REPORT: Exploring Obstacles to Social Cohesion in the Aftermath of Violent Conflict

Peacebuilding Symposium hosted
by the Conflict to Peace Lab
at The Ohio State University

November 15–16, 2019

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

MERSHON CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL
SECURITY STUDIES

c2P

Conflict to Peace Lab

I.   Foreword

Rebuilding trust and social cohesion in the aftermath of political violence has increasingly become a central focus for peacebuilding practitioners, academics, researchers, and donors in a variety of countries and contexts. One of the main assumptions underlying these efforts is the idea that cohesive, strong interpersonal relationships can help bind communities together, foster resilience, and provide the sort of glue necessary to resist future violence. At the same time, vulnerable communities steeped in memories of violence and trauma carry deep-seated feelings of fear and distrust, and the processes to transform these feelings and encourage re-engagement across social fractures are complex and fraught with ethical dilemmas.

Motivated by the desire to address these hurdles, the Conflict to Peace Lab (C2P)—a new research initiative of the Mershon Center for International Security Studies at The Ohio State University— hosted its first annual peacebuilding symposium on November 15th and 16th. Inviting experts from both academia and the practice realm, we sought to facilitate a dialogue exploring the key obstacles to rebuilding trust and social cohesion in the wake of violent conflict. Our goals were multiple. First, we aimed to better understand social cohesion as a desirable peace outcome; that is, what does social cohesion look like in practice, how do we understand its role in healing communities in the aftermath of violence, and what have been the most effective theories of change with regard to social cohesion and trust? Second, we hoped to create a space for academics and practitioners to learn together and explore ways of walking alongside one another in addressing crucial obstacles in peacebuilding efforts worldwide.

The report that follows captures that conversation across three panels: (1) Concepts and Theories about Change, (2) Building Peace and Social Cohesion, and (3) Monitoring, Evaluation, Adapting, and Learning. Across all three domains and woven throughout the symposium was a common interest in mutual learning, building a community of research and practice that honored one another and the communities we work within, and a desire to grow our thinking in innovative and transformative ways. While the divide between scholars and practitioners was sometimes front and center (this was especially true when conversations turned towards measurement and evaluation, as well as timelines and timeliness), dialogue often encouraged participants to disrupt the stark scholar/practitioner dichotomy that even the design of the symposium itself sometimes unintentionally reinforced. A shared sense of mission—a desire to engage with each other and with the world in transformative ways—and the passion that brought participants into this shared space underscored a common ethos of co-learning and discovering how to work (and live) well together.

Acrss the report, we have incorporated summaries of panel presentations, as well as key lessons generated from small-group dialogues. Reflecting on these lessons and the conversations they grew out of, the symposium became its own microcosm of social cohesion in action, drawing people from different life experiences, ways of knowing, and worldviews into relationship with one another. What we found was the importance of *difference* in social cohesion—that cohesion isn't about erasing differences or treating them as problems to be solved, but locating and dialoguing through those differences to find what is shared. The path for collaboration is complicated but worthwhile (even *crucial*), and scholars and practitioners alike have an opportunity to envision a shared future in which we address our perceived incompatibilities, embrace our differences as strengths, and model the dialogic pillars of sustained and honest engagement and deep listening. We are excited and hopeful for where these conversations take us next.

—THE C2P TEAM

II. Panel 1: Concepts and Theories about Change

QUESTIONS GOING IN

We began our first panel by asking presenters to consider how we conceptualize social cohesion and trust in both academia and in practice—how do academics operationalize and theorize about social cohesion in their work? What do peace practitioners mean when they build programs designed to build social cohesion (i.e. what does social cohesion look like as an outcome?). Further, panelists were invited to discuss theories of change surrounding social cohesion and trust, particularly what the pathways are to safely and effectively encouraging vulnerable people and communities to overcome deep-seated social cleavages rooted in fear and mistrust. The panel brought together two academics (Sabrina Karim, Assistant Professor in the Department of Government at Cornell University and Jennifer Mitzen, Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science at The Ohio State University) and two practitioners (Veena O'Sullivan, Head of Thematic Support Team for Tearfund and Auveen Woods, Development Officer at the Center for Civil Society and Democracy) to explore the following questions:

1. What do the terms "social cohesion" and "social trust" mean within our different fields of effort?

2. How should our conception of social cohesion and/or trust be refined or changed?

3. What have been the dominant outcome goals for social cohesion efforts?

4. What are the best processes to encourage social cohesion and effective theories about change?

5. How do peacebuilding and development actors seek to promote, directly and indirectly, social cohesion in deeply divided, conflict-affected countries? What are the assumptions and priorities?

Jennifer Mitzen   Veena O'Sullivan

PANEL SUMMARIES

Presentations on panel one covered everything from increasing trust through positive relationship building with government institutions to the familiarity and subsequent perpetuation of violence in protracted conflict settings. Sabrina Karim[1] presented her research exploring social cohesion and trust in post-conflict Liberia, where diversifying the police force and efforts at building relationships between the police and citizens through dialogue resulted in higher levels of trust. Notably, Karim also cautioned that trade-offs exist when building social cohesion; that is, growth in social cohesion can result in stronger discrimination along other divisions. Consequently, social cohesion as a concept should not be essentialized as a universal good—sometimes, social cohesion can also lay the foundation for shifts in the expression and prevalence of discrimination.

Also problematizing conceptions of social cohesion and 'peace,' Jennifer Mitzen's presentation explored the ways in which conflict persists as a result of attachments to what is seen as familiar or routine. A desire to experience ourselves and our identities as whole and continuous in time and place means that even experiences as seemingly chaotic as conflict can feel ordered when taking a step towards peace means leaping into the unknown. Of particular interest was Mitzen's emphasis on managing existential anxiety; that is, how might we help vulnerable peoples in places of protracted conflict learn to 'dwell in the ambivalence that anxiety allows' without turning to fear and the routines of violence?

In line with the theme of relationship-building in Karim's presentation, Veena O'Sullivan emphasized the importance of building trust and interpersonal relationships not just as a peace practice within violent communities, but as foundational to the way Tearfund's practitioners function in spaces of peacebuilding. She challenged the room to 'see the unseen' and give space and safety to the invisible. Notably, O'Sullivan underscored the importance of active listening, nurturing connection, and becoming comfortable with the non-linear progression of peacework. On those terms, her presentation offered crucial insight into the importance of investing in and learning from people—that to address the invisible requires learning to let go and give away power and trust.

The final presentation from Auveen Woods centered on the question "How do we lay the foundations for peace in the midst of war?" She echoed a common theme across the panel that the path towards peace is often fragile, dangerous, and fraught with risk. For vulnerable peoples in places of extreme violence, peace is often too intangible compared to more immediate and visible needs, highlighting that crucial gap between the visible and invisible that O'Sullivan laid out. One way that Woods' organization has attempted to bridge this gap is to provide training and platforms for skill-building, particularly skills like how to communicate, understand and articulate critical analysis, mediate and negotiate, and build visions of the future in spaces where thinking about the future is often a privilege. Notably, Woods described peace as a daily practice, underscoring the importance of building peace and its counterparts—social cohesion, trust, etc—through routine and long-term skill-building.

