Peace and Conflict Studies

- Conflict Engagement: A Contingency Model in Theory and Practice
  Jay Rothman

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- Studying Diplomatic Negotiations: Integrating the Personal and Institutional Aspects
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- The Political Economy of Ivory as a “Conflict Resource”
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Conflict Engagement: A Contingency Model in Theory and Practice

Jay Rothman

Abstract

The systematic study and applied practice of conflict resolution is now a few decades old and is evolving into its own field and perhaps towards its own discipline (Avruch, 2013). I believe an essential way forward towards a more robust field and discipline is to build a parsimonious contingency approach. That is, an approach for applying our best theoretical and analytical tools to diagnosing the nature and status of a given conflict and then systematically and adaptively matching up the best methods for constructively engaging the conflict as it evolves. Fisher and Keashly (1991) pioneered contingency theory in international conflict resolution, while Sander and Goldberg suggested “fitting the forum to the fuss” in domestic ADR a few years later (1994). Since then the notion has caught on and is now somewhat in “vogue” (Fisher, 2012). However, surprisingly little development has occurred in this arena given the promise it holds. The contingency model described in this article builds on this early theorizing and suggests different conflict intervention methods according to conflict type and stage of development. Conflicts are divided into three different types: resource-based, objectives-based and identity-based. Each type is conducive to a different mode of engagement.

Introduction

To know what something is, it is often necessary to know what it is not. Thus the focus of my work on defining and engaging identity-based conflicts over the past several decades has required, at least in part, that such conflict be distinguished from other types of more “routine” conflicts (Rothman, 1992, 1997, 2012). In seeking to develop a theory and practice for distinguishing and creatively engaging identity-based conflict, I have almost accidentally evolved a particular and parsimonious contingency approach, in which conflict intervention and analysis become interdependent (Rothman, 2012). This approach suggests that conflict specialists begin an intervention by systematically inquiring in to the nature of a given dispute, using a simple three-point schematic to identify the stage of conflict.
development which then sets the stage for intervention choices and design, often on an ongoing and evolving basis.

The field of conflict studies and intervention is now ripe for the development of such contingency models. It has almost passed its early growing pains, in which battles were waged over which model was “better”—for example needs-based conflict resolution of the Burton school (Burton, 1979) or interests-based conflict management of the Fisher school (Fisher & Ury, 1981) or the transformation models of the Lederach (1995) or Bush and Folger schools (1994), and so forth. The field is at a crossroads. It is time for a concerted effort to develop broad contingency approaches in which the field moves beyond the battles over models or methods and can begin coalescing around scientific analysis of conflict connected to systematic and disciplined determination of which intervention model is best suited to treat which type of conflict.

More sustained attention to contingency approaches, I believe, would fill a serious lacuna in the field and help generate some centripetal energy across its valuable but sometimes baffling diversity.

**Contingency Approach**

In a landmark article that began to articulate the boundaries of a contingency approach focused on ADR in the domestic context, Sander and Goldberg (1994) eloquently described their article called, “Fitting the Forum to the Fuss.” Fisher and Keashly previously introduced contingency theory into international conflict resolution in 1991. They suggested that different types of interventions are useful at different points during a conflict. Fisher returns to the theme in a more recent writing, concluding: “The contingency model is an idealized representation of a highly complex reality; however, it may descriptively capture some of the essence of the relationships between highly escalated conflict and the interventions required to address it” (Fisher, 2007, p. 10). Like a number of other theorists, Fisher and Keashly (1991) bifurcate conflict types by distinguishing between objective (or substantive) and subjective (or social-psychological) conflict issues, which they suggest need to be continually assessed and treated differently during an intervention and modulated accordingly. Fetherston (2000) commenting on Fisher and Keashly’s work, writes that “within a conflict process there are times when strategies which focus on interests are most appropriate and effective and times when a shift in focus to relationships is required” (p. 5). A similar dichotomy is also suggested by Marc Ross’ work in which he distinguishes between “interests” and “interpretations” (1993). John Burton also dichotomized between
“disputes” and “conflicts” (1993), suggesting the first may be “managed” but the latter should be “resolved.” Disputes, according to Burton, are routine and deal with concrete goods and services, often called interests, while conflicts deal with existential concerns, which he refers to as basic human needs (see also Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, & Miall, 2011).

I suggest breaking open this dualism by further operationalizing John Burton's (1993) distinctions between resource based “disputes” and needs-based “conflicts” by adding a third category between them: objectives-based “problems.” The contingency model described in this article suggests intervention methods according to these three broad types of conflict. The way to foster cooperative engagement in to deep-seated conflicts is different from that of objectives-based problems, which is also different from the way to most constructively address resource disputes. The type of intervention suggested is therefore to be determined by prior analysis of the nature and depth of the conflict. Indeed, I suggest, this is one major raison d’etre of the field; to bridge careful and systematic analysis with best practices and disciplined interventions.

In the following section I present a typology of conflicts divided in to resource-based, objectives (or goals)-based and identity-based. I am not suggesting this is the right way to divide all conflicts, but rather as an example of one theoretically and practically sound way. There is no need, as I advocate for a contingency philosophy for our field, in part to overcome internecine battles over models, to stake a new claim about a new best model. This is just one among a possible many. I then present, in more generic form a broad variety of choices that could be made about categories (and some examples of) conflict intervention strategies based on this prior conflict analysis.

The following contingency approach is generic and not specific to either domestic or international conflict, and in this it differs from both Sander’s and Fisher and Keashly’s foundational contingency approaches. Also, unlike the Fisher and Keashly approach, it does not focus on the identity of the intervener (consultant, mediator, etc.) but instead broadly groups and hypothesizes various means of constructive conflict intervention according to the types and stages of conflict that each set of strategies may be generally best suited to address.

**Conflict Typology: Resources, Objectives, Identity**

In this section I present my analytical model for determining the type of conflict to be addressed followed by a case study of an intervention. I present a case study of a conflict and contingency-based intervention in an organization, to practically illustrate how to select intervention approaches based on prior – and unfolding - conflict analysis.
Step One: Analysis. Effective conflict engagement begins by “going slow to go fast.” That is, taking the time required to get the definition and dynamics of a conflict conceptually right, so that disputants and potential third parties come to agreement about the nature and depth of their disagreement. This then builds a foundation for selection of appropriate intervention methods.

The first step in a contingency approach then is to undertake a detailed process of conflict analysis, working with disputants to determine either separately or interactively, or both, what the conflict is about, why it matters to them, how deep it runs, what is functional about the conflict, what is destructive about it, and for whom, when and why, and what might be done to mine its creative potential and reduce its destructiveness.

Given that most people tend to have a natural and conditioned aversion to conflict, interveners too often give in to this proclivity and push toward solutions, which may lessen the divide. The problem arises when there is a rush to solutions before adequate understanding is achieved of the parameters and causes of the conflicts. The deeper the problem, the more likely it is that this premature solution-seeking will result in solving the wrong problems (Doyle & Straus, 1976). For example, it may lead to attempts at settling resource disputes when goal problems need attention, or addressing goal problems with “interest-based” solutions that should be preceded by engagement of identity issues. Additionally, when conflicts are about identity they may be resistant to “practical” solutions and thus the effort to resolve them may lead to deeper intransigence. Instead, a host of other types of creative process and insight-oriented ways forward may be, at least initially, necessary. While it may be relatively impossible to “solve” identity-based conflicts, it is possible to gain insight about them and reach agreement about their dynamics and thus set the stage for fractionation and redress of some of its component parts.

Resource Disputes. Building on Burton’s (1993) notion of “disputes”, resource disputes are tangible and observable. Take a hi-tech company where I served as consultant and mediator in which hardware and software departments competed for allocation of resources. Both department managers made a case for investing available monies in their respective departments. This was, at least initially, about the resource itself. Such disputes are fairly routine and relatively easy to “fix,” perhaps with a decision based on a mechanism such as a cost-benefit analysis over a certain pre-determined time frame. Resource disputes can be settled through mixed motive bargaining (Bazerman & Lewicki, 1983) and in part mutual
gains can be achieved for all parties with effective and timely interest-based negotiation and problem solving (Fisher & Ury, 1981).

Disagreements that begin as primarily resource disputes can deteriorate into objectives-based problems or even into identity-based conflicts. For example, when I was called in to mediate the hardware-software dispute, millions of dollars (twice what was initially planned) had already been allocated to the software department to adopt new software. The software manager had won the resource dispute by persuading the head of the company that investment in this area was essential; the hardware manager had lost in his effort to receive the funds to improve hardware so current software could be better utilized. This win-lose situation created a negatively spiraling dynamic in which the software manager was seen as spearheading the future well-being of the company and behaved as such, while the hardware manager felt he and his department were not prioritized or treated with adequate respect. When he was later blamed for not supporting this new software development effort adequately he felt ganged up upon when explaining that given his current resources, he could do no more than he was doing. He was blamed for purposely not cooperating fully with the software department, which needed better hardware support. The dispute deteriorated into an objectives-based problem for the software manager – “I require more and better computer support from the hardware department if our new software is to be effective” – and an identity-based conflict for the hardware manager who felt undervalued and blamed (as in this example, conflicts may exist at a different level for each of the sides).

Objectives-Based Problems. Objectives-based problems are more complex and harder to empirically determine than resource disputes, and may require some digging to determine what they are really about. Objectives, in their most elemental form, are those things we seek to accomplish or attain. Problems, most essentially, are those things that keep us from fulfilling our objectives. In a widely quoted operational definition of conflict, Hocker and Wilmot (1985), suggest that conflict is the interaction of interdependent people who perceive incompatible goals and interference from each other in achieving those goals (see also Folger, Poole, & Stutman, 2005).

