Pathways for Peace

A society's ability to manage conflict constructively is tested continuously by risks that push it toward violence and opportunities to move toward sustainable peace. These challenges emerge from the fast-shifting global and regional landscape, as highlighted in chapter 2, and they reflect each society's unique composition.

This study views prevention, in line with the United Nations (UN) sustaining peace resolutions (UN General Assembly 2016; UN Security Council 2016a), as "activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation, and recurrence of conflict, addressing root causes, assisting parties to conflict to end hostilities, ensuring national reconciliation, and moving towards recovery, reconstruction, and development."

This chapter presents a framework for understanding prevention as part of a comprehensive strategy for sustaining peace. Societies are complex systems in which change follows nonlinear trajectories created by the interaction, decisions, and actions of multiple actors. The framework is based on the concept of pathways for peace and focuses on three core elements of society: actors, the individuals and groups whose decisions ultimately define the pathway a society takes; institutions, which shape the incentives for peace or violence and therefore influence the society's overall capacity to mitigate conflict; and structural factors, which are the foundational elements of a society that define its organization and

constitute the overall environment in which actors make decisions.

Violent conflict cannot be adequately understood using state-centric perspectives because, as discussed in chapters 1 and 2, many of the world's violent conflicts take place on the peripheries of, or outside, the community of states and do not involve government soldiers. Instead, conflicts involving a variety of actors, structures, and processes are playing out at multiple levels, with governments and partners increasingly challenged with identifying and addressing risks, simultaneously, but to varying degrees, at local, national, regional, and global levels.

The concept of pathways for peace helps to illustrate how the risk of violence and the opportunities for peace emerge and change over time. It is possible for a single event to cause an abrupt shift in a society's pathway; however, in most cases pathways change relatively slowly, as risks intensify, accumulate, or are mitigated. Underlying risks related to the exclusion of particular groups—for example, based on identity or geography—tend to play a role in most violent conflicts.

While the calculus of actors is driven strongly by incentives in the short term, the incentives to use violence may accumulate or dissipate over months, years, or even decades. Often violence exists in different forms before being recognized and labeled as a violent conflict. In some cases, actions result in violence even when this is not the preferred outcome of any single actor.

The pathways for peace framework allows for the identification of entry points over time for efforts to address risks and take advantage of opportunities for peace. In line with the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and the UN sustaining peace resolutions, prevention in this model requires a constant process of mitigating shocks, while making sustained investments to reduce underlying structural and institutional risks.

A Framework for Peaceful Pathways

A society's pathway moves through a variety of situations that present risks and opportunities for maintaining a peaceful path (figure 3.1). These pathways are never linear. In the words of North, Wallis, and Weingast (2009, 12), "The dynamism of social order is a dynamic of change, not a dynamic of progress. Most societies move backward and forward with respect to political and economic development." Because they are shaped by the complex relationships among the core elements of society, the pathways are extremely difficult to predict.

Pathways move through a myriad of situations. The ideal state of affairs, shown as the darker shade of green in figure 3.1, can be understood as sustainable peace, a situation without violence and built on sustainable development, justice, equity, and protection of human rights as defined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.[1] The opposing situation, shown as the darker shade of red, is one of overt, collective violence.

Between sustainable peace and overt violence is a range of situations where risks to peace and violence manifest together. Some of these situations can be quite stable and predictable, in the sense that a certain power equilibrium is maintained (Galtung 1969) and there is an apparent absence of tension (King 1963, 1). Yet, such situations do not constitute sustainable peace as long as underlying tensions remain unaddressed or actively suppressed (World Bank 2011).

At times, temporary bargains have helped to stave off overt violence in the short term, potentially buying time for broader reforms that can direct a pathway toward more sustained peace. For example, the increase in public sector employment in the Arab Republic of Egypt and Tunisia in

FIGURE 3.1 Pathway between Sustainable Peace and Violent Conflict

Societies forge unique pathways as they negotiate competing pressures pushing toward violent conflict and sustainable peace. The figure illustrates how different forces can influence the direction of the pathway.
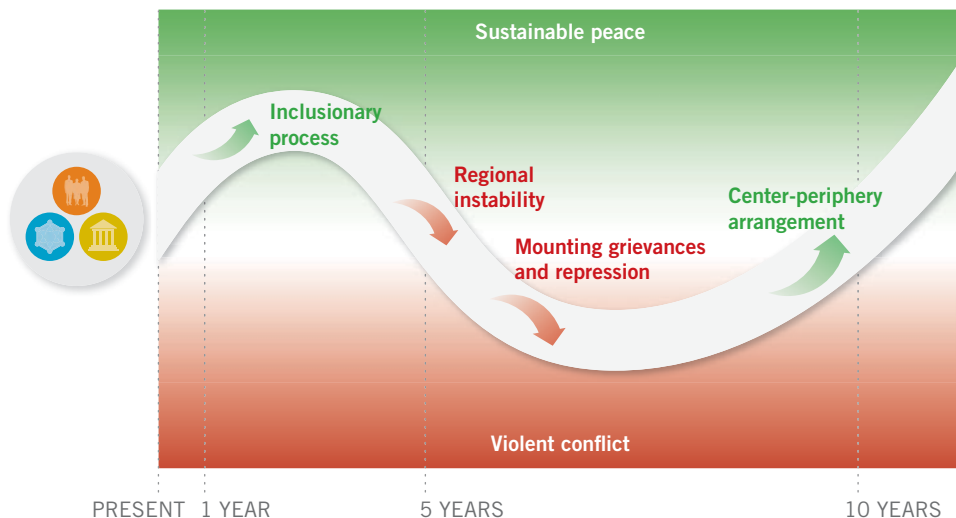
the period after the Arab Spring has achieved some stability in the immediate term, although its long-term sustainability is unclear (World Bank 2017, 16). Some societies have exited violent conflict and transitioned into long periods during which conflicts are suppressed by force more than resolved. Yet, this relative stability does not equate with sustainable peace. Thus, the lack of open violence should not be confused with peace but rather understood as conditions of varying risk.

Sudden changes in a pathway are relatively rare. Instead, cross-country studies of violent conflict have consistently demonstrated that some societies appear particularly vulnerable to violence, with histories characterized by either prolonged violence or repeated episodes of violence, while others tend to be resilient and experience protracted periods of peace (Jones, Elgin-Cossart, and Esberg 2012). Min et al. (2017), relying on the Armed Conflict Dataset of Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), reviewed data for 161 countries during the 1995–2015 period and found that violent conflict is often cyclical or episodic and that vulnerability to violence relates less to specific shocks than to slow-changing institutional and structural factors. Similarly, Fearon and Laitin (2013) examined data for all countries over the 1816–2007 period, finding that violent conflict tends to concentrate and persist in certain countries[2] and, conversely, that a large set of countries, roughly 60, did not experience violent conflict at all.

Given the global trends discussed in chapter 1, this pattern can be expected to continue. A relatively small number of countries experience violent conflict at any given time. That said, risks of conflict will remain high in many countries as long as underlying drivers are not addressed and systemic risks continue to intensify, with the potential for new conflicts to break out and existing conflicts to become protracted or internationalized (Dupuy et al. 2017). Efforts to encourage peaceful pathways continue to be critical both in ending violence as well as in reducing the risk to these countries of violence breaking out.
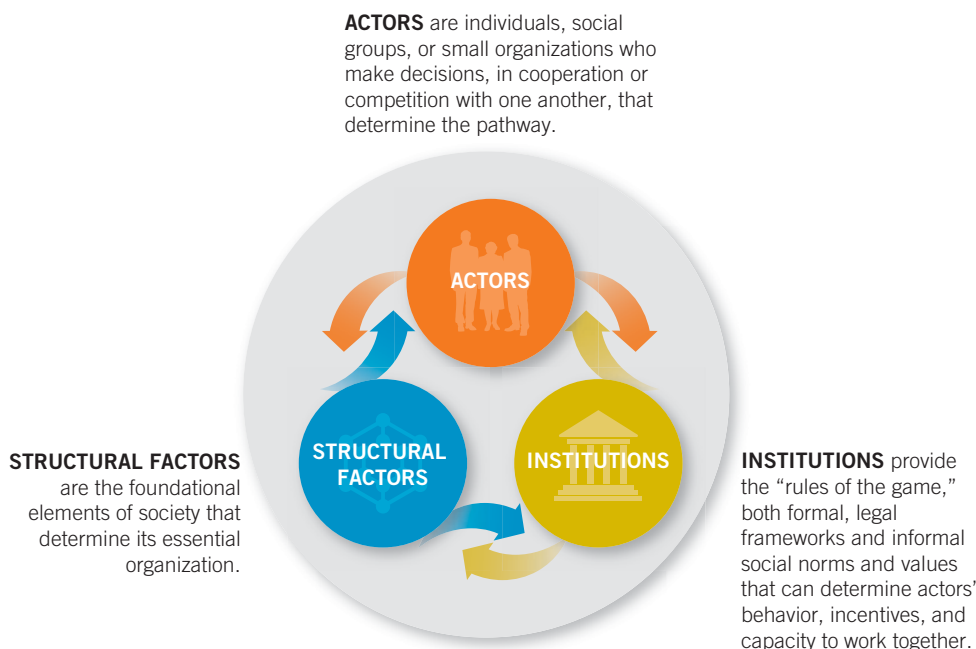
The pathways concept is applicable at multiple levels—that is, to specific areas within a country or areas that extend beyond the borders of a single country. It aids in understanding the risks and opportunities around subregional conflict and in regions like the Sahel, where risks and opportunities are linked across countries. These different levels, although often treated as separate, are in reality fluid and interlinked. In an increasingly interdependent world, risks intersect across levels. In the same way, pathways, in principle, also exist at different levels. A key analytical challenge is to define the boundaries between the levels and the relative weight that should be assigned to them, which Williams terms the "level of analysis problem" (Williams 2016, 43).

