The Research Implications of the Report on Stopping War

Elliot Short, 2021

In 2020, I wrote a report documenting 101 successful efforts to directly reduce armed conflict that took place between 1990 and 2020. The selection encompassed a wide range of initiatives, providing a unique insight into global efforts to build a peaceful world by reducing immediate violence and ultimately demonstrating that war can be stopped. In this article, I provide a brief overview of the cases, highlight some key observations, and raise the most pressing questions that the report raises. I contend that the report adds to a growing body evidence demonstrating that IGOs and peace operations stop wars and should be supported, before considering why I could find so few good examples of local initiatives that directly stopped wars. I conclude the article with a recommendation that future research should focus on developing our understanding of how external and local efforts to reduce armed conflict can cooperate most effectively.

Executive Summary

The 101 cases documented in *Stopping War* cover several geographic and thematic areas and can be broken down in many different ways.

- Intergovernmental organisations were involved in 80 of the 101 successful efforts to stop war, national governments contributed to 45, 12 were carried out by local people and organisations, and international non-governmental organisations directly contributed to 9 of the cases.

- The report includes 42 examples of peace operations that have stopped wars, 28 successful efforts to mediate the end of an armed conflict, 21 cases in which diplomacy prevented conflict, 18 examples in which third-party mediation has helped

to contain a conflict, 12 cases in which civil society or community organisations directly contributed to stopping war, and 10 potentially volatile disputes that were resolved by international mechanisms for arbitration.

- Just 17 cases covered examples of interstate conflict; the other 84 cases were examples of intrastate conflicts that were stopped.
- There are 33 cases of conflict prevention, 33 efforts which ended a war, 19 examples where a conflict relapse was prevented, 9 cases in which a conflict was frozen or contained, and 7 examples of measures that have limited the impact of armed conflict.
- Of the 101 cases, 73 were collaborative initiatives while 28 were carried out by a single organisation.
- Of the 101 cases, 42 were in Africa, 24 were in Asia-Pacific, 16 were in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the 19 were in Eastern Europe and Western Europe and Others combined.

Intergovernmental organisations stop wars. In an era when many historic supporters of these organisations have withdrawn their support, it is imperative to recognise that if funding for these organisations continues to decline and mechanisms that could replace them are not developed, we will be faced with more wars. Future research should focus on:

- What can IGOs with modest resources or a limited institutional history learn from long-standing organisations with a demonstrable record of success?
- What parallel initiatives at the bilateral, national, and local level informed, shaped, or facilitated the successes experienced by IGOs in their efforts to reduce armed conflict?
- Given the evidence demonstrating that IGOs can reduce armed conflict, what are the implications for the apparent decline in international support for maintaining them?
- What can donors and researchers do to encourage cross-party support for maintaining relevant IGOs in the interest of reducing armed conflict?

Peace operations (peacekeeping, observation, verification, special political missions, and multi-dimensional missions) stop wars. Lessons must be taken from past failures, but the evidence does not justify the poor reputation that such interventions have among the media, wider public, and in some policy circles. Future research should focus on:

- What are the main barriers preventing peace operations from receiving the resources they need to fulfil the mandates that they are given?
- Given the mounting evidence demonstrating that peace operations do stop wars, why does peacekeeping continue to be portrayed so poorly?
- How does the sequencing of certain capabilities and mandates impact the success of peace operations?
- Do ad-hoc, single-use peace operations represent an efficient, effective, and sustainable means of stopping wars, or do they threaten to undermine broader efforts to reduce armed conflict?

Despite my best efforts, I was unable to track down more than 12 good examples of successful locally led efforts that directly stopped war. This raises many questions about the role and place of such initiatives in efforts to stop war. Future research should focus on:

- How many good examples of successful local efforts to stop war can be found by a more thorough investigation, how are they documented, and how can this be improved?
- Without parallel international efforts, are local efforts to reduce armed conflict simply too powerless to stop unaccountable leaders resorting to violence to achieve their ambitions?
- Could the multitude of successful IGO initiatives have effectively stopped the wars that they did without the complementary peacebuilding actions of local communities?
- How should different responsibilities within a peace process be divided between the local and the external, and how should this allocation evolve over time?
- How can legitimate and accountable local actors and organisations be identified to work alongside external interventions without doing harm or rushing to potentially destabilising elections?

Introduction

With its expansive geographic scope and a unique focus on actions which directly stopped armed conflict, *Stopping War: 101 Cases of Successful Efforts to Reduce Armed Conflict* is an unprecedented document. To the best of my knowledge, no other works have presented

such an extensive and varied illustration of how people and organisations have successfully managed to stop wars and reduce armed conflict. The primary purpose of the report is to provide a relatively concise body of evidence which demonstrates that war can be stopped. By focusing on the period 1990-2020, the cases documented in *Stopping War* are relevant to contemporary policy and can help inform future efforts to reduce armed conflict.

Based exclusively on desk research conducted within a relatively short timeframe at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, the report is not the product of an exhaustive investigation. Instead, the 101 cases represent the most compelling examples that I could find in online archives, media reportage, and the academic literature to demonstrate where and how war has been stopped. As a result, the selection of cases is not an accurate cross-section of global efforts to stop wars and developing conclusions based on the quantitative assessment of them is problematic. Due to these factors, this article is limited to highlighting some key insights and exploring their implications for contemporary policy and future research. It begins with a broad overview of the cases in *Stopping War*, before exploring three of what I judge to be the most significant observations in more depth: intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) play an unparalleled role in reducing armed conflict, peace operations stop wars, and finding good examples of local efforts to directly stop wars is difficult.

The report documents 101 efforts that directly contributed to stopping war. Gathering these cases required identifying situations in which an ongoing armed conflict was ended (or at least contained), or disputes which threatened to erupt into armed conflict were prevented from doing so. These criteria imposed some restrictions on what cases are included, such as development programmes and peacebuilding initiatives aimed at addressing the "root causes" of conflict, but they also offered some latitude to be relatively generous with what constituted a success. Deploying military observers to a contested boundary for half a century or more to prevent an interstate rivalry from escalating into war could be regarded as a failure by certain metrics as it has not resolved the underlying conflict itself. However, if the presence of such observers has helped to prevent a dispute from escalating into violence, provided mechanisms for ongoing dialogue between the belligerents, and facilitated de-escalation if and when the dispute does turn violent, it is considered a success for the purposes of *Stopping War* as it has directly reduced armed conflict.