Objective-based problems are those without a great deal of emotional content and can often be managed dispassionately, rationally and effectively with third party assistance as long as they are addressed in a rational and proactive way. They are often about contending priorities or poor communication over them. Such problems can be addressed through various value clarification and goal-setting methods such as appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider,
In the company mentioned above, a new allocation of several million dollars was being debated, with the software and hardware managers on opposing sides. Seeking to proactively clarify the underlying goals and objectives each side had for seeking this resource could have spared them the fight that soon changed from a competition for a limited resource in to a deeper identity-based conflict. When an intervener asks the right questions in a timely manner to uncover reasons sides have for their opposing positions, differences over objectives can become a source of clarification and joint problem solving. “I want more funding of hardware since given current time pressures and demands on our business, especially with an upgrade of software, we can’t keep up with software’s requests and will need more workers.” Or “I want more funding for software since we lack a cutting edge system to beat the competition.”

Instead, given how the solution was arrived at in a win-lose way, it is not surprising that for the “winner” deeper objectives-based problems emerged as he felt his goals were inadequately supported by the “loser,” who in turn felt hurt and unvalued, and thus did not adequately support his former colleague and present adversary.

In this case, the software manager is concerned with effectiveness in achieving his department’s goals (thus for him the conflict is still or now presenting at the objectives level), while the hardware manager is not only concerned with the growing demands made to his department – he is also concerned by what he feels is lack of recognition and respect (and thus the conflict became identity-based for him).

**Identity-Based Conflicts.** Identity-based conflicts are often far beneath the surface and much more complex to define than are resource or goal conflicts. They are about existential needs and values of individuals and groups that are threatened, frustrated and are usually competitively pursued in often self-defeating win-lose ways. Identity conflicts often emerge out of threats to a personal or collective sense of safety, recognition, self-esteem, control over the future and so forth. In our example, the hardware manager believes, “I deserve the allocation of money in recognition of my accomplishments and value to the company; and I can do better with more resources and thus be valued even more.” Thus, his sense of self-worth and recognition are threatened and frustrated. Identity-based conflicts, of course, are the most emotionally laden and difficult to engage and convert into opportunities.
However, when handled effectively the creative rewards can be great as a great deal of passion and energy can be well directed. When mishandled, the passion is combustible and deeply destructive dynamics and outcomes are common.

In the above mentioned organizational example, I brought the two managers together to talk about the source of the conflicts, what was upsetting about each other’s behavior, and reframing in terms of their needs and values and sense of place in the organization. This led to a greater level of empathy and recognition by the two previously embattled managers, and led them to commit to a collaborative goal setting process at the objectives level with their respective sides.

Identity-based conflicts require complex, systems oriented interventions such as narrative-based and transformative processes that emphasize dialogue and discovery more than solution seeking and early agreement. Such methods designed to address these types of conflicts include the interactive problem solving workshop approach of Burton (1990), Kelman (1997) and Azar (1990) (Fisher, 1997), the difficult conversations approach (Stone, Patton, & Heen, 2000), radical disagreements (Ramsbotham, 2013), the relational identity theory approach (Shapiro, 2010) and the ARIA approach (Rothman, 1996, 2012).

**Using a Levels-of-Conflict Analysis Visualization for Diagnosis.** Using the common metaphor of conflict as an iceberg, identity-based conflicts may be conceptualized as residing at the un-seeable, murky bottom. Objectives conflicts are visible, but opaque, just beneath the water’s surface. Resource conflicts are above the water and are in plain sight - empirical and tangible.

Another way of differentiating these conflict levels is by the simple questions “What?”; “What for?” and “Why?” At the top of the iceberg are the tangible “What’s” of a conflict. For example, “I want this real-estate to build on.” Going down one level are the slightly less tangible “What for's” of a conflict. “I want this territory because only with it can my people fulfill its national aspirations to assure its independence.” Finally, the deepest level of “Whys” are repositories of the deepest coordinates of identity such as “I want this land because it is home” (see Figure 1.)
This “levels of conflict analysis” approach visually suggests an important feature of identity-based conflict that distinguishes it from the other two. Identity-based conflict contains within it the other two levels of conflict as well. Conceptually moving up the iceberg, a conflict for example over home and one’s access to and control over it (the root of many community and international identity-based conflicts), will also be about broad objectives or specific goals (e.g. to accomplish sovereignty and territorial integrity) and resources (e.g. economic and military strength). On the other hand goal problems will be primarily about goals and resources (e.g. to establish an independent state in order to be able to gain and control of economic and military resources). Resource disputes, while also having seeds of goal problems and even identity-based conflicts if they are poorly handled, are fundamentally about the who, when, and how of the control of tangible resources (e.g. gaining access to and control over scarce resources). Methods of engagement correspond to conflict typology, as outlined above and summarized in Figure 2.
When I was called in to the hardware/software conflict, it was a full-blown identity conflict, with the two managers hotly disparaging each other personally (though the identity aspects of the conflict were more central to the hardware manager than to the software manager, for whom it was still mainly an objectives-based problem). It began as a resource dispute, which deteriorated into an objectives-based problem as both managers began to claim with urgency that the future of the company depended on allocation of resources to their respective departments. The heated situation then transformed into an identity-based conflict particularly for the software department manager whose sense of dignity and value was challenged by the process and outcomes of the initial resource dispute. I dealt with it as an identity-based conflict, using ARIA (Rothman, 2012). The conflict was then reformulated as an objectives-based conflict, and I used a corresponding approach called Action Evaluation (Rothman, 2012).

**Matching Diagnosis with Intervention Strategy.** To now further explain how to connect between diagnosis and intervention strategy, here are two examples, domestic and international, for applying this contingency approach:

In a conflict between a school board and its superintendent which began over deep disagreements about how to manage budgets, personality disputes soon took over as a sense...
of betrayal and mistrust clouded all effective planning or collaboration between the two sides. Is this a resource-dispute, an objectives-based problem or identity-based conflict? This can be deduced through the diagnosis methods suggested above. If the conflict is diagnosed as rooted in identity (say, the conflict has become deeply personal or the parties are of a different race or gender and feel discriminated against on that basis), surfacing and engaging the deep differences through one or a number of identity-based methods is the first stage in intervention. If the conflict is analyzed as objectives-based, intervention begins with clarifying goals and values before addressing concrete resource distribution and outcomes. If the conflict is simply about the resource interventions can be designed to help parties reach agreements on best means to divide, share or trade them. There is also a less preferable alternative: the mediator might first address the conflict as objectives or resource-based, and if parties are unsatisfied or if problems have worsened, might inductively discover that it is necessary to move down to deeper levels of analysis and intervention (i.e. as an identity-based conflict).

Or at the international level, imagine Israelis and Palestinians all seeking an end to their conflict and agreeing in principle about the need for a two-state solution. Next steps should be easy, right? Not at all unless it is clear at what level they are operating. Is it about negotiating final status agreements over who gets what resource, when and how (i.e. the nature of a political settlement)? This would merit principled bargaining, for instance. Is it about the nature and purposes of that two-state solution (i.e. how will they work together on environmental issues? What kind of trade agreements will be reached between the two entities?)? If so, goal setting would be an appropriate approach. Or is it about the identity of each community (i.e., dignity, religious beliefs, control over destiny and so forth and ways that state will fulfill or further frustrate such existential needs and values)? In that case, surfacing contending issues and engaging in “difficult conversations” effectively would be appropriate.

From Theory to Practice – Limitations and Opportunities for Practitioners
One of the main strengths of this contingency approach for practitioners is to provide them with a mental model to organize and guide both conflict analysis and interventions based on it. It has helped many practitioners in all types of conflicts across many different countries to design and implement constructive interventions (Rothman, 2012). It has assisted both third parties and disputants to be able to read from the same score of music – that is to talk about the same things (i.e. levels of conflict) at the same time in the same way (type of intervention...
strategy) for the same reasons. This goes far in moving conflict toward cooperation. On the other hand, like all models, it has limitations in the translation from pure concept to messy practice. Models are simplifications of reality that can help to organize and formalize thinking and acting. But if we view models as reality we reify them, and in that way reduce their effectiveness by seeking to conform reality to them, instead of adapt models as useful to address the vagaries of real life.

Another limitation, which may also be a strength of this model, is that not all practitioners are or should strive to be masters of all approaches. For example, my expertise is identity-based conflicts. Thus, after assessing conflicts, I have told potential clients that my focus on deeply rooted identity-issues may be too much for their situation. Instead, they might do better finding (and I may refer them to) someone who specializes in concrete problem solving methods (like principled bargaining).

One very specific caution for practitioners is, while perhaps obvious, useful to articulate. The levels-of-conflict analysis tool, while useful, is imprecise. It is probably not realistic to think that we ever fully distinguish one level from another in pure forms. Indeed, in another article a colleague and I suggest that underneath all conflicts – even resource-based – lurk deeper layers of identity issues. And so too, if we unpack the densely constructed conflicts in which identity issues are so salient, we can “move up the iceberg” and constructively attend to differences that are more about goals and “above them” in the iceberg, that are expressed by concrete resources (Rothman & Alberstein, 2013). Indeed, the differences between resource conflicts and goals conflicts are often hard to determine. And yet, even with these limitations, I and many others have found this contingency model useful for both conceptualizing conflicts, trying to distinguish between them and using this as a kind of hypothesis to design and manage interventions. However, humility is always warranted in this work of ours and so, even as we may use this model to design interventions, we can at the same time use it to critique and readjust our strategy as we go. As one colleague told me as he learned and applied the ARIA model to a complex intervention between Israeli and Palestinian community leaders outside of Jerusalem some years ago: “the model provided me with a framework that both gave me confidence and humility at the same time” (Ross & Rothman, 1999).
Conclusion

The above contingency model is a result of my effort to distinguish identity-based conflict and to take theory into the field, helping to make it "useful" to those on the ground (e.g. interveners and disputants and policy makers). Moving in the other direction, I have also sought to continually view practice through the lens of rigorous analysis and in the service of replicable theory building.