Recognizing this challenge, the framework presented in this study takes the national-level pathway as the dominant path, highlighting the centrality of the state in determining national outcomes. The framework underscores that the different levels formally intersect through the rights and responsibilities of the state. The state has local, national, and international responsibilities, and the failure of the state in those responsibilities can fuel the spread of conflict across borders. The focus on national pathways does not mean a focus solely on state institutions, but rather a focus on the national level of analysis, in which the state is a key actor, as discussed later in this chapter. A key variable in this analysis is, therefore, the capacity of a state to govern risks across levels within its territory.

The framework for this study understands societies as comprising three core elements—actors, institutions, and structural factors—whose interactions influence the pathway a society takes (figure 3.2).

The pathway that a society takes is a product of the decisions of critical *actors*, who are enabled or constrained by *structural factors* and influenced by the *institutions* that help to define the incentives for their behavior. To understand how pathways are forged, it is critical to examine the interactions among these three elements.

FIGURE 3.2 Actors, Structural Factors, Institutions

ACTORS are individuals, social groups, or small organizations who make decisions, in cooperation or competition with one another, that determine the pathway.

ACTORS

STRUCTURAL FACTORS

INSTITUTIONS

STRUCTURAL FACTORS are the foundational elements of society that determine its essential organization.

INSTITUTIONS provide the "rules of the game," both formal, legal frameworks and informal social norms and values that can determine actors' behavior, incentives, and capacity to work together.

Because they operate in relationship to one another, a shift in one will have impacts on the others.

Structural factors are the foundational elements of society that determine its essential organization. They include, for example, geography, economic systems, political structures, demographic composition, or distribution of resources. In general, structural factors do not change easily, and when they do, they do so only over relatively long periods of time. Structural factors shape the overall environment in which actors make decisions. As highlighted in chapter 2, they may include systemic stresses, such as the influence of transnational illicit markets or the impacts of climate change.

Some structural factors are more malleable than others. For example, geography can rarely be altered, although societies can find ways to mitigate its impacts (Fearon and Laitin 2013; Raleigh and Urdal 2007), as reflected in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 13 of the 2030 Agenda. High levels of aid dependence and excessive reliance on natural resources for economic growth tend to be associated with greater risk of violence

and can usually be changed only over longer periods of time (Blattman and Miguel 2010; Collier and Hoeffler 2004; OECD 2016). In the social realm, structural factors such as legacies of violence, trauma, and the societal divisions left by violence, can persist over generations and often take significant effort and time to change (Hegre and Sambanis 2006; Volkan 2004; World Bank 2011). Conversely, societies that possess more cohesion, higher income levels, more inclusive economic and political regimes, a more diversified economy, a history of peaceful cooperation across groups, and that are located in more stable regions experience less violence (Collier et al. 2003; Easterly, Ritzen, and Woolcock 2006; Østby 2008; Parks, Colletta, and Oppenheim 2013; Stewart 2004, 2008, 2010).

While structural factors are clear influences on the overall health of a society, *institutions* have been described as the "immune system," charged with defending a society from pressures toward violence and promoting overall resilience (World Bank 2011, 72). Just as a healthy immune system mounts a quick, targeted response to

a pathogen, effective institutions can respond and contain the actions of individuals or groups that threaten overall societal well-being.

Institutions provide the "rules of the game"—both formal legal frameworks and informal social norms and values—that govern actors' behavior and limit the damage that individual actors can do (North 1990, 3). Formal law enforcement institutions do this directly, by capturing and containing individuals who behave violently. Informal social norms also perform this role, by influencing people's expectations about how other people will behave. If individuals believe that others are obeying the laws and rules of society, they are more likely to do so as well. However, if an individual does not have solid reason to expect that rules will be enforced, the payoffs to violence are higher. In these cases, ineffective institutions can enable—rather than contain—behavior that threatens societal well-being. The larger a society, the greater the number of institutions (as "enforcers" of rules) needed (North, Wallis, and Weingast 2009).

In defining the "rules" for actors' behavior, institutions shape the overall incentive structure for peace. In high-risk situations or in the presence of violent conflict, capable institutions provide commitment mechanisms for armed groups to hold to a cease-fire by raising the costs of reneging on the agreement. In "Somaliland," trusted governing bodies that encompass actors from various sectors, including clan leaders and elders, have contributed to more than two decades of relative stability and peace, despite ongoing violent conflict in southern Somalia (World Bank 2017). The longer peace endures, the greater the disincentives for any of the groups to resort to violence.

Institutions also structure incentives by managing the expectations of actors. One of the key tasks of institutions is to temper the sense of relative deprivation and frustrated expectations of groups who do not see themselves as benefiting fairly from overall economic advancement and ensuring that these frustrations are addressed peacefully (Gurr 1970; Huntington 1968). As more countries shift toward open political systems, they raise expectations about access to certain freedoms and services. As discussed in more detail in chapter 4, grievances across groups can arise if expectations remain unmet due to constrained resources or lack of political will (Brinkerhoff 2011).

Effective institutions are impersonal. Rather than being confined to the influence of individual leaders or special interest groups, they possess sufficient depth to include diverse groups in a society and have the staying power to outlast political terms or temporary agreements between elites (World Bank 2011). This generates trust in the institutions themselves, even when people do not feel trust or legitimacy toward a particular leader representing that institution. In this way, the impersonal nature of effective institutions can produce a legitimizing effect, which is itself an incentive for maintaining peace and stability. Effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels are an explicit goal within the 2030 Agenda.

To some degree, inclusive institutions can also protect against the impact of unfavorable structural factors, for example, by embodying greater voice and accountability in decision making or redistribution of resources (Fearon and Laitin 2013; Raleigh and Urdal 2007). Social norms that promote gender inclusion, for instance, can help to equalize power relations in decision-making processes and lead to more optimal outcomes; as detailed in chapter 6, women's participation in peace negotiations has improved the quality and staying power of peace agreements across a range of countries (Anderlini 2007; O'Reilly, Ó Súilleabháin, and Paffenholz 2015; Paffenholz et al. 2017; Stone 2015).

Actors are the central component of this framework. Actors can include individuals (especially influential leaders), social groups, or small organizations who make decisions in competition or cooperation with one another. Capable institutions and favorable structural factors can make peaceful pathways more likely and easier to maintain; but, at the end of the day, it is actors—working together or individually—who determine the direction society will

take (Chesterman, Ignatieff, and Thakur 2004; Faustino and Booth 2014; MacGinty 2010). Actors' behaviors, in turn, shape the incentives for other actors to choose violence or peace. For example, as chapter 4 highlights, leaders may develop narratives that increase the incentives for violence or promote peace.

The boundaries between organizations of actors and institutions are difficult to define. At what point does a group of people, acting together, become an institution? For the purposes of this framework, institutions are understood as possessing a level of structure that transcends personal relationships, with rules and norms that apply broadly to all constituents. An organization of actors becomes an institution when it establishes norms and rules that go beyond the immediate influence of one or a few members. Some organizations and even some states are in reality not institutions if they are effectively controlled by a small group of individuals or the rules or norms are not endorsed or followed by the majority of citizens. They do not provide what an institution is supposed to provide, and the small group of individuals may not represent the interests of all social groups, deepening the perception that an organization is exclusionary by design. Box 3.1 illustrates how this framework can be applied to a particular society—in this case, Mali—to aid in understanding how pathways are formed.

