

2018 DC SYMPOSIUM on the New Frontiers of Peacebuilding

July 14 - August 4, 2018

The New Frontiers Memoirs





2018 DC Symposium on the New Frontiers of Peacebuilding The New Frontiers Memoirs

Program Direction

Carola Mandelbaum. *CEO, Creative Learning*

Cameron Chisholm. *Vice-President, Creative Learning / IPSI*

Andres Martinez Garcia. *Director Colombia Office, Creative Learning / IPSI*

Methodology, Compilation, and Analysis

Maria Paula Unigarro Alba. *Program Coordinator, Creative Learning / IPSI*

Editorial Reviews

Alexandra Levinger. *Summer Intern, Creative Learning / IPSI*

Photography

Laura Bisbee. *Summer Staff - 2018 DC Symposium, Creative Learning / IPSI*

Summer Staff

Mayada Al Rawi

Matan Ayash

Laura Bisbee

Caleb Bowers

Abigail Gress

Alexandra Levinger

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FOREWORD

In collaboration with American University's School of International Service (SIS), Creative Learning's inaugural *DC Symposium on the New Frontiers of Peacebuilding* gathered 26 carefully selected global peacebuilders for a three-week program examining innovative perspectives on peacebuilding. Considering that the complexity of existing threats to peace urges us to look for systematic answers and emerging trends from various disciplines, participants were exposed not only to the fundamentals of mediation, negotiation, and facilitation, but also to the newest, cutting-edge approaches to peace. New Frontiers topics included: Architecture, Urban Design and Peace; Conflict Cuisine; CVE and Technology; Religion and Peace; and Venture Peacebuilding.

With the aim of building a collective reflection on this intense experience, participants were offered the opportunity to write an analytical paper about the sessions held during the Symposium. This individual writing exercise was accompanied by breakout group sessions, during which participants had the chance to discuss their thoughts and writing processes with their peers and Symposium organizers. This is how *The New Frontiers Memoirs* came into being. The many facets of a rich and intense academic, professional, and social experience have been condensed into this document. Its author is the Symposium's main protagonist: the student body – international peacebuilders whose diverse backgrounds, experiences, and origins have enabled them to provide a thorough reflection and analysis of this program.

We hope readers find in this report enriching analysis and reflections. Furthermore, we expect many to find inspiration here as they think about and develop their own innovative solutions to current threats to peace.

Carola Mandelbaum
CEO, Creative Learning

Cameron Chisholm,
Vice-President,
Creative Learning / IPSI

Andres Martinez
Director, Colombia Office,
Creative Learning / IPSI



About the New Frontiers Memoirs

The New Frontiers Memoirs is the result of a collective writing exercise that brings to life the 2018 DC Symposium experience. The purpose of this exercise was two-fold: first, to allow participants to reflect on the Symposium's content through writing; and second, to collaboratively develop a document that shares what happened during the program with interested audiences.

This was an optional task for those attending the 2018 DC Symposium. Given that nearly all participants volunteered to be part of this exercise, each participant was assigned one specific session to cover, with only two exceptions. First, two participants wrote about the Local Systems and Governance presentation by Deborah Kimble, which resulted in two distinct perspectives and analyses on the same presentation. Second, two participants jointly wrote a reflection on Alexandre Marc's presentation about the *Pathways for Peace* report¹; their work turned into a shared analysis about the lecture and the discussion that followed.

The structure of each memoir varies depending on each author's style. However, all texts include a synthesis of the session—which highlights the discussions held and the conclusions reached—as well as an analysis of the session. The reader should be aware that each memoir expresses the reflections of its author and does not necessarily represent the views of Creative Learning. Nevertheless, the *New Frontiers Memoirs* offers an unparalleled window into the perspectives of global peacebuilders.

¹ United Nations and World Bank Study. *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*.



Primary Drivers/Diagnosing Conflict with Dr. Doga Eralp

Professorial Lecturer, American University School of International Service

July 17th, 2018

Memoir by Liliana Pimentel, Brazil

This first session of the 2018 DC Symposium, presented by Dr. Doga Eralp, covered the topics of why, when, and how to perform conflict diagnosis. Dr. Eralp first stressed the importance of understanding the history of the conflict, as well as considering all the perspectives of the actors or groups involved, before planning any intervention in the conflict. This is important firstly because parties



hold different views on the facts of the conflict, different levels of involvement in the conflict, and different emotional relationships to it. Secondly, misunderstandings between parties at the very beginning of the negotiation process can reduce the chances of a satisfactory outcome. Negotiators must pay attention to differences of perceptions, expectations, and visions between all parties involved; they must also understand the context of the conflict and the setting of the negotiations, as well as the power imbalances and historical relationships between parties.

With such an understanding, it is possible to analyze the indicators found and develop an overview of the nature and dynamics of the conflict situation. This mapping process helps to identify the core reason for the conflict, allowing one to choose the appropriate strategic approach for conflict management. The complexity of such a task calls for a team that can rely equally on academic and practical skills to carry out a comprehensive assessment; this results in a reliable diagnosis of the situation itself, as well as, on a



broader scale, the effects on the conflict of external factors such as diaspora and the media. Following this academic explanation, Dr. Eralp introduced some concrete frameworks for conflict diagnosis, and participants were divided into groups to practice selecting the appropriate framework and using it on a given conflict situation.

As the first session of the Symposium, the topic covered came at the perfect time, helping participants



understand the importance of a good diagnosis effort as the first step of effective conflict management processes. Creating trust is a key point to guarantee openness from all parties involved. By analyzing and mapping the dynamics of the conflict, its history, and its context, one comes to recognize the roles of each actor and of the mediation team itself, which helps to avoid biases. Conflict diagnosis seems to be the best strategy to prevent the failure or bad

implementation of a peace agreement due to a lack of understanding in the planning and implementation stages of interventions. A good diagnosis phase is important for managing any kind of conflict, no matter its scale or complexity.

In summary, peace is a process, not an end in itself. Accurately understanding the drivers of a conflict allows one to determine the best mediation and conflict management strategies, increasing the chances of a peaceful outcome that satisfies all parties involved.



Architecture, Urban Design, and Peace

with Prof. Victoria Kiechel

Professorial Lecturer, Global Environmental Politics Program, American University
School of International Service

July 17th, 2018

Memoir by Petra Sara Macher, Hungary

According to Professor Kiechel, the role and impact of urban design and architecture is significant in conflicts; Kiechel stressed that *everything that is designed, communicates a message* through its existence. To illustrate this, Kiechel invited the group to discuss the table and room design for the Vietnam peace negotiations; a photo of the room showed groupings of negotiators spread out around



a massive round table. Many participants agreed that the round table seemed to contribute to a sense of equality among the parties, whereas some thought that the huge table rather separated the parties and distanced them from each other, hindering the ability to negotiate.

With regard to urban design, Kiechel stated that *every constructed form is a manifestation of the society and culture* within which it exists. Kevin Lynch (Image of the City, 1960) describes this phenomenon through his urban taxonomy, which defines the elements of a city (paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks) and examines how these elements shape and represent the identity of citizens. Participants explored this concept by observing maps of various cities around the world. In the map of Venice, the proximity of nature and organic development is obvious through the curvy lines of the streets, demonstrating the laid-back Mediterranean culture. The map of Manhattan, on the other hand, with its



straight and evenly organized spaces, reflects the values of a more structured business society with an intention of social equality.



So how can design intervene in conflict? One great example is New York City (USA), where, by building Central Park as a barrier against the violent neighborhoods at the south of Manhattan, city planners successfully reduced the power and number of local gangs. In Medellin (Colombia), in order to improve the quality of an impoverished neighborhood plagued with violence, planners established central community

spaces (such as public libraries and other social spaces), which resulted in social mixing, reduced violence, and an increased level of trust between inhabitants and between the community and the rest of the city.

This led us to the conclusion that *building public places that encourage mutual engagement and interaction between people can help to decrease conflict*. For this to happen, solely the creation of a public place may not be enough. Engaging locals to contribute and participate in the planning and construction of such spaces is essential for their future success. *Ownership on the part of locals creates a supportive environment and a sense of accountability*, which enables the innovation to remain sustainable, without being destroyed and neglected by the locals.

With the above examples, the lecturer underlined her main thesis that *consciously designing new urban settings with the contribution of the community's residents can decrease conflict*. The group supported this thesis. To reflect on this discussion, the group performed an interactive brainstorming exercise, collecting ideas on how to improve a slum. The imaginary structure the participants created featured a colorful common space in the center of the neighborhood, with a food hub, a community garden, and communal kitchens to bring people together.



Local Systems and Governance

with Anthony A. Williams

*Member of the Board of Directors, Bipartisan Policy Center;
Former mayor of Washington, D.C.*

July 18th, 2018

Memoir by Benedict Weiß, Germany



Anthony A. Williams started his presentation by emphasizing the book *Reconstruction*,² which describes the phase directly following the Civil War which had an enormous impact on the city of Washington, DC. Williams linked this historical period metaphorically with his legislative period as mayor, because he took over when the city was in a difficult situation but managed to usher in positive change. Close to

bankruptcy and with a Moody's credit rating of triple A at the end of the 1990s, Washington, DC underwent major transformations during Williams' tenure, to ultimately become an enormous success story.

Williams split American urban history, and with it the history of DC, into three stages. The first stage is the expansion of the city incentivized by industrialization, massive migration, and the founding of George Washington University. This boom begins in the 18th century and ends in the post-Depression era of the mid-20th century. The second stage begins in 1950 with the "white flight" of the middle classes from city centers into suburban areas due to issues of crime and discrimination, among others (Williams offered Detroit and St. Louis as examples of this phenomenon). Washington, DC remained in this stage when Williams entered office. The third stage represents the new concept of a competitive city which requires

² Allen C. Guelzo (2018): *Reconstruction. A concise history.*

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branding efforts in the global market and restructuring efforts within the city to integrate all the necessary urban layers.

Williams discussed certain particularities of Washington, DC, such as the lack of representation of its citizens in Congress despite it being taxed like all other states. The city's spatial design is also unique. DC was developed organically, with a structure based on ideals such as Versailles and the Forbidden City, meant to evoke power and leadership. The spatial concept for DC was the use of public spaces as a



physical representation of the collective power of the American people. For this reason, the National Mall was the initial focal point of the city center, before it changed in the 21st century to emphasize the city's waterfront. This was an important structural shift to develop new areas of the city.

