, many challenges were unaddressed, including the remnants of AQI and Sunni armed groups (although there were further roundups of AQI’s leaders, structures and revenues in late 2009 and early 2010), ongoing efforts to train and equip Iraqi security forces, and the challenges of administering and sustaining the ‘Sons of Iraq’. Politically, efforts to pressure the government and Maliki to abandon sectarianism remained work in progress, and the political model was overly dominated by sectarian elites. There were also tensions between Kurdish authorities and Iraqi security forces and the threat of Turkey destabilising Iraqi Kurdistan.

A major flaw was that the international strategy, despite being multidimensional and geared towards stability, was highly militarised. As Coalition insider Emma Sky observed, ‘[t]here was something in the American psyche about good and evil – good guys and bad guys – that made it difficult for many to cope with the greyness of Iraq.’⁴²⁴ As noted in section 2.2, despite efforts to target more precisely, reduce civilian casualties and protect the public, combat against ‘irreconcilables’ remained to some extent aggressive, indiscriminate and abusive throughout the surge. Thus violence harmed Iraqi civilians all too often.

This validated the need to tackle the key weakness of indiscriminate violence, which did huge damage to the US cause. In October 2007, a special operations raid on an Iran-backed JAM Special Group leader turned into a large firefight in which many civilians were killed alongside militiamen. JAM portrayed the US forces as trigger happy, and prime minister Maliki denounced the US actions.⁴²⁵ In the eyes of Sadrists, ‘[e]ach time the Coalition pursued someone, they destroyed several houses and traumatized people.’⁴²⁶ This in turn stalled an agreement on the long-term US security role in supporting Iraq.⁴²⁷ A botched US raid on the house of Maliki’s sister in June 2008 similarly created serious political problems.⁴²⁸ Killings by foreign private security companies such as Blackwater also did immense human and strategic harm.⁴²⁹

A further concern regarding security gains under the surge was that – especially with the erection of concrete barriers between neighbourhoods – one

price of ending the bloodletting was the separation of formerly integrated neighbourhoods and communities, in some ways freezing the effects of ethnic cleansing and subjecting Iraqi men and women for the foreseeable future to control of their movements by armed young men at security checkpoints.

Socio-economic efforts likewise had their limitations. Although the offer to Iraqis improved, Provincial Reconstruction Teams remained ‘too small to do the job properly’ during the surge, albeit less so.⁴³⁰ It would prove hard to sustain socio-economic progress given broken relationships from national to provincial, district and neighbourhood government levels.⁴³¹ Likewise, military delivery of nation-building and development support (in this case revealingly described as ‘a weapons system’)⁴³² is, in general, highly problematic. In this case, the ‘outrageous size disparity between that military and an undersized diplomatic corps’ meant that soldiers had to ‘transform themselves into diplomats, social workers, and city councilmen’.⁴³³

Similarly, although Petraeus may have had the leverage and skills to wield positive political influence, this is not necessarily a role the military should be playing in such settings. Although the surge often did the right things, it was perhaps inevitable that much of its work would not be sustained in the face of personnel rotation and inevitable withdrawal.⁴³⁴

Indeed, surge leaders ably sought to navigate long-term political dilemmas, but could never have lastingly solved them. US leaders like General Odierno were always fearful of the risks of backing Maliki: “in my heart I think he is truly sectarian”.⁴³⁵ Although this was actively managed it could not be lastingly overcome at the time. In April 2008 Ambassador Crocker noted that the many residual political challenges included corruption and lack of balance in government, Kirkuk’s boundary disputes and related Kurd–Arab tensions, the need to resettle millions of displaced people, threats to women’s and minorities’ rights, the lack of hydrocarbon- and revenue-sharing laws, and the need to boost electricity supply and restructure agriculture.⁴³⁶

The struggle between a sectarian and a more secular and unitary future was the gravest threat looking forward. Although the Coalition exerted effective pressure on the Iraqi government and Prime Minister to pursue reconciliation and accept SOI into Iraq’s security forces, when the US later withdrew, tribesmen who had fought AQI were left on dangerous ground – shunned by the state and targeted for retaliation by AQI.⁴³⁷ Maliki disfavoured SOI and delayed their pay.⁴³⁸ Then came the elections in 2010, in which Maliki supported Iran-backed efforts by Chalabi to discredit his leading

opponent, Allawi (who headed the non-sectarian Iraqiya coalition) as a Ba'athist.⁴³⁹ When the Iraqiya coalition won the most seats and moved to form a non-sectarian government, Maliki refused to accept the results.