Some three decades ago as a doctoral student of John Burton, Edward Azar and Herbert Kelman, I sought to build upon their efforts to build a robust model of international conflict resolution (the Problem Solving Workshop) (Rothman, 1992). At Azar's Center for International Conflict Management and Development, we began an ambitious project to build a Grand Theory of conflict resolution. Our questions then were essentially about the nature of international protracted social conflict and how it could best be understood and addressed. My questions now are even more global (and local): how can we as theorists and practitioners develop a flexible, inclusive and overarching theory of conflict and its creative engagement that can knit our disparate and often fractious field more effectively together in both theory and practice? I believe a contingency approach is one useful and robust answer.

References


What is “the good” of arts-based peacebuilding?
Questions of value and evaluation in current practice
Mary Ann Hunter and Linda Page

Abstract
In a context of growing attention to the benefits of the arts in peacebuilding, this article reports on the findings of a small scoping study that aimed to identify how the arts are perceived and supported by international development agencies. Based on a 2012 analysis of five international aid agencies working in the South East Asia and Pacific region, the study found that arts and creative practices are not, as yet, afforded a significant role in current policy or strategy, although arts activity is recognised as a social development tool by agencies working in partnership with local organisations. Resulting from an analysis of participating agencies’ publicly available documentation, and interviews with staff, arts practitioners and volunteers working in field-based arts projects, this article argues that the value of arts-based interventions in peacebuilding and development is yet to be fully realised. Bringing field experience as well as policy and research backgrounds to the analysis, the authors consider why this might be the case and pose broader questions about the communication, role and influence of evaluation as one factor in this. They argue for a better acknowledgment of the diverse applications and implications of the “use” of the arts within complex social, political, and cultural systems by linking this call with evaluation methodologies that may better reveal the ways in which such projects “raise possibilities” rather than “confirm probabilities.” This article suggests a four-question schema for augmenting the documentation and evaluation of arts-based work to more authentically capture “the good” that may arise from the emergent nature of artmaking itself.
Peace and Conflict Studies

Introduction

In fields as diverse as education, health, public policy and community development, much has been claimed for the benefits of arts participation. As leading arts evaluation scholar, Matarasso (2003) points out,

the idea that art is, in some way or another, good for us … is as old as art itself, and philosophers of conservative, liberal and inconsistent political views, from Plato, through Kant, Hegel and Nietzsche to the present day, have advanced equally varied interpretations of it. (p. 343)

It is therefore unsurprising that there is growing attention to “the good” of the arts as a tool for building peace. To date, documentation of the role of the arts in peacebuilding has included studies of traditional, contemporary, formal and informal creative practices. To give a sense of this diversity, there is recent research in peacebuilding and music (Bergh, 2011; Pruitt, 2011; Urbain, 2008), ritual (Schirch, 2004; Seneci, 2002; Walker, 2011), theatre (Cohen, Varea, & Walker, 2011), youth cultures (Hunter, 2005), and storytelling (Kyon, 2009). The arts have been identified as a vehicle to represent, respond to, prevent and transform conflict, with positive impacts claimed beyond social peacebuilding (Ricigliano, 2003) where most art-based practices may be claimed to sit, into political and structural peacebuilding as well (Dunphy, 2012; Epskamp, 1999; Lederach, 2005; Liebmann, 1996; Shank & Schirch, 2008; Thompson, 2009; Thompson, Hughes, & Balfour, 2009; Zelizer, 2003). A number of studies extend beyond project documentation to investigate the ethical complexities, practitioner challenges, and unintended outcomes that arts activity in conflict and post-conflict settings can generate. Foremost among these is James Thompson’s Performance Affects (2009) in which Thompson charts his own experience as an arts-based fieldworker in Sri Lanka. Thompson’s interrogation of the value and ethics of arts interventions in places of war and conflict is particularly incisive, given that a group of community participants with whom he had worked became victims of a massacre in the months following his visit. In articulating a distinction between effect and affect, Thompson makes a persuasive case for the impact of the arts as immeasurable. Any authentic evaluation of its application in such settings can only, at best, be inconclusive.

Studies such as Thompson’s (2009) highlight the need for more critical investigation of the complexities that underlie a convergence of these two fields of practice – art-making and peacebuilding. Risks and unintended impacts do get acknowledged in individual project reports and in works of creative research and reflection such as Performance Affects. But, at
the same time, the variety of activities and approaches that are subsumed under umbrella definitions of “the arts” can lead to generalised assumptions and underacknowledgment of its potential and impact. A reliance on valourising the benefits of arts participation – “the good” of the arts – without further critical attention to its complexity in practice and the importance of its situatedness in social, political and cultural terms, could ultimately undermine its value.

This article aims to contribute to this growing exploration of the arts’ role in peacebuilding by conveying evidence of how arts-based activity is valued – and evaluated – in the domain of international development. What do the policies and strategies of the development agencies that are most likely to fund peacebuilding arts projects tell us about how the arts are valued? How do these findings relate to the perceptions and experiences of artworkers and volunteers in the field? In investigating these questions, we have identified a disjuncture between practice and policy: a gap in understanding about the nature of emergence in arts-based development work that we believe could be addressed through a reframing of how such work is evaluated. To address this, we arrive at a set of new framework evaluation questions that may augment (not replace) conventional logic-frame evaluation approaches to allow for context-sensitive and humanities-inflected processes of more appropriately assessing and communicating “the good” of the arts when it comes to building peace.

Methods

This article uses a small qualitative study of five government and non-government development agencies’ work in Australia and the South East Asia and Pacific region, as a locus for discussion. The agencies include an international rights-based anti-poverty agency, an international Christian relief and advocacy organisation, an independent emergency relief and development organisation for children, a government overseas aid program, and an international partnerships development organisation. The initial study aimed to investigate the existence and extent of policies, strategies and priorities within these organisations for supporting arts-based and cultural activities generally, and in conflict-affected communities more specifically. The methods of study included: analysis of publicly available agency documentation for references to arts-based and cultural activity; correspondence with administrative and program staff of each of the five agencies; and semi-structured electronic interviews with five in-country practitioners currently or recently working in arts-based...
projects in the region. The objective of these interviews was to deepen an understanding of the rationale and purpose behind organisational support for arts-based projects and to garner individual workers’ perceptions of and attitudes to working with the arts in such contexts.

While certainly not generalizable, particularly given the study sample’s distinctive regional and cultural focus, the findings of this small study reveal a valid foundation for raising further questions as to how arts-based peacebuilding is perceived and evaluated at an organisational level. This article elicits questions and a broader research agenda from this data, by contextualising the study’s findings within current debates of evaluation in peacebuilding practice.

**Definitions of Arts-based Peacebuilding**

In this research, an inclusive definition of the arts is used. While informed by Cohen, Varea and Walker’s (2011) expansive notion of arts and peacebuilding and Shank and Schirch’s (2008) categorical use of the term strategic arts-based peacebuilding, this study adopts the phrase *arts-based peacebuilding* to denote artistic and creative practice that represents, responds to, seeks to transform or prevent the occurrence and negative impacts of conflict and violence.

This definition encompasses activities associated with conventional arts practices such as creative writing, dance, drama, media arts, music, or visual arts; as well as cultural activities such as oral storytelling, games, festivals, rituals, and traditional or environmental practices. Such activities may be conducted individually (as in the work of a solo visual artist, for example), or communally and collaboratively (as in a group music-making activity, for instance, or a film festival in which filmmakers, performers and audiences are involved). Such activities can be considered formal (in the context of community-accepted and recognised practices in designated arts spaces such museums or theatres) or informal (less circumscribed by traditional or established definitions of the disciplines of “the arts” and/or occurring in non-arts-specific settings). Our definition of arts-based peacebuilding, for the purposes of this research, rests on a distinguishing feature of arts-based work with communities that has an intentional element of representing, responding to, preventing or transforming conflict as a way to build “positive peace” (Woolman, 1985).

It is important to note that the majority of respondents in this study did not usually apply the term peacebuilding to their work, even though the intention of their work could be identified as such. Therefore in this research there is something of a part to whole relationship of peacebuilding to development. This relationship between the terms
peacebuilding and development is not intended to simplify the complexity of peacebuilding or development in diverse settings. Rather, this is to acknowledge that much of the arts-based peacebuilding activity that occurs, in the Australian and Asia Pacific region, in which we are working, does so within an international policy context of aid and development.

**Policy? What Policy? Instrumental versus Integrated Approaches to Arts in Development**

In this study, it was unsurprising to find that arts and cultural activities did not feature significantly in the policies, strategies or current priorities of the sample aid agencies’ work. It was clear that the United Nation’s Millennium Development Goals were a key focus for these organisations’ policymaking, reporting and evaluating. And while it was acknowledged by a number of participants in the study that arts activity did occur within projects that contributed to these goals, overarching statements about the role of arts or culture were mostly absent. This was confirmed in follow-up correspondence with individuals who worked in management and program positions in education, partnerships development, project development, communications, and research and evaluation within the participating organisations. When asked “What is your organisation’s policy, strategy, and/or priority for supporting arts-based and cultural activities?”, characteristic responses included “we have no direct policies [on arts and culture]”, “arts and culture type projects are not what we would typically do”, and “we don’t fund those kinds of projects as a priority.”

Documentation of significant arts-based projects did exist online and images of such work featured prominently in website communication and hard print materials, such as organisational reports and advocacy documents. The value of dynamic images of community and individuals engaged in and engaged by the arts is clear. But beyond these representational “good story” opportunities, it was evident that various kinds of arts activity were being supported, either financially or through organisational volunteer placements. One organisation was supporting a major multi-year, multi-location arts project that was developing the capacity of Australian Indigenous artists to develop their own social enterprise businesses in the production and sale of visual art. As a response to the negative and marginalising social and economic impacts of colonial conflict between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Australia, this development project engaged with the arts in a way that aimed to build social and economic capacity through cultural expression. By providing professional development opportunities for Indigenous community members in arts business management, the organisation’s intentional goal was to foster self-determination in a context
where political and social power had been eroded. This approach to integrating social, economic and cultural capacity-building goals within a business enterprise model appeared to be a context-sensitive response to the interdependent nature of social, cultural and artistic meaning-making in Australian Indigenous communities; for in Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, arts practices can be a direct expression of social relationships and of cultural ways of knowing and being. Artworks can convey important ancestral narratives, kinship relationships and community understandings of time, space and land. Their dissemination as artworks and as “ways of knowing”, it could be argued, contribute to significant peacebuilding. Similarly, another organisation’s volunteer project in Thailand was represented as achieving integrated social enterprise goals with marginalised communities of women via their traditional textile making practices. For the community of women involved, these practices held specific cultural meanings and value related to representations of ethnicity and gender.

