Evaluating the Risk of Conflict Renewal During Successful Efforts to Reduce Armed Conflict

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1. Executive Summary

Overview

This report assesses the long-term success of 139 cases, in which efforts were taken to reduce armed political conflict across the globe, that were included in the report "How We Stopped War" written by Dr. Eliot Short.[1] For each case, the relationships between conflict histories, actors, interventions, and the risk of conflict renewal are examined. The report concludes with a discussion of the implications of this analysis for future peacekeeping policy work and research. It is important to emphasize, especially considering the limitations of the "How We Stopped War" report used to generate the data (see discussion below), that any impacts identified in this report should not take to mean that the factors of interest *cause* a reduction or an improvement in the robustness of peace, only that it is associated with this outcome.

Summary of Key Findings

- The most effective factor in determining whether peace will be robust is whether armed actors disarmed, demobilized, and were reintegrated (DDR) into society and/or the security apparatus. Substantively, the existence of a DDR process *reduces* the annual risk of conflict renewal by 68%, on average.

- The five important determinants of a robust peace, in descending order of importance, are whether: (1) new borders were established/formalized (42% *reduction* in conflict renewal every year after the war ended), (2) regional organizations were involved in the peace process (40% *reduction* in risk), (3) a military operation led to the ending of hostilities (33% *reduction* in risk), (4) there was some form of nonviolent international intervention (29% *reduction* in risk), and (5) other governments were involved in the process (27% *reduction* in risk).

- Of the six most effective determinants of long-term peace, four were related to the type of intervention, and two related to the type of actors involved in the peace process. This suggests ways that future peacemaking endeavors can be made more effective if some or all these measures are implemented as part of the conflict termination process.

- The most important actors that increase the robustness of peace are (i) regional organizations such as Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), etc. and (ii) other governments.

[1] As I discuss below, I was forced to omit 41 cases from analysis due to issues such as missing information on some indicators, the existence of duplicates, etc.

- The five most important risk factors of conflict *renewal* (in ascending order of importance) are whether: (i) the conflict was over secessionist goals (325% *increase* in the risk of renewal every year after the war ended); (ii) the conflict involved more than 1,000 casualties (161% *increase* in risk); (iii) the conflict resolution efforts involved domestic or informal transitional justice mechanisms (156% *increase* in risk), (iv) armed nonstate actors such as militias (134% *increase* in risk), and (v) nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that serve as participants in the war ending effort (112% *increase* in risk). As mentioned above, this does not mean that NGOs *cause* conflicts to renew. It simply means they are *associated* with a greater renewal risk, potentially because NGOs are more likely to be invited to participate in contexts where the state is weak or where conflict is more protracted, and which hence have an already-greater probability of renewing.

- Considering that the most durable peace outcomes are associated with actors that are politically formalized and have high levels of capacity, measures intended to increase the capacity of actors whose impact is associated with adverse conflict outcomes – civil society actors, NGOs, domestic customary justice mechanisms – may help in mitigating or nullifying these adverse impacts.

2. Motivation and Goals

This report describes an assessment of factors that determine the long-term success of efforts to reduce armed conflict and violence. The goal is to identify within these contexts factors and actors that improve the viability of the peace process, as well as to identify histories, actors, and intervention types that are associated with lower probability of success. To this end, I focused on analyzing information from "How We Stopped War, 1990-2021," a report by Dr. Elliot Short[2] (as well as relevant data from other source), using appropriate statistical methods to quantify the impact of various relevant factors on ending conflicts.

The impetus for this study was a renewed interest in a systematic assessment of conflict prevention efforts, especially in post-war contexts.[3] Qualitative reports – including "How We Stopped War, 1990-2021" – delineate a useful universe of cases where an inquiry into the determinants of renewal can begin. However, they miss an opportunity to compare the impact of relevant

[2] Elliot Short (2022) "How We Stopped War: 180 Historical Cases of Successful Efforts to Reduce Armed Conflict," a report for How We Stop War, https://howwestopwar.com/publications/.

[3] Barbara. F. Walter (2009) "Bargaining failures and civil war," *Annual Review of Political Science* 12: 243-261; J. Karreth and J. Tir (2013) "International institutions and civil war prevention," *Journal of Politics* 75(1): 96-109; C. A. Hartzell and M. Hoddi (2019) "Power sharing and the rule of law in the aftermath of civil war," *International Studies Quarterly* 63(3): 641-653; Aila M. Matanock, *Electing peace: From civil conflict to political participation* (Cambridge University Press, 2017); Håvard Hegre, Curtis Bell, Michael Colaresi, Mihai Croicu, Frederick Hoyles, Remco Jansen, Maxine Ria Leis et al. (2021) "ViEWS2020: revising and evaluating the ViEWS political violence early-warning system," *Journal of peace research* 58, (3): 599-611..

determinants systematically across these different cases and contexts. They also often do not establish a clear baseline for making such comparisons.

If we wish to improve our understanding of conflict renewal, therefore, we need to first identify *factors* that, amidst post-war peace, contribute to preventing the rekindling of previous clashes or the sparking of new conflicts.[4] Given the limitations of these data and the threshold used to include cases in the "How We Stopped War" report, it is only possible to make generalized claims that warrant further inquiry and analysis. This is an important first step in more effectively assessing the role different factors play in the post-conflict peace process.