Following the 2010 Iraqi elections, against US military advice, the US Ambassador and then-Vice President Joe Biden supported Maliki as he clung to power, in spite of his sectarian and undemocratic behaviour.⁴⁴⁰ This was a sad epilogue: after the US had 'fought so hard to create the political space for all groups to participate' it undemocratically cemented the position of a sectarian leader. This betrayed the many Iraqis who had been brought into the nonviolent political process and convinced they could have a stake (compounding the more general failure to consult and engage with a wide enough range of Iraqi civil society and women's movements, noted in section 2.5 above).⁴⁴¹ It also advanced Iran's agenda to prevent the emergence of 'a strong secular, non-sectarian Iraq'.⁴⁴² Indeed, Iran's influence – bankrolling Iraqi parties, and supporting deadly opposition to the Coalition – remained something the surge failed to get to grips with.⁴⁴³ In the years that followed, as Maliki moved to placate his Shi'a base and consolidate corrupt, cronyistic rule while increasingly alienating and repressing Sunnis, he created the conditions for AQI/ISIS to re-emerge from 2011⁴⁴⁴ (when it would thrive by offering Sunnis protection from Maliki's repression).⁴⁴⁵

Yet later unravelling cannot all be blamed on flaws during the surge. Rightly viewing the Iraq war as the Bush administration's greatest blunder, exchanges during Congressional and Senate hearings reveal how leading Democrats remained hostile to the surge and suspicious of its leading military and civilian figures throughout.⁴⁴⁶ Washington politicians thus approached Iraq through a party-political lens, ignoring well-founded analysis and advice from in-country leaders at a time when doing so could have helped sustain benefits for Iraq and its people through relatively modest ongoing investments.⁴⁴⁷ As Petraeus's Executive Officer Mansoor later reflected:

*'critics of the surge failed to present a compelling argument that alternatives to the surge ... would have led to a better strategic outcome. That the subsequent history of Iraq has not turned out to be as peaceful nor as politically productive as one would have hoped has had more to do with how US policy makers and their Iraqi counterparts fumbled the political endgame than with the concept or military outcome of the surge itself ... we should not interpret the failure of the Obama administration's Iraq policy as a failure of the surge strategy, which provided a window for success that other policies could not'.*⁴⁴⁸

None of the efforts pursued in the case studies can therefore be seen as a panacea, and in each case the limitations illustrate the importance of greater attention to the known flaws of existing responses to conflicts involving violent criminal and proscribed groups set out in the related paper *'No shortcuts to security: learning from responses to armed conflicts involving proscribed groups'*. In particular in our cases, less military dominance,

violence and civilian harm, greater inclusivity of civil society and women, further attention to how socio-economic peace dividends could be embedded and sustained, and additional pursuit of justice for victims could all have helped accelerate and consolidate reductions in violence and reconciliation. Most importantly, our case studies show how vulnerable initial steps towards stability can be to changing political winds.

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Derry/Londonderry Peace Bridge.
The bridge was opened in 2011 and connects the two sides of the city, becoming an iconic symbol of the city.

4

Lessons and implications

This study was of limited scope – largely desk-based, supplemented by interviews and/or consultations with 18 experts and officials, and compiled with limited time and resources. It would be wrong to draw strong generalisable conclusions from the three case studies and the Garissa experience. However, combining the analysis of what worked in these cases, as well as the caveats, with the wider evidence base on negative experiences presented in the related paper *‘No shortcuts to security: learning from responses to armed conflicts involving proscribed groups’*, it is important to draw out a hypothesis as to the thinking, methods and approaches that drove relative success in these contexts. In this section, we highlight patterns and draw out a set of implications. For ease of access, implications are numbered.