[1]For more complete summaries of each panel presentation, please see the appendix.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Following each panel, conference participants broke out into small working groups to discuss points of interest. Highlights from these conversations include:

- The impact of trauma on cycles of violence: For many, trauma became a crucial consideration for theories of building peace through social cohesion. Specifically, participants explored the entanglement between trauma and the ontological security that violence can sometimes offer, drawing on Jennifer Mitzen's work. Toward that end, participants discussed how trauma can feed into unpredictable behaviors, which in turn produce perpetual cycles of violence.

- 'Home' and its relationship with peace: Several questions surrounding the concept of "home" arose, including a national, individual, or familial interpretation of home, and the paradox of never having had a home, not liking home, or not even wanting a home. The group seemed to agree on the concept of home as an ideal – a place where there was general sense of belonging. Physical belonging was not as important as to socially belong. Building upon the idea of home, the group discussed routines and narratives and how they intersected with home. Fragility and fragile spaces impact how routines are created because space is needed to create a habit. Space, however, was a contested notion. How does space manifest? Is it temporal, physical, personal?

- Problematizing social cohesion: Discussions arose regarding whether or not cohesion is always normatively good. In line with Dr. Karim's argument that social cohesion comes with some trade-offs, participants cited hazing and nationalism as examples wherein strong in-group social cohesion exists and, yet, discrimination and even violence persist. Trust was raised as a possible alternative to social cohesion because it is not synonymous to cohesion and requires less transformation or loss of oneself. Discussion also interrogated the concept of a "common identity" (e.g. nationality) and whether it is inherently negative. There must be some benefit in putting aside a part of oneself to cohere to a broader identity such as nationality. As in the case of South Sudan, to identify nationally instead of ethnically might create a sense of loss among marginalized groups because they may lose a sense of recognition for their group's grievances.

- Peace as secondary or intangible: Several participants emphasized the integral role that immediate needs—shelter, food, security, etc.—can play in possibilities for building social cohesion. Reflecting on Woods' presentation, participants explored what it means to build peace in spaces where 'peace' for people on the ground can mean something quite different (for example, clean roadways or reduced public corruption).

LESSONS LEARNED

Key lessons coming out of Panel One of the symposium include:

- Social cohesion as a concept is understood in various ways, both in terms of how academics operationalize social cohesion, what practitioners hope to foster when they build programs focused on social cohesion, and how locals understand the term and their own needs in relation to cohesion and peace. Articulating and exploring these differences is crucial to bridging the scholar-practitioner gap.

- Social cohesion can be described as an accordion—there are both elements of diversity and elements of 'sameness.' Sustainable social cohesion asks us to value and respect our differences, not erase them. This process is long-term and can take generations to build.

- Further, social cohesion should not be taken for granted as a universally good outcome. At times, building social cohesion can produce new divisions and can be particularly problematic for minority group members.

- Peace is a daily practice requiring long-term, routine reinforcement of peace-skills. While building social cohesion in the midst of war seems impossible, focusing on peace as a daily practice lays the groundwork for when the space opens up for peace to flourish.

- As outsiders, we must understand that peace is risky for vulnerable peoples living in spaces of violence. It is risky for a multitude of reasons—from government surveillance and security to the way peace as an unknown threatens one's sense of stability and self.

- Peace is not a linear progression and requires practitioners to commit long-term, to practice resilience, and to become comfortable continually re-thinking plans and adapting to conditions on the ground. For academics, understanding that peace is not linear requires re-considering how we define peace outcomes and their sustainability.

- Reflexivity should be a cornerstone of academic and practitioner work. Acknowledging our own journeys, what brought us to study or work in places of conflict, and what biases we bring to the table is critical. Crucially, we need to learn to let go of our positions of power, humble ourselves, and 'be the bridge that people can walk over.'

III.   Panel 2: Building Peace and Social Cohesion

QUESTIONS GOING IN

In our second panel we shifted focus from conceptualizing and theorizing social cohesion to the central characteristics of effective peacebuilding interventions. In particular, we asked our panelists to share their experiences and perceptions about whether and how our theories about change actually shape the peacebuilding policies and interventions that we implement. We also asked the panelists to identify the most critical challenges facing effective peacebuilding practices and how we can engage in this kind of work without doing harm to vulnerable individuals in communities affected by violence. For example, we asked our panelists to think about when externally sponsored peace initiatives can lay the foundation for social cohesion, and when they may reinforce or even catalyze social divisions that undermine peacebuilding.

PANEL SUMMARIES

Presentations by the panelists focused strongly on the division between local and external agendas in promoting peacebuilding and emphasized the importance of empowering local voices.

Natalia Chan, Senior Adviser, South Sudan, Christian Aid, shared the details and recommendations of a recent report produced by Christian Aid about peacebuilding efforts in South Sudan. She shared that recent eruptions of violence were unexpected, disillusioning, and have caused both international and national peacebuilders to pause and question the efficacy of their historic efforts. Chan went on to explain that while external support for peacebuilding is important, South Sudanese have unique traditional, cultural, and spiritual solutions to their own challenges. Consequently, to be effective, peace initiatives must be reflective of and responsive to local contexts. She also emphasized the need to address deep rooted and painful issues; and that a road to peace will require a comprehensive approach that addresses social, economic, political, and psychological needs.

Natalia Chan

Jesse Eaves, a Director on the Peacebuilding Team, Humanity United, addressed the power imbalances between donors and local peacebuilders. Eaves noted that Humanity United had taken a top-down approach to peacebuilding that he described as often out of touch with the needs of the South Sudanese. As a result of a deep institutional reflection, the peacebuilding team decided to relinquish power into the hands of South Sudanese youth. Eaves played a video of South Sudanese cohort member, Bush Buse who called on donors to be flexible in their methods and mindsets and to allow for local peacebuilders to have agency throughout this transitioning process. Then Eaves emphasized encouraging genuine connection and cooperation between partners, and the need for donors to be willing to give up control.

Jesse Eaves

Bill Froehlich, the Langdon Fellow in Dispute Resolution and Deputy Director of the Divided Community Project at the Ohio State University Moritz College of Law, shared an overview of the Divided Community Project, an initiative that interfaces the efforts of scholars, advocates, civic leaders and practitioners to effectively engage in communities seeking to address divisions that tear at the fabric of their respective communities. Froehlich highlighted the importance of considering the needs and objectives of partners, and the necessity of recognizing inclusiveness, collaboration, and engagement as foundational to the building of trust and relationships.

Froehlich also emphasized the importance of learning about legacies of distrust and the identification of community stakeholders for successful peacebuilding work.