3. Terms and Definitions

Successful war prevention

This project relies on definitions and cases included in "How We Stopped War, 1990-2021," which codes 180 cases. I attempted to include all cases mentioned in the report, but due to different issues and the lack of availability of relevant information in some cases, I was only able to include 139 cases in full.[5]

Conflict renewal

I defined cases where the same conflict recurred following a successful war termination effort as experiencing conflict renewal. I tried not to treat *new* conflicts that occurred in the same country as renewals. However, in several cases, such distinctions were difficult to make. For example, different stages of the Tuareg rebellions in Mali are included in the "How We Stopped War" report as separate incidents, but all phases of this rebellion involved groups – often part of the same umbrella organization – fighting for the self determination of the same ethnic group (the Tuareg). Most external sources consider the Tuareg rebellions as one civil war with multiple instances of the same conflict rather than as several separate conflicts.[6] When there was sufficient evidence to

[4] Note that I use terms like "determinants", "factors", or "features" rather than "causes" because (as I discuss below) limitations related to the available data and methods used preclude me from making causal claims.
[5] The report focuses not only on interventions that ultimately led to the termination of an ongoing conflict, but also on efforts designed to reduce the risk of future conflicts. Including both types of interventions, however, introduces a risk of duplicate cases included in the data. For example, it makes it more difficult to distinguish efforts to end a conflict from similar efforts done to prevent a relapse. I made every effort to include such risk cases, if they represented a distinct case. For example, many cases where a UN mission that was deployed as part of separate war-ending case were omitted as duplicates, unless there was sufficient information to suggest it was designed to handle a risk that was at least somewhat different from the conflict termination cases itself.
[6] J. Kreutz (2010) "How and when armed conflicts end: Introducing the UCDP Conflict Termination dataset," *Journal of Peace Research*, 47(2), 243-250.

suggest the new conflict was the direct result of the previous war, I coded it as "renewed."[7] For information on renewed conflicts, I relied on the "How We Stopped War" report, as well as information from external datasets.[8]

Peace duration

The duration of a period of peace was counted as the number of years that passed since the war prevention effort was deemed successful, according to "How We Stopped War." If conflict was renewed, then the last year of peace was recorded the year in fighting resumed.[9]

4. Peace Determinants

The different factors that can impact the robustness of peace are grouped here into three categories: (1) conflict features, (2) combat/conflict actors, and (3) intervention types. Each of these categories includes several important determinants of peace, which I discuss in detail below.

A. Nature of Conflict

The first category includes features related to the *nature of the conflict that has ended*. Using the "How We Stopped War" report and secondary sources (especially the UCDP datasets cited in footnote 8), I focused on the following features within this first category:

1. **Conflict intensity**: Prior to the formal conclusion of hostilities, were more than 1,000 armed combatants killed?
2. **Conflict duration**: How long did the conflict last before the war-ending effort was successful?
3. Was the war an **identity-based conflict** between two or more political (e.g., states), ethnic, or religious groups?

[7] Note that, often, the report ("How We Stopped War") mentioned that new violent events occurred after the date on which the campaign to prevent war was deemed successful. Here, again, I tried to be conservative – unless I could verify a clear re-intensification of conflict with the help of external sources, I did *not* consider these incidents as renewals. I also made sure – again, wherever there was sufficient information – to code only the first renewal, even in cases (e.g., again, such as the Tuareg rebellion) where the conflict experienced multiple renewals over time.
[8] Including the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset version 21.1, and the UCDP Non-State Conflict Dataset version 21.1, and the UCDP One-sided Violence Dataset version 21.1.
[9] If the conflict did not renew, it was recorded as ongoing in 2022, meaning that 2022 was the last year counted in the data. As discussed in Materials and Methods in the appendix, the modeling approach employed accounts for this type of observational "censoring."

4. Was the war a **secessionist conflict**, where at least one side attempts to establish a new autonomous region or a state?

5. Was the conflict a case of **political violence (**e.g., repression, mass killing) or terrorism against the state and other civilians (response to repression, elections related)?

B. Actors

Next, I wanted to study the *actors* that were directly involved in the war-termination process. Based on the "How We Stopped War" report and information from other sources,[10] the second category covers the following factors:

1. **United Nations**: Was the United Nations involved in the war-ending effort?
2. **Regional actors**: Were other multinational actors from the same region (e.g., AU, ECOWAS, ASEAN, NATO, OAS) involved in the effort?
3. **Other governments**: Did other governments, whether within the region or outside it, engage in efforts to end the conflict?
4. **International NGOs**: Did international NGOs play a role in the peace process?
5. **Armed nonstate actors (NSAs)**: Did armed non-state actors (e.g., progovernment militias) play a role?
6. **Local civil society**: Did local civil society leaders (e.g., tribal chiefs, religious officials) and activists play a role in ending the war and engaging in maintaining the peace?

C. Intervention types

The third and final category of determinants I studied relates to the *type of intervention(s) employed* as part of the war-ending process on how their presence affected the robustness of peace:[11]

1. **Peacekeeping Operation**: Did the UN or other multilateral actors deploy a peacekeeping operation as part of the peacemaking process?
2. **Other international intervention**: Was there another type of international intervention (e.g., Commission of Inquiry, Special Envoy, International Tribunal, etc.)?

