

Institution: SOAS University of London		
Unit of Assessment: 22B – Development Studies		
Title of case study: Shaping the 'UK Approach' to reducing violence and supporting sustainable post-war transitions in conflict-affected countries		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2002–2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Prof Jonathan Goodhand	Professor in Conflict and Development Studies	2001–present
Dr Patrick Meehan	ESRC fully-funded PhD ESRC Postdoctoral Research Fellow GCRF Drugs and (Dis)order Co-Investigator	2012–2016 2017 (one year) 2018–2021
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2018–July 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>SOAS-led research commissioned by the UK Government's Stabilisation Unit played an instrumental role in re-shaping the UK Government's approach to reducing violence and promoting sustainable post-war transitions in conflict-affected countries. The research underpinned the 2018 'UK Government's Approach to Stabilisation', which set out guidelines for the UK Government's efforts to stabilise violent conflict across the world. Offering analytical tools to be used by policy makers and practitioners working on conflict transitions, the research informed UK Government strategic planning in countries such as Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Mali and Somalia; it also influenced peace-building NGOs and UK Government staff training.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Approximately two billion people live in parts of the world affected by violent conflict and fragility. In light of this challenge, the UK Government has recognised the need to deliver more effective interventions in conflict contexts. Conflict resolution and peacebuilding have become key components of international interventions in conflict-affected states. In the UK, this has been reflected by the 2015 UK Aid Strategy and the UK Government's commitment to allocate at least 50% of DFID's budget to fragile states. However, understanding of what works has been limited and partial. Many violent conflicts remain intractable, new conflicts continue to erupt, and violence and instability regularly recur even in countries where international donors have invested heavily in trying to engineer peace.</p> <p>Research on war-to-peace transitions has been carried out at SOAS since 2001, when Dr Jonathan Goodhand took up a University Lectureship (promoted to a Professorship in 2014). Goodhand has a long track record of research and teaching on war to peace transitions and has worked closely with Dr Patrick Meehan since 2012 (PhD 2012–2016; Postdoctoral Research Fellow and Co-investigator since 2017). In 2016, the UK Government Stabilisation Unit (SU) commissioned Goodhand, Meehan and Dr Christine Cheng (King's College London) to conduct research under the 'Elite Bargains and Political Deals' (EBPD) project to inform UK and international policy and practice on reducing levels of armed conflict and building sustainable post-war transitions. The resulting report [3.1] provided a more robust evidence base for the UK's approach to stabilisation and to guide policy makers in delivering more effective interventions in conflict contexts. Goodhand provided overall intellectual leadership for this report and Meehan</p>		

developed much of the report's analytical framework in the initial literature review [3.2] he wrote to guide the EBPD project.

Three areas of the research findings have been particularly influential in informing the work commissioned by the SU. These include:

Political economy analysis of the drivers of armed conflict

Goodhand's and Meehan's research has emphasised the centrality of power relations and elite bargains (discrete agreements that re-negotiate the distribution of power and allocation of resources between elites) to understanding the dynamics of armed conflict and war-to-peace transitions [3.3, 3.4, 3.5 3.6]. This research – some aspects of which have been augmented with co-authored policy-oriented analysis with Dr Mark Sedra (the Centre for International Governance Innovation) [3.6] and the role of war economies in reconstruction with Professor Christopher Cramer (SOAS) [3.5] – highlights the need to focus more explicitly on how power is organised in society. This is crucial in order to understand (and address) drivers of violent conflict. Rather than a technical focus on the design of peacebuilding interventions, the research demonstrates that any intervention will be shaped by power relations and political interests and must be resilient to these pressures [3.2].

A framework for policymakers to analyse conflict dynamics surrounding war-to-peace transitions

The research has demonstrated that transitions from war to peace are shaped by the interaction between three dynamics: (1) the underlying distribution of power – or political settlement – on which a society is based; (2) elite bargains; and (3) formal peace agreements [3.1, 3.2]. The research provides an analytical framework for policy makers and practitioners to assess the multiple dynamics shaping the contexts in which they work [3.1].