Mayor Williams shared that to manage DC successfully, it was important for him to focus on three key actions, which he repeated constantly as clear and consistent key messages:³ (1) renovate Washington, (2) respect and make DC work, and (3) restore value to the riversides. Williams further emphasized the importance of setting a strategy with clear priorities, developing a plan to achieve them, maintaining internal control of the project, and retaining the capability to adapt as the situation requires.

The first challenge to DC's transformation process was to restore the trust of the public and of the banks in the city administration. Securing control and tax incomes was an important goal, but the overall priority had to be attention to the communities, because without their inclusion in the process, Williams stressed, failure would be inevitable. The people needed a positive vision for change, and a clear understanding that there is no alternative to this change.

Participants challenged Williams with examples of low local commitment in the cities of South Sudan and Timbuktu in Mali; but Williams stood by the usefulness and adaptability of his playbook for any urban

³ Jim Collins (2001): Good to Great.



situation, even in cities with profound and unique problems, especially African cities. He provided the example of Joburg Market in Johannesburg, South Africa⁴. This enormous, informally planned market was developed by individual initiatives, challenging the city's administration and transforming this urban space into a success story. The basis for this successful transformation was the absorption of the grassroots level into the process, the assurance of public accountability, and the building of trust. Mayor Williams pointed out the importance of shifting the public's perceptions. The success of Joburg Market was possible because local initiatives channeled the tremendous creative energy of the informal economy with a positive entrepreneurial spirit.

Williams overlooked questions about marginalized parts of DC like South East; instead, he discussed the link between the development of charter schools in underserved neighborhoods with the statistical decrease of crime in DC during his tenure. He emphasized the great benefits of these schools, which, financed by private initiatives, offer children from impoverished areas access to education with no added burden on the city's administration.

The usefulness of Williams' advice for management strategies is universal, but the challenges faced in each context are particular, especially in situations of conflict. Still, it was helpful for participants to gain insight from a seasoned practitioner into management approaches to city administration.

⁴ For further information please visit: http://www.joburgmarket.co.za/marketguide_history.php



Local Systems and Governance with Deborah Kimble

*Director of Governance & Community Resilience, Creative Associates
International*

July 31st, 2018*

Memoir by Luisa Guzman, Colombia

** initially scheduled for July 18th; date changed due to unforeseen circumstances.*

Deborah Kimble's session on Local Systems and Governance focused on three main issues: i) the intersection of structural challenges and power dynamics in decentralization processes; ii) the role of local governance; and iii) the link between governance and peacebuilding.



Regarding the intersection of structural challenges and power dynamics, the group reflected on the different structures of the state (e.g. federal, constitutional) and the different power dynamics between local and national actors that emanate from them.

In relation to the role of local governments, Kimble explained that decentralization processes that empower local governance can serve as either a pathway to peace or fuel for conflict. It all depends on how change is brought about and how it affects the existing political and power dynamics. Practitioners should always ask themselves where power, authority, and responsibility lie within the governance system and how changes to the system can diminish or increase tensions. Participants complemented the presentation by discussing the risks that decentralization can bring about if local governments are not



strong enough and lack capacity. One major concern was the potential for corruption, and the cases of Egypt and Colombia were highlighted.

Finally, Kimble shared that data shows a strong correlation between peacebuilding, effective local governance, and stability. It is argued that limited access to power and resources leads to fragility, while open access to power and resources leads to stability. Therefore, an important question for the practitioner is: if the effects of decentralization on local governance ultimately come down to an issue of power, how can we bring about such changes in a less violent or non-violent way?



The main takeaways from this session include the importance of leveraging political will to advance decentralization processes at the different levels of government, as well as planning for a progressive approach with a focus on long-term goals. It is worth mentioning that while the inclusion of local systems and governance within the peacebuilding realm is relatively new, local governance has the capacity to

make peace more sustainable. Empowered local governance systems in conflict-affected countries are more effective than national governments in delivering services and responding to citizens' needs and grievances; this has a proven correlation with reduced risk of armed conflict.



Local Systems and Governance: Local Governance as a Pathway to Peace with Deborah Kimble

*Director of Governance & Community Resilience, Creative Associates
International*

July 31st, 2018

Memoir by Liaqat Ali, Pakistan

Deborah Kimble presented a very intriguing approach to fostering sustainable peace through local governance. Kimble began by distinguishing the concepts of local government and local governance based on the “actors” involved, defining “actors” as the key players and stakeholders in peace and conflict. She explained that governance represents an interface where all the “actors” can work together, defining the system of local governance as beyond the state structure. It was discussed that both formal and informal actors play a crucial role in the peacebuilding process, which is not bound only to the state structure. The session also debated the role and importance of “good governance” and found that local governance is not a guarantee for sustainable peace, and can become a source of conflict if the governance structure does not ensure accountability.



Kimble outlined the mandatory ingredients for sustainable peace, which traverse structural challenges, power dynamics, and institutional reform at the local level. The session provided an opportunity to understand the importance of a context-specific local governance approach which focuses on particular analysis rather than generalization of the case at hand. In this vein,



Kimble introduced the FRAME analysis system, which takes into account the broader range of social, political and economic aspects of an issue. A case study on the decentralization of Ghanaian bureaucracy opened a stream of questions from the participants, drawing the conclusion that it is very difficult to manage change and expectations while at the same time accepting the civic role and responsibility.

The session described an overarching approach to local governance for sustainable peace. Drawing upon international best practices, the FRAME analysis places local governance at the center of all activities in peace sustainability. The local government is a window of service delivery, and locals can perceive the government as either an actor of peace or an agent of conflict. This discussion led to the idea of



transformational governance, which involves rules based on a social contract, roles as per the capacities of the actors, and relationships binding the actors in terms of accountability, accessibility, and legitimacy in a local community. Kimble further explained how the concepts of fragility versus resilience in governance can be determined by the efforts to engage local systems. This engagement of local systems is not a mere structural transformation, Kimble said, but rather the imposition of accountability at political, administrative, and financial levels.

It was interesting to learn that the presence of a local government system is not the solution to conflict. Change management plays an important role in the success or failure of sustainable peace. The process of change should be easier than the change itself as it is hard to open a closed system. However, it is very important to note that national, regional, and international players play crucial roles vis-à-vis the local systems as the concept of local governance and peacebuilding does not operate in isolation.



Advanced Mediation Theory and Practice I

with Dr. Joyce Neu

Founder and Senior Associate, Facilitating Peace

July 19th, 2018

Memoir by Lauren Javins, United States

The Art of Mediation: Utilizing long-term thinking for short-term advances

Conflict resolution as a theory of practice centers on the process through which peace can be achieved, conflict transformed, and relationships reformed. Conflict resolution is a broad process that involves mediation. Both conflict resolution and mediation share similar iterative processes involving effective communication, active listening, and impartiality. Mediation, like conflict resolution, also means making short-term advances by utilizing long-term thinking.



Dr. Joyce Neu, with her decades-long experience in high-stakes mediation, brought her unique insight into the mediation process to the 2018 DC Symposium. As lead negotiator for multiple organizations, including the UN Standby Team of Mediation Experts, Dr. Neu approaches mediation as the practice of righting asymmetrical balances of power between conflicting parties. Throughout her discussion, Dr. Neu

emphasized the critical importance of thorough conflict analysis, planning out the mediation process, and most importantly, the practice of theory through simulation.

During the presentation, participants asked questions on active listening, who defines the legitimacy of the parties present at a negotiation, how to recognize and acknowledge grievances, and how to ensure accountability of parties after an agreement is reached.



Dr. Neu's presentation also involved two simulations and a debriefing session. The first simulation focused on a small-scale tenant/landlord conflict, and the second took on an international scale, exploring conflict between Kenya, Somalia and the terrorist group Al-Shabaab. After the simulations, participants shared their conclusions on the mediation process as mediators or as the conflicted parties. The debriefing provided time to conceptualize the elements of a



successful mediation and mediator, and discussion went back and forth on what specific traits a mediator should possess. Participants reflected on how strategy, the quality of planning, and the personality of the mediator can affect the mediation process. Dr. Neu emphasized that the mediation process is complex and hinges on trust, where the mediator is often mediating not only between the conflicting parties, but within his or her own team.

Conflict resolution and mediation posit that if we understand conflict, we can seek to resolve it. If war and peace are two sides of the same coin, then a mediator, while working for peace, must embody the traits of a commander as well. Both the mediator and the commander must understand their own personal limits, and know when to push for progress and when to retreat. The art of peace and mediation is itself the art of warfare.

As the ancient essayist Sun Tzu writes in *The Art of Warfare*: "Know the other, know yourself, and the victory will not be at risk."⁵ Both Sun Tzu and Dr. Neu suggest that being a successful mediator means being aware of the frameworks both mediator and conflicting parties bring to a negotiation, possessing knowledge of the history between parties involved, and understanding one's own personal values. As Dr. Neu emphasizes: be aware of your power, be humble, cultivate trust, and have a good team.

⁵ Sun Tzu. *The Art of Warfare*. Trans. By Roger Ames. Ballantine Books; 1st edition (March 2, 1993). Pg 113



The art of mediation combines not only the traits of an optimist, but the traits of a strategist and a commander. Master Sun said that “the traits of the true commander are: courage, wisdom, humanity and integrity.”⁶ Dr. Neu said that the traits of a true mediator are: humility, flexibility, empathy, and the ability to see beyond the present (conflict or warfare). The true mediator is someone who can appreciate the past and envision a positive future with courage, wisdom, humanity, integrity, humility, flexibility, and empathy.

The successful mediator is a commander, a visionary, an advisor, and a strategist.