Bill Froehlich and Teri Murphy

Finally, Henry Middleton, the chief of staff of ARK Group, focused on the role that external agendas have played in the on-going Syrian conflict. As an example, Middleton highlighted the consequences of President Donald Trump's recent decision to pull United States troops out of Syria. Middleton presented recent survey data from Syria documenting increasingly tense ethnic divisions in the wake of the consequent Turkish intervention. Syria exists in a state of deep distrust, and, according to Middleton, external agendas only serve to exacerbate these social divides and undermine Syria's progress. Middleton concluded that the external agendas of Turkey, the United States, and Russia are contributing to a repeat of the very scenario they have allegedly been seeking to avoid.

Henry Middleton

GROUP DISCUSSION

After the completion of the panel presentation, participants once again gathered in small groups to discuss their responses to the themes raised by the panelists. Some of the issues that emerged from these discussions were:

- The conflicting interests and priorities of donors, practitioners, and local communities. As many panelists have pointed out, the goals of people living in conflict affected areas may not always be to reach "peace"; their priority is often safety. While donors may fund peacebuilders and academics to improve the crisis of the state, the crisis of the home may be the long-term solution to breaking patterns of violence. When practitioners and academics are able to create effective partnerships with local communities, efforts can thrive.

- How to prevent burnout among peacebuilders and front-line workers. Partnering with culturally sensitive researchers and academics may be a way to support practitioners. Their "energy capital" can be replenished by inspiring innovative work from both the academic field and from co-worker relationships and networks. Additionally, identifying shared goals between practitioners and academics can mutually benefit even if their approaches may be different. Finding ways to interface or share expertise is critical.

- The prioritizing of certain conflicts over others when attempting to build social cohesion and peace. Both practitioners and academics recognized the uneven nature of donor support for building peace in different conflicts around the world, but they agreed that "you take whatever opportunity you can get." It is important, however, that peacebuilders and academics work alongside people, support local capacities, and find ways to address the root causes.

- The negative effects of shifting donor priorities, limited funding, and short timeframes. These dynamics can injure partnerships and hurt local people whose institutional sustainability and or personal livelihoods may depend upon a project. Another question was raised about whether some of these projects actually put staff or partners at further risk (e.g. enumerators).

LESSONS LEARNED

Overall, both our panel presentations and our discussions focused strongly on the importance of local influence and the role of local voices in developing and implementing effective peacebuilding interventions. Some of the key lessons included:

- The ineffectiveness of peacebuilding initiatives that are imposed by external donors and partners without input from local stakeholders

- The resilience and ability of local stakeholders to work toward peace despite extremely difficult circumstances

- The damaging effects of unrealistically short timelines imposed by external donors and the need for patience in developing local trust and relationships

- The vulnerability of local peacebuilding efforts to destructive and capricious actions by national and international authorities that are insensitive to local consequences

- The central importance of sustained relationships among local actors and between local and external partners for building social trust and cohesion

- The need for external partners to intentionally abdicate positions of privilege and work toward collaborative partnerships with local stakeholders

- The importance of supporting and sustaining local and external peacebuilders through longer term efforts that face inevitable setbacks and stumbling blocks

Panel 3: Monitoring, Evaluation, and Adapting and Learning

QUESTIONS GOING IN

After exploring the different understandings of just what social cohesion is (panel one) and how it can be achieved (panel two), the final panel in the symposium sought to address the question of the different ways of *knowing* when social cohesion exists. This conference has been organized around the belief that social cohesion is the critical ingredient that unites vulnerable communities and creates resilience to violent conflict; but how do we know when it's there? Researchers, practitioners, donors, and policymakers all have different ways of knowing, different criteria that they require for the truth. As such, the third panel aimed to explore how we monitor and evaluate our work, as well as how we can adapt and learn from other traditions and methodologies. *What makes measurement tools valid, reliable and effective? How should we manage ethical dilemmas in repressive environments and ensure our work is conflict sensitive without sacrificing any rigor? How can we learn to unlearn?* The third and final panel of the symposium ultimately challenged us to consider our assumptions about knowledge and the diverse ways of knowing that exist across academic disciplines, peacebuilding practices, and global communities.

PANELIST SUMMARIES

The presentations in the third panel ranged from exploring meaning making and the implications of miscommunication to techniques of design and evaluation of peacebuilding programs, and how subjectivity and unintended consequences can manifest in programs with the best of intentions. Rachel Bessette, senior business development officer with ARK DMCC Middle East, focused her presentation on the meanings of common and often subjective terms used in the field, demonstrating how terms such as social cohesion, peacebuilding, preventing violent extremism, and resilience do not evoke the same responses across social and cultural contexts. Not only can words be lost in translation, but there can also be conceptual disagreements as to what words mean. Working on a "peacebuilding" strategy in Yemen, ARK found that the word "peace" was not evocative to Yemenis because half the population did not believe peace was achievable and the other half did not believe there was a conflict. To combat a lack of trust and mismatch in expectations, peacebuilders need to draw from local understandings and use more context specific language to better achieve shared goals.

Besides the potential of miscommunication, there can also be unexpected implications from peacebuilding projects. Holly Nyseth Brehm, an associate professor of Sociology and Criminology at OSU, discussed lessons that can be learned from the Gacaca Courts of Rwanda which were implemented from 2002–2012 to arbitrate cases of planning, killing, and property crime from the Rwandan genocide. Two research questions have informed her work: what factors influenced Gacaca sentencing and what were the consequences of the Gacaca sentences? Nyseth Brehm found that in communities where life sentences were handed out there were worse outcomes, more crime, and less social cohesion. Her research also found that women who served as judges for the Gacacas experienced a boost in their confidence and pride, and their position as judges often opened up other leadership opportunities within their communities. At the same time however, for the over 250,000 people who served as judges, the "demanding and unpaid work often took away from their livelihoods and wellbeing." Besides taking time away from their families, hearing cases was emotionally taxing, leaving some judges to suffer from secondary trauma.

Holly Nyseth Brehm

Moving into a discussion of measurement, Mara Revkin, Postdoctoral Fellow in National Security Law at Georgetown University Law Center, explored the question, "Can community policing increase state legitimacy?" Previous research has suggested that community policing methods can promote mutual trust between state security forces and civilians in post-conflict settings, thus increasing the effectiveness and legitimacy of the government. Baseline findings of a survey in Al-Baradia, Basra, Iraq reported over 50 percent of respondents distrusting the police "somewhat" or "a lot," associating words such as "fear", "injustice", and "corruption" with the professional cadres. Preliminary findings indicate that in Basra, which saw large anti-government protests in the fall of 2019, citizens hold the most negative views of police with seventy-one percent of those surveyed reporting that they expect the level of violence in the community to increase over the next year, a significantly higher percentage than reported in other cities.