BOX 3.1 **Applying the Framework to the Northern Mali Conflict (2012–13)**

Structural factors

- Some of the populations of the extreme north of Mali have historically been connected more with the Sahara and Northern Africa than with the population of the south, through commercial routes and cultural ties.

- Some of the populations of the extreme north have a long history of conflict with the south, including raiding for slaves, and during colonization and after independence, have been in regular rebellion against the central government.

- The extreme north has been deeply affected by climate change, drought, and the collapse of Saharan trade.

- The civil war in Algeria (1991–2002) and collapse of the central Libyan state have brought about the installation of small violent extremist groups in the region and increased illicit trafficking of arms, people, and weapons.

- There are few economic opportunities aside from illicit trade and some limited herding and agriculture activities.

- The low population density of the north makes the provision of services and infrastructure development very costly and difficult.

Institutions

- Although it is a democratic state with an active political life, Mali has struggled with accountability, corruption, clientelism, and personalization of institutions.

- The military was terribly weakened during prior regimes by fear of military coup and reliance on ethnic militias. The army has been poorly trained and equipped and lacks cohesiveness and leadership. This has created a security vacuum in various parts of the country, especially the border region.

- Decentralization, a central factor in giving the regions more autonomy, has been marred by corruption and lack of accountability of local politicians. It has also upset the ethnic balance. Additionally, political decentralization has never been well accepted by the central government bureaucracy.

- Competition among clans and families has weakened traditional institutions regulating the Tuareg and Fulani groups. Youth, in particular, do not have effective means of participating in these institutions, contributing to a loss in moral authority.

(Box continued next page)

Path Dependency of Violence

All societies experience some violence. Yet, high-intensity violent conflict is a relatively rare phenomenon; most societies are at peace most of the time. Being at peace brings a certain inertia; societies at peace tend to remain at peace. The longer and more intentionally a society has worked to address structural factors and create the incentives for peace, the harder it is to derail that society from a peaceful path.

Episodes of violence, nevertheless, can happen at any point along the pathway, even when the path is headed in the direction of peace. Violence tends to emerge more gradually than is often assumed, with risks building up over periods of months and years (box 3.2).

Like peace, violence is highly path-dependent. As violent conflict continues, societies can get caught in a "conflict trap," where incentives are reconfigured in ways that sustain conflict, and many actors—the state, private sector, communities—start to organize themselves with the view that violent conflict will continue (Collier et al. 2003, 1). As discussed in chapter 1, many of today's conflicts are more protracted and involve an increasing number of armed groups, including self-defense militias, rebel groups, illicit trafficking networks, and urban gangs. The "original causes" often evolve and transform as new generations of actors get involved and as war economies become more entrenched (Bøås 2015; Wolff, Ross, and Wee 2017).

Over time, violent conflict can deepen grievances and divisions between groups. These emotional legacies can be transferred from generation to generation to justify continued violence. In addition, social norms meant to limit violence often relax, as violence becomes normalized as a means of resolving conflict or enforcing power relationships. Women and children are particularly affected by these dynamics, as violence against them tends to become more common and more brutal as conflict continues (Boudet et al. 2012; Crespo-Sancho 2017; Kelly 2017; Slegh, Barker, and Levtov 2014). Because of the way these psychosocial impacts accumulate, even building the "right" institutions cannot ensure a linear path out of conflict (World Bank 2017).

The path dependency of violence is reinforced by the damage it often inflicts on

institutions (Jones, Elgin-Cossart, and Esberg 2012). During protracted conflict, political systems reorient around wartime dynamics. The need to prioritize security often results in large security forces that are difficult to demobilize and reintegrate later. Trust and legitimacy in state institutions can be eroded, as people lose faith in institutions that cannot protect them or provide the basic services they need. Protracted conflict also fuels the brain drain of national talent and skills, as those with the means to do so look for opportunities elsewhere.

Even after violence has taken root, it is still possible for societies to change course. Intermittently along the pathways, opportunities appear when actors' decisions have more impact to define a pathway. These "transition moments" are events that open up the possibility for a marked change in direction (figure 3.3)—for example, a national political transition, a new leader in

FIGURE 3.3 Transition Moments

The graphic illustrates the way transition moments can shift the direction of the pathway, Here, a change in leadership provides an example of an event that can shift the pathway toward sustainable peace, via a power-sharing agreement, or toward greater risk of conflict, via increased competition for power and grievances.
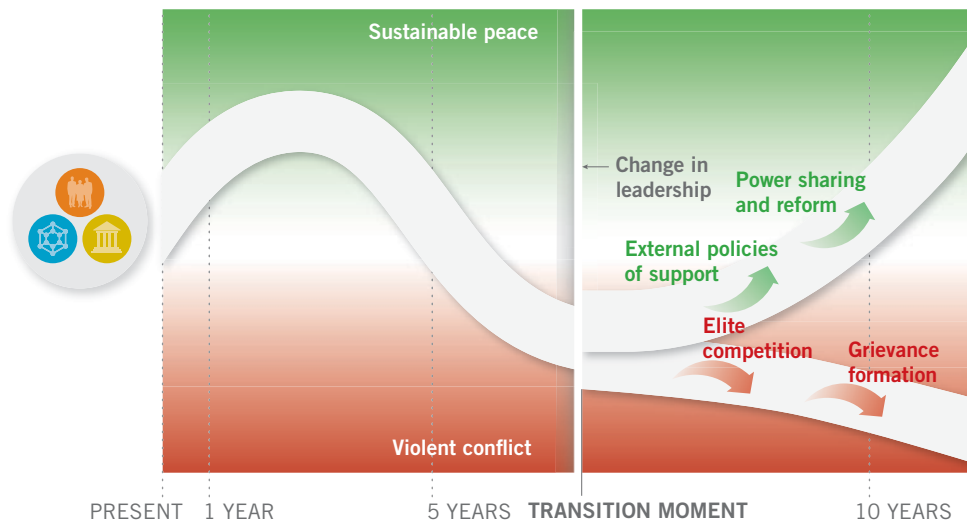
power, a new international alliance—or smaller-scale shifts such as policy reform in one sector (World Bank 2011, 12). During transition moments, coalitions can be formed, leadership demonstrated, and reforms launched. In most cases, a peaceful pathway results from actions taken in many transition moments, rather than a single event. However, as risks escalate—and especially after violence has begun—opportunities for transition moments are less frequent. As explored further below, early monitoring of risks helps in identifying potential transition moments.

The Centrality of Actors

As noted throughout this study, the decisions, calculations, and leadership shown (or not) by actors ultimately determine the pathways societies take. Actors can shape structural factors and influence the way institutions are built and reformed. Understanding the central role that different actors play in driving conflict is especially crucial now, given the multiplicity and complexity of the actors involved in violent conflict today.

Actors can change their behavior relatively abruptly. In contrast, although institutions can sometimes change course quickly, in most cases they take several years, even decades, to reform—thus changing the rules of the game and the incentives for action. It may take a generation or more to achieve the deeper institutional transformations needed to reach recognized standards of governance like civilian oversight of the military, anticorruption measures, or a functioning state bureaucracy (Pritchett and de Weijer 2010).

In most settings, actors tend to make decisions that privilege visible beneficial impact in the short to medium term over actions that may only bear fruit in the longer term. This is often as true in contexts with democratic systems that require a periodic transfer of power between parties as in less democratic settings where leaders often feel a strong need to maintain popular support.

The actions of one individual, or a small group, can bring enormous, often swift, consequences for society. In some cases, just one or a few actors can derail progress toward peace. To draw on the public health analogy (Stares 2017) used in the study introduction, individuals can make unhealthy choices—to smoke or engage in unprotected sex, for instance—that threaten not only their health but also the health of others. This can occur even in people with strong immune systems and favorable environmental conditions that facilitate healthy choices. One terrorist attack by a small group of individuals can abruptly shift the overall political, security, and economic trajectory of a country or a region.

Likewise, the decisive actions of particular leaders and small groups can create incentives for peace, helping to push a society out of a cycle of violence. Leaders can spearhead initiatives that can change a pathway quickly, such as activating coalitions and invoking or shaping norms and values for prevention. They may provide a long-term vision of a society's peaceful future that engages a large audience. Taking such actions often involves risk, especially for political leaders, because political capital or even survival may be at stake in the short term. As chapter 6 illustrates, in high-risk or violent situations, it most often falls to individual leaders to weigh and act on the inevitable political, social, economic, and security trade-offs that prevention entails and to balance the effects of other actors, institutions, and structural factors.