Overview of the cases

The cases in *Stopping War* are drawn from across the planet. There are 42 examples of successful efforts to reduce armed conflict in Africa, 24 from Asia-Pacific, 16 from Latin America and the Caribbean, and 19 from Eastern Europe and Western Europe and Others combined. This broad selection encompasses 33 successful efforts to prevent armed conflict, 33 initiatives that successfully ended a war, 19 situations in which a conflict relapse was prevented, 9 conflicts which have been frozen or contained by an intervention, and 7 examples of measures that have either reduced the likelihood, frequency, or impact of armed conflict in a given area.

The report covers 17 examples of interstate conflicts that have been stopped. Of these cases, 9 were territorial disputes stemming from colonial-era boundaries that were peacefully resolved, 6 were armed conflicts that were contained by peace operations, and 2 were initiatives aimed at reducing cross-border conflicts between local communities which threatened to escalate into interstate conflict. Of the 17 examples, 9 were prevented before they escalated into war and 8 were resolved or contained after armed conflict had broken out. The rest of the wars covered in the report were intrastate conflicts. As direct war between states is increasingly rare, this balance of cases is in line with broader trends in the evolution of armed conflict.[1]

Most of the cases in the report were carried out by a range of actors working alongside each other to stop war: of a total of 101, just 28 were carried out by a single organisation. Almost all of these single-handed efforts were implemented by an IGO (21) or national government (6) successfully mediating a peace agreement or deploying an effective peace operation, with the work of the National Dialogue Quartet in Tunisia representing the only case of the 28 that was implemented by a single organisation working below this level. Of the 101 cases, IGOs were involved in a total of 80, making them the most prolific type of organisation that is included in *Stopping War* by a considerable margin. While national governments were involved in 45 of the cases documented in the report, often alongside IGOs, international non-governmental organisations contributed to just 9 of the examples in *Stopping War*.

As with the actors involved in efforts to reduce armed conflict, in most cases a multitude of approaches combined to successfully stop war. Categorising these approaches precisely is difficult as many of the initiatives developed and changed over time, but it is possible to present some broad groupings. The report includes 42 examples of peace operations (a term

encompassing peacekeeping, verification, observation, special political, and multidimensional missions) that have successfully contributed to stopping wars and reducing armed conflict. When viewed together, these represent the most frequently cited type of initiative documented in the report. In addition, there are 21 cases when diplomacy has helped to prevent war, 18 in which mediation has helped to contain a conflict, and 28 where an ongoing armed conflict has been brought to an end with the signing of a peace agreement, often after years of negotiations facilitated and mediated by third-parties. A total of 10 cases illustrate how mechanisms for international arbitration have resolved conflicts or prevented war, with most of these examples being carried out by the International Court of Justice (ICJ). In addition, there are 12 examples of locally led efforts included in the report, along with 4 cases in which the introduction of early warning systems has reduced armed conflict, and 2 cases in which transitional justice has demonstrably reduced the risk of a conflict relapse in the aftermath of war.

Intergovernmental Organisations Stop Wars

In 1795, Emmanuel Kant offered his vision for how a world free from armed conflict could be created in his essay *Perpetual Peace*. He argued that republican government (democracy), economic interdependence, and a covenant of peace (international law and organisations) represented three key pillars that together could achieve lasting peace.[2] Over two centuries later, certain aspects of the "Kantian peace" have arguably been validated by the decline in interstate conflict since the Second World War. Although many factors have undoubtedly contributed to the decline of this specific kind of conflict, a growing body of research highlights the important role of international organisations in this process. The most active and influential of the international organisations working to reduce armed conflict are IGOs, entities that are created 'by treaty, involving two or more nations, to work in good faith, on issues of common interest.'[3] There are currently approximately 250 IGOs in existence (making them more numerous than states) spanning every major field of international relations.[4] In the last few decades, the original mandates of many IGOs have been revised and expanded to encompass responsibilities such as maintaining peace and stability within certain regions and even upholding the constitutional order and electoral process within member states.[5] This gradual evolution has placed IGOs at the forefront of international efforts to reduce both interstate and intrastate armed conflicts. The 80 cases of successful IGO contributions documented in the report build upon a growing body of scholarship which demonstrates that such organisations do help to stop war by illustrating a wide range of

approaches and methods which have been employed in the last three decades to reduce both interstate and intrastate armed conflict. The following section highlights the relevant cases from the report and positions them in the wider literature on IGOs, before providing some suggestions for future research.

The IGOs that stopped wars

As might be expected, the UN has prevented, contained, or ended more armed conflicts than any other IGO. It has had a hand in stopping wars in Cyprus (1964-present), Namibia (1989-1990), Nicaragua (1989-1992), Cambodia (1991-1993), Western Sahara (1991-present), South Africa (1992-1994), Mozambique (1992-1994), El Salvador (1992-1996), FYR Macedonia (1993-1999), Georgia/Abkhazia (1993-2008), Guatemala (1994-2004), Tajikistan (1994-1997), Croatia (1995-2002), Papua New Guinea/Bougainville (1998-2005), France/New Caledonia (1998-present), Sierra Leone (1999-2005), Kosovo (1999-present), Guyana (2003-2006), Liberia (2003-2018), Côte d'Ivoire (2003-2017), Burundi (2004-2006), Haiti (2004-present), Nepal (2007-2011), Kenya (2008), Guinea (2009), Timor-Leste (1999-2012), Malawi (2011-2012), Madagascar (2013), Nigeria (2015), and Guinea-Bissau (2015-2016); and between India and Pakistan (1949-present), Israel and Syria (1974-present), Chad and Libya (1990-1994), Cameroon and Nigeria (1994-2006), Eritrea and Ethiopia (2000-2008), Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (2014-present), and Burundi and Tanzania (2017-2019).