Revisiting assumptions and renewing strategy with a focus on getting to peace

In all four cases – as a result of mutual suffering, fear for the future, pressure to avoid failure or the arrival of new leaders with greater space to manoeuvre politically – assumptions, policy responses and tactics were revisited. With some reluctance and misgiving, parties recognised that military and law enforcement measures could not solve the problem, and began reconceptualising the conflict and their opponents (even if only in public initially). republicans were no longer merely criminals, but had a political cause and a social base – and as this was increasingly recognised it created the space for them to shift towards a political path to achieving their long term aims; Sunnis no longer saw AQI as a source of protection – and Sunnis in turn were no longer ‘anti-Iraqi elements’ but ‘reconcilables’ in the eyes of US forces; the FARC were no longer merely ‘terrorists’, but their acts had harmed human victims. This enabled the pursuit of dialogue and other initiatives through which grievances and problems underpinning conflict could be recognised, spoken about, and acted on more constructively than had earlier been the case.

1. Processes for stepping back from and reconceptualising conflict – that may involve questioning assumptions, asking whether responses are working and ending harmful policies, trying to re-understand in detail who is fighting and why, perceptions within society, and what issues are driving violence – can be a vital first step towards stability. Interveners and national governments can trigger watershed moments that change assumptions and create political space for leaders to shift away from violence and pursue peaceful change, but violent proscribed and criminal groups and wider societies can also evolve in their thinking, or provide the pressure that crystallises into new approaches and behaviour by elites.

2. Fresh understanding can catalyse new political, security, socio-economic and communications approaches that can help to transform the situation and lead to rapid changes in seemingly intractable situations.

3. Defining parties to conflict as ‘irreconcilable’ – including through proscription as ‘terrorists’ or ‘criminal’ labelling – often oversimplifies the situation and acts as a barrier to peace. To move beyond protracted conflict it can help to:

- be clear about the harms done by violence without demonising the group
- **maintain channels of communication to conflict parties**
- **be open to the potential for violent criminal and proscribed groups – or elements within them – to become ‘reconcilable’** by renouncing violence and repressive aims

as part of political and/or security building processes that tackle underlying issues on all sides

4. In complex, fast-evolving situations like Iraq, it can be important to integrate continual analysis, interpretation and use of information into both overall strategy and day-to-day efforts to promote peace to help mitigate risks and pursue reconciliation and other stabilisation opportunities.

Adopting people-oriented and confidence-building security approaches

In each case study, in different ways, past security approaches were rethought and overhauled. They were reoriented considerably away from the collective punishment that had been a powerful driver of enmity. They no longer focused on degrading, destroying or suppressing violent criminal and/or proscribed groups. The new approach still involved the use of force, but was more targeted. It aimed to provide the public with

more security, and saw security forces working to build progress towards stability and reconciliation rather than for martial victory. People – and even reconciling militants – were also handed a more active role in solving security challenges, whether via community processes, local security provider groups, or integration of aggrieved people into police and other forces. These changed approaches sent a signal that there was a better future security offer available via stabilisation or peace efforts than from violent criminal or proscribed groups. Signalling and then pursuing security change can be both a vital precondition to achieving political, social and economic progress and something that needs to be pursued iteratively and incrementally as political foundations for a new security and justice offer emerge.

5. It is of paramount importance to overturn military-security responses to conflict that – through carelessness or by design – inflict collective and/or arbitrary harm on conflict-affected people.

6. Stabilisation and peace processes can be enabled and reinforced through security approaches that protect people, are accessible to and guarantee the day-to-day safety of communities, and do so in a trust-building, respectful way with communities’ own close involvement, as well as greater transparency and accountability.

7. Security and criminal justice efforts can then concentrate carefully, discriminately and proportionately⁴⁴⁹ on stopping the violence of groups that choose not to reconcile – but with a link to a reconciliatory political offer.