Rebecca Wolfe, former Director of Peace and Conflict Team, Mercy Corps, spoke about the potential for measuring the success of peacebuilding efforts. She identified two obstacles to measuring peace and conflict: isolating variables and choosing the appropriate research methodology. Peace and conflict, she suggested, is difficult to divide into measurable variables because it is a multi-dimensional and multi-faceted experience. Furthermore, because conflict is not just defined by the absence of violence, researchers must look for a range of indicators to evaluate stability. Examining the Engaging Communities for Peace in Nigeria (ECPN) project, which aimed to prevent conflicts between farmer and pastoralist communities in the Middle Belt, Wolfe's research found that perceptions of security increased in communities with ECPN and that intergroup contact between farmer and pastoralist communities increased, even during times of regional violence.

GROUP DISCUSSION

For the final discussion of the symposium, the organizers wanted to capture the energy and interests of the participants; as such, the final group discussion was guided by questions that were submitted by the participants and was organized around four thematic areas. We thought about the different foci from which the peacebuilding project needed to be improved—in the field, in the academy, in the classroom—and what we can all do to contribute, in our own ways, to fostering better relationships between ourselves and the communities we partner with.

The first avenue of questioning can broadly be captured under the header of **"Research, Collaboration and Learning."** Facilitated by Austin Knuppe, he asked whether research is preempted by practice or vice versa, and which directional flow of action should be prioritized. While work can swing to one or the other, it is most likely the case that practice and research are mutually reinforcing: experiences on the ground inspire research but those research findings can also illuminate opportunities and needs in the practice. At the same time, donors have also been drivers of research agendas for some academics; ostensible knowledge gaps in the literature have also inspired inquiry. Not all ways of knowing, however, can be captured though academic research or through scholarship. Rather than looking for answers to questions that have been devised in a lab far away, practitioners advocate for listening to the communities and understanding their needs in order to devise better questions. By incorporating community needs into program proposals and research designs, the practice and academic fields can coexist and reinforce one another more faithfully. The simple action of 'being somewhere' can lead to realizations that would have never been made from thousands of miles away. As such, it is critical for research to be steeped in applied practice and experience. The challenges in access, funding, and conflict sensitivity, however, make this recommendation easier said than done. Working in the other direction, practice can also look

to research to fortify its approaches. Barriers exist here as well, as 'paywalls' on research libraries can make accessing research and knowledge sharing difficult.

The next line of inquiry examined **"Sensitivity, Soft Skills and Humanitarianism,"** asking how practitioners and academics can work ethically in opaque environments. Victoria Gurevich started the conversation by asking: How do you do peacebuilding in environments where the state is the primary perpetrator of atrocities? States are not homogenous and different appetites for peace exist; the violence committed in some regions may not be felt in others, and the victims and perpetrators may differ across contexts. Furthermore, if there is no appetite for peace at the local level, the uncomfortable truth may be that perhaps it is not the right time for peace. Working in divided communities, the tension between what peace means for different groups is a common challenge. Not only across different ethnic or religious groups, community peacebuilding aims to bring together various citizen and professional groups and agree on their vision for the future, which often means reconciling potentially disparate memories of the past.

Next the conversation turned towards humanitarianism; specifically, how the tenet of neutrality often does not align with conflict sensitivity. While humanitarianism works in a realist frame, peacebuilding seeks to become transformative and emphasizes reconciliation and healing—work that cannot be done in a neutral frame. Ultimately an integrative approach was called for, one that facilitates and supports existing relationships while also finding a balance between the expectation of creating transformative impacts and simply making the world 'a little less ugly'.

In any discussion of peacebuilding, it is important not to take for granted the skills of the peacebuilders themselves (not just focusing on the peacebuilding projects). There was a clear consensus that there is an aspect to effective peacebuilding that is intrinsic to the peacebuilders themselves that comes across in communication, authenticity, and relationship building—dubbed 'soft skills'. Furthermore, micro-skills such as summarizing, paraphrasing, inquiring, and synthesizing—critical features of effective communication—are especially important when working with diverse groups of people. Peace practitioners agreed that soft skills must be modeled as that is the most effective way to acquire them. Many participants confessed that soft skills are an integral part of building peace; however, teaching them to the new generation of peacebuilders presents an entirely new challenge since they can be hard to recognize, are not used for evaluation, and lack concrete criteria.

Turning next towards perhaps the overarching objective of the symposium, Kara Hooser led the discussion that focused on **"Bridging the Divide Between Practitioners and Academics."** Regarding timelines, practitioners noted how academics' tendency to 'soak in ideas' does not translate well into something that can be implemented by practitioners. The academic lifecycle is much longer than that of peacebuilding interventions; oftentimes the urgency that peacebuilding demands is difficult to match in academia. Urgency can be dictated not only by the situation on the ground, when practitioners are working to end violence, but urgency can also be created from donors. Calls for bids are often short, lasting only several days or weeks. Not only that, but the timelines of the projects themselves may also be too short to accommodate a rigorous research project. Furthermore, it is often the case that organizations go where donors want them to go, which is not towards research. A proposed solution to this could be for the academy to 'step closer to practitioners' and facilitate deeper levels of learning when time and funding is not available to peacebuilding organizations.

Another challenge that exists for academic-practitioner coordination is information sharing. While academics working on issues of peacebuilding undoubtedly want their research to be

used effectively by NGOs, academic journals are often not accessible or practical for NGOs to consult. Blocked by paywalls, steeped in jargon and 'impressive' statistical graphs, articles are not accessible outside of the academy. A proposed solution to this is for academics to offer short, two-page briefs covering the main findings of their research. These briefs can then be curated in an open-source database where they are available to everyone, thereby creating a culture of intellectual exchange and growth between practice and academia. It is important to underscore that while there are obstacles to effective collaboration, relationships between practitioners and academics already exist—they just need to be appropriately synchronized.

In the final round of the discussion, Christopher Gelpi asked participants perhaps the most important questions: **"What's Next?"** What do we do with the energy that was created over the course of the last two days? The challenges of practitioners and academics working together in a field that some have described as one where "there tend to be no structures in place for collaboration," have been diligently, passionately, and creatively addressed. There is a way forward. Besides maintaining and fostering individual relationships between specific researchers and practitioners, it was unanimous among participants that symposiums such as this one are essential for the exchange of ideas, information, and experiences. It is difficult to collaborate when the field is opaque; symposiums and conferences will allow the many stakeholders in peacebuilding to get to know each other's work and discover the connections between their projects. Moving forward, it is important to broaden the voices and traditions that are featured in the room. Satellite conferences can be used to give access to partners communities, and the location of the conference itself (Columbus, OH) should be rotated on a yearly basis to make travel more convenient and possible for some affiliates. Cluster meetings for non-humanitarian groups and a common communication platform or database are also ways to stay connected.