Accounting for successes and failures of external peacebuilding interventions

The research provides a clear explanatory framework to show that where externally-driven peace processes do not reflect the underlying distribution of power, the foundations for war-to-peace transitions will be highly unstable and the risk of renewed violence will be high. This concept of (mis)alignment has important policy implications for understanding why external interventions in different contexts have played a role in further destabilising armed conflicts, consolidating pre-existing power structures, or facilitating more transformative and inclusive post-war societies [3.1].

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- 3.1. Cheng, C., Goodhand, J. and Meehan, P. (2018). 'Synthesis Paper: Securing and Sustaining Elite Bargains that Reduce Violent Conflict'. UK Government Stabilisation Unit. London. <https://eprints.soas.ac.uk/30510/> **Peer-reviewed 87-page report**
- 3.2. Meehan, P. (2018). 'What are the key factors that affect the securing and sustaining of an initial deal to reduce levels of armed conflict?' London: UK Government Stabilisation Unit. <https://eprints.soas.ac.uk/30509/> **Peer-reviewed academic analysis piece**
- 3.3. Meehan, P. (2011). 'Drugs, Insurgency and State-Building in Burma: Why the Drugs Trade is Central to Burma's Changing Political Order'. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 42(3), pp. 376–404. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022463411000336> **Peer-reviewed**
- 3.4. Goodhand, J. (2008). 'Corrupting or Consolidating the Peace? The Drugs Economy and Post-conflict Peacebuilding in Afghanistan'. *International Peacekeeping*, 15(3), pp. 405–423. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13533310802058984> **Peer-reviewed**
- 3.5. Cramer, C. and Goodhand, J. (2002). 'Try Again, Fail Again, Fail Better? War, the State, and the "Post-Conflict" Challenge in Afghanistan'. *Development and Change*, 33(5), pp. 885–909. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-7660.t01-1-00253> **Peer-reviewed**
- 3.6. Goodhand, J. and Sedra, M. (2013). 'Rethinking Liberal Peacebuilding, Statebuilding and Transition in Afghanistan: An Introduction'. *Central Asia Survey*, 32(3), pp. 239–254. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2013.850769> **Peer-reviewed**

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The work of Professor Goodhand and Dr Meehan in the EBP research project provided a strong evidence base and a set of analytical frameworks that informed the shaping of the new UK Government policy approach to support stabilisation as well as country-level strategic decision-making for UK Government interventions in conflict-affected contexts. The research also influenced the work of peacebuilding agencies such as the NGO Conciliation Resources and was embedded in the training of UK Government staff in various departments such as the (former) Department for International Development (DFID) and Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), and the Ministry of Defence (MoD).

Shaping the UK Government policy on stabilisation interventions

The research was fundamental in shaping the 2018 UK Government's Approach to Stabilisation: A guide for policy makers and practitioners [5.1]. The Minister of State for International Development, Rt Hon. Alistair Burt MP, endorsed these guidelines as setting out the UK Government's 'latest thinking on how the UK sees the role of stabilisation in conflict-affected contexts' [5.2 p2], acknowledging their importance for responding to the failures in Afghanistan and Iraq and the findings of the Iraq Inquiry. Recalling one of [3.1]'s key findings, Rt Hon. Burt stated that 'understanding conflict and ending violence requires a total focus on the politics and the power holders at play' and praised the centrality of this work to set the conditions for more sustainable transitions out of conflict [5.2 p4].

The guidelines drew heavily upon the terminology, concepts, analytical framework and core arguments developed in the research [3.1, 3.2]. This included an explicit need to acknowledge and confront the difficult policy trade-offs that exist between efforts to stabilise violent conflict in the short-term, and efforts to provide the foundations for longer-term stability and inclusive development [5.1 pp5, 9, 11, 49, 58–59, 85, 87, 92]. It also included the need to think and work politically and to acknowledge the centrality of elite bargaining processes to the dynamics of violent conflict and stabilisation [5.1 pp27, 38, 87–107]. Other core arguments used included the danger that externally-driven peace agreements and reforms can be destabilising if they misalign with the underlying distribution of power in conflict-affected contexts [5.1 pp8–9, 20, 29, 65, 87, 92]; and the destabilising impact of large-scale militarised interventions [5.1 pp9, 61, 65].