⁶ Ibid, pg 232



Advanced Mediation Theory and Practice II

with Dr. Joyce Neu

Founder and Senior Associate, Facilitating Peace

July 20th, 2018

Memoir by Elshaddai Mesfin Haileyesus, United States



The second part of Dr. Joyce Neu's session on Advanced Mediation took the form of a practical exercise on the basic concepts of mediation, aiming to demonstrate the challenges of the mediation process through a simulation. The simulation reflected a real local case that occurred on the Somalia-Kenya border. It involved the militant group Al-Shabaab and the local Somali administration as parties to the conflict, and

two trusted elders as chief mediator and mediation assistant respectively. Dispersed into groups of four, participants took on these roles for the exercise, then reported back in plenary to highlight some of the challenges encountered.

Based on the debriefing session, the challenges raised can be grouped into three themes that set the tone for the success of a mediation. They are: 1. **Representation and Legitimacy of Conflict Parties**; 2. **Dynamics of the Mediation Process**; and 3. **Dynamics of the Mediator(s)**. These considerations are especially important in the context of today's changing conflict landscape involving more and more non-traditional state actors, such as those labelled "terrorists."⁷ More often than not, the legitimacy of such groups within a negotiation is not recognized, causing the group to call upon the representation of an interlocutor; this adds an additional layer of complexity to the process, as one must consider the

⁷ For further reference, please visit:

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2015/571320/EPRS_ATA\(2015\)571320_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2015/571320/EPRS_ATA(2015)571320_EN.pdf)



interlocutor's legitimacy and credibility in conveying information between the party it represents on one side, and the mediator(s) and opposing party/ies on the other.

Furthermore, factors such as the dynamics of gender and religion impact the direction a mediation is likely to take and its potential for success. One must ask: how comfortable would mediators and conflicting parties be with a mediation process led by women? Or a mediation beginning with a prayer session? Would this directly determine the success of the process? The dynamics of the mediation team should not be overlooked either: to what extent is the team uniformly informed of the conflict? How complementary are the relationships between the mediation team members? Such issues are among the many that highly affect the success of any mediation process.

There is no formula to undertaking a perfect mediation: the process is highly dynamic and complex. It requires flexibility and adaptability from both the mediators and the conflicting parties. But most importantly, it calls for consideration of the small details that may derail the process and creative approaches that can integrate such details; this can be achieved through inclusion of all concerned parties and stakeholders, the creation of conducive discussion environments, and transparent sharing of necessary information, especially in the current age of social media where access to information is easier than ever before.





Conflict Cuisine: Food as a Tool of Facilitation

with Dr. Johanna Mendelson Forman

*Board Member, Creative Learning;
Adjunct Professor, American University's School of International Service*

July 20th, 2018

Memoir by Marie Carmelle Pierre, Haiti



Dr. Mendelson began her lecture by emphasizing that food is a fundamental need for the survival of humankind, and that it can be a powerful tool to control human behavior. Mendelson also spoke on the proficiency of food in attracting attention to peace, bringing people together, and facilitating non-violent communication, such as in a family kitchen.

The main points of her lecture were introducing the concept of “conflict cuisine” and exploring its connection with food security and its facilitation of peacebuilding.

Over the course of the session, two videos displayed the successes and setbacks of the use of food in peacebuilding. One example was the McWhopper campaign, a joint project by McDonald’s and Burger King, in which the two companies collaborated to create a burger to be sold during the United Nations’ International Day of Peace in 2015; through this campaign, the two traditionally rival companies demonstrated that it was possible to leave differences behind and work together towards one common objective: to raise awareness about the Peace Day and to encourage actions directed at building a more peaceful world. This showed how food can translate to action for peacebuilding. The videos also focused on awareness of food insecurity, xenophobia, anti-migration, and conflict around the world. Still, it is not



clear whether the elaborate projects shown in these case studies can be applied by communities in conflict when their priorities lie in meeting citizens' basic needs.

The session also highlighted that conflict cuisine has political power in forging policy to shape opinion and promote social values. Mendelson emphasized that food has always been a key feature of diplomacy, especially with the recent integration of “gastrodiplomacy” and the practice of diplomatic talks in the context of social gatherings. It was impressive to learn how food can bring different cultures together and facilitate the peacebuilding process through culture. The session also underscored the beneficial impact of some national and international movements driven by food. Some examples were the documentary “Bread is Gold,” in which a renowned chef strives to restore dignity to people without access to food, as well as the Brazilian nonprofit Gastromotiva, a key player in the Social Gastronomy Movement.



Dr. Mendelson gave the group an exercise where they had to propose original projects that incorporated both gastrodiplomacy and citizen diplomacy for use in the dynamic peacebuilding sector. Participants raised questions on the practicality, utility, and efficiency of this exercise in matters of peacebuilding; some worried that these practices would come across as naïve and too sophisticated, especially in the face of hostility in the

field and other challenges. The discussion raised another major concern: food security problems in the conflict zone can easily undermine the goals of gastro- and citizen diplomacy.

The multidimensional concept of conflict cuisine encompasses the general theme of food as well as various aspects of the food industry, elucidating food's ability to either foster or hinder equality and peace in a given community. The general conclusion of the session was that food is a promising path to extend the domain of peacebuilding. Food takes on the role of a soft power in zones of conflict, where it becomes central to both survival and resilience; thus, it can be used to foster dialogue among communities. Food can be employed in various ways to creatively and effectively facilitate peace dialogues, although it is commonly recognized that some uses of food have failed to achieve their intended results. In any case,

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understanding the role of food as a soft power and its potential facilitation role in all stages of peace talks, especially the initial phase, may be significant when analyzing the successes and failures of a peace process.

Negotiation Training I with Camilo Azcarate

International Conflict Resolution Consultant

July 23rd, 2018

Memoir by Kenneth Conteh, Sierra Leone

Systems Theory of Practice (DST) Approach

Mr. Camilo Azcarate has experience as Manager of Mediation Services for the World Bank Group since November of 2008. He has also served as Ombudsman at Princeton University and Director of the Conflict Resolution Institute at the Center for Leadership and Innovation. In his presentation he attempted to portray how new findings in science have influenced conflict resolution.



The session began with introductions from Mr. Azcarate and each participant. Mr. Azcarate then stated the objectives of the training, which were: (a) Demystify complex system approaches; (b) Understanding the Four Phase Model (Preparation, Comprehension, Engagement, Learning and Adaptation); and (c) Learn basic Dynamical Systems Theory (DST) concepts and competencies necessary to understand how complexity creates intractability in conflicts.

The presentation took the form of an interaction between the presenter and participants. Mr. Azcarate referenced Peter Coleman's *The Five Percent: Finding Solutions to Seemingly Impossible Conflicts*, which stresses that if we cannot understand violence, we will not be able to achieve peace. Mr. Azcarate stated that practitioners have grown accustomed to the "checklist approach" to conflict analysis whilst failing to realize that the reality is more complex, often rushing to analyze a conflict without first understanding its



background. The speaker explained that, using the Dynamic Systems Theory (DST) approach, he intended to train participants in a peacebuilding methodology that links academic knowledge with practical, on-the-ground situations. He focused especially on the DST of Practice approach, which involves systematic preparation, systematic comprehension, systematic engagement, and systematic learning and adaptation. Rich and intricate, the DST approach helps to better understand the problem at hand, and it is crucial when one considers that cycles of violence and conflict so often continue to repeat themselves despite the signing of peace agreements (for example in the case of South Sudan). A detailed and thorough methodology, DST could be helpful for instance in the context of adjudicating refugee claims; such an undertaking would entail background research on refugees' country of origin, identifying patterns of violence, and determining attractors for sustained peace and, on the contrary, those for increased conflict, at the micro (individual), meso (family/community), and macro level (society/state).



Mr. Azcarate shared a video on the construction of a well in Malawi as an example of “fixes that fail.” In the discussion that followed, participants agreed that donors and humanitarian organizations often design projects without understanding the needs on the ground and implement through NGOs with a primarily business or profit-oriented approach. As such, no prior needs assessment is conducted to

establish the need for such a project. This is an issue for which the DST approach proposes the use of a mapping process that takes into account micro, meso, and macro level analyses prior to implementation of any project or intervention. Mr. Azcarate referred to Karl Popper’s 1966 analogy of “clocks and clouds,” with “clocks” representing a problem-solving approach and “clouds” representing a complexity analysis approach. This highlights the principle of “Complicate to Simplify to Solve” as proposed by Peter T. Coleman which stresses the “Complexity before Simplicity Rule,” a pervasive idea in science. In the words of a participant, “we learnt how to embrace complexity to be able to understand and address all the factors in a negotiation and that linear solutions lead to failure in peace negotiation agreements,” This



can be explained when one considers the non-participation of beneficiaries in interventions implemented by donors which fail to take into consideration lessons learnt from previous interventions.

It emerged as a general understanding that one must comprehend a complex situation first before delving into a negotiation. In line with the theme of New Frontiers, the DST approach helped participants understand the complexity of conflict beyond the traditional approach that focuses on parties rather than on (a) prior analysis of the situation, (b) anticipating the side effects and long-term repercussions of an intervention, and (c) emerging needs and changes on the ground.

In summary, how much analysis is needed in a conflict situation before trying to take a step forward? We learned that when tasked with negotiating in a conflict situation, it is best to analyze available information, note what essential information is not available, and map these out into Primary and Secondary areas of focus to ensure a comprehensive approach to sustainable peace. In other words, it is always best to Plan and Prepare.

Negotiation Training II with Camilo Azcarate

International Conflict Resolution Consultant

July 24th, 2018

Memoir by Andrea Caldera, United States/Mexico



The dynamic system within negotiation can often be broken down into multiple stages. During the second day of his presentation, Camilo Azcarate introduced the Dynamic Systems Theory (DST) as a new way to approach international negotiations in countries of conflict. Azcarate explained that a case of conflict can often be analyzed through a thorough conflict mapping procedure. The DST is one such procedure and includes three levels of approach:

the micro level helps to understand a conflict at the scale of the individual, the meso level encompasses the family and community dynamics, and the macro level takes into account international or state-level dynamics.

The specificities of each level are crucial to the DST. When analyzing the micro level, it is vital to understand root causes of chronic violence. At the meso level, it is important to acknowledge elements such as cultural norms and mental health conditions. At the macro level, institutional relationships must always be considered. One cannot apply DST to a case of conflict resolution without an understanding of the underlying problem.