[10] Including the UN's official website and the Progovernment Militia Dataset created by: S. C. Carey, N. J. Mitchell, and W. Lowe (2013) "States, the security sector, and the monopoly of violence: A new database on pro-government militias," *Journal of Peace Research* 50(2): 249-258.
[11] To code these interventions, I used information from the "How We Stopped War" report, in addition to UCDP and UN peacekeeping data.

3. **Military action**: Did military action by one or more parties to the conflict result in its end?
4. **Peace agreement**: Was there a formal peace process and was an agreement signed?
5. **DDR**: Was a formal demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration (DDR) process implemented?
6. **Repatriation**: Was there a formal process to allow civilians to return to their homes?
7. **Transitional justice**: Did the war-ending process include some form of domestic or local transitional justice mechanism (e.g., truth and reconciliation commission, local tribunals, etc.)?
8. **Change in/formalization borders**: Did the peace result in a formal change in borders (in the case of international conflicts) or internal administrative units (in the case of domestic conflicts)? Alternatively, were the previously contested borders formally accepted by all parties?

5. Research Design and Limitations

To determine whether these features constitute reliable determinants of the long-term success of the war-ending process, I systematically analyzed 139 cases of successful war-ending contexts. While the "How We Stopped War" report formally includes 180 cases, missing information in some cases and the existence of duplicates in some cases meant that I was unable to include the remaining 41. For instance, the report lists the fictional country of "Boendoe," a case where civil war has been peacefully avoided. Seeing that I could not determine the name of the country, actors involved, type of conflict history, etc., this case was omitted from analysis. Another example was the nuclear deal with Iran – seeing that no conflict (luckily) preceded the deal and that the features mentioned in sections 3 and 4 were not relevant in this case, without useful information to code, this case was also omitted.

Combined, of the 139 cases I was able to analyze, 41 (or about 30%) experienced conflict renewal at some point after "How We Stopped War" assessed a "successful" termination of the original conflict.[12] the full list of war-ending contexts that experienced renewals is reported in Table A1 in the appendix. A discussion of the methodology used in the comparative analysis is provided in the Methods section, also included in the appendix.

[12] As explained above, these cases do not include sporadic events of re-intensification of violence that were not confirmed by other sources to be a renewed conflict. Accordingly, 30% is likely a conservative estimate; the true rate may be higher.

Despite trying to ensure the data effectively reflect reality, and that the methods employed provide for the best possible inference, there are important limitations the reader should bear in mind.

1. Information on peace durations and many of the indicators comes from "How We Stopped War." As such, I only included cases identified by that report. That meant that there are certain limitations to what I could analyze.

    a. The cases are based on the standards used in Dr. Short's report, which are not the same standards employed by other widely used studies and datasets on war and peace. Most importantly, the report does not establish a clear threshold for assessing what cases were part of the sample, which made comparison between different cases harder, and also lead to duplicated results. For example, the discussion of conflict termination in Wajir country in Kenya includes two separate observations, one discussing the conflict termination and efforts to maintain peace, and a second about preventing conflict relapse. It is unclear why both cases are not simply included as one observation seeing they overlap nearly completely.

    b. Dr. Short's report only focuses on successful efforts to end war as defined by him. This means that his universe of cases excludes (presumably numerous) post-war and post-violence situations that did not experience successful war-ending efforts. Without being able to analyze these "sunken ships," any conclusions we can draw with respect to the role of each determinant in ensuring long-term, viable peace is very limited. For instance, the cases included in the report and analyzed here might be those that attracted interest from major powers, meaning that we may be neglecting relevant factors from those that did not. Another, even more concerning issue is the fact that most cases included here are, by definition, focused on successes. What the report fails to make clear is what prevented other post-war cases from becoming successful in the first place. Without having unsuccessful cases included in analysis, it is hard to fully establish what are the factors that improve the probability of long-term robust peace. On the contrary, this might – in extreme cases – lead to suggestions that could even exacerbate an ongoing situation.

    c. As mentioned previously, I deployed relatively strict standards for measuring conflict renewal, even though Dr. Short's report used different measurements of violence at different scales across multiple conflicts. Accordingly, any estimates of how each factor impacts the probability of long-term peace is inherently subjective.

    d. As mentioned above, Dr. Short's report includes cases that heavily overlap. For instance, on pp. 192-193, the report mentions attempts to end the conflict between the Government of Indonesia and Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM), including the

establishment of an external mission by European states and ASEAN. The next case (pp. 194-195) then discusses this mission and its role in preventing conflict as a separate case. Considering that the second case adds hardly any new information added, I considered it to be a duplicate. Whenever possible, and as long as there was sufficient difference between the two cases, I coded them as separate events. However, in some cases, there was simply not enough new information to warrant the inclusion of a separate case.

2. The number of observations analyzed (139) is relatively small. While this does not preclude the use of statistical methods, it does suggest that relying on standard methods of inference, such as statistical significance thresholds, can lead to inaccuracies in identifying each determinant's effects. Accordingly, in the comparative analysis section I report only the impact (in percent) a given factor has on increasing or decreasing conflict renewal risk, without any statistical thresholds. The statistical estimates of the models are reported in Table A2 in the appendix.