The African Union (AU) and its predecessor, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), have helped to end or prevent wars in South Africa (1989-1993), Comoros (1997-2008), Burundi (2000-2006), Liberia (2003-2018), Kenya (2007-2008), Côte d'Ivoire (2007-2017), Zimbabwe (2008-2009), Guinea (2008-2010), Madagascar (2009-2014), South Sudan (2015-present), The Gambia (2017-present), Lesotho (2017-2018); and between Chad and Libya (1987-1994), Cameroon and Nigeria (1994-2006), Eritrea and Ethiopia (1998-2000), and Botswana and Namibia (1999-2018). These efforts were complemented by the work of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Sierra Leone (1999-2001), Liberia (2003), Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea (2007-2011), Guinea-Bissau (2012-2020), and The Gambia (2017-present); the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in Zimbabwe (2008-2009), Lesotho (2017-2018), and Madagascar (2009-2014); the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in South Sudan

(2015-present) and the Horn of Africa (2002-present); and the Economic Community of Central African States in São Tomé and Príncipe (2003).

Despite its primary function as a trading bloc, the European Union (EU) and its predecessor, the European Community (EC), have made noteworthy efforts to preventing or ending wars across the world. Successful European contributions to reducing armed conflict include the Soviet Union (1989-1991), South Africa (1992), Croatia (1995), Guatemala (1999), FYR Macedonia (2001), Bosnia and Herzegovina (1995-present), Indonesia/Aceh (2005-2012), Moldova/Transnistria (2005-present), Georgia/Abkhazia (2008-present), Kosovo (2008-present), Guinea-Bissau (2012-2016), and Colombia (2012-2016). The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and its predecessor, the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), have also helped to reduce armed conflict in the Soviet Union (1989-1991), Moldova/Transnistria (1992-present), Estonia (1993-1997), FYR Macedonia (1993-2001), Tajikistan (1994-1997), Georgia/Abkhazia (1994-present), Bosnia and Herzegovina (1995-present), Albania (1997-1998), Kosovo (1999-present), and Kyrgyzstan (2010). Similarly, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) helped to prevent armed conflict in Macedonia (2001) and kept the peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1995-2004) and Kosovo (1999-present).

The Organization of American States (OAS) has helped to stop wars in Suriname (1989-2004), Guatemala (1999), and Guyana (2006); and between Honduras and Nicaragua (1999-2001), Belize and Guatemala (2000-2008), Colombia, Venezuela, and Ecuador (2008), and Costa Rica and Nicaragua (2010-2011). The Confederation of Independent States (CIS) contributed to the peace in Tajikistan (1993-2000) and Georgia/Abkhazia (1994-1998); the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) helped consolidate peace in Indonesia/Aceh (2005-2012); and the Commonwealth contributed to the peaceful resolution of crises in South Africa (1992-1993), Solomon Islands (1999-2000), and Guyana (2006). In addition to actions by major IGOs such as these, several other international forums have served to stop wars. The Inter-Tajik Dialogue in Tajikistan and the International Contact Group on Liberia helped to end major armed conflicts in those countries, while the signatories of the Rio de Janeiro Protocol ended the 1995 war between Ecuador and Peru and the Rio Group provided a mechanism for the 2008 Andes Crisis to be resolved peacefully.

The potential for IGOs to have a meaningful impact on stopping war is considered in a growing body of scholarship, much of which has emerged in the aftermath of the Cold War. In response to the publication of *An Agenda for Peace* in 1992, the Australian government sponsored a report on how 'international regimes' and IGOs could most effectively manage armed conflict in the emerging political landscape. Written by Gareth Evans, Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs 1988-1996, *Cooperating for Peace: The Global Agenda for the 1990s and Beyond* illustrates how IGOs serve as a key mechanism 'to create the kind of deep and durable relationships which make conflict improbable' and already played 'more specific peace building roles' when conflicts erupted.[6] The book documents a range of approaches which IGOs should employ to stop wars (such as preventive diplomacy and deployment, peace-making, peacekeeping, and sanctions) and calls for the establishment of 'broad, regional agendas' for cooperation and the creation of 'mechanisms for the non-violent resolution of conflict.'[7]

As the pursuit of peace was incorporated into the mandates of existing and newly established IGOs throughout the 1990s and 2000s, the question of whether such organisations do indeed create a more peaceful world was considered in dozens of studies encompassing a range of disciplines and perspectives. In 1998, Bruce Russett, John R. Oneal and David R. Davis attempted to put the criteria presented in *Perpetual Peace* to the test by conducting an extensive statistical analysis of armed conflict in the period 1950-1985. They found that shared membership of IGOs reduced the likelihood of war between states by 23 percent, a figure which increased to 35 percent if both states were fully democratic.[8] The same year, Connie Peck provided further insights in *Sustainable Peace: The Role of the UN and Regional Organizations in Preventing Conflict*, a significant report sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Peck argues that 'the building blocks of sustainable peace and security are well-functioning local, state, regional, and international systems of governance, which are responsive to basic human needs' before assessing the role of various IGOs in promoting sustainable peace.[9] A key finding of her work was that regional IGOs may have an advantage over the UN with regard to legitimacy due to 'the Security Council's wide range of coercive powers, and the perennial concern over Great Power domination.'[10] In 1999, Oneal and Russett expanded the scope of their previous study to the years 1885-1992, finding that although the impact of IGOs was 'more modest' in this timeframe, shared membership of IGOs still reduced the likelihood of armed conflict between states by 18 percent.[11] In another study conducted four years later, Oneal, Russett, and Michael L.