Christopher Gelpi

LESSONS LEARNED

Main takeaways from the third panel of the symposium:

- Practice and research are mutually reinforcing; experiences on the ground inspire research but those research findings can also illuminate opportunities and needs in the practice

- Not all ways of knowing can be captured though academic research; local traditions of knowledge must be honored and engaged as legitimate peacebuilding rationales

- Peacebuilding and research priorities should be arrived at by listening to the communities and understanding their priorities and needs

- The appetite for peace must come from the local level; it cannot be compelled

- Soft skills such as those that contribute to communication, authenticity, and relationship building are critical to effective peacebuilding projects; peacebuilder education and training would do well to include soft skills in their instruction

- The timelines kept by academics and practitioners are a possible source of incompatibility, where the academic lifecycle is much longer than that of peacebuilding interventions and the urgency that peacebuilding demands may be difficult to keep up with in academia

- Information flows between the academy and practice are often obstructed; with academic research guarded behind paywalls and couched in jargon; to make research more accessible, academics should strive to make the main findings of their research available to the communities they serve and the NGOs working in similar thematic areas

V. Conclusion

Peace and social cohesion are built by sustaining, managing, and even fostering a series of tensions among contending needs. These tensions exist both with regard to the processes for creating peace in the wake of violence as well as our understanding of what the fundamental nature of a peaceful cohesive society actually is. Rather than viewing these tensions as problems that must be resolved, we experienced them as values and needs that must be acknowledged and explored continuously as peaceful communities develop.

With regard to the practices of building peace, our discussions touched on the tensions between theory and practice. Participants noted the need for general theories of peacebuilding and social cohesion to guide the creation and implementation of peacebuilding practices. Yet at the same time, presenters also emphasized the need for adaptability and accommodation of local practices, voices, and initiatives. This tension between theory and practice also connected to a tension between developing knowledge that is generalizable and knowledge that speaks to the lived experiences of those affected by violence. Similarly, many participants emphasized the need to engage local communities and beneficiaries both in imagining the futures for their societies and in working toward that future. At the same time, others noted the potentially devastating and disruptive effects that actors at the national and international level can have on peacebuilding processes and the development of social cohesion. Peacebuilders must also engage at these levels if peace is to become sustainable. And finally, our participants touched repeatedly on the tensions between long-term and short-term time frames for building peace. There is a profound need for urgent action to respond to those affected by violence, and yet a need to ensure that those efforts are sustained over time.

Our discussions revealed that fundamental tensions also undergird the nature of peace itself. Our symposium focused on the construction of social cohesion, but our participants noted the persistent tension between the need for communities to cohere as well as the needs of local groups and individuals to express their identities and values. Social cohesion is necessary for the functioning of society, and yet the notion of cohesion intrinsically threatens the expression of the individual and the unique. Our participants explored the concept of trust as a way to manage this dichotomy in a way that sustains both self and other and fosters both community and diversity.

Throughout our discussions we noted the differing perspectives of academics and peace practitioners in addressing these tensions. While not always emphasizing the opposing sides of these dichotomies, academics and practitioners often expressed different approaches to developing knowledge, different emphases on the general versus the particular, and different timelines for taking action. However, one central concept brought these communities together both in terms of developing trust with one another and trust among local communities affected by violence: relationships. Time and again our symposium returned to the centrality of sustained relationships as the foundation for trust within local communities, between local communities and global actors, and among academics and practitioners seeking to build peace in communities and societies affected by violence. Our participants expressed a strong commitment to fostering and sustaining relationships across all of these divides. We believe that the construction of peace depends upon these relationships. The Conflict to Peace Lab is also committed to sustaining these relationships and we look forward to seeing what we can build together.

The complete summaries of each presentation are listed in order of appearance.

Sabrina Karim is an assistant professor in the government department at Cornell University. Her presentation, entitled "Relational State Building – How Shared Experiences Can Help Create Social Cohesion," explored the two core concepts of trust and cohesion and further analyzed her work with the Liberian police. Two of her main questions relating to these concepts include how to increase trust in government institutions in post-conflict contexts, focusing specifically on the security sector, and how to increase cohesion between in-group and out-group members.

As it relates to the concept of trust, Karim has focused on perceptional and behavioral measurement methods to analyze trust in Liberia's integrated security forces following ad-hoc violence. For the public and police personnel, these measurements focus on positive perception, preferences, increased use of services, complying with rules, and the cooperative exchange of information. Karim found that the best way to increase trust was not offering information about new institutions or acknowledging a common identity among police officers and citizens; instead, she found that building positive relationships was integral to enhanced trust. Dialogue forms trust and putting a face to the police force helped individuals build a relationship with the institution.

In the case of cohesion, Karim cites the fact that Liberia disassembled and rebuilt their police force to diversify the institution. Again, Karim used perceptional and behavioral methods of measurement. Positive affect, self-reported conformity, and self-reported perceptions of inclusion were measured on the perceptional aspect. Behaviorally, Karim looked for inclusion of the out-group in informal activities, minimal discrimination, shared individual and group preferences, deliberate decision-making, and high participation rates. However, Karim does cite a trade-off between cohesion and discrimination – pressure to conform to an institutional identity may cause members of an out-group to discriminate against their peers. In conclusion, Karim finds that the key to building trust is building relationships, and that the importance of cohesion is tempered by its trade-offs.

Jennifer Mitzen, Associate Professor of Political Science, The Ohio State University, began by speaking about the value of thinking theoretically in the evaluation of peace and security efforts, as a way of potentially uncovering aspects of conflict situations that we might not otherwise see. She followed by using a conceptual framework to describe how the process of building stable identities can actually lock communities into conflict. Humanity, Dr. Mitzen explained, seeks ontological security, or a sense of order and meaning within each new experience. For this reason, she emphasized approaching the concept of security through its relationship to identity because it helps account for the cyclic nature of violence. In the words of Dr. Mitzen, sometimes "conflict persists because we want it to."

Using an ontological security lens, Dr. Mitzen explained that people need to experience themselves as whole and continuous in time and place. The narratives that shape identity, the routines which establish order, and the comfort found within a home, all form a basic trust in the social world and help maintain that sense of 'identity security.' These narratives and practices are so intrinsic to humans, Dr. Mitzen proposed, that they condition how societies react when faced with a moment of anxiety. She drew from the experiences of 9/11 to illustrate how communities faced with uncertainty seek comfort within familiarity. After 9/11, a pervasive sense of threat prevented United States citizens from returning to normalcy. She stated that the governmental response was an attempt to reestablish a facade of home. The War on Terror allowed an abstract fear to be directed at something tangible, and the establishment of Homeland Security shut out strangers who may have been perceived as a threat. Dr. Mitzen went on to use the Concert of Europe as another example of communities reacting to a moment of anxiety. She highlighted that after violence had become a norm, the main actors of the Concert of Europe were unsure of how to act while seeking peace. These actors decided peace should be handled within a shared space and that threats should be addressed, for the first time, through the great powers talking together.

The examples of 9/11 and the Concert of Europe, as explained by Dr. Mitzen, represent two possible responses to existential anxiety. There is always a moment of ambivalence, where societies can either contain anxiety by turning it into fear or they can embrace it by seeking out new solutions. She concluded that a key to political order lies in managing the existential anxiety which arises from an encounter with the unknown, without resorting to the ready solution of giving into fear. The final question she asked participants to reflect upon was, "is it possible to dwell in the ambivalence?"