3. The methods (discussed below) used for assessing how different indicators impact peace durability allow researchers to claim that one factor *causes* a change in the risk of an event only within a fully experimental setting. Considering the nature of the observational data used here, the most we can claim is that a given determinant is *associated* with some sort of impact on the duration of peace. This, of course, does not mean that the findings are irrelevant, but policymakers[13] should take care in interpreting them.

6. Descriptive Statistics and Comparative Analysis

I begin this analysis with a descriptive examination of the difference between the 41 cases that experienced conflict renewal and the rest of the sample (98 cases) that have been generally robust. For each indicator discussed in section 4, Table 1 reports the frequencies (in percent) of each factor (excluding conflict duration, where I report the average length in years of the duration of the conflict that preceded peace) twice, once cases that experienced conflict renewal (column 2), and again for cases that did not experience renewal (column 3).

For instance, looking at the first row in Table 1 (political violence), we observe that about 29% of the cases that experienced renewal were political violence conflicts (as defined above) compared with 43% of the cases in the robust sample. Moving on to the next row, we can see that the average length of conflicts (or conflict history) in the renewed sample is slightly larger, 8 vs. 7 years. More generally, Table 1 suggests that of nature of conflict features, the renewed conflicts subsample

[13] By "policymakers" I refer broadly not only to government officials, but also to international organization employees and development sector workers.

have higher rates of identity, intense, and secessionist conflicts, compared with the robust sample. For actors, the robust subsample has higher rates of regional actors' and other governments' involvement, while the renewed subsample has higher rates of involvement by civil society actors, the UN, nongovernmental organizations, and armed nonstate actors. Finally, examining intervention types, the robust sample has (slightly) higher rates of DDR, formally changed/agreed upon borders, military action, international action, repatriation, formal peacekeeping operations, and formal peace agreement, while domestic and local customary justice mechanisms are slightly more prevalent in the renewed sample.

Table 1: Comparison of Rates and Means Across Renewed and Robust Cases

Indicator	*Renewed Sample*	*Robust Sample*
Nature of Conflict		
Political violence	29.3%	43%
Duration	8 years	7.1 years
Identity conflict	19.5%	12.4%
Intensity	70%	43%
Secessionist conflict	12.2%	3.3%
Actors		
Regional orgs.	26.8%	46.6%
Other governments	46.3%	60.8%
Civil society	31.7%	21.9%
UN	31.7%	27.3%
NGOs	26.8%	9.2%
NSAs	60%	41.2%
Intervention Types		
DDR	27.5%	35%
Changed borders	9.8%	22.3%
Military action	9.8%	10.7%
International action	17.1%	29.2%
Repatriation	40%	40.7%
Peacekeeping op.	36.6%	38.8%
Peace agreement	82.9%	87.6%
Other TJ mechanism	7.5%	6.7%

This information, while helping us to better understand the data, is not indicative of a more systematic relationship. To evaluate how each factor impacts the risk of renewal for every given

year, accounting for the simultaneous effects of all other indicators, I deploy statistical analysis. Specifically, I rely on Cox Proportional Hazard (PH) models to assess the simultaneous impact of each of the factors in Table 1 on the risk of conflict renewal (see Methods section, appendix).

Overall, the result from these Cox PH models reveal a clear pattern.[14] First, they suggest that the successful war-ending contexts that are most likely to transition into long-term peace are political violence conflicts whose resolution involved military action by regional actors and foreign governments, where demobilization and reintegration of rebels as well as the establishment of clear borders and the ability of displaced civilians to return to their homes have been formalized, and where peacemaking mechanisms have been institutionalized by international actors. Political formalization – of actors and of conflict resolution initiatives – emerges as being potentially a key means for successful conflict resolution. More specifically – and considering that the features inherent to conflict nature and type are not under the control of policymakers seeking to promote peace – these findings highlight relevant interventions that can increase the possibility of a viable long-term peace. They also identify relevant actors that can facilitate long-term peace, presumably those with greatest self-interest in preventing conflict relapse, and the greatest capacity to do so.

Nature of conflict

Figure 1 shows the average impact of factors related to *the nature of the conflict* (listed in Table 1). The y-axis in Figure 1 (and all subsequent figures) lists by how much (in percent), on average, each factor reduces (negative numbers) or increases (positive numbers) the risk of conflict renewal each year. Starting from the left, we can see that political-violence-centric conflicts have a slightly *lower* risk, 15% on average, of conflict renewal compared with the average case. The next factor is conflict duration – conflict that lasted longer until peace has been achieved are, on average, at a milder 4% *higher* risk of renewing in a given year compared with shorter conflicts. Moving to the next feature, identity-based conflicts are at a slightly *higher* risk – about 17%, on average – of experiencing renewed conflict in a given year. The most dangerous nature-of-conflict features are whether a conflict is intense (involving more than 1,000 deaths),[15] which makes it, on average, at a 161% *higher* risk of renewing during a given year; and secessionist conflicts, which experience a staggering 325% higher-than-average-risk of renewal in a given year.[16].

[14] The statistical estimates are reported in Table A2 of the appendix.
[15] For instance, the Yugoslav civil war or the conflict between Israel and Syria.
[16] E.g., Indonesia's conflict with GAM and Timor Leste.