Berbaum showed how shared membership in multiple IGOs decreases the likelihood of interstate conflict and promotes commerce between members, reducing the chance of war even further.[12]

Research on the "Kantian peace" laid the foundations for more focussed assessments of the role and potential of IGOs. In 2004, Charles Boehmer, Erik Gartzke and Timothy Nordstrom found that some IGOs do help to reduce armed conflict, particularly those that are 'well-institutionalized' and enjoy 'a mandate to engage in security diplomacy.'[13] Their overall conclusion, however, is somewhat cautious: 'Do intergovernmental organizations promote peace? It depends.'[14] In 2006, Russett and Jon Pevehouse showed that 'IGOs comprised principally of states with democratic governments are strongly and consistently associated with a lower risk of fatal militarized disputes among their constituent states.'[15] Their findings were corroborated by a similar study published in the same year by Andreas Hasenclever and Brigitte Weiffen, which concluded that 'Interdemocratic institutions seem to be particularly suited to block escalation pathways and to prevent conflicts from resulting in war.'[16] A 2008 study by Han Dorussen and Hugh Ward suggests that in addition to reducing armed conflict on their own account, IGOs also create network ties between states which allow them, either individually or collectively, to intervene more effectively in armed conflicts.[17] The following year, Megan Shannon showed that international organisations (rather than IGOs specifically) 'are indeed effective in brokering negotiations' and 'are valuable for encouraging international involvement in members' conflicts.'[18] In 2010, Shannon, Daniel Morey, and Frederick Boehmke examined the years 1950-2000 to assess how international organisations impacted the length of wars, finding that they decreased 'the duration of international conflicts by mitigating commitment problems and encouraging combatants to cease hostilities more quickly.'[19]

Many works focus on individual IGOs and their place in the international system. Indeed, Routledge alone has 151 titles in its book series on Global Institutions, including assessments of IGOs which work to build peace such as Rodrigo Tavares' *Regional Security: The capacity of international organizations*.[20] By examining the capabilities of eleven major regional IGOs, Tavares illustrates how a growing spectrum of regional organisations have emerged, often with encouragement from the UN, to assist in the global effort to reduce armed conflict. In a 2012 study, Eileen Babbitt provides a detailed analysis of the conflict prevention activities of the OSCE, OAS, Commonwealth, and UN, detailing the different

ways in which these IGOs have successfully stopped wars.[21] In 2012, Jaroslav Tir and Johannes Karreth began investigating the impact of IGOs on intrastate conflict. They found that highly structured IGOs help to prevent the escalation of low-level armed conflicts within states, thereby significantly reducing the likelihood of civil wars.[22] Six years later, they presented their findings from a much more thorough investigation in *Incentivizing Peace: How International Organizations Can Help Prevent Civil Wars in Member Countries.* They argue that 'international institutional structures are a key factor in preventing civil war' and note that the chances of armed conflict within a state declines if that state is a member of multiple IGOs with conflict management functions.[23] They also highlight how highly structured IGOs, including development banks and trade organisations that can incentivise peace alongside more traditional security organisations, are most effective at reducing armed conflict.[24]

Despite the growing body of evidence proving how important IGOs are for reducing armed conflict, the future of such institutions is uncertain. From Brexit and the financial cuts to IGO funding introduced by the Trump administration, to OAS entanglement in Bolivia's ongoing constitutional crisis and the recent disintegration of the Pacific Islands Forum, IGOs are facing unprecedented existential challenges. Should policymakers continue to utilise IGOs as a scapegoat for domestic failings, present them as unnecessary and restrictive economic burdens, or abuse them to achieve foreign policy goals, the capacity of such organisations to reduce armed conflict will be severely undermined. Approximately 40 percent of IGOs established since 1815 have been formally dissolved or ceased functioning after their founding treaties expired or as a result of drops in financial or political support.[25] Allowing contemporary IGOs that work to reduce armed conflict to fall apart without viable mechanisms to replace them presents a genuine threat to peace.

The *Stopping War* report shows that IGOs help to reduce armed conflict, providing 80 cases that demonstrate where and how this has been done. The report reiterates and reinforces the findings of previous research, showing that IGOs represent an effective vehicle for reducing armed conflict. To achieve a more peaceful world, they should be sustained and improved as institutions, and politically supported by member states and the wider public.

Peace Operations Stop Wars

The practice of deploying multinational contingents of military personnel to achieve or preserve peace is one of the most direct ways that IGOs have helped to reduce armed conflict.

From relatively humble beginnings in the decades immediately after the Second World War, peace operations now span a wide spectrum of activities, ranging from heavily armed missions designed to overmatch the belligerents in a conflict and "enforce" peace to the deployment of small teams of unarmed military observers to verify ceasefires, gather information, and facilitate dialogue. Contemporary peace operations often extend beyond the military sphere, encompassing significant police and civilian components to form "multi-dimensional" missions. In some cases, duties are limited to advisory and oversight functions. In others, peace operations are tasked with strengthening state institutions, protecting human rights, and overseeing the electoral process. Many of the UN's current missions face an even wider range of challenges, with peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Mali, and South Sudan being tasked with accomplishing increasingly complex mandates (from providing security to millions of refugees to combatting armed extremist groups) with extremely limited resources.

The sheer range of responsibilities that have, over time, come to fall within the purview of peace operations inspired UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to commission the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) to review 'special political missions' and 'the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects' with an overall goal of strengthening the UN system.[26] In its 2015 report, the Panel recommends discontinuing the use of binary distinctions between "peacekeeping" and "special political" missions and advocates a conceptual shift towards a 'flexible spectrum' of peace operations which can be tailored to the specific context of each armed conflict.[27] With 42 examples of armed conflicts that were prevented, contained, or ended by peace operations, the *Stopping War* report serves to highlight some of the approaches which can inform those that are included on the spectrum proposed by the HIPPO.

The widespread use of these militarised operations has not come without scandal. Major failures in Angola, Somalia, Rwanda, and Bosnia and Herzegovina during the 1990s (along with the ongoing criminal behaviour of peacekeepers in some contemporary operations), has engendered widespread scepticism of the UN and peace operations more broadly. These failures have combined with concerns regarding the colonial overtones and ethical ambiguity of some international interventions to stimulate an expansive debate on the suitability of peace operations as a means for reducing armed conflict. The 42 examples that are documented in *Stopping War* do not contribute much to resolving this ethical dilemma;

instead, they provide some historic cases which demonstrate that peace operations have worked in the past and can be successful in the future. These cases help to illustrate the findings of a growing body of scholarship which demonstrates that peace operations are indeed effective agents for reducing armed conflict, particularly when they meet certain criteria. The following section highlights which operations were included in *Stopping War* and considers how these cases fit with the existing literature, before presenting some recommendations for future research.