The guidelines explicitly cited Goodhand, Meehan and Cheng's research [3.1] as providing 'helpful analytical frameworks for analysts and policy makers' working in conflict contexts as well as a fundamental evidence base [5.1 p90]. The research underscored the guidelines' foundational stabilisation principles [5.1 pp9 and 89] and was cited as a tool for approaches to political deal-making [5.1 pp92, 94 and 97]. Rt Hon. Alistair Burt MP also expressed being 'especially pleased to see the development of a strong evidence base to underpin the Guide . . . and the collaborative and engaged way my team have sought advice and input from experts outside government' [5.3 p2]. As noted in the written supporting statement by Ed Hadley, Conflict and Stabilisation Advisor, it is rare for academic research to translate so directly into policy, and the project 'stands as a shining example of academic/government engagement and interaction' [5.4 p2]. The research also had a positive impact on strengthening the reputation of the Stabilisation Unit. The 2018 Annual Qualitative Assessment of HMG [Her Majesty's Government]'s Stabilisation Unit described the SU's Lessons Team as a 'key HMG thought leader on current stabilisation', explicitly citing the EBP research project as a 'good example' of this [5.5 p6], and also indicating that the project had been 'well-received by SU stakeholders' [5.5 p3]. The report also attained significant media attention in the UK and internationally; for example, it received deep coverage by *The Guardian* [5.6] as well as foreign press [5.7].

Informing UK Government strategies and interventions in conflict-affected countries

Through its impact on shaping the 'UK Approach' to Stabilisation, Cheng, Goodhand and Meehan's work also influenced UK Government strategies and interventions in conflict-affected contexts. The SU conducted a careful internal monitoring of research uptake from the EBP research project. As reported by Ed Hadley, the framework for analysing elite bargaining in conflict contexts [3.1, 3.2] underpinned Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability (JACS) reports conducted by the SU in Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Mali and Somalia [5.4 p1]. The JACS is a strategic assessment used to underpin UK National Security Council Strategies. Furthermore, [5.1] underpinned the UK

Government's new stabilisation strategy in Libya and Syria [5.4 p1]. Ed Hadley also noted that in countries such as Mali and Yemen the core principles of [5.1] guided discussions between Senior SU Advisors implementing partners delivering programmes, providing a realistic framework for UK Government engagement in-country [5.4 p2]. Had this not occurred, he stated, there was a clear risk that unrealistic and apolitical programmatic interventions would have been implemented. For example, in Mali, SU advisors used the EBDP framework to engage with Adam Smith International, the implementing partner tasked with developing a stabilisation programme in Central Mali, ensuring that the framework was used as a 'checklist' to design interventions that were more conflict sensitive. [5.1] also shaped conflict analysis and the designing of UK Government conflict interventions in Syria, and underpinned parts of the 2020–2024 UK Government Strategy on Afghanistan [5.4 p1]. Country-level strategic government documents are classified and cannot be made available; however, Ed Hadley noted in his supporting statement that 'the project's robust evidence base enabled substantive challenge to existing policy and has enabled alternative policy approaches to be considered' [5.4 p1].