The strong profile of these integrative practices of the arts did not seem to correlate to any similarly strong or distinctive organisational (or managerial) perception of the arts. For instance, one of the organisation’s respondents stated “there is probably arts and cultural content in our projects but it is used as a communication tool.” The variation between the generalised comments about the instrumental value of the arts (as a “tool” for communication or social enterprise) and more nuanced attention to integrative values (with respect to the ways in which the arts make meaning within social, cultural, political and aesthetic domains) is not uncommon. It reflects the core of policy debates that have characterised the field of socially-engaged arts practice internationally over the past 20 years: that is, a debate around how the value of the arts is assessed and communicated – questions to which this paper will return.

A publication launched by one of the participating organisations during the period of this study did signal a shift toward a more complex and nuanced valuing of the arts within the context of aid and development. Austraining International, one of three volunteer agencies delivering the Australian Volunteers for International Development program (AVID), published a focus issue of the quarterly magazine, Connect, titled “The Art of Development” (Austraining International, 2012). This focus issue profiles the work of ten volunteers engaged in arts-based assignments within the Austraining International program whereby, as field workers, their goal is described as “work[ing] with local people to reduce poverty by sharing knowledge, developing sustainable skills and building the capacity of individuals,
organisations and communities” (Austraining International 2012, p. 3). While the AVID program’s Manager of Research and Evaluation commented that “AVID has no sectorial expertise on arts or culture and no policy about it”, she indicated that AVID takes its lead from local partner NGOs as to their program priorities, “which sometimes involve arts, creativity and cultural development.” It is clear that Austraining International is not the initiator of such arts projects, but functions as a partnering organisation by contributing sectorial expertise through volunteers’ professional skills and knowledge. As the Manager of the volunteer program of AVID states in the Connect magazine, the aim is to profile “how Australian Volunteers are providing skills and expertise to assist other organisations as they collect, document, and channel the richness that makes up their peoples’ local cultural heritage” (McCulloch, 2012). Examples of projects in “The Art of Development” range from theatre performance to documentary film and traditional handicrafts, providing insight into a range of integrated (as distinct from instrumental) approaches to working with the arts as a means of supporting locally-driven change in complex societies. It was significant, therefore, to see this acknowledgement of the more complex value systems that intersect with the arts’ “use” in such settings (such as the meaning that specific artform practices or processes may have within cultural, political, social and regional domains) via the work of volunteer practitioners themselves.

Practitioners’ Insights

It was apparent in this study that while the sustainability of cultural practices and preservation of cultural heritage are acknowledged under many national and international goals for cultural development, the arts as an expression of culture did not appear significantly in the policies or strategies of the agencies studied. Yet, individual arts projects were being publicly profiled as “good practice” in development and in agency-community partnerships, albeit as good photo opportunities at times. The study revealed that on the ground field-workers conveyed a nuanced understanding of the value of the arts and cultural practice to their community-based work and, unsurprisingly, as artists and artworkers themselves these field practitioners were articulate about what they saw as the real and potential contribution of the arts to development goals, agency-community partnership, and peacebuilding more broadly. Yet, these study participants expressed the challenges of working within organisational and managerial contexts where there was limited awareness of the value of the arts beyond single-focus instrumentalism. One participant in the study, for example, claimed she felt the need to spend as much time advocating to stakeholders for the
importance of arts-based work, as much as actually practise it. This confirmed a sense that arts-based development and peacebuilding, despite being a growing field of practice and scholarly inquiry, was not yet well understood at an organisational and managerial level. It appeared that generalised organisational assumptions about “the good of the arts” sometimes side-tracked a need to raise awareness of its capacity and complexity. Here follows insights into some of those complexities from two Austraining International volunteer fieldworkers who were engaged in local arts-based projects in the Solomon Islands and Timor Leste.

William Head, a participant in this study, was an Australian volunteer who worked as the film and photography program curator of the 11th Pacific Arts Film Festival held on the Solomon Islands in 2012. Head described his motivation to pursue this work as the opportunity to contribute in a meaningful way to the development of a nation. This was partially about the positive economic impacts of staging a major international event, but to my mind, ultimately about contributing to a shared national identity for an otherwise culturally disparate nation.

Head perceived the value of the Festival in many ways. It not only enabled various communities in the region to reclaim and profile a shared sense of identity through engagement with their traditional Pacific Islander cultures, but Head also observed that there was much comment in the media and in general conversation [within the local community]… that [the festival] would be a test and proof of how far the Solomon Islands had progressed since the ethnic tensions during the last decade.

Evident in Head’s discussion was an awareness of the ways in which the arts festival had potential to build cultural and social capital in a post-conflict setting, as well as be a litmus test for achievements of political and structural peacebuilding as well. Could the city of Honiara manage to logistically stage the Festival? Could the nation assess something of its own peacebuilding achievements by measuring the city’s capacity to deliver on the organisational and material infrastructure needed for the festival to occur?

Head describes in his report for Austraining the range of positive outcomes for participants. He cites feedback from individuals who attended the films and associated photography exhibition and comments on the way that the festival had helped them reclaim community histories and cultural narratives. It is clear that participating artists in the festival valued the opportunity for public presentation of their work and, since the event Head has observed the development of locally-sustaining networks and professional development
opportunities for filmmakers. As a project supported by the AVID program (through Head’s volunteer placement), the Pacific Arts Film Festival demonstrated the kinds of multi-layered impacts and implications that arts and cultural events can have as both a process for, and measure of, peacebuilding in communities. This could be seen as a characteristic of arts-based work that reaches far beyond instrumentalism.

For Holly Schäuble, another Austraining International volunteer and participant in this study, engagement with the arts as both a process and a measure of peacebuilding is similarly apparent. Working as co-director of Many Hands International, an organisation that supports artistic and creative expression in developing countries in the South East Asia region, Schäuble described the ways in which one of Many Hands International’s 2012 projects with young people in the regional town of Lospalos in Timor Leste aimed to promote children’s rights through “an intensive community social action theatre making project.” The project’s objective was to bring the Nafo Fila theatre company from a distant regional town of Ainaro to Lospalos with the intention to work with and engage young people in theatre making. Interestingly, the project also offered the emergence of other opportunities for intergenerational engagement. Six lia nain (elders) became involved and, as a result, sacred ratu stories of the community were shared amongst the elders for the first time, and further, collectively shared with the community in a public performance by the young project participants. As Schäuble observed, “There was an overwhelming sense of the significance of this for breaking down divisions between the various ratu, with whom people in Lospalos identify strongly and between whom there are long standing traditional rivalries” (Schäuble, 2012, p. 6). This project was an initiative in which art (in this case, interactive theatre) allowed for other kinds of new emergent opportunities for community development and relationship-building to take place. The aims of the project – to make and present theatre – were flexible yet robust enough to accommodate opportunities for further peacebuilding as they arose. As a result, the project then became more relevant to the actual needs and interests of that community. The project yielded important peacebuilding gains for the lia nain, their intergenerational connections, and for community cohesion more broadly. These were significant outcomes that were not intended as the end goal in themselves, but their significance and relevance to the community lay in the fact that they emerged through the “contextually ambidextrous” (Shank & Schirch, 2008, p. 233) act of artmaking itself. It was not just about the arts as a communication vehicle.

Schäuble’s co-director of Many Hands International, Kim Dunphy, has written about
the range of positive impacts of this kind of participatory arts work in development contexts. These include the “maintenance of cultural heritage and identity, stimulation of creativity, health promotion, peace-building, trauma recovery, skill development, income generation and environmental awareness raising” (Dunphy, 2012, p.187). Drawing on a range of examples, Dunphy advocates for a multi-dimensional approach to valuing artwork in international development, employing Jon Hawkes’ (2001) concept of culture as the “fourth pillar of sustainability” as a theoretical base. In her reporting and associated research, Dunphy argues how change within such projects can be examined within paradigms that value “the dimensions of social equity, cultural vitality, economic viability and environmental sustainability” (Dunphy 2012, p. 187). Schäuble further reiterates the complex value of the arts in such settings, describing the connection between culture, poverty, conflict and peacebuilding:

Culture is not the first (or usually even the last) thing people think of when it comes to addressing poverty, but it has a vital role to play in achieving sustainable development. …Where culture is weakened, interrupted or lost through conflict, colonisation, globalisation and/or poverty, we can see a corresponding loss of social cohesion and community wellbeing as people struggle to make sense of, and adapt to, a changing world. (Schäuble, 2012, p. 6)

Measuring Value and Change: The Challenge of Evaluation

These arts practitioners’ perceptions of the value of the arts in post-conflict settings convey nuanced appreciation and understandings of the multidimensional nature of the outputs, outcomes and impact of arts activities. Their projects and their individual perceptions about their work reveal how arts-based activity can operate beyond instrumental uses (such as direct communication) and beyond being a catalyst for economic enterprise. These practitioners draw attention instead to the diverse benefits and potential of such work within complex social (Loode, 2011), political, cultural and intergenerational systems of meaning and value. Head recognised that the “good of the arts” in the Pacific Arts Film Festival, for instance, was beyond just a celebratory showcase of culture and regional identity. The Festival’s impact could be valued at other levels: as an indicator of structural peacebuilding and civic achievement, and as the catalyst for sustainable networks in a growing local film industry. In Many Hands International’s Lospalos project, Schäuble and Dunphy brought focus to the change in the quality of intergenerational relationships, and the “newness” of offering a contemporary re-aestheticising of important community stories by
the younger generations involved. Local narratives became re-invested with contemporary meaning and value by a multi-generational community rebuilding their social fabric following violent conflict.