The Peace Operations that stopped wars

As with the broader efforts of IGOs to reduce armed conflict, the UN has carried out most of the successful peace operations included in the *Stopping War* report. UN missions have successfully contributed to ending, containing, or preventing war in Cyprus (1964-present), Namibia (1989-1990), Nicaragua (1990), El Salvador (1990-1996), Western Sahara (1991-present), Cambodia (1992-1993), South Africa (1992-1994), Mozambique (1992-1994), FYR Macedonia (1993-1999), Croatia (1994-2002), Georgia/Abkhazia (1993-2008), Guatemala (1994-2004), Papua New Guinea/Bougainville (1998-2005), Sierra Leone (1999-2005), Kosovo (1999-2008), Timor-Leste (1999-2012), Burundi (2003-2006), Liberia (2003-2018), Côte d'Ivoire (2003-2017), Haiti (2004-2019), Nepal (2006-2011); and between India and Pakistan (1949-present), Israel and Syria (1974-present), Chad and Libya (1990-1994), and Eritrea and Ethiopia (1998-2000).

The OAU/AU made successful use of peace operations to end or prevent wars in South Africa (1992), Comoros (1997-2008), Burundi (2000-2004), and The Gambia (2018-present). ECOWAS contributed to stopping wars in Sierra Leone (1999), Liberia (2003-present), The Gambia (2017), and Guinea-Bissau (2012-2020). An additional successful operation carried out by an African IGO came in the form of the SADC intervention in Lesotho (2017-2018). The EU and EC helped to end, contain, or prevent wars in Slovenia (1991-2001), FYR Macedonia (1991-2001), Croatia (1995-2004), Bosnia and Herzegovina (1995-present), Albania (1997-2006), Kosovo (1999-2007), Indonesia/Aceh (2005-2006), and Georgia/Abkhazia (2008-present). NATO operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1995-2004), Kosovo (1999-present), and FYR Macedonia (2001)

successfully prevented wars, while OSCE and CSCE observers have contributed to ending, containing, or preventing armed conflicts in Moldova/Transnistria (1992-present), FYR Macedonia (1992-present), Georgia/Abkhazia (1994-2008), Croatia (1995-2007), Bosnia and Herzegovina (1995-present), Albania (1997-1998), Kosovo (1999-present), and Ukraine (2014-present). The CIS also contributed to ending the war in Tajikistan (1993-2000) and containing the armed conflict in Georgia/Abkhazia (1994-2008) by deploying peacekeepers; and OAS observers contributed to preventing a conflict relapse in Guatemala (1999) and stopping wars in Guyana (2006) and between Honduras and Nicaragua (2001-2007).

Many successful peace operations were established on an ad-hoc basis independently of existing IGOs, usually reporting to an international body established for the sole purpose of responding to an armed conflict. The Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission and the Military Armistice Committee helped to keep the peace on the Korean peninsula (1953-1995), the Joint Control Commission has led efforts to contain the armed conflict in Moldova/Transnistria (1992-present), the Military Observer Mission for Ecuador and Peru prevented a conflict relapse between those states (1995-1998), the Multinational Protection Force ended the fighting in Albania (1997), the Truce Monitoring Group and Peace Monitoring Group contributed to ending the war in Papua New Guinea/Bougainville (1997-2001), the International Force East Timor helped to stop the fighting in Timor-Leste (1999-2000), and the International Peace Monitoring Team and the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands successfully prevented war there (2000-2017).

In the last few decades, the subject of international intervention in armed conflict (and peace operations more specifically) has been scrutinised and analysed using dozens of different methods and approaches. In a pair of studies published in 2003 and 2005, researchers at RAND found that in contrast to unilateral interventions (which generally fail), UN-led efforts to stabilise countries in the aftermath of civil wars were successful in 7 of the 10 cases included in the assessment.[28] In 2004, Virginia Page Fortna found that the deployment of peacekeeping missions reduced the duration of intrastate conflicts, and the following year she argued in her book *Does Peacekeeping Work?* that the answer to the question posed in the title was a 'resounding yes.'[29] Combining both quantitative and qualitative evidence, she

suggests that the deployment of a peacekeeping mission reduces the likelihood of a conflict relapse by between 50 and 85 percent.[30] Lise Morjé Howard offers a comprehensive assessment of ten UN peacekeeping missions in the period 1990-2005 in her book *UN Peacekeeping in Civil Wars*, concluding that multidimensional peacekeeping mandates for interventions in civil wars could be successful if three conditions were met: 'the consent of the warring parties for the UN operations, consensual but only moderately intense Security Council interests, and first-level organizational learning in the UN Secretariat's peacekeeping operations.'[31]

There is a growing body of data-driven analysis highlighting the success of peace operations. Kyle Beardsley shows how the deployment of peacekeepers to a country in conflict reduces the risk of the fighting spreading to neighbouring states by over 70 percent, while in another study Beardsley and Kristian Gleditsch illustrate how peacekeeping missions help to reduce the geographic scope of armed conflict, containing them at the provincial level in many cases.[32] Several studies from the Conflict Trends Project at the Peace Research Institute Oslo have unequivocally concluded that peacekeeping works, with evidence indicating that the deployment of peacekeepers reduces the level of violence in a conflict, as well as its duration.[33] A 2019 study by Håvard Hegre, Lisa Hultman, and Håvard Mokleiv Nygård argued that 'peacekeeping is much more effective than found in previous studies' but can become more effective with additional resources and stronger mandates.[34] Further research has shown that the deployment of UN peacekeeping missions reduces the number of both military and civilian deaths in a conflict, shortens the overall length of a conflict, and increases the likelihood that a conflict will be ended with a negotiated settlement.[35] In 2020, Walter Dorn and Robin Collins sought to provide an assessment of UN peacekeeping in its entirety by assessing the comprehensive collection of cases spanning over six decades that are documented in *The Oxford Handbook of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations*.[36] They found that, according to their criteria, 'at least two-thirds of missions were successes or mixed successes' and 'a quarter could be labelled as failures, but only half of *those* (only an eighth overall) are unambiguous failures.'[37]