In order to better understand the DST approach, the class was separated into small groups. Each group was instructed to choose a conflict within a country. My group, which included members from multiple African countries, chose to better understand Boko Haram, an extremist group in Nigeria opposing



Western culture and ideals and their presence in Africa. To begin, we determined that the micro level for this conflict was the division of the North and South of Nigeria over unequal power distribution and inability to share resources. We then analyzed local governance for the meso level, and finally found the leading cause of conflict to be influenced ideology at the macro level. We identified these factors leading to the rise of Boko Haram as beginning shortly after the US invasion of Iraq. Western influences were increasing their presence in the country, giving way to an uprising from opposing groups. Once we had established the root of the conflict, my group was able to map its repercussions. The timeline in our mapping progressed as follows: 9/11 attacks on US soil, US invasion of Iraq, Boko Haram is founded in 2002 in opposition to Western invasion, bombing in 2011 at the UN, hundreds of young girls are kidnapped in 2014 putting Boko Haram in the international spotlight.

Through this exercise, the DST approach allowed global minds the opportunity to work together to find a root cause for a particular conflict. The exercise also shed light on the challenges of using DST in a group context, as disagreements around ideological drive often caused limitations within groups during deliberation. Overall, the session was extremely helpful in showing the usefulness of the DST approach when entering and analyzing countries of conflict.





Site Visit: U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP) with Pamela Aall & Tim Receveur

*Senior Advisor for Conflict Prevention and Management, USIP
& Director of PeaceTech Exchanges, PeaceTech Lab*

July 24th, 2018

Memoir by Zhaybel Cardenas, Venezuela

Prevention amid a world in transition

Pamela Aall, Senior Advisor for conflict prevention and management at the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), gave a talk highlighting the importance of conflict prevention in light of ongoing transformations of approaches to intrastate and interstate conflicts. According to Aall, the old-fashioned formula that would ultimately aim to solve conflicts through intervention is being replaced with a growing focus on prevention.



Moreover, as Aall pointed out: "prevention has not been led by the political agencies anymore but by the developing world...." In that regard, "Africa is leading the way in terms of the role institutions play in addressing conflicts."

Most conflicts can be prevented through identification of their causes, and diplomacy remains as the first line of defense against conflict. Systems, norms, laws, and culture, among others, are major factors involved in conflict prevention. However, new approaches are shaping the search for the roots of conflicts. In this regard, Aall referenced the recently published United Nations and World Bank joint study "Pathways for Peace: Laying the Groundwork for a New Focus on Prevention," which emphasizes the need



to address structural inequality and the issue of injustice to prevent conflict from arising. The study additionally points out the importance of building up resilience.

Although institutions play a pivotal role in preventing conflicts, civil society's involvement is growing. The UN and WB study, for instance, shows incipient tendency to consider non-governmental actors.

A brief discussion followed Aall's lecture. The main topics addressed were the following:

- 1) The advisability and negative impact of implementing the principle of the responsibility to protect (with the example of Haiti);
- 2) The willingness of new generations to avoid conflicts by engaging in prevention (with the example of Sudan);
- 3) The misconception of resilience as "a way of coping with everything," leading to a state of complacency towards conflict (with the example of Venezuela).



Prevention and the use of new technologies

In line with the need for conflict prevention in today's evolving world, technology plays a pivotal role. Bearing that in mind, Tim Receveur, Director of PeaceTech Exchanges at USIP's PeaceTech Lab, lectured on the use of media, data, and technology in conflict.

Receveur addressed how technology can be used to prevent and manage conflict at the local level through approaches to good governance, countering violent extremism, the gender divide, citizen engagement, countering hate speech, and entrepreneurship. Under the umbrella of PeaceTech Exchanges, PeaceTech Lab is currently implementing several peacebuilding programs in Iraq, Sudan, Nigeria, Myanmar, Macedonia, Niger, and Somalia, and some of these programs have experienced measurable success. PeaceTech Exchanges currently intends to expand to West Africa and Central America, among other regions.



Conclusion

In today's world, the political causes of intrastate conflicts are considerably rooted in economic inequality. Those are issues than can be prevented through effective development plans in line with the Agenda 2030 as well as compatible policies aimed at building up resilience. In most cases, humanitarian intervention has failed to solve intrastate conflicts, and has even deepened divisions in already cracked societies. Prevention efforts, on the other hand, are most likely to help build peace in the long term. Media, data and technology are powerful resources for conflict prevention so long as they are handled under the right principles. In this regard, youth is the main target.



Facilitation Training

with Michael Shipler & Rajendra Mulmi

Associate Vice President, Strategy and Program Quality, Search for Common Ground & Country Director – Nigeria, Search for Common Ground

July 25th, 2018
Memoir by Badr Elbendary, Egypt

This session focused on how a successful facilitation process can be achieved, starting from the preparation stage, which involves identifying the participating parties, and ending with the final design and implementation of agreements between parties. The facilitation training session was a set of interactive exercises that engaged the participants to dynamically learn and digest the topic.

The session involved a set of exercises. The first focused on the concept of identity, specifically how a person identifies her/himself and how others perceive and approach this identity and assign labels. In one exercise, sticky notes of various colors were put on the foreheads of participants. Each participant didn't know what color s/he had been given, but all were instructed to interact with others



in certain ways depending on the color they had, fostering a discussion on the perception of identity and labels. After these exercises, Shipler and Mulmi presented a case-study on the plan to construct a mosque at Ground-Zero in NYC. Small groups identified the issue, the parties involved in the conflict and needing to participate in a dialogue, and their respective drivers. The training highlighted that asking “Why?” is the key tool for any facilitator in order to be able to analyze a conflict in depth and identify the fundamental drivers, which can even be forgotten by the stakeholders themselves, regarding each party's involvement in the conflict process.



Karla Marchena, participant, asked a critical question about the difference between facilitation and mediation. Shipler identified this distinction by giving a metaphoric example of mediation, defining it as an approach that falls under the umbrella of facilitation. He explained further that facilitation encompasses the design and practice of the entire peacebuilding process, which has eight stages: 1) Identify and frame the issue; 2) Identify the participants and prepare for dialogue; 3) Convene; 4) Build mutual understanding, trust, and respect; 5) Identify underlying interests; 6) Identify common ground; 7) Build agreement; and 8) Implement agreement.



One major takeaway from the training was that the facilitation process doesn't start with initiating the dialogue, but rather with analyzing the conflict and identifying all parties related to it. Though facilitation practices might seem to add more complication to the process, not having a clear understanding of the real causes of a conflict and the dynamics and drivers of its parties will likely lead to failure in building peace. The Ground-Zero case study exercise clearly illustrated this. The session also emphasized certain concrete elements of the facilitation process, such as the importance of body language and the creation of a safe space for the dialogue to foster a sense of safety and trust among the participants.

Citizen-Based Mediation with Chic Dambach

CEO, Operation Respect

July 25th, 2018

Memoir by James Okony Dau, South Sudan



Participants were honored to be guided by Chic Dambach in learning about citizen-based mediation and what it entails. As adjunct faculty at American University and Johns Hopkins University, Past President of the Alliance for Peacebuilding, and President Emeritus of the National Peace Corps Association, Chic has much experience in conflict mediation. Mentioning his autobiographical book

Exhaust the Limits, Chic began the session by sharing quotes that have inspired his work, such as “do not aspire to im-mortal life, but exhaust the limits of the possible,” from the Ancient Greek poet and philosopher Pindar, quoted in Camus; another such quote was George Bernard Shaw’s “You see things; and you say, ‘Why?’ But I dream things that never were; and I say, ‘Why not?’” This inspired Chic’s mantra, “Why not peace?”

Chic then shared his experience of the Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict, in which he was called in to help the mediation process between State leaders. Chic described how his mediation team fostered the will of both parties in the conflict to welcome, respect, and respond to the mediators’ engagement. The team encouraged the two governments to listen to and understand both sides of the conflict, held many key meetings with different stakeholders to build a relationship of mutual trust, ascertained what might help the parties find a path to peace, adopted a central theme, and helped make it happen. Chic stated that



not just one, but rather multiple pathways to peace are available in every conflict environment. As Chic put it, peacebuilders help belligerents find a path enabling them to resolve their differences without bloodshed.

Following this idea, Chic asked the participants how to settle disputes at home and within neighbourhoods: should we use hand grenades to solve problems? The participants answered with a resounding “NO.” If we don’t accept the use of violence to resolve conflicts in our homes and neighborhoods, why, Chic asked, do we accept the mass violence and destruction of war as a viable option? Chic argued that the use of violence to solve conflict is stupid, quoting Gen. Dwight Eisenhower: “I hate war, its brutality, its futility, its stupidity.”

As a non-violent method to solve conflicts, Chic introduced the concept of mediation and explained that it refers to an indirect negotiation that is conducted in a friendly manner and assisted by a professional holding no decision-making power. Who can conduct a mediation? Track 2 diplomacy focuses on the capacity of people and civil society organizations that are respected, trusted, impartial, and skilled to mediate and



resolve conflict. Chic shared crucial elements of “getting to yes,” or achieving success in the mediation process: one must separate the people from the problem, focus on interests rather than positions, create options for mutual gain, and insist on objective criteria. One participant raised the question of what model to use in mediation? Chic replied that there is no specific model to use; one must use their own common sense in mediation.

To demonstrate his teachings on mediation through an exercise, Chic invited the participants to have a conversation on the legality of abortion. Three groups formed, one supporting the legality of abortion, one supporting illegality, and one neutral. The pro-legal side expressed the view that a woman has absolute rights over her own body which override those of any unborn fetus. The anti-legal side held the



conviction that life begins at conception and therefore abortion is always wrong. The neutral group had various opinions on abortion, but generally emphasized its ability to save lives in certain situations. After each side had expressed its views, Chic encouraged each side to practice active listening; this meant showing interest, paying careful attention, repeating back what the other side has said to indicate understanding, being empathetic, avoiding “Why” questions in favor of open-ended questions, and using effective pauses to give the other party the chance to speak.



Scope and Limitations of Reconciliation as a Peacebuilding Process

with Dr. Valérie Rosoux

Professor of International Negotiation, University of Louvain

July 26th, 2018

Memoir by Angela Suarez, Colombia

Dr. Valérie started her lecture by highlighting the difficulties of defining reconciliation; it is an intangible concept, used in the peacebuilding arena increasingly over the past few decades, but extremely difficult to pin down. The concept implies a broad variety of elements ranging from pacific coexistence between parties (not killing each other) to promoting acceptance, transforming relationships, restoring trust, and perhaps the singular most difficult and deeply personal human act: forgiving.