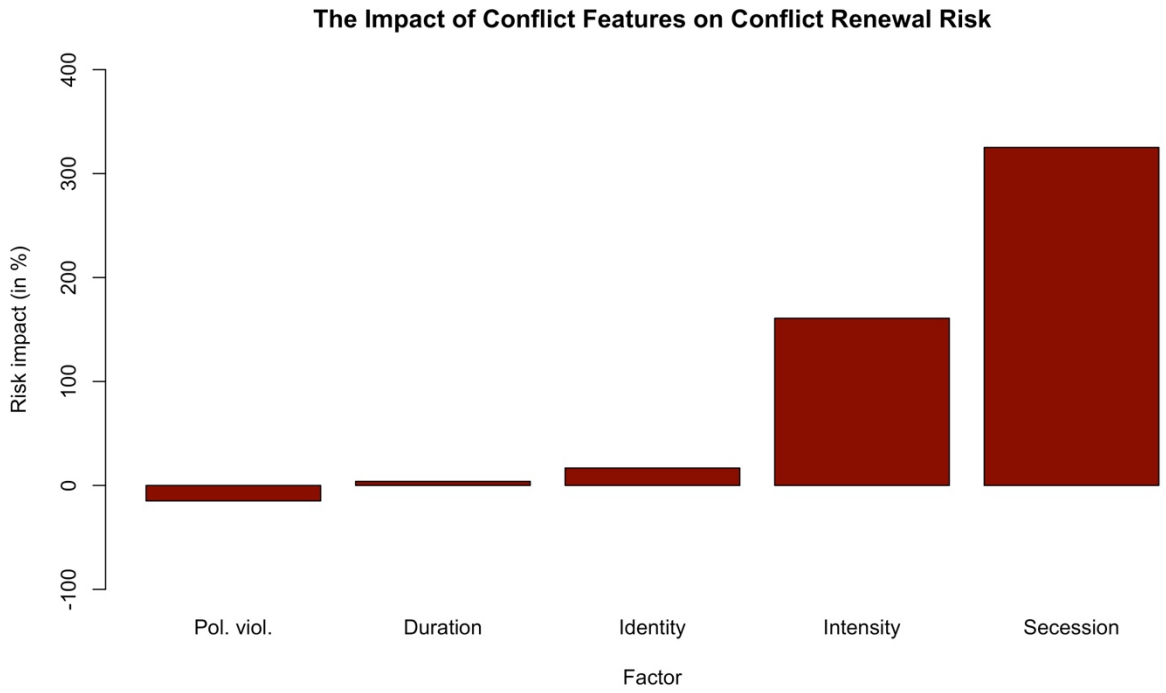

Figure 1: The Impact of Conflict Features on Conflict Renewal Risk

Figure 2 (below) plots the impact of the different *actors* involved on the risk that conflict will renew in a given year. Starting from the left, we observe that successful war-ending processes that involved regional actors are at a 40% *lower* risk, on average, of conflict renewal at any year after the conflict ended. This result is intuitive. Local regional organizations often have strategic reasons to ensure that peace holds – for instance to avoid potential conflict spillovers into neighboring countries. In addition, regional actors are more likely to invest more resources and resolve in ensuring that a war ending effort is successful.[17] The next most effective determinant of durable peace is whether other governments have been directly involved in the war-ending process. A foreign government's involvement is associated with a reduction of 27%, on average, in the risk of a conflict renewing in a given year. Again, this might be related to the fact that such governments have greater stakes in seeing a war-ending process transition into stable peace, as well as the fact that they can make military commitments that they are more likely to adhere to, in contrast to international organizations and peacekeeping forces that have more limited mandates.

[17] For instance, the military involvement of the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in the civil war in Sierra Leone was one of the key features that brought to its successful conclusion. See: David Keen, *Conflict and collusion in Sierra Leone* (London: James Currey, imprint of Boydell & Brewer Ltd., 2005).