Pursuing dialogue, deal-making and reconciliation across lines of enmity, with creativity and determination

In each of our cases there were **efforts to develop bridges between hitherto distant or opposing groups, move violent actors back towards the political space, dispel mistrust and build confidence, and construct platforms and agreements for tackling pressing issues.**

In Colombia, Northern Ireland, and to an extent Iraq, there were efforts to de-vilify violent, proscribed groups and invest in campaigns and dialogue processes to dispel mistrust and build confidence. Reconciliation efforts either moved violent actors back towards the political space, or moved sections of the public that sympathised with them towards rejection of violence and support for stability. While some processes were ‘whole-of-conflict’ resolution processes, others were more about societal healing

and rejection of violence (as in Garissa and the other cases where civil society added significantly to peace efforts) or about ending local violence and divisions in pragmatic ways before trying to ‘stitch together the patches’ at national level (as in Iraq). But, in all cases, leaders who believed in ending violence took risks and windows of opportunity, in spite of their own loss, pain and anger, to reach across divides and construct platforms and agreements for stopping the violence and tackling pressing issues.

8. Political conflict resolution and reconciliation processes can help reduce violence and promote stability when the reconciling parties can construct a way out of destructive cycles of violence, establish some degree of mutual recognition of hurt and injustice, and provide people with an offer of better security and socio-economic support. Such processes can start big at the top or small at the bottom.

9. How a conflict is conceptualised by leaders and across society can be important in making political paths out of conflict viable, even when it has been assumed they are not. **Defining the situation as ‘conflict’ with political, social and economic dimensions, de-vilifying violent groups, and dropping ‘terrorist/criminal’ labels (or at least signalling openness to doing so under the right circumstances)** can be important ways to enable violent groups to adopt nonviolent political paths and encourage all parties to understand opposing sides’ perceptions of the conflict and its drivers.

10. Parties should explore, offer and pursue reconciliation much more routinely than has been the case in past counter-terror and counter-narcotics campaigns. Even the most reviled groups – as with backers of AQI who became its opponents – may have sub-groups and members with whom reconciliation is feasible.

Supporting society’s capacity to nourish peace efforts through bargaining and accountability

The influence of stabilisers is typically time-bound, and elite bargains often translate into state capture and renewed conflict. As illustrated by the role of women’s movements and victims’ groups in the Northern Irish and Colombian peace processes, *societies* have a vital potential to shape peace processes and political settlements towards a focus on justice and equality, and then to help keep them on track towards nonviolence.⁴⁵⁰ Where societies are afforded little or no space or role to bargain with and pressure parties and power-holders to make peace and take steps to address public grievances and

priorities, this weakens the potential for peace to address societies’ concerns and lessen fundamental drivers of conflicts involving violent criminal and proscribed groups (especially corruption, abuse, marginalisation and exclusion).⁴⁵¹

11. Those leading or supporting peace negotiations and stabilisation processes should **significantly increase their meaningful engagement with civil society, including organisations representing women, youth and other marginalised groups**, ensuring they have opportunity – backed with assiduous, flexible and creative support – not just to input into discussions and agreements from the earliest possible stage, but also to inform understanding of conflict dynamics and issues that need to be addressed.

12. In the long term, all those working towards stabilisation and peacebuilding processes should **support civil society’s ongoing efforts to bargain with authorities and elites, to press for the emergence of more inclusive, fair, responsive and accountable governance, security, justice and service provision and ensure momentum and accountability for progress in peace processes.**

Addressing wider conflict drivers and making people a better offer

In our cases, where the public and aggrieved groups could see the initiation of progress towards meeting their concerns, this contributed to the momentum and sustainability of the efforts to end the violence and take initial steps towards sustained peace. A first step was often security change – including greater safety and respect for human rights – but **to make steps to peace sustainable, action on inequality, injustice, discrimination and marginalisation needs to follow fast to build on security gains and windows of opportunity.**

Although our cases profiled successful first steps out of violence, they also show instances of worrying neglect for wider conflict drivers – including legacies of injustice, state–society disconnects and gaps in services and opportunities. This reflects the difficulty in shifting patterns of marginalisation and power imbalances amid limited political incentives to live up to the aspirations of peace and stabilisation efforts over years and decades to follow. Where this was the case, it put lasting peace at risk.