There is no single approach to reconciliation, but despite its broad scope and vague meaning, it does have some universal elements: it is a long-term process that must be tailored to the specific context and needs of the communities and individuals involved, and it requires delicate management of expectations in order to avoid further grievances. Dr. Valérie acknowledged the strong tensions around the concept: “On the one hand, most official representatives, scholars, and NGO workers consider reconciliation as the ultimate achievement in societies previously affected by violence. On the other hand, victims largely distrust this notion. Many of them feel bitterness towards what they perceive as an ‘indecent’ injunction to reconcile with their enemies.”



This tension translates to concrete challenges, such as the delicate balance between memory/truth-telling and reconciliation: remembering atrocities enough to prevent them from happening again and to honor the victims with dignity, but at the same time forgetting enough in order to heal and move forward as individuals and societies. In post-conflict scenarios, victims usually carry the burden of many layers of violations, stigmatization, and unhealed pain, a burden that is often transferred from generation to generation. Like a millefeuille, only the surface layer of cream is visible, but the accumulation underneath makes healing very complex, if not impossible, to address.



Rather than providing answers, past cases like that of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Peru⁸ show that the idea of reconciliation leaves many questions unanswered: What can we do to favor new structures and narratives? What story are we going to tell about the past? Is reconciliation always possible, or even necessary, during a peacebuilding process? Should we acknowledge the victims' right to silence and the right to hate?

Taking such experiences into account, Dr. Valérie shared three different lenses through which reconciliation should be approached: 1) Structural changes to address the root causes of the conflicts, such as redistribution of wealth and democratic participation; 2) Psychosocial practices that favor new relationship building; and 3) Moral and ethical considerations, which may lead to forgiveness and healing, but can also lead to a dead end.

That said, although there is no formula, one should always seek a balance between political support from above and grassroots efforts on the ground; keep in mind that the process is never linear nor easy; remember that none of the aforementioned lenses is sufficient individually; and most importantly,

⁸ In operation between 2001 and 2003 to clarify human rights violations committed during the 1980s and '90s by the Fujimori regime during the extermination of the Shining Path Guerrilla Group. The Commission had the mandate to investigate more than 70,000 deaths and hundreds of forced disappearances. Ultimately, recommendations made to the Peruvian government were not implemented, and expectations were not met.



approach the process with modesty and humility. The reconciliation process must be context-tailored and owned by the conflict victims. Goals must be achievable — coexistence might be as good as it gets in some cases — and change may require generations. It is also crucial to realize that sometimes the past can be transformed and acquire a different meaning in the minds of victims, but in other cases, trauma is irreversible and leaves wounds that will not heal. Reconciliation is not a fairy tale; there is not always a happy ending, and victims should have the right to hold on to their hatred. Sometimes, it's all they have left.

From my limited perspective, shaped by my experience working with this issue in Colombia, I would add that the greatest question remains unanswered: Is it worth it? Supporting painful truth telling exercises, promoting new narratives, and investing in inner healing can be exhausting and seem fruitless, even harmful, when in so many cases it is nearly impossible to restore trust between victims and ex-combatants. In the Colombian case, trust has not even been restored between different sectors of the divided society, which refuse to mourn together because the majority does not believe in the suffering that at least 17% of the population experienced.

The other side of the coin is that in some cases, all that reconciliation takes is for people to feel heard and acknowledged, to regain a sense of belonging for the first time in generations. I can't even describe the strength and resilience I have seen in many who have been to hell and back, but who forgave in order to escape the evil of conflict and violence, and became the voice of others who can't speak anymore.

Both, the shining eyes and the silenced voices, make me believe that it is worth it. We, who have been more privileged, need to keep striving to bring the ends together, need to act as bridges and engage people, need to keep working to make the horror of violence visible so that all see a dividend in peacebuilding, even if it takes generations.



Countering Violent Extremism

with Ryan B. Greer

Director for Program Assessment and Strategy, Anti-Defamation League

July 27th, 2018

Memoir by Muhammad Usman Asghar, Pakistan

“Terrorism will not be defeated by military force or security force, law enforcement measures, and intelligence operations alone.”

– Presidential Statement adopted by the Security Council in January 2013



Mr. Ryan B. Greer delivered a candid lecture on the very important topic of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) in the United States. According to the United States Homeland Security Department’s Countering Violent Extremism Task Force, the term “countering violent extremism” (CVE) refers to proactive actions to counter efforts by extremist groups and individuals to recruit, radicalize, and mobilize followers towards violence. In

his lecture, Greer deliberated on CVE through the prism of past, present, and future.

According to Greer, US policy makers view CVE as a process with multiple steps, including building trust with communities, focusing on prevention, identifying those at risk, and conducting intervention and rehabilitation efforts. In 2011, the US government formally introduced its first ever strategy for CVE, aiming to enhance engagement and support efforts in local communities targeted by violent extremists. This strategy also emphasized building government and law enforcement expertise in preventing violent extremism, in addition to countering violent extremist propaganda while promoting US ideals. In a first attempt, by applying CVE techniques, US forces helped rescue youth of Somali diaspora in Minneapolis



from falling into the hands of East African jihadist militant group Al-Shabaab. Greer further shared statistics showing that, alarmingly, right-wing extremists are responsible for a vast majority of extremist-related murders in the US over the last decade. Among other factors, hate is the key ingredient to violent extremism. In the US, almost 15,000 law enforcement professionals receive in-depth training on counterterrorism, extremist threats, core values, anti-bias, and leadership and hate crimes each year. Statistics show a very grim situation of violent extremism in the US contemporarily. As a matter of fact, 2017 alone saw a 94% rise from the previous year in anti-Semitic incidents at K-12 schools throughout the US.

Greer concluded his lecture by emphasizing the significance of countering violent extremism. He stressed the role of the non-governmental sector in supporting government efforts for CVE. This collaboration is crucial, because numerous socio-political and geo-strategic factors make violent extremism inevitable unless its contributing factors are curtailed through comprehensive countering strategies. Extremist narratives play their vital role in promoting



extremism and inciting violence as its byproduct. In this debate, the difference between being extremist or violent should not be misunderstood. Governments need to devise policies to counter violent extremism in their respective sovereignties. For example, the “Naming and Shaming” approach in the US proved a helpful tool to avoid the promotion of hate speech by politicians. Socio-economic factors also contribute to violent extremism. Uneven resource distribution across a population widens the wealth gap, leading to class differences in the society. These class differences promote polarization in the society, fueling in-group/out-group rifts sometimes to the point of dehumanization of the Other. CVE is impossible without recourse to joint efforts by all stakeholders across the board towards developing durable coexistence and peace.



Countering Violent Extremism with Paul Turner

*Technical Director and Senior Advisor for Peacebuilding, Countering
Violent Extremism Practice Area, Creative Associates International*

July 27th, 2018

Memoir by Emmanuel Kwalar Bongnjo, Cameroon

Unlike the DC Symposium's first session on Countering Violent Extremism (CVE), presented by Ryan Greer, which focused principally on CVE in the United States, the second session, presented by Paul Turner, Senior Advisor for Peacebuilding at Creative Associates International, focused on similarities and distinctions between CVE in the US and in other parts of the world. Turner introduced the concept of Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE), which



in itself consists of efforts and narratives to stop incidents of violent extremism from happening, unlike CVE, which came into existence fifteen years ago with the aim of countering terrorism after violence has already occurred.

The “Push and Pull drivers” of violent extremism, which are structural and psycho-social motivators respectively, highlight various motivations for violent extremism which exist in different communities and parts of the world. These motivations encompass many factors besides extremist ideologies. They include grievances tied to perceptions of relative deprivation, social marginalization, issues of corruption, limited social mobility, standards and ideals surrounding manhood and masculinity, opportunities for network and belonging, the need for employment and financial security, and the desire for companionship and adventure, among others.

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Among the various contributions by participants, one participant from Mali raised the idea of “transforming violent extremism” (as opposed to countering it), given the prevalence of uncompromising extremist ideologies. A participant from the US and Ethiopia spoke about the case of Somalia, where the extremist ideologies of groups such as Al-Shabab have destabilized the region. Another participant, using his

home country of Côte d’Ivoire as an example, expressed his concern about politicians using violent means to gain access to political power.

At the end of this interactive session, the class collectively worked to identify areas where PVE and CVE overlap. Both approaches involve building the capacities of individuals and communities, as well as implementing projects that lead to economic growth, youth de-radicalization, sociocultural and religious inclusion, promotion of political freedoms, and civil liberties.

CVE and Technology

with Giselle Lopez & Cassandra Schneider

Technology Associate, Creative Development Lab at Creative Associates International & CVE Program Associate, Creative Associates International

July 27th, 2018

Memoir by Engy Said, Egypt



The second week of the DC Symposium concluded with a discussion of one of the most complicated topics in the field of peacebuilding: Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE). While there is no universally accepted definition for the term “violent extremism,” Giselle Lopez and Cassandra Schneider of Creative Associates International relied on the definition employed by the U.S. State Department, which defines

Violent Extremism (VE) as “a set of beliefs and actions of people who support or use violence to achieve ideological, religious, or political goals. This includes terrorism and other forms of politically motivated violence.” After recalling the structural and individual factors that lead to VE, the speakers explored the role played by technology in P/CVE and the actions needed to reduce risks of radicalization.

Global technology plays a crucial role in P/CVE, with recent technological growth and innovations being employed by VE groups to spread their messages and ideologies, share information, recruit new members, and mobilize supporters. Even so, the role of technology is often overlooked. Hence, there is a need to apply potentially beneficial functions of technology to conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts in order to offer alternative narratives countering those of extremist groups.