In recent years, peace operations have entered an era in which the UN leadership and policymakers more broadly appear eager to learn from the mistakes of the past while building on previous successes to produce more effective interventions and ultimately reduce armed conflict. Whether this promise will be fulfilled remains to be seen (particularly given the

political developments within some of the UN's biggest historic supporters over the past decade), but contemporary scholarship offers an idea of the developments we may see. John Karlsrud provides the most cutting-edge analysis of UN peace operations in *The UN at War*. His proposals to focus on sequencing priorities, long-term planning, sharing responsibilities between the UN and regional IGOs, and protecting civilians rather than governments represent an ambitious vision.[38] A 2019 volume edited by Cedric de Coning and Mateja Peter offers additional analysis of the future of peace operations. With contributions from scholars and practitioners (including members of the HIPPO and former officials from a range of UN peace operations), *United Nations Peace Operations in a Changing Global Order* is a major contribution to the scholarship and will more than likely shape policy developments. As with Karlsrud's work, the authors highlight the importance of effective strategy, developing partnerships with regional IGOs, and prioritising the protection of civilians.[39] Should the UN and other IGOs be provided with the funds that they need to develop how they address armed conflict, perhaps adopting some of the suggestions emerging from the literature in the process, peace operations may become even more effective in future.

Much of the scholarship on PSOs (particularly the quantitative studies) suggests that such interventions do indeed significantly reduce armed conflict. However, as Han Dorussen observes, this 'rather impressive line of research has… done little to take away doubts about peacekeeping.'[40] He highlights a 'puzzle' which has surrounded debates on peacekeeping: 'that reporting on peacekeeping tends to be critical (if not outright hostile), and public opinion about intervention in far-away places – typical candidates for peacekeeping – is at best uninterested or even negative when costs become more apparent.'[41] Given the historic successes of at least some peace operations and the frankly negligible resources with which they have been achieved (the entire UN budget for peace operations is about the same as what Norway spends on defence each year), explaining the seemingly poor public reputation of peace operations presents an interesting and potentially important direction for further research.

Although the seemingly poor public reputation of peace operations is not supported by the data presented in a wide range of studies, there are many entirely valid criticisms. These have historically centred on the apparent dysfunctionality of peacekeeping missions, the poor training and limited capabilities of many peacekeepers, or the limiting, ambiguous, or overly ambitious mandates that they are given by a distant Secretariat acting upon extremely limited

intelligence. Few scholars go as far as suggesting that peace operations do not work altogether, with Séverine Autesserre's 2019 *Foreign Affairs* article, *The Crisis of Peacekeeping: Why the UN Can't End Wars*, representing the only noteworthy contribution from this perspective. In the article, Autesserre highlights some of the significant shortcomings of previous peacekeeping operations, illustrates the increasingly ambitious mandates that peace operations are given, and argues that many of the problems that are experienced by peacekeepers in the field stem from a lack of resources and a 'fixation' on elections. However, even in this highly critical assessment, Autesserre is clear that although 'peacekeeping is broken…the world shouldn't give up on it' and emphasises that with bespoke approaches for each intervention and much greater local involvement, peace operations could be more effective.[42] Rather than suggesting that peacekeeping cannot work whatsoever or that the UN is incapable of ending wars as the title suggests, the article views peace operations in their current form as a 'Band-Aid on a gaping wound' with plenty of room for improvement.[43] Autesserre will undoubtedly expand on this perspective in her forthcoming book, but the case for increased local involvement resonates with research (discussed in the next section) highlighting the fundamental importance of local input for building sustainable peace.

Hannah Schmidt's 2019 article on the local activities of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire shows that peace operations can successfully engage with local communities and peacebuilding organisations to resolve conflicts and reduce communal violence.[44] However, few other studies have focussed on this potentially rich vein of research. The importance of developing our understanding of such initiatives was also highlighted in a recent article titled *What Do We Really Know about Local Peacekeeping Effects?* by Lisa Hultman and Kajsa Tidblad-Lundholm. After surveying much of the literature on how peace operations can reduce armed conflict at the local level, they stress that 'there is much more to explore in terms identifying local factors that make peacekeepers more or less likely to succeed.'[45]

It is evident that there is something of a disconnect between the growing body of broadly positive quantitative assessments of peace operations and the more reserved (sometimes negative) findings produced by qualitative research, much of which focuses on specific case studies. The *Stopping War* report provides 42 examples of peace operations which have made a direct contribution to reducing armed conflict, providing further evidence which demonstrates that such interventions are effective. The operations documented in the report

represent cases which can be scrutinised and assessed in more detail to address the gaps in the literature and provide some detailed cases which can better illustrate the findings of the quantitative assessments. Although it is of course important to examine failures and shortcomings of previous missions, such assessments should be balanced with equally vigorous analyses of situations where peace operations have stopped wars, such as those documented in the report. This would not only provide important insights and potential lessons that could be drawn into the post-HIPPO era of peace operations, but would also put poorly executed missions and individual failures in much sharper relief, ultimately creating a broader and more detailed picture of an incredibly complex subject. As Dorn and Collins note in a riposte to Autesserre's claim that the UN can't stop wars, 'we believe that successful UN peacekeeping missions are often forgotten, while memories of unhappy struggles and controversies linger.'[46] Contemporary policy and future research simply cannot be grounded on assumptions and the selective study of the past.