Yet, the question remains, why does policy and strategy not yet adequately “speak” to this potential and complexity? How might these practitioners’ understandings and insights into the value of arts practice in the field better influence the ways in which arts and cultural expression are communicated at an organisational level: with managers, donors and government agencies?

It can be suggested from this small regional study that further dialogue among local and international drivers, implementers and participants of development work is required to foster broader-based understandings of the complex value and practices of arts-based peacebuilding. While there is growing attention to this field of work in academic settings, our findings suggest that a practical avenue for such dialogue among practitioners and policymakers is evaluation. For in our own experiences as artworkers in community and international development settings, it is evident that evaluation reports – whether compiled by project implementers or independent evaluators – can often be the sole channel of communication about on-the-ground activity to organisational and external stakeholders. Yet, it is our contention that sole use of conventional evaluation processes, particularly those based on logic models (Leeuw, 2003), serve to exacerbate an instrumentalist rather than complex view of the arts. Such models do not suit the task of adequately capturing and communicating the diverse outputs, outcomes, impacts and diversity of arts-based experiences. Before suggesting ways in which a reframing of evaluation in arts-based projects might better address the practice/policy disjuncture, it is worthwhile considering the ways that conventional evaluation models are themselves based on presuppositions about the nature and value of change.

Conventional approaches to evaluation in international development (and in other environments), are driven by needs to monitor and assess a project’s process, effectiveness and impact. The starting point is often a project or program’s preconceived set of aims, goals and benchmarks against which its success has been deemed to be measured. Theories of change become evident in evaluation design: it is assumed that evidence of change will be available (or at least observable), and that such evidence can be collated and validated to measure the impact and success of the project’s achievement in meeting its intended goals. Such approaches are built on a positivist paradigm of knowledge construction that seeks
(mostly implicitly) to confirm probabilities: i.e. the intervention/project is implemented on the assumption that it will probably achieve the stated objectives; further implying that similar activity has probably been successful before and could be probably be replicated under similar conditions elsewhere. Therefore, evaluation often occurs within this implicit positivist discourse that seeks to aggregate information to enable informed judgement as to the probability of similar projects achieving similar results again and/or elsewhere. In many circumstances, this approach is entirely valid. For example, where the arts are explicitly “used” as a communication tool (for public health messages, for instance), or as an instrument for business enterprise, the activity may fit well within this kind of evaluation paradigm. Yet, given the complex ways in which the arts can also convey, contribute to, or unsettle a community’s systems of social, political and cultural meaning in more interactive ways (such as demonstrated by the Pacific Arts Film Festival and Many Hand International’s Lospalos project) these kinds of evaluation approaches limit appropriate assessment. In some arts-based interventions, intended and observable change may be sought from the outset, thereby suiting logic frame approaches to evaluating results (i.e. outputs, outcomes and impacts) against inputs and activities (Schalock & Bonham, 2003). But, as Lederach points out, the central paradox that unites the fields of peacebuilding and the arts is the desire to achieve outcomes that do not yet exist (Lederach, 2005). Predetermining the change that is most contextually relevant and needed in a multi-layered peacebuilding process is problematic. Strict goal orientation can limit the generative capacities of building in peacebuilding (and making in art). What to do, then, when seeking to more authentically evaluate and communicate on effectiveness or “success”? What frameworks are appropriate to gauge whether such activity is in fact “good” or ethical or appropriate within the political, social and cultural contexts in which it occurs?

Evaluation studies literature published recently in the Australia and Asia Pacific region is replete with critiques of and divergences from the “logic model” of evaluation, particularly when it comes to development and community-based work (Donnelly, 2010; Mertens, 2010; Nagao, 2006; Renger, Wood, Williamson, & Krapp, 2011; Tennant, 2010). Most studies uniformly argue that charting success and effectiveness on the achievement of preconceived goals is inadequate to the task of valuing and evaluating interventions in complex peacebuilding and community settings. There exists a range of more multi-layered contemporary systems-based approaches to evaluation that appear to better address complexity and influence in determining value and success (Boyd et al., 2007; Cabrera,
Colosi, & Lobdell, 2008; Henry & Mark, 2003; Renger et al., 2011; Tennant, 2010). These approaches and theories allow for greater acknowledgment of context, situation, diverse theories of change, and ongoing implications and outcomes of work. Furthermore, these studies speak of expansion and/or augmentation of logic models in an effort to empower and sustain local processes of evaluation involving community members more actively in evaluation methods themselves (Donelly, 2010; Mertens, 2010). These research developments are relevant to how we may progress a more appropriate framework for the evaluation of arts-based peacebuilding.

In light of this, a notable feature of our interviews with field practitioners was their attention to “what happened next” when asked to assess or convey the impact of their work. This tendency to talk of the future – not necessarily in terms of extending the projects themselves, but identifying the work as a catalyst for a future (or kinds of future work) not previously envisioned – confirmed one of the core observations that, as artworkers ourselves, we have seen in our own and others’ arts-based experiences. That is, that quality arts-based peacebuilding (of the integrative type discussed above) is more about raising possibility than confirming probability (terms borrowed from arts educator, Gallagher (2000)). Making art, by its very definition, is a generative act: creating that which does not yet exist. Building peace, it could be equally argued, does the same. Our study participants’ self-directed attention and description of “what happened next” wasn’t always necessarily expected or predetermined, yet it held significance as a mark of impact and success.

How then can evaluation processes and reports – which seek to document, account for, and communicate the value of such activity – capture these possibility-raising characteristics?

We suggest an augmentation to conventional evaluation practices to more appropriately value and communicate the quality of emergence in such work. This is not solely about advocating for more new systems-based models of evaluation, but to add a further evaluative frame specifically for arts-based work. This is a frame that would capture the multidimensional nature of making art (which by its nature is emergent and generative) with an understanding of its situated influences (from and on political, cultural, social meaning-making) and generative impacts (such as what happens next). This means placing equal value on effects and impacts both within the original scope of the project’s aims and beyond. It means focusing more attention on how arts-based work engages with possibility; giving weight to outcomes that, in Lederach’s terms, may not yet exist (Lederach, 2005).
We suggest a framing devised with four key questions for processes of evidence-gathering and analysis: (i) What was intended? (ii) What emerged? (iii) What insights were gained? (iv) What happened next? Such questions may be posed by stakeholders, participants and/or independent third party evaluators during and after project implementation. They are also questions that, depending on the time and human resources available, may be asked separately within the domains of social, political, cultural and aesthetic systems of meaning. For instance, to ask these questions of the Pacific Arts Film Festival, with the social domain, such a framework may reveal (hypothetically) that (i) while there was some intention on the part of the organisers for social interaction among different cultural groups in the region; (ii) what emerged were disparate or individualised representations of Pacific Islands cultures in the films themselves. This may have provided (iii) further insight into the social dimensions of peacebuilding in the region; and (iv) lead to further incentives to support cross-cultural arts opportunities or lead to further public debate about nationhood. As a hypothetical example, we are not suggesting these are true of the 2012 Festival, but through this hypothesising we draw attention to how analysis of arts-based work in this way can provide more nuanced detail and communication of the complex value and situatedness of the arts activity itself.

It is important to note that these framework questions are raised here not as an alternative model for evaluation but as a gesture toward letting practice speak. It is an as yet untested schema that we hope may challenge prevailing assumptions about the arts only as instrumental (a “vehicle” or “communication tool”) to achieving other goals, caged solely in development or peacebuilding terms. The questions we envisage are intended to sharpen documentation and analysis of the actual art at the centre of arts-based peacebuilding, and acknowledge that the arts represent and contribute to complex processes of social, political, cultural and aesthetic meaning-making. The arts cannot exist solely as an instrument or method only. The framework could also be adapted to promote active implementer, stakeholder and participant involvement in evaluation, simply by having each ask and answer these questions of each other. Like any evaluation task, individual project scale and resources will determine the level of detail captured, the kind of methodologies employed, and the time available to gather data and analyse each of these questions. However, we believe this humanities-inflected framework, even in its minimal form, would invite more nuanced appreciation and understanding of the arts and their symbiotic relation to culture, society, politics, history, conflict and peace in any particular setting.
It is important to avoid evaluation measures and methods based on generalised assumptions that the arts are “good”. Rather, such a proposed schema may be used to both account for and assess an arts activity’s relevance and impact in the complex social, cultural and political systems of meaning and value in which it takes place. It is a schema that may problematize commonplace assumptions that an activity’s worth is best measured solely by its achievement of predetermined goals. However, part of the very value of working with arts at all in such development and peacebuilding settings is that it can often and boldly defy common assumptions at all.

Conclusion

This small scoping study has suggested that there is a gap between policy and practice when it comes to understanding and valuing the complexity and potential of the arts in international development and peacebuilding. While there is a perception that the arts are “good” and that they can function well in development contexts as a tool for communication and for social enterprise, we found that there are many other ways in which arts activities function as a practice and measure of peacebuilding. Field practitioners, working in partnership with local communities, bring a nuanced understanding of multi-layered outputs, outcomes and impacts of arts-based work, yet it is often only through evaluation reports that such meaning is communicated to those managing and funding such activity, in the international aid arena in our region at least. Given the importance of evaluation for making meaning of practice for wider audiences, attention must be given to more relevant approaches to communicating the value of arts-based peacebuilding through evaluation and reporting. We have suggested that a reframing is needed to allow for the equivalent valuing of intention and emergence – a schema that promotes evidence-gathering and analysis that clearly centres and links the arts practice to its situated contexts and values (in social, political, cultural, and aesthetic domains). Such a framing could augment conventional means of evaluation, while at the same time better value the complexity of the arts when applied in such settings.