Influencing peacebuilding NGOs and other international donors

In November 2016, Goodhand and Meehan were commissioned (alongside Walton at Bath University, and Plonski at Queen Mary University of London) by Conciliation Resources – an international NGO committed to stopping violent conflict and creating more peaceful societies – to produce a publication entitled 'Borderlands and Peacebuilding' as part of Conciliation Resources' flagship Accord Series. Co-edited by the Senior Adviser Peace and Transition Processes and others at Conciliation Resources, it was published in November 2018 [5.9]. It played a further important role in disseminating key aspects of Goodhand and Meehan's research on war-to-peace transitions to policy makers and practitioners working on peacebuilding, and the resulting cross-border peacebuilding concepts trialled by the NGO has received 'positive feedback from the FCDO' (Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office) [5.10]. [5.1] was used extensively to inform the development of the Stabilisation Leaders' Forum 'Stabilisation principles' and shared definition of stabilisation, cementing the UK's reputation as a 'thought leader' in this area. The forum is a group made up of the Heads of over 12 stabilisation-focused organisations – including from Germany, US, Canada, France, Denmark and Sweden – referred to as government-to-government exchanges by Hadley [5.4 p2].

Impact on UK Government training

Goodhand and Meehan's research also had a direct impact on the training that the UK Government provides to staff across various government departments including DFID, FCO and MoD. Indeed, between 2018 and 2020, Goodhand and Meehan developed training materials and delivered training for more than 60 government employees as part of the SU's quarterly 'Conflict and Stabilisation' training course [5.4 p2, 5.8]. The SU also held briefing sessions on the EBDP report [3.1] with colleagues across government and country offices. This included sessions at the Defence Academy; in Yemen, Syria and Afghanistan; at the UK Government's Conflict Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) Global Workshop; for the Joint Funds Unit (which administers the CSSF); and at DFID Governance and Conflict Cadre conferences. Hadley points out that '[a] daylong annual gathering of SU Senior Advisors focused entirely on [5.1] and its core precepts' [5.4 p2].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- 5.1. UK Government Stabilisation Unit, The UK Government's Approach to Stabilisation: A guide for policy makers and practitioners, 2018. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-uk-governments-approach-to-stabilisation-a-guide-for-policy-makers-and-practitioners> [pp. 5, 8–9, 11, 20, 27, 29, 38, 49, 58–59, 61, 65, 85, 87–107]
- 5.2. Speech - Burt, A. 2018. Deal Making and Peace Building: A new approach to reducing conflict, 14 June 2018. Chatham House, London, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/deal-making-and-peace-building-a-new-approach-to-reducing-conflict>
- 5.3. Letter to Committees (International Development Committee, Foreign Affairs Committee and Defence Committee) from Rt Hon. Alistair Burt MP, Minister of State, on the Publication of the

'UK Government's Approach to Stabilisation: A Guide for Policy Makers and Practitioners', December 2018.

5.4. Supporting statement from Ed Hadley, Conflict and Stabilisation Advisor, Lessons Team, Stabilisation Unit.

5.5. C. Swallow, A. Neaverson, V. Metcalfe-Hough and E. Laws, Annual Qualitative Assessment of HMG's Stabilisation Unit, 5 October 2018.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/778635/FINAL_SU_AQA_Summary_and_Recommendations.pdf

5.6. Patrick Wintour, 'Britain must strike deals with "unsavoury" elites, says FCO report', The Guardian, 31 July 2018. https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/jul/31/britain-must-strike-deals-with-unsavoury-elites-says-fco-report?CMP=share_btn_tw

5.7. Markus Haefliger, 'Comeback des Realismus in der britischen Aussenpolitik', Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 9 August 2018. <https://www.nzz.ch/international/comeback-des-realismus-in-der-britischen-aussenpolitik-ld.140994> (German)

5.8. UK Government Stabilisation Unit, 'Conflict and Stabilisation Course' Agenda 21–23 May 2018, 11–13 September 2018.

5.9. S. Plonski, Z. Yousuf, O. Walton, P. Meehan and J. Goodhand, Borderlands and peacebuilding: A view from the margins. Accord Insight 4. London: Conciliation Resources, 2018. https://www.c-r.org/downloads/CONJ6359-Accord-Insight-4-Borderlands-WEB-181030_0.pdf

5.10. Letter from Director of Research and innovation and Director of Accord, Conciliation Resources