Technology can contribute to P/CVE in various ways. For example, data management has contributed to CVE through the development of simple tools such as mobile data surveys, which are easy to use and can work in low-connectivity environments. Another such tool is GIS (Geographic Information Systems), which can help gather and analyze geospatial data to identify the movements of armed groups, plot the locations of organizations operating in different areas, and detect information relevant to conflict dynamics such as population density and migration patterns. The Fund for Peace, for example, uses mapping tools in Nigeria to identify the movements of armed groups in conflict areas. It also uses mapping to geolocate conflict dynamics and factors that may influence conflict such as migration movements and demographic growth.

Crowdsourcing and crowd seeding also play a role in collecting both targeted and untargeted data to map conflict- and violence-related incidents from a range of sources. Big data analysis helps to monitor social media trends to understand how people communicate and share information, and it can also be used to develop early warning systems based on databases. Furthermore, collaborative media facilitates sharing information through social media, online platforms, radios and TV, and mobile phones. In this context, technology can be used to enable collective action through surveys, public opinion metrics, and gaming. In Lebanon, for instance, Search for Common Ground used YouTube videos as a means for young people to develop and share perspectives on their multidimensional identity.

The theory of change adopted by Creative Associates International is based on the need to reinvigorate efforts in four key areas of CVE. These areas are 1) strengthening community resilience against extremist ideology; 2) empowering youth to reject radical ideologies and recruitment; 3) successfully integrating former fighters through an engaging approach that includes support from families and the community; and 4) creating a stable and broadly accepted political environment to reduce the likelihood of violence by ideology-based groups. Undertaking these efforts through education reforms, access to services and economic opportunities, respect for civil liberties and rights, strengthening government institutions, and reforming justice systems, among other endeavors, shall in turn reduce the influence of VE organizations.



The session witnessed a lively debate on the freedom of the internet, the accuracy of data provided through social platforms, and the integrity and credibility of the media. Participants raised questions on the dilemma of how to guarantee freedom of expression on open social networks while at the same time regulating information shared to ward off fake news. Participants emphasized the need to implement measures



preventing the spread of fake news that may ignite violence, focusing on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, which some may use to transmit unverified or inaccurate information. The discussion also highlighted the limitations of some technological tools in countering VE, such as mapping, given that it only tracks trends without providing sufficient analysis reflective of the situation on the ground. For example, technological tools that map migration flows do not reflect the political or socio-economic conditions that people are fleeing. Furthermore, questions emerged regarding the reach of radio and TV programs in multi-ethnic societies that speak different languages. In countries like South Sudan, Cameroon, and Nigeria, the number of spoken languages may exceed 200, which renders social media inaccessible to parts of the society. Participants also expressed concerns about popular TV shows featuring discourse that uses inflammatory language which can itself motivate violence.

By the end of the discussion, participants agreed that while technology plays a pivotal role in preventing and countering violent extremism, it is still a new domain in its experimental phase, requiring further exploration and investigation. There is a need for more empirical evidence and measurable assessments of the impact of technology on peacebuilding, such that the peacebuilding field can develop a record of best practices for different regions, taking into consideration the particularities of each conflict and scope of intervention.



Religion, Conflict, and Peace

with Katherine Marshall

*Senior Fellow, Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs at
Georgetown University*

July 30th, 2018

Memoir by Lydia Dawson, United States

Marshall's session began with a discussion on the role of religion in conflict. Marshall first shared a tip for discussing the concept of religion as it relates to conflict: it is best to use the word "religion" as an adjective, to narrow its definition and to force precision and specificity (as in "religious actors," "religious institutions," etc.). Marshall then contended that while conflict is rarely about religious beliefs alone, it almost



always involves religion in some way. The cohort agreed with this analysis, but generally expressed wariness about the involvement of religious actors in the peacebuilding process, citing instances of manipulation, exclusion, or extremism at the hands of religious actors.

Marshall then introduced the idea of proselytism and development, a topic of concern for many. Several told stories of NGOs in their countries which only served those of the same religion, stating that large organizations with money and resources often wield too much power in a conflict. Others, though, had seen religious organizations act in ways that were impartial and just. Some emphasized the difference between an organization's stated goals of impartiality, and their actual work on the ground which can be perceived as biased or unfair. Marshall's conclusion was that religious organizations and leaders should be acknowledged in conflict analysis and peacebuilding efforts, whether or not one agrees with their



beliefs, because they often exert great influence in their communities. Overall, the attitude of the whole cohort was more skeptical than accepting of religious involvement in peacebuilding work.



One core lesson from this session was that the ethical concerns about religious involvement in peacebuilding are many. However, peacebuilders must acknowledge the role and power that religious actors hold in the community in question. The session also brought to light one area of much needed progress in the peacebuilding field: the inclusion of nontraditional actors. As Marshall states in her report “Women in Religious

Peacebuilding,” women often possess insights and relational capital which could support the peacebuilding process, yet they are often missing from formal meetings and decisions. The field of religion and peacebuilding must grow to include those who are rarely party to the conversation, because they often have the inclination to peace necessary for effective conflict management. Therefore, peacebuilders and religious actors should be willing to collaborate and build upon one another’s connections within the community in question. Their work should seek to be mutually inclusive and supportive of one another and of the communities in which they serve, so as to leverage the impact of both.

Religion and Peace with Cameron Chisholm

Vice President, Creative Learning / International Peace & Security Institute

July 30th, 2018

Memoir by El Hadj Djitteye, Mali

The 2018 participants of the DC Symposium were honored to attend a session on Religion and Peace led by Mr. Cameron M. Chisholm, Vice President of Creative Learning Inc. and Founder of the International Peace & Security Institute (IPSI). Mr. Chisholm shared his insights into the connection between religion and peacebuilding. To better understand religion, he explained, one must understand the use of religious normative language (also described as “textbook language”) and how it reflects on the identity and perceptions of followers.



“Textbook language” can be derived from the interpretation of texts that religious traditions consider to be central to their practice or beliefs. Religious texts may be used within a faith to provide meaning and purpose, evoke a deeper connection with the divine, convey religious truths, foster communal identity, and guide individual and communal religious practice.

The U.S. Department of State trains its officials to understand the normative languages and the problem of religious identity and perceptions before serving in zones affected by religion-related conflict. Mr. Chisholm presented training modules that describe how the Department of State educates foreign affairs officials to understand the religious values, identities, perceptions, and cultural elements of communities in which they are to serve. The case study of Kenya served as an interactive example, in which participants



took on the perspective of U.S. officials exchanging letters to understand the backgrounds of religious factions involved in conflict.

Considering the training modules presented, participants pointed out that most of the time, practices are more cultural than religious. In many communities, religious practices become a combination of religious beliefs and culture, and the communities may become more cultural in practice than religious in practice. One example of this is that in some religions women and men are not allowed to mix, and this has become part of traditional cultural heritage for communities practicing these religions.



The perception of religion can turn to violent conflict, Mr. Chisholm shared, citing the cases of Nigeria, Myanmar and Mali, where opposing religious identities and perspectives have incited violent conflict. In Mali in 2012, Islamist militants of a religious extremist group restored a Sharia law, igniting a violent conflict that continues to this day. In Nigeria, the Boko Haram movement, which demands that Western education be forbidden, has incited a religious conflict that continues to become increasingly violent.

The same way religion can turn to violent conflict, religion can be a pathway for peacebuilding through an understanding of the religious dynamic of the conflict. Identifying and understanding the religious perceptions held by each faction can help to foster peace among all parties. For this, it is crucial for officials to understand each party's behaviors, its traditions and customs, its perception of Western civilization, and its perception of the religious sect with which it identifies. In addition, peacebuilders can enlist the help of religious leaders to facilitate negotiations and conflict resolution efforts. On this topic, the session explored how critical collaboration is between multilateral actors, government, policy makers, institutions, peacemakers, mediators, and negotiators to engage religious leaders and sway them towards peace.



Understanding normative language, perceptions, and identities is crucial to diagnosing violent religious discourse and to preventing violent conflict. The communication strategies covered in this session help me better understand how to effectively interact with religious groups in my own work. Over the last five years, my work has focused on transforming violent extremism in Mali. Most of the time, I am dealing with religious sects in conflict, whose respective uses of normative religious language have been a barrier to effective communication. In these situations, I can use an awareness of their uses of normative language to mediate, negotiate, and build peace among the sects involved.



Venture Peacebuilding: Aid to Artisans Case Study with Lauren Barkume

Training Manager, Creative Learning / Aid to Artisans

July 31st, 2018

Memoir by Karla Marchena, Guatemala



Who owns something made by hand? Almost all the participants answered yes to this initial question from speaker Lauren Barkume. Barkume continued the session by providing some background history on Aid to Artisans (ATA). ATA was founded in 1976 before joining the DC-based nonprofit organization Creative Learning in October 2012 to strengthen and expand its implementation of artisan development initiatives worldwide. Barkume stated that

ATA's main purpose is to build profitable businesses in the handmade goods sector by bridging the gap between highly skilled local producers and existing and potential markets. The most important three things ATA's program offers artisans are access to new markets, design innovations, and business trainings in the home countries of locals who want to enter the US handmade market.

Barkume gave four main reasons why ATA focuses on handmade products. First, in emerging markets, the handmade industry is the second largest job sector after agriculture. Second, there is a high demand for handmade products both locally and abroad. Third, the handmade sector works with women, girls, and young entrepreneurs. Last but not least, by supporting local artisans, ATA helps ensure the preservation of local cultures around the world. Barkume shared that over its 42 years of experience, ATA has faced



many shifts in the handmade, retail, and development sectors; however, the organization has remained resilient and innovative, improving its models to continue helping artisan's businesses.

Barkume then introduced one main question of her session: where is the gap that ATA addresses? It is the one between the production and market sectors. ATA, Barkume explained, has found that on one side, there is an abundance of people with amazing and beautiful skills, and on the other side, there is an available market and a clear opportunity for these producers to make money through it. Barkume shared some of the challenges ATA faces while attempting to bridge this gap. Some examples included: producers don't know how to decide which markets to target or how to access these markets; they are not designing for a specific market; they don't know to assess what the market wants; they struggle to manage clients; they don't know sales and marketing skills in foreign languages and cultures, and others.

Barkume also stated that ATA has determined three crucial elements for creating a successful craft business program. First, product design is critical for reaching any market; an artisan may have a wonderful item, but if it doesn't feature a trendy color, design, style, etc., nobody in the market will be interested in buying it. Second, artisans and their teams need an entrepreneurial spirit, to be willing to work hard and keep pushing and "making it happen." Third, producers need to know how to respond to market demand, but this can only happen once the other two elements are fulfilled.