It is now broadly acknowledged that actors do not always behave "rationally"—considering all possible contingencies and making a calculated decision based on self-interest—as economic models would predict (World Bank 2015). People and groups are rarely able to process all of the available information or to consider every possible contingency when making a decision. Actors "think automatically" rather than deliberately (World Bank 2015). Stress and tension limit agency further by constraining the capacity for deliberative thinking (Mani et al. 2013; Mullainathan and Shafir 2013; Narayan et al. 2000). For example, the experience of poverty can stress mental resources, simply through the many decisions that need to be made to meet

basic needs—keeping children safe or obtaining food, for example. The stress of poverty focuses attention on the present, making it hard to plan for the future, like investing in education, or opening a small business. This "cognitive tax"[3] is exacerbated in conflict-affected environments, where the threat or experience of violence combines with the daily challenges of meeting basic needs (World Bank 2015, 81).

Actors also "think socially," that is, they are heavily influenced by social norms that determine their expectations about how others will respond to a decision they make. Instead, the behavior of actors is shaped by their social and emotional environment (Halliday and Shaffer 2015; Simon 1997 [1947]). In this way, social norms help to shape the incentives of actors because they help actors to anticipate how others will behave. Expectations of shame or loss of reputation, for example, can be more powerful enforcers of contracts than legal regulations.

Domestic Actors

The pathway a society takes depends greatly on the way actors in that society—what this report calls "domestic actors"—cooperate or compete with one another. Domestic actors may be part of the state or outside it, including groups or individuals, members of civil society, and the private sector, and they may be formal, informal, or traditional leaders. Most often, the state is central among them, but a constellation of actors plays roles in various combinations at different times.

Domestic actors can promote a virtuous cycle of long-term peace and development. For example, community or religious groups and nongovernmental organizations have played pivotal roles in promoting and sustaining peace. They can also push a society toward violence. As mentioned in chapter 1, violent conflict in recent years is characterized by a proliferation of nonstate actors such as militias, rebel groups, criminal groups, violent extremist groups, and many others. Oftentimes the stated grievances used to justify their movements evolve over time.

In addition, these groups do not always represent the interests of the people whom they claim to represent. This is particularly evident in the emergence of criminal networks operating in contexts of violence.

Domestic actors hold the highest stake in mitigating and preventing violent conflict, even when a conflict has global significance; possess the deepest understanding of their history and causes (although that understanding may be deeply biased); and have the most legitimacy, whether formal or informal, to act (Mcloughlin 2015). External actors can play critical and sometimes decisive roles (see chapter 7) in high-risk and violent situations, but ultimately internal actors can go beyond preventing imminent or existing violence itself to address underlying grievances or causes, including by engaging international support and mobilizing domestic coalitions, including around the 2030 Agenda.

The range of domestic actors is too vast to treat exhaustively. Here, the chapter focuses on some of the key domestic actors that matter for understanding violence and violence prevention: the state, civil society and community organizations, and the private sector.

The State

In most societies, the state is the central domestic actor influencing a society's pathway. While the extent of its agency and power vary vis-à-vis other actors in society, the state ultimately holds responsibility for many of the decisions that shape the pathway and has the authority to negotiate and navigate agreements or political settlements, reform institutions, and direct policy. On top of this, the state also has the legal responsibility to implement international treaties that it has ratified, including in relation to human rights, and international agreements such as the 2030 Agenda and the sustaining peace resolutions. The state's role is not always positive; history is full of examples of states perpetrating violence directly through state forces or failing to quell violence within their borders (Elias 1982; Tilly 1985, 2003).

As an abstract concept, the "state" comprises not only the institutions that represent its more formal and "visible" structure, but also the social interactions that create and sustain that structure. The state is not a unitary actor, but an organization of heterogeneous individuals, all of whom bring varying motivations, interests, and degrees of commitment to shaping the character and functioning of the state. For example, the bureaucrats that make up state institutions are driven by a variety of motivations, from a vocation for public service, desire to advance their careers, need to provide for their families or accumulate wealth, as well as political interests. All of these motivations and interests are constantly negotiated; they shape, and are shaped by, the institutions that result from them (Marc et al. 2012).

The state is a product of its interaction with society and continually evolves in the context of that relationship. Predatory states prey on social groups, extracting resources with little or no compensation. States can be captured or work in collusion with powerful interests that undermine peaceful pathways. For example, some drug cartels now command financial flows that rival those of national governments and heavily

influence key state institutions.[4] More authoritarian states may strike a bargain with society in which the state distributes resources in exchange for limits on civil freedoms. Others essentially contract out the delivery of basic services to nonstate actors, such as nonprofit organizations and external partners.

Many states—including many in fragile and conflict-affected contexts— garner support and ensure their existence through informal patronage networks that distribute resources and privileges to key constituencies (Evans 2004).[5] In these cases, political authority is diffuse and informal, rather than formalized through state institutions (Bøås et al. 2017). The relationship between these networks and the state may be quite stable, as long as the power balance is maintained (Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith 2005). Attempts to reform institutions will inevitably bump up against this reality and can lead to instability when the balance of power across groups is disrupted (Hameiri 2007).

Where the state has not established its presence in a convincing way, nonstate actors often step into the breach and provide alternative forms of governance (box 3.3). Most policy makers and academics now

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BOX 3.3 Alternatively Governed Spaces

The concept of ungoverned spaces, defined as "areas of limited or anomalous government control inside otherwise functional states," emerged out of the policy debates following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States (Keister 2014, 1; Nezam 2017). These spaces are not necessarily limited to a defined geographic area. The Internet, for instance, has been described as an ungoverned space because it offers an unregulated, virtual haven and a platform for recruiting to violent extremist groups (Patrick 2010).

In reality, ungoverned spaces are not so much ungoverned as alternatively governed. In many cases, they represent populations on the political or geographic peripheries of a country that have

never been meaningfully integrated into state-building projects. Where the state is absent or unwilling to assert its presence, other actors step into the void. These can include a range of actors, from tribal leaders and elders to criminal networks, insurgent groups, and extremist groups. In a study of the Sahel region, Raleigh and Dowd (2013) argue that the challenges faced by political and geographic peripheries are a result not of too little governance but of many overlapping forms of governance.

Rabasa et al. (2007) define three main forms of alternate governance:

- With *contested governance*, a territory does not recognize the legitimacy of the government and is loyal to another

(Box continued next page)

type of social organization such as an identity group or insurgent movement. These groups or movements usually want to establish their own state.

- With *incomplete governance*, a state wants to project its authority over its territory and provide public goods and services for its population but lacks the competence and resources to do so. Where officials are present, they are often intimidated, inept, or corrupt.

- With *abdicated governance*, the government refuses to extend its authority or provide security, infrastructure, and services because doing so is not cost-effective. Instead, authority for delivering basic services is ceded to subnational groups such as local tribes.

The chief concern has been that alternatively governed spaces may facilitate the entry and operations of nonstate actors such as illicit trafficking networks, gangs, or violent extremist

groups (Clunan and Trinkunas 2010; Keister 2014; Nezam 2017). While weak state presence is often an attractive condition for these actors, it is insufficient on its own. Criminal and extremist groups require a certain level of infrastructure (transport and communications, in particular) as well as some support from local populations, in order to operate effectively. For this reason, weak states may be more vulnerable than failed states to these types of networks (Menkhaus and Shapiro 2010).

All three forms of alternative governance ultimately undermine state capacity and legitimacy, even though they may bring some stability over the short term. The presence of these spaces also offers varying degrees of opportunity to integrate them into broader society by increasing the representation of local populations in the arenas where access to power, resources, and security are negotiated. Chapter 5 discusses these issues in greater detail.

agree that what have often been called "ungoverned spaces" are not actually ungoverned; rather, they are "differently governed" by alternative authorities or nonstate actors—traditional or customary, tribal or clan, religious, criminal, and insurgent, among others (Keister 2014; Nezam 2017). These actors may provide state-like services such as security, employment, and education, as armed groups have done in contexts ranging from the Philippines to Afghanistan, Jamaica, and cities in Brazil (Arias 2013; Clunan and Trinkunas 2010; Keister 2014; Sacks 2009).

Alternatively governed spaces can present a challenge to sustainable peace when the presence and activities of nonstate actors undermine state capacity and legitimacy (Nezam 2017). Illicit trafficking networks are a good example. These networks can have a variety of relationships with the state and with society (Cockayne 2016).

When these groups are able to establish control and set up parallel state structures, especially when they deliver security that the state cannot, or will not, deliver, the state loses credibility and its capacity is undermined. When elites accept bribes or participate directly in trafficking networks, legitimacy suffers, and resources that could go to deliver basic services are diverted (Kemp, Shaw, and Boutellis 2013; Stearns Lawson and Dininio 2013).