Veena O'sullivan, Head of the Thematic Support Team at Tearfund, spoke of working in the space of conflict and its intersection with interpersonal relationships. She began by describing Tearfund, a non-governmental organization that operates in fifty countries impacted by social and political conflict. As a humanitarian agency, Tearfund serves the "visible" humanitarian needs of fragile communities by working together with local leaders, while also helping those leaders strengthen their resilience to handle every day and on-going challenges. O'Sullivan also explained that over the course of its fifty-year history, Tearfund has chosen to step outside of the "traditional" humanitarian mandate. They have been challenged to see the "unseen" or "invisible" and to step closer to the lived realities of people's lives. They do this through the building of relationships.

Strong relationships have become a key priority for Tearfund because trust and interpersonal relationships are foundational for cohesion and peace. O'Sullivan described the non-linear, circular progression of the path towards peace, and the need for both "letting go" and relearning in order to make progress. She shared a story about a group of community leaders, representing different side of a conflict, who were brought together for a retreat in Egypt. People came with fear and anxiety; some of those invited even chose not to come. Emotions and tensions were too high. The first two days of the event were spent in tears. People began to open up and to share from their pain and experience. O'Sullivan explained that personal sharing was crucial for success because it allowed everyone to understand the "unseen" in a safe space. Once words of pain were expressed, shared hopes began to be expressed, and the moral imagination broke free. Part of the reason division was broken down was because each participant had chosen to be in that space. Having a choice was fundamental to their ability to trust, and trust was a prerequisite to opening up their ability to imagine a different and shared future together.

O'Sullivan also shared a story about a group from Iraq. She explained that Tearfund had to relearn everything as a humanitarian organization in Iraq. They learned that "trust" meant different things to different people. For example, who men trusted was different from who women felt confidence in. And who children felt safer with was different from adults. What they found was that Tearfund had made assumptions about trust. They had not been building it. Instead, they were addressing the visible (tangible needs) in a place where the invisible was the most destructive to the potential for social cohesion. "If they do not pour water and germinate seeds to re-build trust, we will be stuck in Iraq forever," she said. In order to build the bridge from conflict to sustainable peace, she argued, these organizations must nurture,

equip, and connect people seeking peace to build trust and relationships with each other.

Auveen Woods, Development Officer for the Center for Civil Society and Democracy (CCSD) built upon the conceptual discussions by analyzing obstacles to peace. In her experience, "Peace agreements are often the most fragile and dangerous period of a conflict. Everyone is exhausted; they are hungry or homeless and most people don't really care about an intangible 'peace' until their needs are addressed." In other words, the period of time surrounding the signing of a peace agreement may not be the best time to lay the foundations of sustainable peace. For this reason, CCSD began to focus on the question: "How do we lay the foundations for peace in the middle of war?" As a Syrian founded NGO, CCSD began working inside Syria as the initially peaceful protest movement became more violent in 2012. For decades. Syria civil society had been repressed. As a result, there was a lack of civic education or participation and a vacuum of alternative leadership to the regime. In response, CCSD made a strategic choice to begin identifying local activists, offering them leadership training and support. They created learning platforms and hubs and places to exchange ideas about how to positively impact social cohesion and trust within various communities - even when war was surrounding them.

Highlighting the importance of skill building and support, Ms. Woods described the positive impact of two of CCSD's four networks such as I Am She and the Aman Network both of which aim to build solidarity and local cohesion. The I Am She network is a network of women peacebuilders, that identifies local women and brings them together, training them in leadership skills that are useful to their daily lives. These skills vary from critical analysis and thinking to legal literacy of international and national laws and norms. Additionally, this network provides women with essential skills such as effective communication, mediation, negotiation, and facilitating dialogue. Members are able to take these skills directly into their communities and teach others in ways that often influence local discourse and understandings.

The Aman Network is composed of local peacebuilders who work to address local issues affecting communities such as revenge killings, child marriages, or arms proliferation. They try to promote mechanisms for social cohesion necessary to prevent further destabilization in their communities. "During war people are fragmented in their communities or clique into negative behavioral patterns. But the foundations for peace can be generated through replicable and practical applications of skills such as effective dialogue that try to bridge these divides." Because communities vary in needs

and acceptable approaches, finding ways to effectively convene and train can be difficult. Yet CCSD remains committed to working through local networks to "build trust, end cycles of violence, and create opportunities for communities to experience effective, locally owned governance." Additionally, by engaging civil society through these networks, people also have a "safe space to envision and express their ideas for their future."

Natalia Chan, Senior Adviser, South Sudan, Christian Aid, shared the details and recommendations of a recent report produced by Christian Aid about peacebuilding efforts in South Sudan. Having spent the past ten years working in Sudan and South Sudan, she explained that there is no "quick fix" to South Sudan's conflicts. She shared that recent eruptions of violence were unexpected, disillusioning, and have caused both international and national peacebuilders to pause and question the efficacy of their historic efforts. Chan went on to explain that because political and military elites are not the sole authors of violence or peace, peacebuilding requires more than deals between political and military leaders.

In her review of Christian Aid's In it for the Long Haul report, Chan explained that the first section provides background on subnational and local peacebuilding initiatives and challenges previously accepted logic about the conditions necessary for a national transitions. Additionally, she described the positive impact of these initiatives, including increased local capacities for peace, mitigating effects and preventing escalation of conflict, and more effective ability to influence national level processes.

The second section of the report illustrates that while external support for peacebuilding is important, South Sudanese have unique traditional, cultural, and spiritual solutions to their own challenges. Chan went on to explain that although these challenges will take a long time to resolve, South Sudanese people continue to work towards peace. She shared that decade old grievances drive contemporary challenges and that very diverse views coexist within this new country. There is a wide range of culture, ethnicities, and languages – even words like peace do not mean the same thing. Chan shared ten key principles, highlighting that peace is a long term and transformative process. For this reason, peace must be situated in a long-term perspective. Additionally, to be effective, peace initiatives must be reflective of and responsive to local contexts. Other key principles were "It is not what you do, but how you do it" and recognizing that "peacebuilding can lead to further conflict."

Chan made several recommendations based upon her past experiences in the region. Recommendations included the importance of sharing information, lessons, and knowledge across academia and practitioners; the need to address deep rooted and painful issues; and the necessity of ensuring that peacebuilding was central to all local and international efforts. She maintained that a road to peace will require a comprehensive approach that addresses social, economic, political, and psychological needs.