The *Stopping War* report offers some additional points of interest regarding peace operations. Many of the successful peacekeeping missions required several iterations, first entering a country under the auspices of a regional organisation (the AU or ECOWAS, for example), before the troops of that mission are re-hatted and reinforced to form a UN mission, which in turn may undergo a few transformations. The final iteration of the mission may be the one which oversees the transition to peace, but its ultimate success in this regard may well depend entirely on the work of its predecessors. More research is required on what peacekeepers can feasibly achieve at various stages of a war, with a focus on what initial deployments can do to prepare the ground for more effective missions further down the timeline. Sequencing these different types of mission and furnishing them with the mandates and capabilities that are appropriate to each stage of the intervention is a complex process. We must develop our understanding of it to ensure that future interventions are as effective and efficient as possible.

The peace operations documented in *Stopping War* include eight examples of peacekeeping missions that were established outside the framework of existing IGOs, often for the singular purpose of carrying out an intervention before being disbanded. From missions in Albania, Moldova/Transnistria, and on the Ecuador-Peru border to various multilateral operations in Asia-Pacific, these ad-hoc, single-use peace operations have successfully ended, contained, or prevented war across the world. Although such missions operate within a legal framework

that is usually provided by the UN Security Council and thus rely on many of the same processes and mechanisms as their blue-helmeted counterparts, the cases documented in *Stopping War* demonstrate that short, targeted, and regionally-driven spontaneous interventions can be effective. Research is required to assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of such interventions and identify whether they represent a practice which should be replicated thanks to certain efficiencies, or curtailed due to the potential for an improperly constructed intervention to do harm.

Whither the local?

Had I been able to use examples of successful local efforts to directly stop war for half of the cases included in the report, I would have. However, just 12 of the cases in *Stopping War* document such actions. Unfortunately, given recent developments in Myanmar, the work of both external and local actors in support of the ongoing peace process there can no longer be considered the qualified success that it was last year, reducing the overall figure to 11. However, the examples of Solomon Islands (1999-2001), Kenya (2007-2008), Kyrgyzstan (2010), Nigeria (2015), and Tunisia (2011-2015) illustrate how all aspects of civil society can mobilise to prevent armed conflicts from erupting, while the cases of Colombia (1994-present), Sudan (2011-present), and "Boendoe" (2016-2018) show that initiatives at the community level can demonstrably reduce and limit the impact of armed conflict, even while fighting continues in other parts of the country. Furthermore, the cases of Bangladesh (1992-1997) and Nepal (2006) show that seemingly intractable intrastate conflicts can be resolved due to changes in the domestic political environment, while the case of Somaliland (1991-present) proves that local efforts to stop war can be highly successful, even when situated in a highly unfavourable regional context.

These examples prove that local efforts to stop war can work and do play an important role in reducing armed conflict, however the selection is far from expansive. Given the 'local turn' in scholarship on the peacebuilding field over the last decade or so, which (in broad terms) emphasises the paramount importance of local input for building sustainable peace, this raises many questions.[47] The cases presented in *Stopping War* are subject to limitations, ranging from the availability and accessibility of relevant documentation to my own limitations as a researcher who only speaks a few languages and is confined to desk research. Furthermore, the focus of the report is exclusively on directly stopping war (preventing or stopping immediate violence) rather than more expansive efforts to address the root causes of a

conflict and build a positive peace. However, the suggestion that there are additional examples of locally led initiatives that were not uncovered during the research for *Stopping War* needs to be tested before any conclusions can be made in this area. Moving forward, a key priority should be documenting good examples of when locally led initiatives have demonstrably stopped war and reduced armed conflict. A recent volume edited by Stacey L. Connaughton and Jessica Berns titled *Locally Led Peacebuilding: Global Case Studies* represents an excellent start, but much more is required.[48] Any research in this direction should be a collaborative and global effort, encompassing as much local knowledge as possible.

An expansive survey of the peacebuilding field may well uncover evidence of as many successful efforts to stop war that have taken place locally as those which have been coordinated at governmental and intergovernmental levels. However, until such research is conducted, another explanation must be considered: without external support, local actions are, more often than not, simply too powerless to directly stop wars. Such an explanation could be interpreted as a challenge to the growing body of scholarship highlighting the importance of thinking and acting locally to effectively build peace. Instead, it should serve to shape future research. Rather than viewing local and external efforts to reduce armed conflict as two competing endeavours, they must be understood as complementary efforts towards a shared goal. It is imperative to develop our understanding of the relationship between these different approaches and identify the most effective divisions of labour and areas of cooperation between them. Along with committing more resources to IGOs and peace operations, finding the right balance between external and local efforts to reduce armed conflict and ensuring that balance evolves at an appropriate pace is the key to stopping more wars.

Conclusion: What next?

IGOs play the leading role in global efforts to manage and reduce armed conflict. The work of these organisations must be rigorously scrutinised with the aim of identifying lessons which can inform policy. To achieve this, research should focus on:

- What can IGOs with modest resources or a limited institutional history learn from long-standing organisations with a demonstrable record of success?
- What parallel initiatives at the bilateral, national, and local level informed, shaped, or facilitated the successes experienced by IGOs in their efforts to reduce armed conflict?

- Given the evidence demonstrating that IGOs can reduce armed conflict, what are the implications for the apparent decline in international support for maintaining them?
- What can donors and researchers do to encourage bipartisan support for maintaining relevant IGOs in the interest of reducing armed conflict?

Peace operations stop wars and have the potential to become more effective. Each of the 42 successful peace operations documented in *Stopping War* should be subjected to extensive historical analysis to gain lessons and insights that can inform future operations. Additional research should focus on:

- What are the main barriers preventing peace operations from receiving the resources they need to fulfil the ambitious mandates that they are given?
- Are contemporary peace operations' mandates too ambitious?
- Given the mounting evidence demonstrating that peace operations do stop wars, why does peacekeeping still have such a poor reputation?
- How does the sequencing of certain capabilities and mandates impact the success of peace operations?
- Do ad-hoc, single-use peace operations represent an efficient, effective, and sustainable means of stopping wars, or do they threaten to undermine broader efforts to reduce armed conflict?