In general, states based on open access and contestation tend to forge more peaceful pathways (North, Wallis, and Weingast 2009). Conversely, states that employ coercive tactics that limit people's agency in expressing identity and accessing opportunities for social and economic mobility tend to see a hardening of identities and increased risk of violence (Benford and Snow 2000; Fearon 2010).

Countries experiencing fragility are often hard-pressed to act preventively. In some cases, elites may discount actions whose consequences, while grave, are not immediate and clear, in order to ensure regime survival. In other cases, the state may lack the requisite legitimacy in the eyes of particular groups to address underlying risks. Capacity is another factor; states that are unable to formulate and implement policies, collect taxes, provide basic services, or ensure a minimum of security are often limited in the extent to which they can monitor and address risks. A particular effort is needed to support the capacity of countries experiencing situations of fragility so that they can more effectively undertake prevention policies and programs and implement the 2030 Agenda, which provides a pathway to sustainable development and peace.

Civil Society and Community-Based Organizations

Civil society actors comprise a wide range of associations and nonstate entities, including charities, nongovernmental organizations, community groups, faith-based organizations, trade guilds and unions, professional associations, and advocacy groups, among others (Aslam 2017; Marc et al. 2012). The category also includes informal decision-making bodies, such as tribal councils or elders, that provide many of the basic services to people in transition or postconflict settings (UNDP 2012). While civil society is often seen as consisting of organizations that may be competing for the same pool of resources, their underlying norms and values have been assumed to be largely shared, facilitating potential broad-based solidarity. With an increasing multiplicity and diversity of actors engaging in the civic space, this space is also becoming a more contested domain of public life (Poppe and Wolff 2017). In addition, civic space has received a digital dimension, which provides space for different modes of both solidarity and contestation (Dahlgren 2015).

Civil society actors can promote confidence and build trust, which encourages cooperation among members of society and creates incentives for collective action. Where trust is forged across groups, it can apply to society more broadly (Boix and Posner 1996; Yamagishi and Yamagishi 1994). This ability to build bottom-up trust gives civil society an instrumental role in forming coalitions for peace.

Civil society and community-based actors, in particular, are central to both the resolution and prevention of conflict (Giessman 2017). At the most basic level, civil society actors may help to provide basic services to local communities, an important function in maintaining stability during a crisis. Civic associations, such as neighborhood or community organizations, often contribute to cohesion that helps to buffer against risk of violence, especially when they build relationships across different social groups (Aslam 2017; Varshney 2002). Civil society groups also play an important role in promoting social norms that discourage violence, for example, by increasing awareness of the costs of violent conflict and showcasing opportunities that can come from engagement across rival groups (Barnes 2009).

Beyond these roles, civil society organizations (CSOs) play a crucial part in mediating the state-society relationship by maintaining space for dialogue and expression of dissent (Marc et al. 2012). CSOs, in many cases, play a role in holding the state accountable, which becomes increasingly important in high-risk situations, when the space for dialogue often narrows (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011), including to ensure that the state implements international agreements such as the 2030 Agenda. They may help to mediate conflict directly, through local peace committees, or by participating in national peace processes (Nilsson 2012; Wanis-St. John and Kew 2008). They can also work indirectly, by helping to shift norms and behaviors to increase commitment to peace (Barnes 2009). Once violence takes hold, civil society actors can help to prevent further escalation (Dahl et al. 2017). Over the longer term, they can help to build more responsive state institutions, contributing to sustaining peaceful pathways (Dahl et al. 2017).

Chapter 6 covers the experiences of civil society actors in shaping societies' pathways in more detail.

As with all actors, the role of CSOs has its limitations and is not uniformly positive or effective. Many actors make a transition from civil society to operate in state institutions or move to civil society after their role in the government. These career paths often facilitate better relations between state institutions and communities, but can also damage the perception of independence. Where CSOs are insufficiently independent or represent narrow interest groups, they can cause more harm than good in the absence of appropriate countervailing forces.

CSOs can also contribute to division when they exclude other groups, either unintentionally or by design. CSOs can use their grassroots appeal and convening power as a way to mobilize for violence against other groups. For instance, before the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, CSOs including the Hutu Power groups excluded parts of the population and tended not to cross group divides, and some community organizations were active in the genocide (Aslam 2017; Human Rights Watch 1999; UN General Assembly and UN Security Council 1999). By building intergroup cohesion and "perverse social capital" that isolates them from other social groups, CSOs can also work to counter positive social goals (Posner 2004). This methodology is present in groups as diverse as urban gangs, paramilitary organizations, and student associations that became the first vigilante groups active during the 2002 conflict in Côte d'Ivoire (Sany 2010).

Private Sector Actors

Private enterprises have been an integral part of society for millennia and play an important role in shaping peaceful pathways. The private sector is a primary source of livelihoods for the majority of the population today as well as an important avenue by which to foster inclusion and social cohesion. Private enterprises, both formal and informal, have the flexibility to provide jobs, services, and tax revenue, as well as public goods such as infrastructure and enhanced environmental and governance standards, all of which shape incentives for maintaining peace. In addition, by supporting markets, the private sector enables interaction across social groups and communities that helps to build trust—a critical ingredient for prevention. A thriving private sector mitigates tensions and remedies their consequences by increasing economic opportunity and helping to address exclusion (IFC 2018).

Both large corporations and small and medium enterprises may play crucial roles in prevention. Small firms provide services and jobs to the local population, including the most marginalized. Small and medium enterprises can be collectively powerful in shaping peace incentives by contributing to social and economic interactions and attracting and making investments that are conducive to peace. They play an important role as flexible, adaptable entities. Large domestic and multinational firms can act as a major force for peace too. Leadership from businesses—setting examples of conduct, developing standards, negotiating concessions, and consolidating international partnerships—can go a long way toward mitigating tensions. Global companies, for example, have made positive contributions to stability and peace around problems such as conflict minerals or oil spills by developing new rules and investing in social programs.

The leadership potential of private firms is exemplified by private companies' direct participation in peacebuilding processes, reflecting their understanding that a stable operating environment is essential for a prosperous business community. This has been seen in many contexts, such as in Kenya, where the Kenya Private Sector Alliance, together with other civil society groups, swiftly mobilized to help end election-related violence in 2007–08 and worked to prevent a recurrence of violence during the 2013 general elections (Goldstein and Rotich 2008). Some of these experiences are described in more detail in chapter 6.

However, the role of the private sector, like that of all other actors, is nuanced and not uniformly positive. Just as private sector actors can help shape peaceful pathways, they can also contribute to and benefit from violent conflict (Peschka 2011). When conflict starts, individual companies or groups of companies may seek to profit from the opportunities that conflict provides, for instance, by trafficking or trading in weapons and other goods with various armed factions (Comolli 2017). In some cases, private companies have become embroiled directly in conflict by supporting trade in minerals that may be trafficked by armed groups (Campbell 2002; Rettberg 2015). Corporations can also contribute to grievances and tensions through land grabs for agriculture, extractives, or commercial projects, while large-scale mining companies have fed into conflicts in Bougainville and Samoa. The proliferation of private security companies and private military firms in recent decades has also raised questions of conflicts of interest, as in some cases these firms have contributed to undermining state capacity to control violence and citizen trust in state law enforcement (Singer 2010). In Papua New Guinea, for example, the private security sector has grown to be larger than the state law enforcement forces, supplanting the state's monopoly on violence (Lakhani and Willman 2014).

The interaction of businesses with other actors in a given institutional context determines to a large extent their impact on conflict dynamics. For this reason, transparency, on the one hand, and accountability, on the other hand, are critical for fostering a positive contribution of the private actors to peace; these issues are elaborated in chapter 6.

Voluntary standards play a similarly critical role in that respect. Conflict-sensitive business practices have gathered momentum as a way for private companies to carry out their activities with a commitment to do-no-harm principles (UN Global Compact 2017). Operating in a conflict-sensitive manner is a preventive strategy deeply rooted in understanding the local context. Lack of such understanding

stands to aggravate local tensions unintentionally by disproportionally employing staff from one community or another, providing revenue or capacity that can later be deployed in conflicts. Businesses can also actively engage to stabilize the environment in high-risk contexts. To that end, the former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon launched the United Nations Global Compact "Business for Peace" platform, which boosts the participation of the private sector in support of peace and supports local actors to adopt responsible business practices (UN Global Compact 2017). The UN Global Compact's "Guidance on Responsible Business and in Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas" (UN Global Compact 2010) helps companies to operate in challenging contexts and seeks to aid their operations to contribute positively to peace and development.