What further questions, then, does a proposed reframing of the paradigms and methods of evaluation raise when it comes to arts-based peacebuilding? Firstly, given the complementarity of the arts and peacebuilding in terms of their generative capacities (the desire to achieve outcomes that do not yet exist), what can the fields of arts evaluation and peacebuilding evaluation learn from and with each other? While there are international communities of practice investigating similar concerns (Acting Together, 2011; Beausoleil, 2012; Blum, 2011), our particular interest is in how current research into systems thinking,
participatory practices, and interdisciplinary processes of evaluation could contribute to better understanding not only of evaluation but of the practices of arts-based peacebuilding themselves. Secondly, how could more iterative action-research evaluation paradigms in arts-based peacebuilding be encouraged in ways that avoid the high-cost resourcing usually required to implement? And, thirdly, how might arts-based methods of data collection and analysis – methods that more explicitly seek to capture affect than effect – be employed to make evaluation in arts-based peacebuilding more authentic and appropriate to the nature of the work itself?

The very term “creative practice” infers the generation of something new – whether that be a new experience, new future, new perspective or new artefact. We suggest that “the good” of engaging with the arts – whether as a participant, audience member, implementer, or stakeholder – is about generating new ways of knowing and new avenues for “what happens next”; regardless of whether “what happens next” is a preconceived intended outcome or is arrived upon in an emergent process of meaning-making. It appears from available documentation of diverse arts-based peacebuilding work, that one of the benefits of working with the arts is the capacity to enable conflict-affected communities to become alive to the idea of possibility. To return to the provocations of Thompson which began this paper, this is as much about affect as effect. As a field, we continue to struggle with the question of how this gets valued and measured. One step toward addressing this is to redirect attention to the qualities and characteristics of artmaking itself in all its diversity, situatedness, and emergence that is difficult to capture and measure by conventional means. By partnering with scholarly and practice communities in peacebuilding, the arts, and evaluation more broadly, we suggest that a re-framing of evaluation when it comes to arts-based peacebuilding could be possible: the implementation of new paradigms that will more appropriately value and communicate the generative capacities of both making and building that the very term “arts-based peacebuilding” implies.

References


Studying Diplomatic Negotiations: Integrating the Personal and Institutional Aspects

Egle Murauskaite

Abstract
Following the Middle East Peace Conference in Madrid in 1991, the Arms Control and Regional Security (ACRS) working group was launched as the first and so far only official regional arms control negotiations. While there have been multiple attempts to distil the lessons of the ACRS process, the aspect of events most conducive to forging trust between the negotiators and their inter-personal dynamics has never been explored. This paper takes an inter-disciplinary approach to studying negotiations: it zooms in on the ACRS process, integrating Middle East studies, decision making processes and nonproliferation literature with negotiations theory and oral history techniques, in the first attempt at a more comprehensive methodology to one of the highlights in the modern Middle Eastern diplomacy. To convey the multiple vantage points of participants, a three-stage methodological process is discussed: individual interviews with negotiating team members and facilitators, followed by group interviews of national delegations, and finally, a group session with representatives from each delegation. Ultimately, this model helps preserve a more accurate historical account, and significantly complements the technical insights on the negotiation dynamics with unexpected inter-personal relations angles, assisting in the design of more promising future frameworks.

Introduction
This paper presents a new methodological approach developed for a two-year oral history study of the Arms Control Regional Security Working Group (ACRS), a multilateral official negotiations track launched at the Middle East Peace Conference in Madrid in 1991. Much of the literature on conflict studies and negotiations in general, and the long years of the Middle East Peace Process in particular, has tended to readily accept negotiators as sterile representatives of national interests, with scarce attention to their personal traits or institutional background. Subsequently, this study focuses on personal perspectives of the ACRS participants, and the impact of inter-personal and inter-institutional dynamics on the process. It draws on a diverse spectrum of practices of oral history, integrated with insights.
from studies of negotiation behavior, offering a new methodological contribution to help bridge the divide between different disciplines, and between theory and practice. The study complements the prevailing approach to exploring negotiation dynamics on the state level (which, in case of ACRS, is now relatively well understood) with additional levels of analysis on institutional decision-making and relevant personal aspects, painting a more comprehensive picture of these historic events. With no official record of the ACRS negotiations, and a new generation of arms control experts yet to emerge in the Middle East, the project, for which the methodology discussed in this paper was developed, will be able to offer guidance for setting up more successful future frameworks for negotiating Middle East security.

The paper starts with a brief background on the ACRS process, introducing the methodological approach designed for this study. The second section reviews the practices in oral history that have laid the groundwork for this methodology. The third and fourth sections proceed to discuss the relevant theoretical frameworks in negotiation behavior and institutional decision making processes, which are subsequently tested for explanatory power for the ACRS case during the interviews with former negotiators. The fifth section follows with a brief discussion of the inherent limitations of the chosen research methods, and some of the remedies available to address them. The final section discusses preliminary findings from the interviews conducted to date.

ACRS as a Case Study

The Arms Control Regional Security Working Group (ACRS) has so far been the only official multilateral security dialogue and framework in the Middle East concerning WMD control and nonproliferation. ACRS was established as part of the Arab-Israeli multilateral peace process initiated at the Madrid Peace Conference in October 1991. The ACRS group held six plenary sessions and many other conceptual and thematic meetings between 1992 and 1995. By 1995, complications in the Peace Process, the 1995 Review and Extension Conference on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation on Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and the ongoing disagreement between Israel and Egypt over when, where, and how to discuss the nuclear issue, all contributed to the ACRS talks being put on hold indefinitely (Landau, 2008).

Nevertheless, ACRS achieved important understandings, including draft Declaration of Principles and Statements of Intent on Arms Control and Regional Security, draft charter for regional security centers, as well as procedures for pre-notification of certain military
activities and exchange of military information. At the same time the failure of ACRS also revealed the deep disagreements between Egypt (which took upon itself to represent the Arab position) and Israel on priorities, the sequencing of the Peace Process versus WMDFZ negotiations, threat perceptions, and the nuclear issue. The process also deepened mistrust and rivalries among various Arab states (Kane & Murauskaite, 2014).

While much has been written about the ACRS process, its achievements, and reasons for its failure, not a single study has been written by those who negotiated the process. In fact, no account has ever been written of the decision making processes in the lead up to and during the negotiations, or the events most conducive to the negotiations, and most helpful in forging personal relationships and trust between the negotiators. Nevertheless, with consistent emphasis on confidence building measures in the literature analyzing ACRS content, the role of inter-personal dynamics, trust and good faith – or lack of thereof – held great potential significance. Yet, with no official record of these negotiations, memories of the participants, many of whom are already in their late seventies, are the last remaining trace of this significant chapter in the Middle East Peace Process.

ACRS lends itself well to case study methodology, being a unique and significant component of the Middle East Peace Process, with a less abstract content focus, a clear start and finish date, and a relatively small and consistent group of people involved. These specifics make it knowable in a more comprehensive manner than other aspects of the process, or the Peace Process as a whole. Yet, many of the insights associated with personality impact and dynamics, are still externally generalizable and have value for similar future efforts in the region.

This is the first attempt to gather the ACRS Working Group participants’ memories, commentaries, recollections, perspectives, interpretations, and accounts of events and experiences during the negotiations. The broad objectives behind this approach are to better understand what happened; offer rare insights into individuals and states’ decision-making processes; identify differences based on cultural values and perspectives; verify or explain contested events or decisions from multiple perspectives; transmit experiences to the future generation of negotiators and regional policy makers; and identify areas that require special care or consideration in future negotiations.

In this study of regional conflict negotiations, an inter-disciplinary approach was adopted, integrating Middle East studies, decision making processes, and nonproliferation literature with negotiations theory and oral history techniques, in the first attempt at a more
comprehensive methodology to one of the most significant but least studied events in the modern Middle Eastern diplomatic history.

The project was divided into three stages of interviews, complemented with personal notes of the participants, as well as archival materials of the period in question for canvassing a more accurate and comprehensive backdrop. In the first stage, members of the region’s negotiating teams and facilitators were interviewed individually about their personal experiences and roles during the negotiations, and the events that, often unwittingly, became the pivotal points. In preparation for this stage, each interviewee was asked to write a brief, mainly to be used to refresh the memories, as almost 20 years have passed since the discussed events. The second stage brought together small groups of individuals, who had served together on their state delegations, clarifying common and diverging interpretations as they become apparent, reflective of national inter-institution dynamics. The third stage unfolds as a joint session with one or two representatives from each delegation, where participants collectively revisit some of the key experiences identified in the previous stages, and get to compare notes across the national lines. This multi-layered methodological approach allows telling the story of a particular negotiating process from multiple vantage points – the individuals, their organizations, national delegations, and the process as a whole. The following sections detail the body of scholarship that this methodology was built around, explaining the aspects the model draws on, with the limitations of the chosen approach addressed in section five.

**Drawing on Oral History Practices in Conflict Studies**

Oral history as a methodology can bring to light hidden aspects of a past event, facilitating a sense of closure on issues not adequately remembered or dealt with. Methodologically, oral history practices have been successfully applied to studying arms control negotiations in cases of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, USA-UK 1958 Mutual Defense Agreement, the negotiations between the USA, Canada, and Romania in the 1960s on nuclear energy cooperation, and the Cuban Missile Crisis (Blight, 2003; Daalder & Destler, 2000; Gheorghe, 2013; Haley, 2002). With efforts to revive the Middle East Peace Process in general, and regional arms control negotiations in particular, revisiting the ACRS story from this innovative angle can also assist in developing recommendations and offer insights to future negotiators. Indeed, identifying and clarifying common and diverging interpretations of events, and helping explain the thoughts and reasons behind actions, is significant in moving forward, as many of these underlying realities remain
painfully acute, and individuals in question still play a central role. In preparation for this project, the researchers consulted with three institutions that use oral history as part of their methodology.