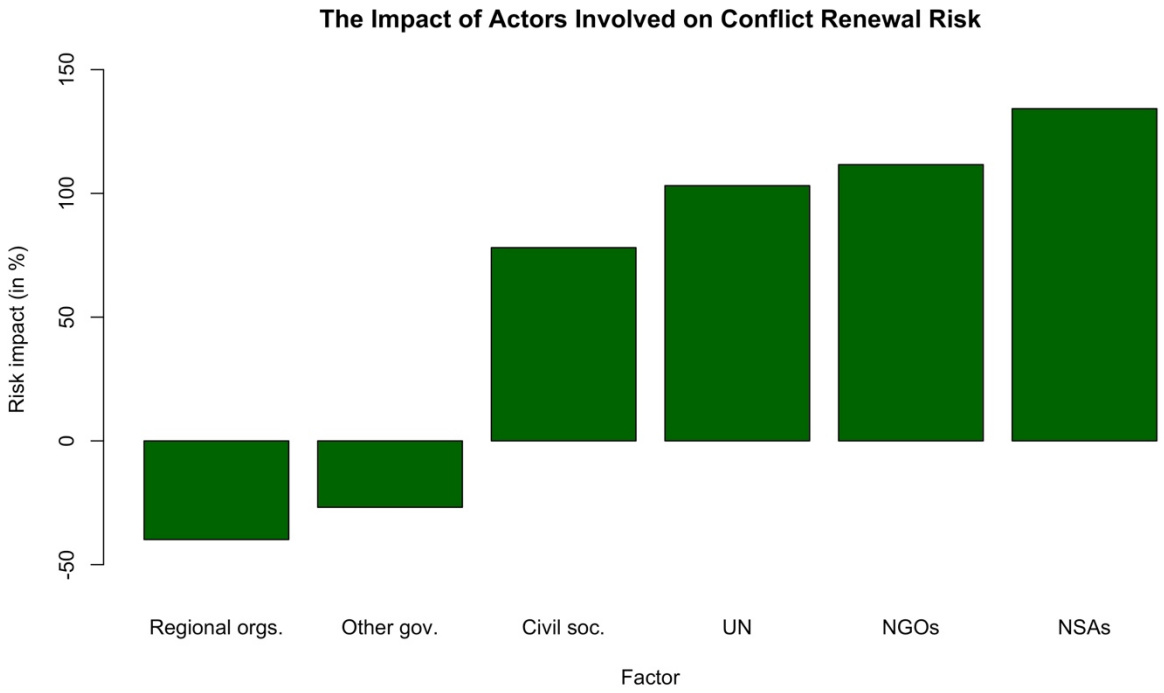

Figure 2: The Impact of Actors Involved on Conflict Renewal Risk

All other actors included in Table 1 are associate with an *adverse* impact on the risk of conflict renewals. Again, it is important to emphasize that this does not mean these actors *cause* renewal. For instance, the involvement of (domestic) civil society actors such as local chiefs or religious leaders is associated with an increased renewal risk of about 78%. UN involvement is associated with a 103% increase, on average, in renewal risk. These finding could be explained by the fact that UN forces are generally more likely to get involved with violent and high intensity conflicts (e.g., in Lebanon), which – as Figure 1 shows – are more than twice as likely to experience renewal in a given year, while local social actors are likely to get involved in cases where formal conflict resolution capacity is low.[18] The involvement of (international or domestic) NGOs is associated with a similar (112%) increase in the risk of renewal. Note, however, that NGOs might be more likely to be called into situations where other measures for prevention that rely on domestic and international governmental organs failed, meaning these organizations may be associated with adverse conflict outcomes through no fault of their own. Finally, successful war ending contexts that include armed nonstate actors (e.g., militias, mercenaries) are at an especially high risk of renewal, 134% above average. This is not a surprising finding, as research has found that the presence and integration of armed nonstate actors (e.g., militias) and is directly associated with conflict renewal risk.[19]

[18] The raw correlations between high intensity conflicts on the one hand, and UN and local civil society actors' involvement on the other is 0.1 and -0.1, respectively, suggesting relatively little overlap between them exists.
[19] Ore Koren, and Bumba Mukherjee (2022) "Integrated Militias Can Increase the Risk of Civil War Renewal." HiCN Working Paper 336. https://hicn.org/working-paper/wp-366/; C. V. Steinert, J. I. Steinert, and S. C.

Finally, Figure 3 assesses the specific impact of each *intervention* type (discussed in section 4) on the risk of conflict renewal. Here, the most effective means of risk reduction is whether a demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration (DDR) process has been implemented. In substantive terms, DDR reduces the annual risk of renewal by 68%, on average. The next most effective determinant is whether there was an institutionalized, formalized change in or acceptance of existing borders; when both sides agree to a permanent border, the annual risk of conflict renewal is reduced by 42%. Next, conflicts that ended in a successful military action are 33% less likely than average to experience renewal annually. Similarly, conflicts that experienced some international intervention (e.g., the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry, a Special Envoy, or an International Tribunal) are associated with a 29% decrease in the annual risk of conflict renewal. Finally, repatriation – providing a formal means for civilians who fled due to the conflict to return to their homes after the war has successfully ended – is associated with a 10% decrease in the risk of renewal, potentially due to reduced willingness (civilians are less likely to hold grievances) and opportunity (civilians residing in refugee camps or forced to migrate are often easy recruits for rebel groups). While it is impossible to reject the possibility that these associations reflect selection biases – for instance, because cases with DDR and formalized change in borders are naturally less likely to renew – these results are in line with the effects one might expect these features to have.