International Actors

While domestic actors drive change on the ground, international actors have a strong role to play, primarily in helping to shape the incentives and actions of national actors. International actors include national governments external to the conflict, regional organizations, the private sector,[6] and the multilateral system of political, security, and development institutions. Their actions can be decisive, especially where domestic actors are too fractured, inclined by their own interests or history, or incapable of acting. The most constructive external role has usually been to create space and, in some cases, safety nets—fiscal and economic, security, human and social capacity, or political—into which domestic actors can step forward and direct their society on a peaceful pathway. International actors can also play a role in setting and enforcing norms and supporting the implementation of international treaties and agreements, including the 2030 Agenda.

The very presence of international actors has an influence on the pathway a society takes. In the more extreme cases, international actors manipulate violence to further their own interests. Chapter 1 describes the growing trend of internationalization of

conflicts, as outside states finance or send military support for proxy wars in other countries.

In other cases, international actors contribute indirectly to the forces pushing toward violence, by failing to understand their own role in conflict dynamics. International actors bring their own expectations and ideas of what domestic action should look like, which are in turn shaped by their individual experiences and backgrounds. It can be difficult for international actors to "see" domestic institutions and relationships, especially if they are culturally and socially different from their own. This tension between formal structures, which are often more visible and understood by international actors, and the (usually) informal institutions and norms that govern daily life for much of society influences every aspect of the involvement of international actors: from who gets invited to the table for decision making to the information international actors receive and how international support is prioritized and directed. International actors can help to neutralize the impact of their presence by being aware of the biases they bring and the makeup of the society they are entering (Barron, Woolcock, and Diprose 2011).

In recent years, regional organizations have emerged as important international actors for peacebuilding. Regional actors have provided channels for navigating the effects of systemic risks such as broader political and economic trends and global issues such as trade, climate change, transnational crime or terrorism, or natural disasters. They also are taking more active roles in conflict mitigation and prevention. Regional actors are likely to have deeper interests in the outcomes, to have greater understanding of and interest in regional stability, and therefore to be seen as more legitimate mediators or conveners than multilateral actors. Countries at risk of violent conflict also are often more receptive to talking to neighbors and governments from the same region. However, regional actors are not without challenges. Regional organizations' mandates, capacity, and resources do not always match the demand for their support, or they may be perceived as partial

toward certain actors. Chapter 7 discusses these experiences in more detail.

International organizations face particular constraints in supporting national actors for violent conflict prevention, but nonetheless have found effective means to do so in some cases, working in concert with regional partners. Following on the principle of state sovereignty, as enshrined in the mandates and procedural rules of international organizations, international actors require an interlocutor at the national level in order to operate in any environment. This is almost always the national government. In turn, national governments may depend on international actors to supply the resources and in some cases technical capacity to ensure regime survival. This support can take many forms, including strengthening the security apparatus or targeted delivery of public services to certain constituencies on which the regime depends.

The terms of this mutually dependent relationship represent constraints on the agency of both parties, to differing degrees (Barnett and Zurcher 2010; Bøås et al. 2017). National governments encounter limits on the degree to which they can maintain stability through coercion and repression, lest they risk losing the external financial or military support that allows them to sustain power. Additionally, they must balance the demands of the constituencies that keep them in power with the requirements for international support. This dual accountability represents a critical dilemma for many states, especially when the nature of the demands makes it impossible to satisfy expectations from both international and domestic consistencies simultaneously (Englebert and Tüll 2008; Ghani and Lockhart 2008).

In turn, international actors' reliance on states as interlocutors for conflict prevention limits their room for maneuver, since their presence depends on the discretion of national governments. Any support they provide happens relative to the state's relationship with the constituencies that maintain it. Thus, international actors are often constrained in the degree to which they can engage nonstate actors who may be strong influences on the pathway. In cases where states derive support and legitimacy from

patronage systems that distribute favors and privileges to informal networks of elites rather than from formal institutions, international support may simply maintain these systems at the expense of broader institutional reform. In the process, international actors frequently opt for reinforcing these networks—especially when the state maintains them with minimal repression—over pressuring for the long-term reforms needed to ensure greater inclusion. Chapter 6 explores this dilemma further.

Understanding Risk and Opportunity

Different points along the pathways exhibit varying degrees of risk and present opportunities. The concept of risk has been well developed in the fields of disaster risk management and finance. It is generally understood as the probability of an event combined with the severity of its impact if it does occur (Hammond and Hyslop 2017, 17–18; OEWG 2016). Risk is mediated by the capacity to manage it. A central premise of the *World Development Report 2011* is that the capacity of institutions provides the necessary buffer for societies to manage risk and navigate conflict without violence (World Bank 2011).

Sometimes, risks can be relatively isolated. More often than not, however, risks are multidimensional and interconnected (box 3.4)— that is, they interact with other risks, which can increase not only the

probability of their occurrence, but also their impact if they do occur (Hammond and Hyslop 2017; OECD 2016). A drought can exacerbate food insecurity, which by itself may be manageable. However, if the risk posed by the drought combines with other risks—loss of livelihoods, perceived discrimination in the state response, or the presence of armed groups who can mobilize grievances—the overall risk of violence increases. The more risks are present or the more intense the risks are, the more they can strain the capacity of a society to respond effectively.

All along the pathways, societies experience shocks of different types. A shock is a neutral event. It can be understood simply as a change in the world that brings consequences of some kind (Hammond and Hyslop 2017). A shock may occur suddenly, in the form of a price spike, for example, or could unfold over time, such as a drought.

Most of the time, capable institutions weather shocks and a society stays on a peaceful path. However, in situations where risk is already high or multiple risks are present, shocks can act as triggers by causing a particular effect, such as violence. In these cases, the presence of multiple risks—or very intense risks—and a sudden shock overwhelms the capacity to manage them and triggers violence (box 3.5). For example, rainfall variability in certain climates may pose little risk by itself, but when it coincides with other risks,

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BOX 3.5 Economic Shocks and Violent Conflict

If not mitigated effectively, economic shocks can act as triggers for violence, especially in settings that are already at high risk. Studies examining the relationship between economic shocks and violent conflict yield mixed findings. Min et al. (2017) reviewed data for 161 countries during the 1995–2015 period and found a significant relationship between economic downturns and the onset of conflict. Similarly, in a study of 44 countries in Africa, Aguirre (2016) found that commodity price shocks had a significant effect on the onset of conflict. Similarly, Calì and Mulabdic (2017), in a study of developing countries between 1960 and 2010, found that an increase in a country's export prices increased the risk of intrastate conflict. However, Bazzi and Blattman (2014), in a global, longitudinal study of all low- and middle-income countries from 1957 to 2007, found that price shocks—even intense shocks in high-risk countries—had no significant effect on outbreak of conflict, but did have a mild, negative impact in countries where violent conflict was ongoing.

Three main theories guide the literature in this area. The "rapacity effect" theory posits that a sharp increase in the price of exports, especially capital-intensive products such as extractives, sparks violence because the benefits of the increase can be more easily appropriated (Bazzi and Blattman 2014). Calì and Mulabdic (2017) find support for this theory, as violence in their sample is more likely to be associated with increases in the price of natural resource exports. Others have argued that whether increased rents provide incentive for violence depends on the extent to which the state can control access to them (the "state-deterence theory"). If the state exerts control over resources, a price rise generates increased tax revenue, whereas if state control is weak, armed nonstate groups have greater incentive to appropriate resources (Dube and Vargas 2013; Fearon and Laitin 2003). According to the "opportunity cost" theory, economic shocks lower the risk of conflict by increasing the opportunity cost of participating in violence (Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Dal Bo and Dal Bo 2011). This is especially the case with changes in the price of agricultural products, which are more labor-intensive. For example, in Colombia, falling coffee prices were associated with increased violence in regions producing more coffee, while increasing oil prices coincided with higher

(Box continued next page)

levels of violence in municipalities where landowners sought to appropriate oil rents (Dube and Vargas 2013).

Economic shocks are more likely to trigger violence when they are not accompanied by mitigation measures. For example, Calì and Mulabdic (2017) find that countries with strong trading relationships with neighbor countries are less likely to experience violence associated with price shocks. These benefits can be enhanced when accompanied by measures to facilitate trade across borders, such as easing logistics or reducing transaction costs.

In some cases, economic shocks put increased pressure on governments to make up for lost resources. The state may struggle to pay civil servants or security forces or may need to make fiscal adjustments by slashing subsidies, which can cause a rapid increase in the price of basic goods. Accordingly, cuts in subsidies can be accompanied by a properly considered and communicated safety net program to buffer the impacts. Additionally, special provisions or protections may be needed for vulnerable groups, such as internally displaced people or minority groups.