The USA Marine Corps (USMC) routinely uses oral history interviews to capture the personal narratives of active duty and reserve marines recently returned from overseas deployments, alongside the broader historical record of events that the Corps maintains. The Marine Corps History Division has an Oral History Program dedicated for this task in Quantico, VA, where officers are trained in this technique, and subsequently dispatched to conduct individual interviews with their fellow marines, using a standard manual. Each interview session is usually conducted on one-on-one basis and lasts from 45 minutes to an hour. Shared institutional background and relatable experiences between the interviewer and interviewee are conducive to quick development of rapport, and the interviewees tend to be forthcoming with information, assured it would not be shared with their superiors or used in a way that could adversely impact their stance (J. L. Rossiter, personal communication, May 1, 2013). The interviewees consent for the recorded information to be used for the Marine Corps internally and it is rarely if ever released to the wider public verbatim, but the History division regularly uses these insights, anonymized and pooled, in its publications. These brief frank interactions in familiar surroundings, usually shortly after the events in question have occurred, represent one end of the spectrum – a routine emphasizing personal experiences in events, the significance of which is usually yet to transpire. Further down this spectrum are oral history practices employed to study events of historic importance that have occurred in the distant past, with the explicit purpose of preserving this record for the general public. Parts of taped interviews from several participants are usually combined to shed light on less known aspects of generally widely studied events. The Marine Corps Oral History Program, for instance, used this methodology to interview the veterans of Korean and Vietnam wars.

Another step further down this spectrum of oral history practices are extended multi-day interview sessions with one individual and a team of interviewers, used by historians to finesse details of somewhat controversial or less well-understood events that had occurred in the distant past. In preparation for the interview, a file is assembled based on publicly available documents, detailing the sequence of events in question (such as newspaper articles or relevant leadership statements) to provide somewhat objective and contextualized anchors to the interview, and prompt the subject’s memory. For instance, scholars with the USA
Institute for Defense Analysis have used this technique to individually interview Iraqi generals, who had served under Saddam Hussein during the Iran-Iraq War, seeking their personal insights and the Iraqi military perspectives on the events of that period (Woods, Murray, Holaday, & Elkhamri, 2009; Woods, Murray, Nathan, Sabara, & Venegas, 2011). The team travelled to the Middle East to meet these veterans, usually spending around three days with each interviewee: the first day was used to build some personal rapport, moving through a series of increasingly detailed questions over the next day or day and a half, and using the remainder of the third day to rehash or clarify issues raised during these conversations. Kevin Woods (author interview, April 18, 2013, Washington, D.C.) described these intensive sessions as physically taxing to both, the interviewers and interviewees, requiring regular breaks to rekindle attention, and noted the challenges of communicating through an interpreter, as well as talking across cultural boundaries (USA-Iraq; civilian-military; English-Arabic). The scholars have also noted that interviewees who were physically in different places at the time of the event in question (e.g. an air force pilot and a ground forces commander during the same battle), and thus had different but not directly conflicting narratives, were much more forthcoming with the information, compared to those who had lived through the experiences under scrutiny “shoulder to shoulder.”

At the other end of the spectrum is critical oral history methodology. Namely, in mixed group interview sessions an inter-disciplinary group of scholars engages in a moderated discussion with a group of interviewees with diverse backgrounds, who had participated in an historical event, bringing different vantage points. The reference document package that the interviewers prepare includes declassified documents and more personalized records, such as letters, memos or transcripts from conversations, and the two groups interact over several days in a series of roundtables or seminars aimed at clarifying various aspects of the event. A representative example of employing critical oral history technique is a project exploring the roots of USA-Iranian enmity, where a group of international relations scholars and lead figures from the National Security Archive engaged with CIA veterans and former USA diplomats on the subject (Blight, Lang, Banai, Byrne, & Tirman, 2012). Another example is critical oral history series held at the Woodrow Wilson Center, such as an oral history of the Cuban Missiles Crisis and US-South Korea relations. In the latter, fifteen international relations scholars from the USA and the Republic of Korea (ROK), together with former ROK and USA officials, explore the interactions with and within the Korean Peninsula during the Cold War (Ostermann & Person, 2011).
Building on these practices, oral history methodology was optimized for interviewing international diplomats about their experiences during a past negotiation. Most interviewees were Western-educated and all of them spoke English (the ACRS negotiations were conducted in English). At the same time, whilst less constrained by language and cultural barriers, temporal constraints was a very real issue. Given the high positions of the interviewees (e.g. former prime minister or current foreign minister), they were able to spare no more than a few hours at a time, after rigorous planning. Scheduling individual sessions for 1.5-3 hours in length, and proceeding with group sessions of approximately half-day long, offered a balanced approach in this respect. The third stage of the project, a two-day conference based on the critical oral history model, was also designed to be shorter: with the first two stages of interviews laying substantive groundwork, it was intended as a narrative comparison session, instead of being the primary venue for raising the critical points.

Another challenge in arranging the interviews proved to be logistics. Namely, best practices in oral history suggest meeting the interviewees in their familiar environment, as a gesture promoting openness and putting them at ease. However, with most Middle East delegates still based in the region, the tumultuous environment limited the number of locations conducive to interview meetings for security reasons. Similarly, factors pertaining to current regional dynamics also presented challenges in locating some of the former ACRS participants: with 48 delegates identified through literature review and personal consultations, it was possible to contact 20 individuals and schedule interviews with 15 of them, with more interviews expected to follow over the next 4 months.

Prior to meeting for the initial individual sessions, the interviewees were briefed about the project, and asked to review any personal notes or documents they may have kept from the negotiations to rekindle the memory. Many interviewees have subsequently agreed to share this material, and that became a significant compliment to the background compendium, consisting of a detailed timetable of the process, source documents from the negotiations, available media reports from the period, and scholarly literature analyzing the process of negotiations retrospectively from the external observer point of view. For the study of the ACRS process, this proved particularly insightful, as these negotiations, from the very start, were conducted under the agreement that no official record would be kept. Furthermore, the author has filed requests under the USA Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) with The George Bush Presidential Library, William J. Clinton Presidential Library, and the USA Department of State, to make publicly available previously unreleased records of reports on
consultations prior and following the meetings, phone conversations, as well as relevant notes, internal memos, reports and correspondence. Whilst the nature of these records is somewhat USA-centric, it offers important insights into the overall dynamics of a process that the USA was trying to facilitate, with particularly informative records of phone conversations between USA and Middle East leaders and diplomats.

The proposed focus of the interviews on inter-personal experiences and inter-organizational dynamics had initially surprised many of the ACRS delegates contacted for the project. As discussed above, the traditional approach to studying various aspects of the Middle East Peace Process had been primarily state-centric content-focused, with few personal anecdotes, occasionally found in the literature, recalled when emphasizing a point (Baker, 1995, pp. 454-455). Nonetheless, the former ACRS participants proved surprisingly frank in the interviews, eagerly sharing their personal perspectives on the interplays among the fellow negotiators on their team, as well as with their regional counterparts. The aspect of inter-personal dynamics proved particularly significant, since the composition of national teams has changed little during more than four years of the negotiating process, and the small community of international arms control experts meant they have been interacting repeatedly in this, as well as other forums.

**Incorporating Aspects of Negotiation Behavior Studies**

A common method for social scientists to test theories and models of interpersonal conflict negotiations is through behavioral laboratory experiments with volunteers, usually simulating situations relevant to business relations. To the best of the author’s knowledge, none of the previous studies using oral history interviews have attempted to integrate such insights into their methodology through question design or interview analysis. Druckman’s (1973, 1983) research offers a rare example of sociology and behavioral research models applied to analyze international post-conflict negotiations. Subsequently, this study looks to bridge the gap between disciplinary methodological practices, using quantitatively tested lab models as prompts in a qualitative study with first-hand participants of historical events. Studies of trust in negotiations are particularly relevant: introducing regional parties to each other through various semi-formal (Track 1.5) and informal (Track 2) initiatives, and bringing the discourse from abstract concepts to inter-personal interactions among counterparts, have long formed the facilitation backdrop for the Middle East Peace Process, with success depending in no small part on the compatibility of personalities at the table. On inter-state level of analysis, confidence building measures have become an integral part of the
process – but ultimately, these measures also start with a network of persons, who have confidence in their professional counterparts, and only gradually can that trust be embedded in the states they represent.

Firstly, relevant frameworks for understand the atmosphere at the outset of the negotiations are reviewed by Lewicki, Tomlinson and Gillespie (2006), suggesting that parties start with surprisingly high levels of trust, absent prior information that would encourage them to act otherwise, and gradually move towards higher levels of trust and/or distrust, depending on their experience in repeated interactions. Meanwhile, in conflict studies, the implicit assumption is that parties arrive at a negotiating table with mutual feelings of animosity, i.e. that the violent conflict, ongoing or suspended for the duration of these negotiations, would act as such prior information, negatively predisposing the parties towards each other personally. In light of the violent conflicts in the Middle East preceding the ACRS negotiations, and the sensitivity of the subject of weapons of mass destruction, the interviewees were prompted to recall any prior interactions they had with their counterparts, the first impressions, and the initial atmosphere at the working group, looking for cues about whether and how those aspects shifted during the nearly five years of repeated encounters. Irmer and Druckman (2009) have put Lewicki’s model of trust development to a test, using quantitative methods to code textual inferences drawn from literature describing negotiations processes. The qualitative approach to integrating conflict studies and sociology literature in this study complements the abovementioned research with first-hand accounts of participants collected through semi-structured interviews.

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Secondly, for understanding drivers of progress in negotiations, sociological studies of conflict transformation are helpful in thinking about the points of inflection, moving the process forward or stalling it instead. Based on Linda L. Putnam’s research review (2004, pp. 277-278, 283), the process of negotiation can be transformed along two dimensions: first, the level of abstraction may shift, in terms of the content of the talks, and second, the depth and quality of the personal bond between the negotiators may change (see Figure 2).