Jesse Eaves, a Director on the Peacebuilding Team, Humanity United, addressed the power imbalances between donors and local peacebuilders. Speaking to his own experience of navigating peacebuilding in South Sudan with cohorts of South Sudanese youth, Eaves stated, "when a donor is in the room, everyone is on their best behavior." Eaves explained that when funding is at stake, the power held by the donor can sometimes diminish voices that are essential in the peacebuilding process. He demonstrated a need for change in donor mentality by describing some of the shifts in thinking and practice that Humanity United has made throughout the past decade. For example, in 2005, Humanity United took a top-down approach to peacebuilding that he described as too complex and often out of touch with the needs of the South Sudanese. He shared that a major point of transition in Humanity United's approach took place after John Paul Lederach, renowned peacebuilding scholar, accepted a senior fellow position within the organization. As a result of his insight and the deep institutional reflection that took place, the peacebuilding team decided that in order to best pursue sustainable peace, they needed to relinquish power into the hands of South Sudanese youth. As a symbol of this shift, their project team was titled "Cohort Zero"; by design, they eliminated all titles which had formerly created a hierarchy between Humanity United and local peacebuilders, and they adopted a co-learning process.

In a striking example of the shared space Humanity United has cultivated for peacebuilding initiatives, Eaves played a video of South Sudanese cohort member, Bush Buse. Buse spoke about the importance of collaboration between donors and local peacebuilders. He expressed the value in having experts with extensive background in conflict providing support and accompanying change. However, he emphasized that their need for help was only temporary. Local peacebuilders must have ownership over change and peace initiatives within their communities. Buse called on donors to be flexible in their methods and mindsets and to allow for local peacebuilders to have agency throughout this transitioning process.

Eaves left the conference with three pieces of advice for pursuing balanced relationship dynamics. His advice centered around encouraging genuine connection and

cooperation between partners because in his words, "addressing power imbalances is about shrinking the distance between 'us' and 'them' and including a much wider interpretation of 'us'." Donors need to be willing to give up control and allow for collaboration; embrace ambiguity in the forms that peace takes and the timeline in which it occurs needs to be accepted at an institutional level; this work takes time and organizations have to invest in interpersonal connections because relationships only move with the speed of trust.

William (Bill) Froehlich is the Langdon Fellow in Dispute Resolution and Deputy Director of the Divided Community Project at the Ohio State University Moritz College of Law. Speaking on the topic of building peace and social cohesion, Mr. Froehlich, shared an overview of the Divided Community Project, an initiative that interfaces the efforts of scholars, advocates, civic leaders and practitioners to effectively engage in communities seeking to address community divisions that tear at the fabric of their respective communities. Froehlich focused on what various cities around the United States have done to promote peace and social cohesion and how lessons from these efforts might be applied proactively to identify and address potential divisions and their underlying causes in other communities around the world.

Froehlich highlighted an example of how communities in central Florida have been working to bridge and heal historical division. In the aftermath of the shooting of Treyvon Martin, Andrew Thomas, a retired mediator, worked with neighborhoods in the city of Sanford to strengthen community wide trust. He continues to work extensively with municipal departments in developing and providing resources for leaders, to open lines of communication, and to deal very practically with issues that contribute to the roots of community tensions. As a result of this on-going work, precedent for collaborative and proactive work has been established which will strengthen collective efforts to prevent future community-wide conflict from escalating into violence.

Some of the key takeaways presented by Mr. Froehlich were the importance of considering the needs and objectives of partners; and the necessity of recognizing inclusiveness, collaboration, and engagement as foundational to the building of trust and relationships. He offered three recommendations to achieve these goals. Volunteers with expertise can come alongside communities to help strengthen their efforts to build trust. Secondly, academics can empower the work of the volunteers through on-going evaluation and identification of lessons learned. And lastly, the use of simulations of violent protests can prepare,

strengthen, and engage city leaders to develop insight, empathy and understanding. This type of experiential learning will help them make future decisions that lead to greater social cohesion and trust.

In his concluding remarks, Froehlich emphasized the importance of learning about legacies of distrust and the identification of community stakeholders to establish successful strategies for proactive peacebuilding work.

Henry Middleton is the chief of staff of ARK Group. His presentation entitled "External Agendas and Dynamics: When Do These Initiatives Reinforce or Even Catalyze Social Divisions that Negatively Affect Peacebuilding and Development Agendas?" focused on the role that external agendas have played in the on-going Syrian conflict. In 2017, when the ISIL caliphate was forced to release their capitol, the international community faced a problematic void. Due to strategic and political uncertainty, governments and donors did not designate or prioritize funding for Syria, and political leaders have been ambivalent about a way forward. Yet an immediate and positive alternative is needed because extremist presence, support, and even points of view remain appealing in various communities.

Middleton gave the example of Trump's recent decision to pull United States troops out of Syria to illustrate how external agendas influence and operate in the region. In this case, communities have been split apart even further. Although three out of five in Syria support the decision, there is only 33% Kurdish support. At the same time, 77% of the Kurds oppose a Turkish intervention. Geopolitical agendas and internal anxieties continue to aggravate a deep intra-Kurd divide. Many Kurds are displaced and want to return home, but young men are forced to flee to avoid PYD conscription. The Assad regime is not welcome, yet for some communities, Turkish control is the best chance to avoid violence.

Tension continues between Turkey and the Kurds, as well as Turkey and the Assad regime. For the Kurds, Turkey is perceived as less close to being an Arab state than the Assad regime, yet it has more economic stability and prosperity. Meanwhile, it seems likely that the regime will continue to gain more territory in the north. But a consequence of Assad's presence is the increased likelihood and risk of ISIL returning. Middleton's analysis is that ironically, the external agendas of Turkey, the United States, and Russia are contributing to a repeat of the very scenario they have been fighting against.

Syria exists in a state of deep distrust, and, according to Middleton, external agendas only serve to exacerbate these social divides and undermine Syria's progress.

Rachel Bessette, senior business development officer with ARK DMCC Middle East, began by asking members of the symposium to consider the meanings of common and often subjective terms used in the field. Her presentation, entitled "Lost in Translation: Bridging the Gap Between Partner and Donor Communication of Success," centered around terms such as social cohesion, peacebuilding, preventing violent extremism, and resilience. She facilitated discussion about the most commonly accepted definitions of each term and then offered reflection about the implications of these definitions.

For example, Bessette explained that the term "resilience" originally came from the field of disaster management but that over time, the concept had also become adopted as a stabilization and peacebuilding priority. Donors were looking to fund projects that would encourage "community resilience." She pointed out, however, that there was not an agreed upon definition of resilience or a "best practice" framework for these efforts. To illustrate, Bessette shared an anecdote about one of ARK's proposals for strengthening resilience within Palestinian camps in Lebanon. Because there is not a direct translation for the word "resilience" in Arabic related to peacebuilding - for the local community - the actual premise or rationale of the proposal did not make sense. Bessette gave another illustration about attempting to create a "peacebuilding" strategy in Yemen with their local partners. What ARK found was that the word "peace" was not relevant to Yemenis because half the population did not believe peace was unachievable and the other half believed there is no conflict. Bessette asked symposium participants to consider which words, instead, they might use given these types of circumstances.

