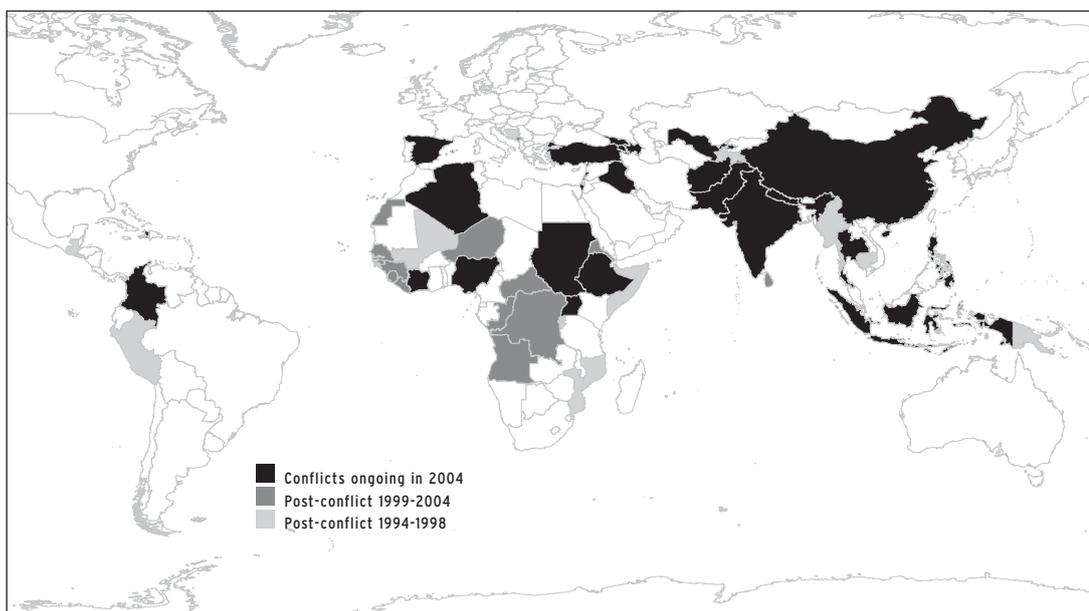


Managing 'Post-conflict' Zones: DDR AND WEAPONS REDUCTION

The end of armed conflict does not necessarily signal a return to security. The introduction of ceasefires, peace agreements, or even discrete interventions that seek to disarm warring parties does not always guarantee tangible improvements in safety. As this chapter shows, in 2004 many so-called 'post-conflict' periods presented even more direct and indirect threats to civilians than the armed conflicts that preceded them. In reality, levels of firearm-related violence are often higher than they were before, or even during, the armed conflict (see Figure 10.2).

Map 10.1 Selected conflict and 'post-conflict' zones, 1994-2004

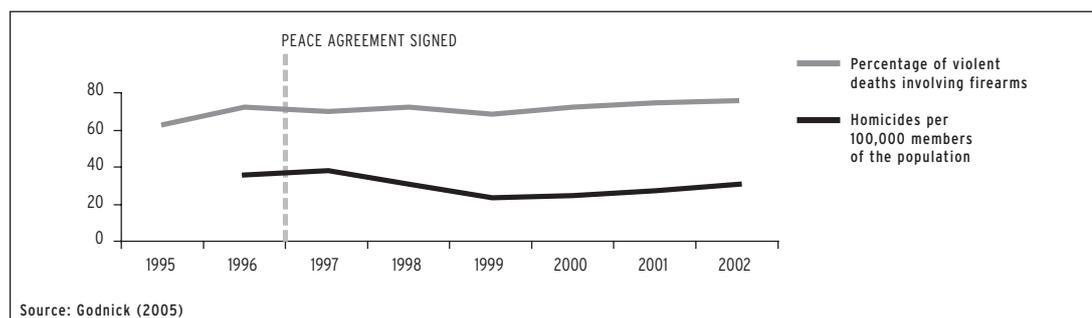


Sources: IISS (2004); SIPRI (2004); University of Uppsala (2004)

This raises an important question: what does 'post-conflict' actually mean? When does it begin and where does it end? Is a signed peace accord a sufficient or even necessary criterion? Is post-conflict marked by a 'significant' reduction in direct mortality, the deployment of a peacekeeping force, an arbitrary period of time, or the holding of national elections? This chapter argues that the meaning of the expression 'post-conflict'—ubiquitous as it may be—is ambiguous.

In fact, the 'post-conflict' designation unhelpfully disguises the many risks facing societies emerging from war, as events over the past year in Afghanistan, Haiti, Iraq, the Solomon Islands, Sudan, and the countries of the Great Lakes Region painfully illustrate. Among several countries emerging from protracted armed violence in the 1990s, such as Guatemala, Nicaragua, and El Salvador, the Small Arms Survey finds that firearm-related deaths and real and perceived insecurity have not markedly diminished since the formal end of the wars there (Map 10.1 shows selected conflict and post-conflict zones from 1994-2004). Moreover, the demand for weapons in post-conflict contexts often stays high, and the militarization of refugee camps presents a dangerous risk for renewed armed violence in host and neighbouring countries.

The introduction of DDR and weapons reduction programmes as part of overall recovery strategies can be an important factor in winning the peace.

Figure 10.2 Firearm death rate and homicide rate in Guatemala

Despite the challenges to a successful transition from conflict to post-conflict recovery, there are reasons for cautious optimism. The introduction of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) and weapons reduction programmes as part of overall recovery strategies can be an important factor in winning the peace. A growing range of multilateral agencies and donors now view DDR and weapons reduction as pivotal pillars of post-conflict recovery.

Encouragingly, the current preoccupation of donors and multilateral agencies with the promotion of recovery and reconstruction in post-conflict contexts, including support for DDR and weapons reduction, underlines their growing commitment to securing peace. Though some criticisms of conventional post-conflict recovery packages remain valid, there is growing recognition of the importance of making efforts to decrease the number of small arms and light weapons in recovery strategies. Indeed, the UN and the World Bank have launched at least 14 DDR initiatives in post-conflict zones since 2000—eight of which are ongoing in 2005. Similarly, at least 22 weapons reduction projects were established in post-conflict areas over the same period—and more than 16 are operational today. In addition, the UN is increasingly acknowledging the need to adopt regional and integrated approaches to DDR and weapons reduction.

But current approaches to DDR and weapons reduction still suffer from limited political will, selection biases, inadequate financing, and coordination gaps. Alarming, DDR and weapons reduction frequently substitute for political solutions to armed conflict, and the reform of the governance and judicial sectors and sustainable development more generally. Moreover, concerted efforts to reduce the demand for firearms are regularly overlooked in the rush to secure peace. The chapter warns that unless the objectives of DDR and weapons reduction are more clearly articulated and their capacity to enhance security well substantiated, the programmes may ultimately be discarded by donors and affected countries.

The UN and the World Bank have launched at least 14 DDR initiatives and at least 22 weapons reduction projects in post-conflict zones since 2000.

This chapter begins with a comprehensive review of the threats confronting civilians in a post-conflict environment. It then considers a number of practical interventions designed by international and national actors to alleviate these risks, including DDR and weapons reduction initiatives. Although the contribution of these endeavours to reducing armed violence in post-conflict contexts is an open question, the international donor community continues to pin considerable hope on them. Building on previous work of the Small Arms Survey, the chapter concludes with a critical review of DDR and weapons reduction programmes.