To finish the session, participants were divided into 5 groups to explore case studies regarding specific artisans. Each group was instructed to make a SWOT analysis for its assigned case study, identifying the context, main issues, goals, key facts, alternatives, and recommendations for the artisans involved. My group's case study was on a craft business in a South



American country making products with alpaca wool, which are sold in the local market and sporadically in other markets abroad. The two major strengths we determined were the high quality of the products and the story behind them. The greatest weakness we



found was the outdatedness of the inventory. The biggest opportunity for the business was a demand for its product outside the home country, while the major threat was the lack of a successful marketing strategy. The recommendations we came up with were to create a new business model, update the website to focus on the high quality and story behind the products, find a contact within the US market, and improve and innovate product design to incorporate trendy colors and styles.

The lesson all participants learned through this session is that small businesses are indeed related to peacebuilding, because the many hands that touch the value chain of products in the handmade sector (such as those in charge of design, quality control, shipping, sales, etc.) imply many job opportunities throughout the chain. These numerous jobs can provide direct income and stability for all people involved and decrease fragility and the risk of conflict within rural areas.



Site Visit: World Bank & Presentation on the *Pathways for Peace* Report with Alexandre Marc

Chief Specialist, Fragility, Conflict, and Violence Group, World Bank

July 31st, 2018

Memoir by Frank Adarkwah-Yiadom, Ghana
& Anuoluwa Ajose, Nigeria

The participants of the 2018 DC Symposium on the New Frontiers of Peacebuilding visited the World Bank headquarters and met with Alexandre Marc, Chief Specialist for Fragility, Conflict, and Violence Prevention. Among other qualifications, he is the lead author of the United Nations/World Bank Flagship Report “Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflicts,” and has extensive experience in the areas of conflict and fragility, having worked on related themes across four continents over the last 28 years.



Alexandre Marc briefed the participants on the aforementioned study, which is the first report published jointly by the World Bank (WB) and the United Nations (UN). He mentioned that the outcomes of the study, besides the extensive final report, includes main messages and emerging policy directions for conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The WB is a large institution which works in partnership (under different mandates) with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the UN to assist in achieving sustainable development and conflict prevention.



Marc informed the participants regarding the history of the WB, stating why it was established after the Second World War, with a focus on post-conflict reconstruction in Europe. He further explained how the organization's focus shifted during the 1950s into development in the poorest developing countries across the world. He indicated that, among other factors, the outcome of the WB/UN study touched on the 30-year trend of a decline in armed conflict worldwide; however, Marc explained that this trend reversed in 2010, as the numbers of armed conflicts, terrorists attack, combat-related deaths, and forced displacement have all increased. Marc further stated that, with the increase in the number of violent conflicts around the world since 2010 (particularly in Africa and the Middle East), conflict management is under strain; he shared statistics that show peacekeeping personnel has nearly tripled in number from 34,000 in 2000 to 97,000 in 2017.

Marc shared in his briefing that the WB/UN discovered some of the causes of more recent violent conflicts, which include, but are not limited to, climate change, politics, and advances in ICT (information and communications technology) used as a tool for extremist groups to transmit negative ideologies. At the same time, Marc shared the roles that various regional organizations around the world are playing in conflict prevention, and he commended the achievements of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in West Africa thus far as compared to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in East Africa.

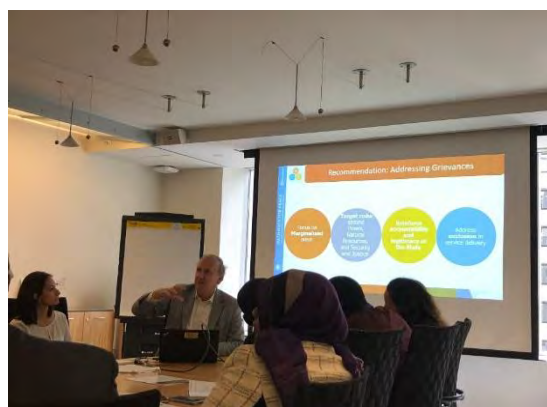
Regarding the goal of conflict prevention, Marc noted that a study was conducted on 20 countries, among them Ghana, Niger, and Tunisia, to determine what those countries have been or are doing differently to prevent violence from either occurring or recurring. The study, Marc stated, took note of the needs and frustrations of citizens, including lack of power, health, and security; these frustrations in some cases led to the formation of a coalition government to address critical risks. Concluding his briefing, Marc provided recommendations on preventing conflicts and grievances, which included focusing on marginalized areas, addressing exclusion in service delivery, and managing youth's unmet aspirations and desires to be included in society.

Participants raised some general concerns regarding the sustainability of the WB's developmental projects, especially after their completion, as well as the lack of involvement of youth in the Bank's project



design and implementation processes. In response, Marc reiterated that WB projects are handed over to local governments and communities upon completion, and the Bank expects a sense of responsibility for their sustainability from these actors. Marc emphasized that inclusivity is an important means by which the Bank ensures successful and sustainable projects. He also indicated that development projects should be conducted before, during, and after an outbreak in a conflict-affected area. A participant inquired about which phases of a conflict see WB prevention efforts. In his response, Marc underscored that prevention efforts are critical at all phases of conflict, citing a case in Yemen where development projects are currently underway in some areas of the country that show no evidence of conflict, purely to avoid potential escalation and expansion of conflicts to those areas. However, Marc noted that the WB conducts more prevention efforts during the aftermath of violent conflict to avoid recurrence of conflict.

When a participant asked about the involvement of youth in the WB's development and conflict prevention activities, Marc responded that youth is an essential component of pathways for peace. Representing close to 70% of the world population, youth are an important stakeholder. Channeling messages of peace through them so that they anchor themselves and their communities helps create a wall of resistance against



the shock of conflict. This goal should be supported by offering youth necessary services, including education and training, for them to build a decent life (i.e. access to employment with a salary that provides for the essential needs of themselves and their families). This is particularly true in the area of violent extremism, where youth are the easiest targets for the recruiting efforts of violent extremist groups, which can justify war and violence in ways that resonate with this demographic.

Generally, it became quite clear during the discussion that the WB is working hard to support all conflict prevention efforts, particularly through collaborations with the UN and other relevant regional organizations; unfortunately, however, they conduct these efforts only by means of development projects. Reportedly, the WB does not in any way get involved in the political issues and proceedings of



the countries in which they operate. This fact helped participants recognize the limitations within which the Bank operates and the complexity of the issues it addresses. In some circumstances, development efforts and political solutions for preventing conflicts are a two-prong approach and are not separable. Taking this into consideration, the UN and other regional organizations deal with political solutions for conflicts, while the WB addresses the development aspect of the process. The need for conflict analysis as part of any prevention program is clear. A complementary analytical framework that genuinely identifies the sources of a conflict, as well as triggers for its outbreak and escalation, can greatly improve the potential for success of prevention-oriented development assistance programs.

In view of the above, there is an urgent need to review all incentives that national, local, and international stakeholders have to act early and collaboratively build consensus and sustainable peace. Preventing violent conflict can only be attained through the full partnership of development, diplomatic, security, and local actors.



Rounding-Up: Operationalizing the New Frontiers in Peacebuilding Work

with Dr. Hrach Gregorian

*Program Director, MA International Peace and Conflict Resolution,
American University's School of International Service*

August 1st, 2018

Memoir by Amy Thomas, United States

This session was meant to “round-up” the concepts of peacebuilding we had covered throughout the Symposium and to provide a basis for our peacebuilding simulation. Dr. Hrach Gregorian stated as his main point that peacebuilding is an art and not a science; thus it is ever fluid in both theory and practice. In supporting this point, he brought up three central ideas: multilateral negotiations, neuroscience, and



systems dynamics, and their pertinent advancements in the field of peacebuilding, conflict resolution and multi-party relations. Throughout his lecture, Dr. Gregorian emphasized that while peacebuilding is a field theorized at the international and state level, the outcomes of any given process are often directly impacted by the individual diplomats, leaders, rebels, and populace involved. His themes reminded us that the individual is still a major player in peacebuilding, despite the emphasis usually lying with the international actors.

Dr. Gregorian presented the new theory that a person’s genetic makeup has a greater impact on their emotional versus rational response than do nurture or memory, as memory is subjective, and nurture does not entirely mitigate one’s genetic predisposition to certain emotional responses. In arguing this idea, Dr. Gregorian presented a study (warning that this study should be approached with caution as its



repercussions could be detrimental if put into the wrong hands). The study found that emotional responses and amiability can be altered by differing levels of oxytocin in a person's body, as this hormone stimulates feelings of cooperation. Dr. Gregorian's compelling argument looked into how one could prevent conflicts prior to their inception via emotional analysis and manipulation via oxytocin; the speaker acknowledged, however, that such an approach suggests the radical concept of editing or manipulating an individual's hormones in order to ensure amiability.

Moving to the macro level, Dr. Gregorian shifted his focus to the complexities of multilateral negotiations. He made two points: firstly, multilateral negotiations, which are complex and rife with competing interests and policies, require formalizing consensus and overall harmonization in order to reach agreement on the finer details. Secondly, multilateral negotiations are usually conducted by coalitions. Dr. Gregorian argued that the UN's budget constraints, its lack of power to enforce mandates, and the competing interests of all those at the table, make it nearly impossible to achieve consensus on the finer details of application; hence, generalized consensus and harmonization must be the key objective. Gregorian further illustrated the demands of emotional intelligence over those of mere scholarly intelligence in peacebuilding. This seemed to be one of the few points on which our cohort reached a consensus in discussions, particularly when reflecting on the challenges of communication and agreement faced during the two-day simulation.



Dr. Gregorian concluded his lecture with systems dynamics, arguing that there are distinct drivers, conductors, defenders, brakers, and cruisers in all negotiations. Our cohort seemed to disagree with this analysis, arguing that these roles are fluid, ever-changing, and undecided. There was also debate on the applicability of these prescribed roles; for example, can a state that is hindering the progress of peace

negotiations be considered a "spoiler," or merely a "braker" given its vested interest in a peaceful outcome? This detail-oriented discussion offered necessary distinctions for all pursuing careers in negotiation.