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it can undermine the ability of institutions to cope. A study of the relationship between rainfall and civil conflict in 41 African countries between 1981 and 1999 concludes that civil conflict is more likely to occur following years of poor rainfall (Miguel, Satyanath, and Sergenti 2004). If shocks occur when conflict is already under way, they can exacerbate or prolong it (Bazzi and Blattman 2014).

The risks that societies face along their pathways can be exogenous or endogenous. Some *exogenous risks* arise from the systemic trends detailed in chapter 2, including climate change, advancements in information and communication technology (ICT), demographic shifts, or the increase in illicit trafficking. While these risks may originate outside national borders, they exert powerful impacts on national dynamics.

As noted in chapter 1, a key exogenous risk is that an increasing number of conflicts are internationalized, involving the direct assistance of an external state actor. In these situations, the knowledge that outside actors can, or might, intervene at any time influences the incentives of domestic actors to commit to peace or to disrupt stability (World Bank 2011).

Spillover effects of conflict from neighboring countries pose additional risks, including direct incursions from armed groups, increased availability of arms, disruption

of trade, and sudden and heavy flows of refugees across borders, among others (Min et al. 2017; World Bank 2011). These risks are more likely to overwhelm the capacity to mitigate them when other endogenous risks are present. In Central Africa, armed groups have exploited areas of weak governance to set up bases, recruit new members, and take advantage of looting opportunities (Raleigh et al. 2010). Likewise, extremist groups have often exploited the existence of internal divisions between identity groups and the lack of consistent or credible state presence to gain territory and support from local populations (ICG 2016). As another example, international illicit trafficking networks often capitalize on internal instability, buying off elites or offering financing to armed groups in exchange for the freedom to operate with impunity (Comolli 2017).

Institutional capacity can mitigate the impact of exogenous risks. For example, in Nicaragua, security reforms and relatively inclusive institutions built during the war and postwar period have been credited with stemming the influence of international drug trafficking networks in that country compared with its neighbors (Cruz 2011).[7] As another example, Calì and Mulabdic (2017) show that price shocks are less likely to coincide with violence when the country enjoys strong trade relationships with neighboring countries. This effect is enhanced

when governments take measures to facilitate trade—for example, by easing tariffs or logistics costs—and when trade policy is informed by analysis of the distribution of gains and losses across society, with specific focus on whether trade exacerbates existing societal cleavages.

Endogenous risks to peaceful pathways tend to emanate from relationships among actors and often involve the state in some way. Perhaps not surprising, grievances tend to arise in arenas where access to power, resources, and security is negotiated. Chapter 5 includes a rich discussion of these arenas and the risks and opportunities present in them.

Some of the most powerful *endogenous risks* relate to social, economic, and political exclusion of different social groups (box 3.6). Exclusionary systems that are perceived to privilege some groups at the expense of others[8] create fertile ground for violence. This is underscored by a growing body of literature arguing that policies promoting inclusion are a source of stability and legitimacy (Barnett 2006; Brinkerhoff 2007; Call 2008; Chesterman, Ignatieff, and Thakur 2004; Fukuyama 2004; Ghani and Lockhart 2008; Keating and Knight 2004; Stewart et al. 2006).

Cross-country studies consistently identify policies to promote inclusion as a key factor in reducing the risk of violence. Collier and Hoeffler (2004) find that stronger economic performance has a pacifying effect on countries by creating greater economic interdependence across groups. Call (2012, 99) applied mixed methods to study the causes of conflict recurrence in 15 countries, identifying exclusionary policies and behavior as the most important causal factor in 11 cases and chronic exclusion as important in 2 of the 15, concluding that exclusion is the "consistently most important" factor in violence relapse. Hegre et al. (2016) examined data from all countries between 1960 and 2013, drawing on the UCDP data set and on a set of five scenarios for policy choices drawn from the Shared Socio-Economic Pathways initiative (O'Neill et al. 2014), predicting that countries with higher levels of inequality face greater challenges in mitigating the risk of conflict as well as those associated with climate change. Similarly, Min et al. (2017) find that countries with policies to increase the participation of previously excluded groups, to influence government policy, and to increase political engagement during economic downturns experience less conflict. These findings build on prior work by Fearon (2010) and Fearon and Laitin (2013) emphasizing the importance of inclusive governance to mitigating the risk of conflict.

Gender inclusion, in particular, shows a robust, empirical relationship with peace, from the local to the international level (Caprioli and Tumbore 2003; Caprioli et al. 2007; Herbert 2017; Hudson et al. 2009). Governments of countries with more equitable gender relations, as measured by levels of violence against women, labor market participation, and income disparities, for example, are significantly less likely to initiate interstate conflict or escalate civil conflict (Hudson et al. 2012). In contrast, countries with higher levels of gender

inequality are associated not only with increased risk of international or civil war, but also with higher levels of violence in conflict (Caprioli and Boyer 2001).

Inclusion of youth also strongly affects a society's pathway. Societies that offer youth opportunities to participate in the political and economic realms and routes for social mobility tend to experience less violence (Idris 2016; Paasonen and Urdal 2016). With the youth population increasing globally, the ability to harness the energy and potential of youth presents a strong opportunity to realize a "demographic dividend" (UN Security Council 2016b). This topic is explored in depth in chapter 4.

Other forms of exclusion that heighten the risk of conflict relate to relationships between central states and populations located on geographic or political peripheries within a state. Subnational conflicts of this nature are on the rise in various regions, especially Asia, Europe, and the Middle East as well as Sub-Saharan Africa (Colletta and Oppenheim 2017; Parks, Colletta, and Oppenheim 2013). These conflicts tend to revolve around center-periphery tensions, with a subregion opposing a state-building project or responding to exclusion from political and economic systems. They are increasingly common in middle-income countries (World Bank 2016).

Center-periphery tensions tend to be rooted in historical patterns of exclusion and are therefore heavily entrenched in state institutions. For a variety of reasons, states often deem the costs of integrating peripheral regions via improved infrastructure or services to be too high for the potential benefits it could bring (Keister 2014). Some peripheral regions continue to receive minimal investment as part of colonial legacies of neglect of certain areas that were previously buffer zones between rival powers. In many cases, populations in peripheral areas are minorities with strong, separate cultural identities, who were forcibly incorporated into national structures during moments of state consolidation. In these cases, populations may resist efforts by the state to forge a national identity or to consolidate power as existential threats to

ethnic identity (Parks, Colletta, and Oppenheim 2013).

Exclusion along center-periphery lines not only fuels conflict with the state, but also creates fertile ground for other forms of violence to emerge and escalate, including localized intercommunal and intra-elite violence. In some cases, center-periphery conflicts have become interlinked with cross-border violence and large-scale internationalized conflicts as well (Colletta and Oppenheim 2017; Parks, Colletta, and Oppenheim 2013).

Many peripheral regions fall into the category of "alternatively governed spaces" as discussed in box 3.3. In these cases, integration efforts can exacerbate instability if they disturb the existing power balances between the vested interests in peripheral regions (Keister 2014).

Prevention and Sustaining Peace: Building Peaceful Pathways

Understanding the pathways and the ways in which risk and opportunity manifest along them helps to better define prevention. At its core, prevention is the process of influencing systems so that it is *easier* for actors to forge a pathway toward peace, by reinforcing the elements of the system pulling toward peace and mitigating the elements that push it toward violent conflict. This proactive approach is in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the UN sustaining peace resolutions. Consistent with the framework of the *World Development Report 2017*, prevention requires a rethinking of the process in which state and nonstate actors make decisions and negotiate different outcomes to create the mechanisms needed for them to commit, cooperate, and coordinate along peaceful pathways (World Bank 2017).

Effective prevention requires a delicate balancing of efforts to address risks that may provoke crises in the short term, while maintaining the necessary attention to deeper structural and institutional risks. Many times, immediate measures are needed to manage shocks or alter the calculus of actors—a cease-fire, an elite bargain,

or sanctions to prevent violence from escalating. The challenge for all societies is to monitor and mitigate these risks, while not losing sight of the sustained investments in institutional reform and addressing the underlying risks, especially those associated with inequalities and exclusion. These underlying risks are taken up in more detail in chapter 4.

Addressing underlying risks and enhancing the capacity to mitigate shocks entail tackling institutional reform. Risk and opportunity tend to accumulate in critical spaces, which this study calls arenas of contestation, where access to power, resources, services, and security are determined. Institutional reform is the entry point for addressing risk in the arenas; this issue is discussed in detail in chapter 5. As chapter 6 explains, all countries that significantly reduced violent conflict eventually undertook institutional reform to manage risk.