13. It is important to **build into peace and stabilisation processes a better offer to the public, including measures to address socio-economic drivers of conflict.** This should include creating paths to deal with injustice and grievances, addressing corruption, and tackling marginalisation and inequality, and should be accompanied by

truthful communication of what is being done to support peace and overcome relevant obstacles to change.

14. Addressing such long-term issues requires consistent attention long after stabilisation efforts create a window for moving forward. This should be a central component of strategy and a focus of ongoing monitoring and adaptation mechanisms rather than an afterthought.

15. Civilians should lead such efforts, but if (exceptionally) militaries take a lead for pragmatic reasons, governments should at the earliest opportunity develop clear plans for how initial efforts will be sustained by long-term, civilian-led programmes.

Maintaining focus, consensus, engagement and stewardship in support of emerging peace

Our case studies profile not just relative success but also imperfect efforts that were vulnerable to neglect and changing political winds – whether due to geopolitical or domestic shifts. This raises important questions regarding best practices in constructing sustainable peace processes and putting in place durable structures for legitimate stewardship and support. As when Germany took on more responsibility for supporting Sudan’s transition when the UK was preoccupied by Brexit, shared responsibility between friends’ groups can prove important where one actor has limited bandwidth to support peace. Another option is to set processes up to be as locally self-sustaining as possible – with minimum requirements for external inputs and resources.

16. Make every effort to indemnify emerging efforts to end violence and construct peace against later unravelling due to neglect or destructive behaviour by any one particular government or political party, including by efforts to:

- **foster trans-partisan consensus** around agreements among the public and all parties involved
- either **construct processes that depend as little as possible on external inputs**, or in the case of processes that require external support, **construct multinational and multilateral stewardship over peace settlements so that they are less dependent on any one government or entity**

Such mechanisms should aim to help encourage adherence and continued momentum towards tackling new divisions, discourage thoughtless abandonment of hard-earned gains, and keep focus on tackling core long-term peace issues such as socio-economic inequality and legacies of injustice.

Knowledge gaps

As a time- and resource- bound exercise, this study offers an initial exploration of a complex but important topic. In follow-up it could be important to:

- Research public and civil society perceptions of the outcomes of these processes in more depth, in particular within the case study countries themselves, to ensure lessons and caveats are fully understood.
- Expand the range of case studies explored, looking for example at cases at different stages of conflict, including examples of prevention and different types of outcome.
- Examine varying models for moving forward to end violence and address its drivers involving different types of government, groups of different types, and with greater emphasis on what makes transitions beyond violence durable.
- Deepen analysis into how external players can best support different types of actor to contribute positively to violence reduction and peace processes, including ways to assist all forms of civil society and social movements to fulfil their potential.

Notes

⁴⁴⁹ Whereby criminal-justice approaches are preferable to military ones, while recognising that part of an effective security approach is stringent adherence to the framework provided by human rights and humanitarian law and that acknowledgement of ‘political prisoner’ status can be appropriate regarding some detainees.

⁴⁵⁰ See Kleinfeld R (2018), *A Savage Order* (London: Vintage), p 101, p 121, pp 170–171.

⁴⁵¹ On which see the related paper, Attree L, Street J (2022), ‘No shortcuts to security: learning from responses to armed conflicts involving proscribed groups’, Saferworld, May (<https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/1389-no-shortcuts-to-security>)

About Saferworld

Saferworld is an independent international organisation working to prevent violent conflict and build safer lives. We work with people affected by conflict to improve their safety and sense of security, and conduct wider research and analysis. We use this evidence and learning to improve local, national and international policies and practices that can help build lasting peace. Our priority is people – we believe in a world where everyone can lead peaceful, fulfilling lives, free from fear and insecurity. We are a not-for-profit organisation working in 12 countries and territories across Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

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