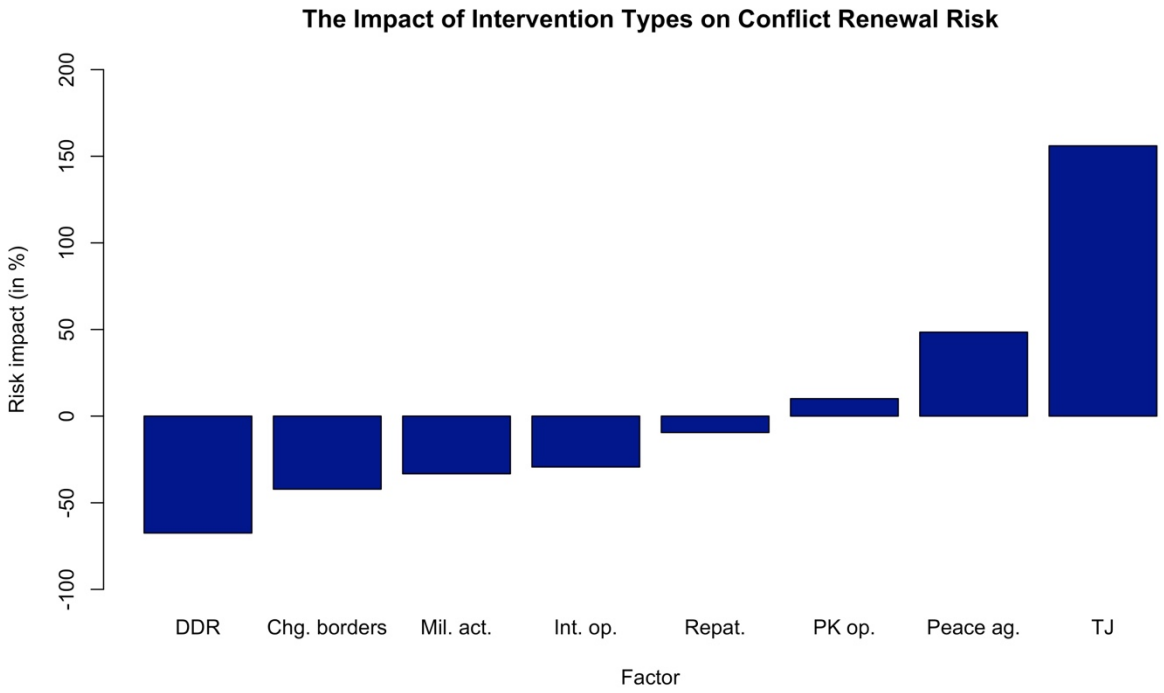

Figure 3: The Impact of Intervention Types on Conflict Renewal Risk

Carey (2019) "Spoilers of peace: Pro-government militias as risk factors for conflict recurrence," *Journal of Peace Research* 56(2): 249-263.

Other interventions are associated with an *increased* the risk of conflict renewal. Successful war-ending contexts that involve a UN peacekeeping operation are at a slightly higher than average (10%) risk of experiencing renewal during any given year after the conflict has ended. Again, it is important to emphasize this is not (necessarily) because formal UN peacekeeping mandates are *causing* an adverse effect, but rather the fact that such deployments are more likely in the context of intense and long conflicts, which (as Figure 1 shows) are more than twice as likely to renew. Interestingly, formal peace agreements are associated with a 49% *increase* in the annual risk of conflict renewal.[20] This could be related to the role of nonstate actors, which we examined in Figure 2, as well as general regime irredentism that can lead to a peace process collapsing. Formal peace agreements often neglect armed actors other than states and rebel groups, which can create heightened incentives for these groups to re-engage in conflict.[21] Finally, country-level and semi-formal/informal transitional justice mechanisms (i.e., those that are not part of an international intervention as defined above) are associated with a staggering 156% increase in conflict renewal risk. This could be related to the possibility that such "local" mechanisms might be more likely to be perceived as unfair, politicized, or irrelevant by the local population.

7. Discussion

These findings have several important implications for research and policy. First, the results identify a relatively small list of potential interventions that explain whether a given successful war-ending context will transition into long term peace. Five types of interventions – DDR, institutionalized change in/formalization of borders, successful military action, international intervention, and repatriation – are generally associated with a lower risk of conflict renewal annually. Analysts and policymakers seeking to identify and recommend effective interventions should pay special attention to whether it is possible to implement or give primacy to these factors.

Second, the involvement of two types of actors – regional bodies and foreign governments – appears to be a promising explanation for when a successful war-ending process will result with viable long-term peace. This finding more specifically suggests two underlying features that can facilitate peace. First, actors that have an *immediate stake* in preventing conflict renewal – for instance because it might spillover, or because they seek to ensure regional stability – enjoy greater *credibility* as third parties that may engage in a fight or try to broker peace.[22] At the same time,

[20] One especially consequential example of this – which was not included in the "How We Stopped War" report, and is hence not analyzed here – is that of the Arusha Accords, which sought to put a permanent ending to the civil war in Rwanda in 1993. Within a few months of signing the accord, the Rwandan president Habyarimana was assassinated, and the Rwandan Genocide was perpetrated.
[21] Ore Koren, and Bumba Mukherjee, "Integrated Militias Can Increase the Risk of Civil War Renewal."; Steinert et al. "Spoilers of peace: Pro-government militias as risk factors for conflict recurrence."
[22] Walter, "Bargaining failures and civil war."

there are other actors that also may have an immediate stake in preventing conflict – including civil society actors (such as local chiefs and religious leaders) and armed nonstate actors (such as militias) – which are associated with an *increase* in conflict renewal risk. These findings suggest that one potential explanation for the adverse relationship of civil society actors and NGOs with conflict renewal is their low *capacity*. Foreign governments and regional organizations have greater capacity not only to provide guarantees to the different involved parties, but also – if needed – to coordinate a forceful military response that can defeat rebels in afflicted countries, or contain invading states. In doing so, they increase the probability of a decisive military action that – as Figure 3 illustrates – is associated with a reduction in conflict risk. Low-capacity actors, in contrast, not only do not have such capacities, but they may also be more likely to be involved in cases of intense or protracted conflicts, which are exactly where the state is weaker, meaning they are facing, to begin with, tall odds of success.