Drawing on the framework presented here, five key implications are evident:

First, prevention entails promoting favorable structural conditions, where possible, by fostering a social and political environment where the deeper drivers of conflict can be addressed (Giessman 2017). As chapter 4 argues, many of today's conflicts are rooted in perceptions of exclusion related to inequalities across groups. Addressing these and the narratives that often form around them is critical. The 2030 Agenda provides a framework for addressing some of these issues.

Second, prevention means shaping incentives for peace. This can happen both through institutions, as they change their rules and policies, and through key decisions by influential actors. As noted earlier, broad institutional changes often take years, if not decades. That said, sometimes measures that signal bigger changes can send powerful messages to the population and influence the behavior of actors quickly, even if the reforms take much longer to take full effect. Domestic institutions play a central role here, both in mitigating conflict and in sanctioning violent behavior. For example, governments have sent strong messages of change by announcing power-sharing arrangements

or nominating a member of an opposition party to the governing administration, adopting reforms that equalize spending across geographic regions, or launching new grievance-redress mechanisms (World Bank 2011). Chapter 5 develops this argument in more detail.

Third, actions that influence short-term decisions by actors are a very important part of a prevention strategy. Decisions by actors alter incentive structures. Mediation efforts can immediately influence the calculus of armed actors, encouraging them to commit to a cease-fire or peace settlement, for example. These are especially important in conveying a change in direction in situations where violence has already escalated and addressing the short-term incentives for violence during a crisis. Promoting peaceful narratives can also play a big role in creating incentives for peace, as chapter 4 explains. Chapter 6 explores how domestic actors have mobilized incentives for peacebuilding.

Fourth, shaping incentives for peace also requires a strong focus on arenas where access to power, resources, and security are contested. These arenas define who has access to political power and representation, natural resources (in particular, land and extractives), security and justice, and basic services. Because existing power dynamics determine access to these arenas, prevention means making the arenas more inclusive, particularly to groups that have traditionally been left out of decision-making processes, especially women and youth. However, as chapter 5 notes, reform in the arenas is often fraught with setbacks and backlashes, as groups who hold power do not often relinquish it easily.

Fifth, systemic prevention is very important. In today's globalized world, systemic trends like climate change, demographic shifts, advancements in ICT, and the rise of transnational criminal networks present risks and opportunities that must be managed carefully. It is necessary to energize global coalitions to tackle systemic risks and take advantage of the opportunities posed by today's global trends. This subject is discussed further in chapter 8.

Scenarios for Pathways to Peace or Violence

Effective prevention has a strong temporal dimension. Not everything can—or should—be done at once. Rather, the scale and nature of prevention changes along a society's pathway. Prevention requires flexibility, adaptability, and a good sense of the right timing and sequencing. Prevention also relies on systematic monitoring of risks and their potential interactions, in order to address underlying and emerging risks and preempt and manage shocks.

Every decision point along the pathway presents trade-offs that must be managed carefully. For example, stability and a cease-fire today can open the space for movement toward a sustainable peace in the future. Likewise, short-term crisis prevention to avert violence may postpone, or even undermine, efforts to make the structural changes for sustained peace. Long-term efforts to develop institutions and mechanisms that will systematically address previously identified social, economic, and political factors contributing to conflict and create resilience toward outbreaks of collective violence should be done in parallel with identifying and providing timely response to emerging risks. Ideally, prevention efforts represent a continuum of mutually reinforcing actions, from early monitoring and action on risks, to consistent strengthening of social resilience to invest in peace for future generations.

In *environments of emerging risks*, the greatest number of options are still on the table, and medium- to long-term policies can have an important impact. For domestic actors, dealing with underlying and emerging risks entails development planning that will address structural imbalances contributing to social polarization and establishing inclusive systems of risk assessment and response. The 2030 Agenda provides multiple entry points to address several risks. To ensure sustainability of these efforts, the reform of existing legislation and institutions and, potentially, the creation of new ones are needed to bolster resilience against risk of violence. Institutional safeguards can enable the monitoring of grievances and their potential for mobilization as well as efforts to address violence and norms that tolerate it, especially against at-risk groups, such as women, children, and minorities. However, prevention may be more difficult to sell politically because actors see the payoffs as relatively low.

Among the international actors, development actors have the widest space to maneuver in environments with emerging risks because the security situation has not deteriorated to the extent that it limits their activities. To address underlying and emerging risk, indicators of conflict risk can be embedded within broader monitoring of macroeconomic trends, paying special attention to countries with structural factors associated with risk of violence, such as high dependence on aid or natural resources. In these moments, conflict-sensitive development policies will have the most impact in mitigating the risk of violence. International political and security actors have a smaller presence in these environments.

In *high-risk contexts*, risks have intensified or compounded to the point that they are picked up by early warning systems. For domestic actors, the incentives for violence are tangible, and the opportunity costs for engaging in violence are decreasing. Meanwhile, the incentives to reverse course are less evident, contributing to an overall environment of uncertainty. In these situations, a failure to prevent violence can lead to permanent losses in social and economic development. This is where diplomatic efforts and local-level mediation are central, but development action can also play a strong role by signaling willingness by the state to change its stance and restore confidence among the population. Do-no-harm, conflict-sensitive approaches take on greater salience in these situations.

In *contexts of open violence*, preventing escalation of violence takes priority. In many cases, efforts are focused on mitigating the impact of violence on civilians, the economy, and state institutions—once a state has collapsed or atrocities have been committed, violence is often irreversible in the short term. In these situations,

development actors often halt or cease operations in high-risk areas; yet, maintaining development projects is critical for buffering populations against the risk of violence. In these moments, it is critical for development actors to identify ways to work through local partners and to employ more flexible delivery systems, in order to ensure a minimum of basic service delivery.

Finally, in *contexts where violence is halted*, preventing recurrence is paramount. This is the time where the window of opportunity reopens, providing some space for structural factors to be addressed and institutions to be rebuilt. However, the forces of path dependence remain strong. During this time, it is essential to restore trust and confidence by rebuilding the core functions of the state. Often, reforms are needed in arenas of contestation where conflict has played out (for example, land or security sector reform). Attention needs to be given to addressing the grievances of particular groups, especially those mobilized during the conflict, including former combatants, as well as to the processes of accountability and reconciliation, including the prosecution of war crimes. Taking on illicit economies that can fuel the resurgence of conflict is also essential, though more likely to be effective through global coalitions.

Preventing recurrence in conflict-affected environments requires sustained attention and resources from international actors, because conflict has, in most cases, overwhelmed the capacity and legitimacy of many domestic actors to take the actions needed to address conflict drivers. Preventing recurrence is where special financing facilities can have an important impact.

Conclusion

Investing in prevention of violent conflict requires a long-term view of how violent conflict emerges and evolves in societies in order to identify and act on appropriate entry points. The organizing framework presented here helps to define how societies shape unique pathways toward different

outcomes as they manage the forces pushing for peace or violence. The pathway is formed by the decisions of actors, who respond to the structural factors and incentives present in society.

Within this framework, prevention is a process of building systems where actors are more likely to choose peaceful pathways, by taking advantage of favorable structural factors or mitigating the impacts of unfavorable ones, building incentive structures that encourage peace, and containing violence when it does occur. The longer and more intentionally a society has built a path toward peace, the higher the probability that it will stay on that path. The scope and nature of possible actions changes along the pathway, in response to the risks and opportunities that are present at different moments.

Drawing on this understanding of violence, prevention of violence, and risk, the study turns next to a deeper discussion of some of the factors and processes that often push actors toward violence. In particular, understanding the relationships among groups in a society and their perceptions of whether they are treated fairly is key to understanding the risk of violence. Chapter 4 looks deeply at what makes people fight and the importance of exclusion, inequality, and perceptions of unfairness.

Notes

1. See UN General Assembly (2015, 2016) and UN Security Council (2016a).
2. Comparing the historical periods of pre- and post-1945, Fearon and Laitin (2013) find that the experience of an "extra-state" (imperial or colonial) war pre-1945 is associated with an increase in the occurrence of intrastate war in later years. Intrastate war pre-1945 was not associated with violent conflict after 1945.
3. A cognitive tax is a metaphor for stresses that compromise mental resources.
4. On Latin America, see Briscoe, Perdomo, and Burcher (2014); on Afghanistan, see Felbab-Brown (2017).
5. In Peter Evans' formulation, "informal structures of power and practice render the formal structures ineffectual" (Evans 2004).

6. For sake of convenience, international private sector actors are discussed together with domestic private sector actors in the "private sector" section of this chapter.

7. Drug flows have increased through Nicaragua in recent years, calling the long-term sustainability of this situation into question.

8. Galtung (1969) defines these conditions as "structural violence."

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