Following her discussion about the subjectivity and fluidity of definitions, Bessette raised questions about why definitions matter and why it is critical that shared understandings do not get lost in translation. Perceptions, Bessette explained, differ in social and cultural contexts. To combat a lack of trust and mismatch in expectations, peacebuilders need to draw from local understandings and use more context specific language to better achieve shared goals. Otherwise, significant misunderstandings between donors, academics, practitioners, and beneficiaries will continue. In closing, Bessette posed a final question to the audience, asking for them to consider: What can we do to bridge this gap?

Holly Nyseth Brehm, an associate professor of Sociology and Criminology at The Ohio State University, discussed lessons that can be learned from the Gacaca Courts of Rwanda. The Courts, which were implemented between the years of 2002 and 2012, consisted of weekly trials in each community and were led by "people of integrity". The Gacacas model was not new to Rwanda. A traditional mechanism used to settle disputes in local communities, they existed before the colonial era. After the genocide in Rwanda, the government empowered these localized courts to hear cases and hand out sentences for three categories of genocide: planning, killing, and property crime.

Brehm, who studies the Gacacas, has used a mixed method approach, primarily consisting of surveys, interviews and focus groups. She has high level access to government records yet also works at the grassroots level. Two research questions have informed her work: what factors influenced Gacaca sentencing and what were the consequences of the Gacaca sentences? She discovered that punishments tended to be community-service oriented but that harsher crimes resulted in harsher punishments and longer sentences. Other important findings included that men more typically received longer sentences and people who were younger received less severe punishments. Additionally, she found that in educated areas or in tightly knit communities, punishment was not as severe as less educated areas, or in places where social cohesion was lower. In communities where life sentences were handed out, there were worse outcomes, more crime, and less social cohesion. Brehm also found that individuals who received life sentences had poorer health; but analysis also found that communities with more life sentences had worse collective health outcomes. Finally, in places where community service was preferred to life sentences and harsher punishment, there was a rise in wife beatings

Dr. Brehm's research also analyzed how participating as leaders of the courts influenced individual's lives. For example, women who served as judges for the Gacacas experienced a boost in their confidence and pride. Their position as judges often opened up other leadership opportunities within their communities. For the over 250,000 people who served as judges, however, few discussed the long-term impact that facilitating hearings had upon their lives. What Dr. Nyseth Brehm discovered, was that "this demanding and unpaid work often took away from their livelihoods and wellbeing." When judges served in the court, less time was spent caring for their families. Additionally, hearing cases was emotionally taxing and some judges even suffered secondary trauma. They also experienced a decrease in their social capital. Judges were sentencing people that they knew from families that they knew; listening to cases and making judgements felt much more personal. Brehm noted that "one third of judges experienced grudges, threats, and intergenerational effects."

Mara Revkin, Postdoctoral Fellow in National Security Law at Georgetown University Law Center, explored the question, "Can community policing increase state legitimacy?" She began her presentation by offering an overview of previous research. Findings have suggested that community policing methods can promote mutual trust between state security forces and civilians in post-conflict settings, thus increasing the effectiveness and legitimacy of the government. Her research built upon these findings by identifying three knowledge gaps: the police perspective, Iraq-specific data, and the demilitarization of police. She noted that although mutual fear and distrust between police and civilians is a two-sided problem, most previous research has focused on the civilian perspective due to the difficulty of surveying or interviewing police officers. Additionally, community policing had yet to be studied quantitatively in Iraq, and though many studies had focused on the militarization of police, little research had been published on how to effectively demilitarize them.

Revkin shared baseline findings of a survey in Al-Baradia, Basra, Iraq in which more than 50 percent of respondent said that they distrust the police "somewhat" or "a lot." Qualitatively, when asked to list the first words that come to mind when they think about the police in their, some of the most common words that citizens used to describe police were "fear", "injustice", and "corruption". These findings underscored the acute need to build trust and cooperation between Iraqi civilians and police. She went on to explain her research design and the intended outcome of strengthening future policy and prevention models in Iraq. Revkin is in the process of conducting surveys in thirteen communities about police legitimacy in partnership with the International Organization for Migration, which is implementing a community policing program in these areas. Though the research is not yet complete, preliminary findings from baseline surveys indicate that in Basra, which saw large anti-government protests in the fall of 2019, citizens hold the most negative views of police. Additionally, seventy-one percent of those surveyed in Basra reported on the baseline survey in July 2019 that they expect the level of violence in the community to increase over the next year, a significantly higher percentage than reported in other cities.

Given the heightened vulnerability of communities in Iraq, a symposium participant asked about dissemination of information and ethics. Revkin intends to share findings with the community by translating publications into Arabic and holding public events in Iraq. For ethical reasons, Revkin has chosen not to use random door to door sampling in highly traumatized communities, such as where large Yazidi populations live, to prevent the recurrence of traumatization of individuals.

Rebecca Wolfe, former Director of Peace and Conflict Team, Mercy Corps, spoke about the potential for measuring the success of peacebuilding efforts. Wolfe explained that while measuring peace and conflict is complicated, there are opportunities to use quantifiable data to improve future initiatives. She identified two obstacles to measuring peace and conflict: isolating variables and choosing the appropriate research methodology. Peace and conflict, she suggested, is difficult to divide into measurable variables because it is a multi-dimensional and multi-faceted experience. Also, conflict is not just defined by the absence of violence. This means researchers must look for numerous indicators to evaluate stability. Furthermore, the tendency for researchers to use interviews to gather data allows for the risk of self-presentation bias. People often seek to maintain their self-image and say what they believe researchers want to hear.

Wolfe discussed Mercy Corps' attempt to overcome these barriers while measuring peacebuilding efforts in Nigeria. She shared that Mercy Corps and local partner, Pastoral Resolve (PARE), had worked together on the implementation of the Engaging Communities for Peace in Nigeria (ECPN) project, from 2015 to 2019. The aim of the project was to prevent conflicts between farmer and pastoralist communities in the Middle Belt. They used three main intervention strategies: to strengthen the ability of local leaders to resolve conflict inclusively and sustainably; to provide trainings on negotiation and mediation within a collaborative setting, and; to increase engagement of local leaders in preventative planning and information sharing between communities. She explained that the research design included triangulating the results of a community-level randomized controlled trial with a pre-/post-program analysis of individuals. Experiences of direct and indirect participants of the program were compared to members of control communities in order to analyze overall impact.

In evaluating the results of the research, Wolfe found that the effect of the project was more likely to have an impact than not. Her findings also demonstrated that perception of security increased in communities with ECPN and that intergroup contact between farmer and pastoralist communities increased, even during times of regional violence.

Complications to the research were time and money constraints, and evolving events, which Wolfe asserted are consistent obstacles in the field. She concluded, however, that despite the obstacles, research creates an opportunity to meet the demand of policymakers and practitioners to better understand the impact of their peacebuilding investments

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