This report also suggests several important avenues for future research and policy. First, and most obviously, it would be valuable to explore whether the factors analyzed here maintain the same level of (positive or negative) influence when a larger set of post-war cases – including cases that did not end successfully (according to the standards used in "How We Stopped War") – are incorporated alongside the post-conflict contexts analyzed here. Cases can be selected based on numeric (e.g., a certain number of people killed in the war) or qualitative thresholds. Considering the wealth of data on conflict and other types of violent events that are openly available nowadays, conducting more extensive research is feasible, and will likely yield important insights concerning our understanding of when conflict renewal is less likely, and why.

More broadly, it would be worthwhile to explore in greater detail – using both qualitative and quantitative methods – *why* is it that some actors or types of interventions that should facilitate long-term peace are instead associated with an increased risk of renewal. Knowing, for instance, whether initiatives that involve civil society actors fail to achieve their intended effect because they exist in cases that are more likely to renew in the first place, or whether there is something specific that makes these interventions ineffective, will allow policymakers to devise ways of bolstering their capacity.

8. Appendix

Table A1: List of Successful War-Ending Cases That Renewed

Country	Case	Peace duration
Angola	Civil war in Angola	5
Azerbaijan	Nagorno-Karabakh	26
Cambodia	Conflict with the Khmer Rouge	2
Central African Republic	Military coups	4
Colombia	Colombian civil war	0
Democratic Republic of Congo	First Congo War	0
Democratic Republic of Congo	Second Congo War	0
Democratic Republic of Congo	Second Congo War -- East Kivu	0
Eritrea, Ethiopia	War between Eritrea and Ethiopia	14
Georgia	South Ossetia	16
Georgia	Abkhazia	4
India	Assam	0
India	Mizoram	0
India	Nagaland	4
India	Manipur	0
India, Pakistan	Kashmir	30
Indonesia	Central Sulawes	5
Lebanon	Civil war, Israeli involvement	4
Liberia	First Liberian Civil War	2
North Macedonia	Ethnic strife	8
Mali	Tuareg rebellions	0
Mali/Niger/Burkina Faso Border	Transnational armed conflict	0
Mexico	Zapatistas	0
Mozambique	FRELIMO	21
Mozambique	Preventing conflict relapse	21
Nepal	Maoist rebellion	1
Niger	FLAA	10
Nigeria	Plateau	0
Nigeria	Kaduna	0
Nigeria	Southern Plateau	0
Nigeria	Middle Belt	0
Philippines	MNLF	7
Republic of Congo	Political militias	14
Russia	First Chechen war	7
Senegal	Casamance	4

Somalia	Puntland	2
South Africa	Natal	3
Sudan	SPLM	3
Sudan	South Kordofan	0
Ukraine	Crimea	0
Western Sahara (Morocco and Mauritania)	POLISARIO	0

Methods

To conduct a systematic, quantitative assessment of how each determinant affected the duration of peace, I relied on a Cox proportional hazard (PH) model. The Cox PH model has several advantages for my purposes.[23] First, it is specifically designed to assess how different factors impact the risk of an event – such a leader's departure from office, a supreme justice's regime, or war – occurring over time. Second, the Cox PH model provides a more flexible way of modeling how the underlying risk, regardless of the impact of each determinant, changes as time since the end of the war passes (statistically, one calls this way of measuring duration "semi parametric"). This in contrast to other methods that assume the risk of renewal remains constant over time. Third, the effect of each indicator in this model is easily expressed in clear substantive terms; for instance, "factor X increases the risk of renewal during a given year by Y%." Finally, the Cox PH model made it possible to analyze and compare a great number of cases of war-ending efforts alongside each other, which lends greater confidence that any relationships identified are valid. In adjusting risk to take into consideration the time that had passed since the war ended, the Cox PH model is more likely to provide an accurate picture of the relationship between each determinant and conflict renewal. The estimates plotted in Figures 1-3, which were calculated using a Cox PH model, are reported in Table A2.

[23] Anderson, Noel, Benjamin E. Bagozzi, and Ore Koren. 2022. "Pressed to Prolong: Conscription, the Costs of Military Labor, and Civil War Duration." Forthcoming in *International Studies Quarterly*.

Table A2: Cox PH Regression Peace Determinants

	Coefficient	Std. Error
Nature of Conflict		
Political violence	−0.161	(0.446)
Duration (log)	0.038	(0.175)
Identity conflict	0.155	(0.531)
Intensity	0.959*	(0.438)
Secessionist conflict	1.447**	(0.609)
Actors		
Regional orgs.	−0.509	(0.444)
Other governments	−0.312	(0.403)
Civil society	0.577	(0.456)
UN	0.709	(0.524)
NGOs	0.750	(0.499)
NSAs	0.851	(0.474)
Intervention Types		
DDR	−1.124**	(0.471)
Changed borders	−0.547	(0.588)
Military action	−0.404	(0.676)
International action	−0.348	(0.497)
Repatriation	−0.099	(0.405)
Peacekeeping op.	0.096	(0.552)
Peace agreement	0.395	(0.543)
Other TJ mechanism	0.940	(0.705)
Observations	139	
Log Likelihood	−160.117	
LR Test	39.615*** (df = 19)	

Standard errors clustered on country in parentheses; Log corresponds to natural log.
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1