Exhaust Your Limits: Resilience for the Peacebuilder with Chic Dambach

CEO, Operation Respect

August 3rd, 2018

Memoir by Pierre Ahoure, Ivory Coast/Australia

Cycles of International Wars and Human Endurance for World Peace



The topic of Professor Chic Dambach's seminar, which took place on the last day of the DC Symposium, was "Resilience for the Peacebuilder." In his talk, Chic argued that the world we live in today is less violent and overall better than it was 100 years ago. In light of this conclusion, the session led participants to reflect on the negative media and propaganda to which the public has become accustomed regarding violence and conflict.

One important lesson from the 2018 DC Symposium was to remind ourselves of the cyclical violence resulting from wars between nations. Reviewing the current state of recurring crises between sovereign States, Professor Dambach emphasized that we live in "a much more peaceful world" than we did a century ago. That is, we have predominantly learnt from past wars caused by cyclical violent behaviors between States. Hence, a call to dedicate this Memoir to reviewing the atrocities of the last century, where human's *life* and the likelihood of disasters affecting lives, were greater.

In 1986, 22 years ago, the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) reported that the five permanent members of the UN Security Council—US, Soviet Union, UK, France, and China—had nuclear weapons stockpiles totaling 65,549, each averaging 15 times more destructive power than the bomb that destroyed



Hiroshima.⁹ In addition, it is now known that Israel has 100 to 200 nuclear weapons, India 30 to 35, and Pakistan 24 to 48.¹⁰

Equally horrifying facts from the last century alone are the acts of human violence and aggression identified by scholars Jonathan Spencer, Franz Michael, Anthony Beevor, John Ellis, Michael Bucklow, and Glenn Russell, as a consequence of human disregard for the sanctity of *life*:

- the *bloodiest war*, as Ellis notes, is World War II, which killed 56.4 million people during the 1940s (counting both battle and civilian deaths)¹¹;
- the *bloodiest modern battle*, as Beevor notes, is the battle of Stalingrad, USSR (now Volgograd) during World War II (summer 1942-January 31, 1943), which took the lives of 1.109 million people¹²;
- the *bloodiest civil war*, says Michael, is the T'ai P'ing Rebellion in China (1850-1864) in which 20 to 30 million people were slaughtered¹³;
- the *greatest mass killing*, says Spencer, was of 26 million Chinese during the first 16 years of Mao Tse-tung's regime¹⁴;
- the *greatest purge of political opponents*, as Bucklow and Russell indicate, was the killing of an estimated 8 to 10 million Russians by Stalin's regime between 1924 and 1953.¹⁵

These records illustrate the unthinkable consequences of human violence and aggression, which are not unknown to human societies, yet have continued to occur. Numerous authors have referred to this recurring cycle of war and destruction as the result of "great-power rivalries"¹⁶ for leading positions in the hierarchy of States. On such rivalries, British historian Arnold Toynbee wrote in his

⁹ Natural Resource Defence Council, 'Archive of Nuclear data from NRDC Nuclear Program', <http://www.nrdc.org/nuclear/nudb/datab19.asp>, 2007, pp. 1-4.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ J Ellis, *World War II: A Statistical Survey*, New York, Facts On File, 1995, pp. 251-269.

¹² A Beevor, *Stalingrad*, London Penguin Books, 1988, pp. 439-440.

¹³ F Michael, *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, London, University of Washington Press, 1966, vol.I, pp. 169-188, see also Documents 317 to 391, and Volumes II and III.

¹⁴ J Spencer, *Mao Zedong*, New York, Penguin Putnam 1999, pp. 120-134.

¹⁵ M Bucklow & Glenn Russell, *Russia: Why Revolution*, 2nd edn Australia, Longman Cheshire, 1994, pp. 219-243.

¹⁶ AJ Toynbee, *A Study of History*, London, Oxford University Press, 1954, in Kegley & Wittkopf, 5th edn, pp. 73-76.



Theory on the Cycle of History (1954):

“The most emphatic punctuation in a uniform series of events recurring in one repetitive cycle after another is the outbreak of a great war in which one Power that has forged ahead of its rivals makes so formidable a bid for world domination that it evokes an opposing coalition of all the other powers¹⁷.”

History has largely proven Toynbee to be right, as in the twentieth century alone, the world experienced two World Wars and a Cold War. Even in light of this violent history, however, Professor Dambach placed emphasis on arguments that today’s world is more peaceful than ever before, referencing Steven Pinker’s book *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* (2011). Pinker asks, “was 2017 really the ‘worst year ever,’ as some would have us believe? ... Recent data on homicide, war, poverty, [and] pollution ... finds that we're doing better now in every one of [these areas] when compared with 30 years ago.” For Pinker, “we will never have a perfect world, and it would be dangerous to seek one, ... but there's no limit to the betterments we can attain if we continue to apply knowledge to enhance human flourishing.”¹⁸

During the seminar, participants reflected on the endurance of their peace heroes, whose lives have inspired them and whose legacies have made and continue to make the world more democratic and peaceful. Professor Dambach invited participants to share quotations by these personal heroes. For myself, I chose Martin Luther King for his humanist message about his “dream,” which left the enduring legacy of envisioning a peaceful future for the United States. Also raised was Nelson Mandela’s quote, “negotiation and discussion are the greatest weapons we have for promoting peace and development.” This in my view confirms that negotiation is the most important obligation in Article 33(1) of the UN Charter, as its political nature renders it *l’arme des plus forts* (“the weapon of the strongest”). The seminar concluded on the note that human endurance has created new frontiers for peacebuilding and led to a more peaceful and overall much better world.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ S Pinker, “The Better Angels of Our Nature,” Steve Sailer, October 31, 2011, p. 1.



Final Remarks: What did we learn at the 2018 DC Symposium?

by Maria Paula Unigarro Alba
*Program Coordinator,
Creative Learning / International Peace & Security Institute*

The written reflections of the student body demonstrate that the 2018 DC Symposium resulted in a comprehensive and systematic perspective on how to build positive peace.¹⁹ This means that beyond training on conflict resolution methods such as mediation, negotiation, and facilitation, which are practical for solving local and global violent conflicts, the program offered a broad perspective on the necessary contributions of various disciplines to effective peacebuilding. This means building the conditions that lead not only to the absence of violence, but also to developing the attitudes, structures, and institutions required for the wellbeing of a society as a whole. In a word, the DC Symposium was an ample exposition of ways and means to achieve sustainable peace.

With regard to the core concepts and practices of conflict management, the speakers and the student body highlighted three general conclusions. First, the notion of conflict prevention is now more relevant than ever—instead of focusing exclusively on how to solve ongoing conflicts, peace practitioners are paying great attention to early identification of emerging conflicts so that they can be managed through diplomatic channels (both official and unofficial). Second, the lectures and trainings on conflict resolution techniques pointed out one simple but essential rule: it is crucial to plan and prepare before any intervention. Accurate diagnosis of a conflict is required for the peacebuilding process to succeed, or at least to ensure that the intervention does not cause any harm to the parties involved. Third, reconciliation processes imply great difficulties and tensions; however, to overcome them, it is important to recognize that these processes must be context-tailored, and no immovable pre-established goals must be set.

¹⁹ For further reference, please visit the 2017 Positive Peace Report (Institute for Economics and Peace).
<http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2017/10/Positive-Peace-Report-2017.pdf>



Along with these lessons on conflict management, speakers and participants shared innovative and eye-opening reflections about the contributions of diverse disciplines to the peacebuilding field. The main takeaways from the New Frontiers sessions were:

- From a **governance** perspective, it was pointed out that **local governance** can make peace more sustainable by addressing grievances at the grassroots level, and hence, decreasing risks of fragility. Nevertheless, a caveat to this is that local governments can become agents of conflict when they are not accountable at the political, administrative, and/or financial levels.
- The **entrepreneurial** point of view shared that fragility risks and potential conflicts can be reduced by strengthening **local businesses**. Supporting communities in developing businesses according to their interests and abilities results in the creation of job opportunities, which in turn contributes to improving citizens' wellbeing. In several cases, this phenomenon has had a proven correlation with the decrease of fragility risks.
- Considering **religious studies**, it was clarified that even though there are many examples of **religion** being used to trigger conflict, it can also be used to catalyze peace. Religion shapes identities and perceptions, and for this reason religious leaders have great influence in their communities. Understanding a community's religious beliefs and involving its leaders in peace processes can contribute to building more inclusive and sustainable solutions to violent conflicts.
- A presentation from the **urban design** field demonstrated that **urban planning** and **architecture** are powerful tools that shape social dynamics. Public spaces that are designed taking into consideration a community's needs and interests, can encourage social interaction and help diminish causes of conflict.
- A very innovative view of **gastronomy** showed how food, as a fundamental need for human survival, can be used to influence human behavior. The idea of **conflict cuisine** points to using food creatively to encourage dialogue and empathy among communities experiencing violent conflict.
- Finally, transversal to the topics addressed during the program, **technology** and **social media** were highlighted as instruments that, when used in the right ways, can contribute to peacebuilding efforts.



Technological platforms can be used for peacebuilding purposes mainly in two ways: i) through the mapping and identification of information relevant to conflict dynamics; and ii) by spreading messages that counter hate speech and inflammatory language which motivate violence.

In brief, content covered at the 2018 DC Symposium showed that conflict resolution studies and practices can benefit greatly from a variety of disciplines and currents of thought. If the objective is building positive and sustainable peace, then peacebuilders should look at the bigger picture and recognize that this goal can only be achieved by implementing the right conflict management techniques while incorporating the variety of disciplines required to attend to communities' and societies' needs and interests.

The final message of this program is an invitation to think creatively and to find innovative solutions to current threats to peace. If we want to return to a trend of decreasing violence (such as the one experienced in the late 1990s and early 2000s) and to avoid re-entering a cycle of violence, then it is indispensable to plan and prepare and to exhaust our limits. This implies carefully identifying the diverse factors that can turn conflict violent, and developing comprehensive prevention and intervention mechanisms. In this regard, the challenges are many, but the opportunities vastly exceed our expectations.





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