Locally led efforts to directly stop wars can work, but only a limited number of successful cases could be included in *Stopping War*. Finding and documenting more cases should be a priority, along with highlighting the cases that were included in the report for the benefit of practitioners. If finding more cases proves to be difficult, future research should focus on how local efforts can most effectively be sequenced into broader efforts to build peace following an externally led initiative to stop war. Further research in this area should focus on:

- How many good examples of successful local efforts to stop war can be found by a more thorough investigation, how are they documented, and how can this be improved?
- Without parallel international efforts, are local efforts to reduce armed conflict simply too powerless to stop unaccountable leaders resorting to violence to achieve their ambitions?
- Could the multitude of successful IGO initiatives have effectively stopped the wars that they did without the complementary peacebuilding actions of local communities?

- How should different responsibilities within a peace process be divided between the local and the external, and how should this allocation evolve over time?
- How can legitimate and accountable local actors and organisations be identified to work alongside external interventions without doing harm or rushing to potentially destabilising elections?

[1] A recent overview of wars that have taken place since 1991 is available in Chapter One of: Elliot Short & Milt Lauenstein. *Peace and Conflict Since 1991: War, Intervention, and Peacebuilding Organisations.* (New York, 2020); A report by RAND also offers useful insights into contemporary conflicts, in: Thomas S. Szayna et al. *Conflict Trends and Conflict Drivers: An Empirical Assessment of Historical Conflict Patterns and Future Conflict Projections.* (Santa Monica, 2017)

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[4] David. M. Law. "Intergovernmental Organisations and Their Role in Security Sector Reform." In David M. Law, ed. *Intergovernmental Organisations and Security Sector Reform.* (Lit Verlag, 2008)

[5] The African Union Normative Framework on Unconstitutional Change of Government and the ECOWAS Protocol on Good Governance and Democracy both exist to deter unconstitutional political activity and provide mechanisms which can lead to intervention by the respective IGO.

[6] Gareth Evans. *Cooperating for Peace: The Global Agenda for the 1990s and Beyond.* (St Leonards, 1993) p.50

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[8] Bruce Russett, John R. Oneal & David R. Davis. "The Third Leg of the Kantian Tripod for Peace: International Organizations and Militarized Disputes, 1950-85." *International Organization*, Vol. 52. No. 3. (1998) p.462-3

[9] Connie Peck. *Sustainable Peace: The Role of the UN and Regional Organizations in Preventing Conflict.* (New York, 1998) p.45

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[11] John R. Oneal & Bruce Russett. "The Kantian Peace: The Pacific Benefits of Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organizations, 1885-1992." *World Politics*, Vol. 52, No. 1. (1999) p.1

[12] John R. Oneal, Bruce Russett & Michael L. Berbaum. "Causes of Peace: Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organizations, 1885-1992." *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 47, No. 3. (2003) p.388-9

[13] Charles Boehmer, Erik Gartzke & Timothy Nordstrom. "Do Intergovernmental Organizations Promote Peace?" *World Politics*, Vol. 57, No. 1. (2004) pp.29-30

[14] Ibid. p.30

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[16] Andreas Hasenclever & Brigitte Weiffen. "International Institutions Are the Key: A New Perspective on the Democratic Peace." *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 4. (2006) p.585

[17] Han Dorussen & Hugh Ward. "Intergovernmental Organizations and the Kantian Peace: A Network Perspective." *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 52, No. 2. (2008) p.189

[18] Megan Shannon. "Preventing War and Providing the Peace? International Organizations and the Management of Territorial Disputes." *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, Vol. 26, No. 2. (2009)

[19] Megan Shannon, Daniel Morey, & Frederick J. Boehmke. "The Influence of International Organizations on Militarized Dispute Initiation and Duration." *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 54, No. 4. (2010) p.1123

[20] Rodrigo Tavares. *Regional Security: The Capacity of International Organizations.* (London, 2010)

[21] Eileen Babbitt. "Preventive Diplomacy by Intergovernmental Organizations: Learning from Practice." *International Negotiation*, Vol. 17, No. 3. (2012) p.349

[22] Johannes Karreth & Jaroslav Tir. "International Institutions and Civil War Prevention." *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 75, No. 1. (2012) p.96

[23] Jaroslav Tir & Johannes Karrath. *Incentivizing Peace: How International Organizations Can Help Prevent Civil Wars in Member Countries.* (Oxford, 2018) pp.5-6

[24] Ibid. p.6

[25] Mette Eilstrup-Sangiovanni. "Death of international organizations. The organizational ecology of intergovernmental organizations, 1815-2015." *The Review of International Organizations*, Vol. 15, No. 2. (2020) p.340

[26] Report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations on uniting our strengths for peace: politics, partnership and people. *A/70/95-S/2015/446.* (New York, 2015) Available at: https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2015/446 (Accessed 17/03/2021)

[27] Ian Martin. *Foreword* in Cedric de Coning & Mateja Peter. *United Nations Peace Operations in a Changing Global Order.* (London, 2019) p.vii

[28] James Dobbins et al. *America's Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq.* (Santa Monica, 2003); James Dobbins et al. *The UN's Role in Nation-Building: From the Congo to Iraq.* (Santa Monica, 2005)

[29] Virginia Page Fortna. "Does Peacekeeping Keep Peace? International Intervention and the Duration of Peace After Civil War." *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 48, No. 2. (2004) p.269; Virginia Page Fortna. *Does Peacekeeping Work? Shaping Belligerents' Choices after Civil War.* (Princeton, 2008) p.125

[30] Ibid.

[31] Lise Morjé Howard. *UN Peacekeeping in Civil Wars.* (Cambridge, 2008) p.327

[32] Kyle Beardsley. "Peacekeeping and the Contagion of Armed Conflict." *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 73, No. 4. (2011) p.1051; Kyle Beardsley & Kristian Skrede Gleditsch. "Peacekeeping as Conflict Containment." *International Studies Review*, Vol. 17, No. 1. (2015) p.67

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[38] John Karlsrud. *The UN at War.* (London, 2018)

[39] Cedric de Coning & Mateja Peter. *United Nations Peace Operations in a Changing Global Order.* (London, 2019)

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