![Figure 2: Conflict Transformation Techniques in Negotiations](image)

However, it is important to appreciate that the impact of these inflection points, signifying change in the inter-personal relations or content focus of a negotiation, can often only be understood as productive or counterproductive in retrospect. Frank J. Barett (2004, p. 214) and Irving Seidman (2013, pp. 17-19) have also acknowledged the skepticism of many in the field with regards to the ability of negotiators to recognize a critical moment as it occurs – rather than retrospectively. These insights have prompted the search in this study for the multitude of critical events throughout the ACRS process that could suggest attempts at such process transformations, and also to prompt the interviewees directly as to whether certain insights had occurred to them in real time or transpired in retrospect, consulting the participants’ own notes from the period in question when available.

Thirdly, it is important to consider the impact of cultural differences on inter-personal dynamics. It has been suggested that negotiators from diverse cultural backgrounds likely come to the table attaching differing levels of significance to verbal agreements (Friedman, Yi-Hong, & Simons, 2013), and varying levels of propensity to search for win-win (as
opposed to winner-take-all) solutions (Aslani, Ramirez-Marin, Brett, Tinsley, & Weingart, 2012), potentially leading to miscommunications and overall sub-optimal results of interaction. Behavioral studies of negotiation dynamics in business settings have also explored the persistence and impact of cultural stereotyping (Tinsley, Turan, Weingart, & Dillon-Merrill, 2012, pp. 272-274), and it is worth seeing how these aspects play out in diplomatic negotiations. Cofman-Wittes (2005) has studied the interplay of cultural factors in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, but broader regional research in this domain remains scarce. In case of ACRS, whilst parties from the Middle East would have been abreast of the neighbourhood cultural and political dynamics, their limited official diplomatic interactions may have given them little indication of how these factors play out in practice at the negotiating table; for Western diplomats the reverse may have been the case – more direct bilateral interactions with the parties, but less practical comprehension of regional realities on the ground. Subsequently, the former ACRS negotiators were prompted to recall the general level of cultural awareness amongst their colleagues and counterparts, as well as previous experiences they may have had of cross-cultural negotiations.

It is also worth noting that few contemporary behavioral studies of negotiations include individuals from the Middle East in their samples, with the contrasts between Asian and North American styles of negotiation as the more common research focus. Therefore, the insights of former ACRS participants from places like Israel, Egypt, and Jordan may offer new perspectives to the ongoing studies and future negotiations in this field.

**Inter-Agency Decision-Making Dynamics in Arms Control**

Studies exploring state decisions to acquire or renounce weapons of mass destruction frequently turn to the bureaucratic politics framework as part of the explanation, but similar approach has so far not been applied to studying the ACRS process. The institutional factor is important to consider, first, as a formative background influencer of the negotiators, and second, as a systemic indicator of the different bureaucratic arrangements for handling these arms control negotiations in participating states. Relevant models detailing organizational behavior are drawn upon in an effort to offer a more comprehensive understanding of the ACRS negotiations.

The literature detailing decision-making and influence over nuclear weapons issues considers three institutional categories of particular relevance: the national nuclear energy establishment, significant units in the military, and the political apparatus (Sagan, 1996-1997). For the study of ACRS negotiations, the first category is expanded to include technical
experts from a broader range of relevant backgrounds (e.g. missile or other WMD programs),
and the third category is further divided into country leaders, foreign affairs experts, and
(lower level) civil servants. The inter-institutional dynamics came into play by socializing the
relevant groups of experts and influencers in the discourse of arms control through
educational seminars, dialogue, and identifying the agreed confidence building measures. In
addition, inclusion of persons with military background into some of the negotiating teams
created potential for civil-military institutional background clashes.

In his seminal work on institutional decision-making, Graham Allison (1971, pp. 67-96)
postulates that organizations follow a fixed set of actions to perform complex tasks, with
their own survival and advancement as the top priority, and are subsequently able to produce
only a limited range of responses to any given problem – inbuilt biases not always
immediately obvious to outsiders. James J. Walsh (2000) has found institutional factors to be
the most significant in explaining nuclear nonproliferation decisions, after testing a range of
alternatives pertinent to security and normative environment: modifying Allison’s classical
theory slightly, Walsh nevertheless underlines the importance of identifying the institution
that stands to gain from such a significant national policy change. However, it is not clear
whether, to set the disarmament talks (and process) in motion, the factors that have initially
driven certain institutions to become proponents of pursuing WMDs would have to be
reversed, e.g., as was the case in South Africa, or whether a rival institution would have to
erge with goals inconsistent with such a pursuit and challenge that incumbent, as was the
case in Brazil and Argentina (for an overview of explanations of nuclear reversals, see
Mueller & Schmidt, 2010; Paul, 2000). Subsequently, during the interview process, the
author attempted to distinguish institutional level drivers of the ACRS talks, and identify
evolving institutional approaches to ACRS, in light of their traditional operating dynamics.

National government profile has also been considered among the leading explanations
of state propensity to pursue weapons of mass destruction or disarm (if one presumes the
reversal of the original drivers would allow the space for starting a dialogue on disarmament)
– with assessed characteristics being the relative depth of democratic institutional culture, and
international political and economic integration (Hymans, 2012; Solingen, 2012). These
factors significantly affect the audience costs, domestic and/or international, that the
leadership would incur in making such decisions. Regional security negotiations concerning
the most strategic armaments arguably had the potential to start generating audience costs on
institutional level (for instance, consider Saddam Hussein’s misleading behavior regarding
Iraq’s WMD capabilities leading to the 2003 war). In addition, existing and developing contacts between corresponding agencies of negotiating states would affect the ease with which international influence could be exerted over domestic bureaucratic apparatus. Furthermore, greater national inter-agency coordination necessitated by the ACRS process around the specific set of issues at hand could potentially extend the range of such external influence of any institution by effectively transmitting it over a newly formed domestic web of relations, rather than being limited to a single nod of the corresponding agency. These factors form an illustrative background for understanding the dynamics within national ACRS delegations, explored during the second stage of interviews in this project.

Leadership susceptibility to public opinion pressure has often added complications to the Middle East Peace Process talks, but as the ACRS talks unfolded in a separate, more isolated domain, with negotiators several levels removed from the highly visible top leadership, an interesting insight to consider is whether this increased the relative significance of the institutional level traits (over personal or state level). Although country leaders still were the ones to make the final decisions in ACRS, their involvement in the negotiating process was rather limited (in contrast to the talks during the Peace Process), having instructed their national negotiators in broad terms. The technical nature of discussions would have also made it accessible to a much smaller public audience, especially given that many of the negotiators had to be themselves gradually educated on the matter, potentially creating more leeway by further reducing public pressure.

Another important factor to consider is the civil-military institutional dynamics. For instance, Israel’s tradition of particularly close civil-military bureaucracies in a democratic setting would have posed a curious challenge to the Arab state representatives, where a strong military establishment did not typically coexist with an effective and powerful civilian political structure - the nature of their previous domestic experience of civil-military interaction would have been radically different. Moreover, the measures and exercises agreed through the ACRS process would have required closer domestic cooperation between the civil-military structures, as well as the technical experts, and it is interesting to analyze the potential impact of ACRS to alter power relations between these domestic institutions. For instance, Barry Posen (1984, pp. 56-75) posits that as the probability of armed conflict declines, military structures conform more closely to predictions of organizational behavior theory, and also – that growing security concerns prompt increased civilian efforts of oversight over the military establishment. Since the ACRS process was intended to gradually
improve the regional security environment, it is curious to observe whether any of these effects on inter-agency relations could be observed as it unfolded.

**Methodological Limitations and Proposed Remedies**

Some of the common critiques of the interview and oral history methodologies stem from the nature of verbal and textual information as a credible modicum. Questions surround individual’s general ability to accurately convey their inner experiences or events they have witnessed through a verbal exchange process of an interview (Hammersley, 2008). The primary focus of the interviews was the personal narratives of interviewees, rather than the search for absolute historical truths, as is characteristic for phenomenological interviewing (Roulston, 2010, pp. 16-29). This was also helpful in addressing the challenge of accuracy when discussing the events that occurred some twenty years earlier—a detailed timeline of key factual events was maintained for reference purposes, but focused on memories of emotions and perceptions, which individuals seemed to have a better recollection of.

While it was important to avoid giving the interviewees an impression that they are being judged and ought to offer a justification for thoughts and actions they describe, the second and third layer of group interviews were added in an attempt to qualify these individual experiences through a collective history filter. In the second layer of national delegation interviews, that had to be weighed against the participants’ level of comfort to speak frankly in the presence of their former (or current) superiors and colleagues, especially since they experienced these events together, so diverging recollections could suggest direct confrontation. The third layer of interviews, with representatives from each delegation brought together, presented challenges in depicting divergent perceptions within teams or delegations—inviting particular representatives risked validating their narrative in the eyes of fellow participants as the discussion moved ahead.

A subsequent set of concerns relates to the use of language and terminology. Namely, the selection of language to conduct the interviews in may influence the interviewee’s speech patterns and choice of vocabulary, as well as their interpretation. For this project, all interviews were conducted in English—a language all participants were fluent in, but many were not native speakers. Similarly, a cautionary note is needed for the terminology used in this interdisciplinary research project: different academic fields tended to used different terms to refer to the same issue at hand, and vice versa. In addition, the effort to make this project accessible and useful to both, academic and policy practitioner audiences also influenced the
terminology choices. Nevertheless, it must be noted that all the interviewees were from the field of nonproliferation and shared understanding of the discussed terms.

Finally, the reliability of the interview process could be challenged on the basis of that the interviewer, as the medium eliciting and capturing responses, influences responses as the information requested is channeled through him or her. While this is a general concern, following consultations about the best interview practices with other scholars, each interview was conducted in the consistent team of two, with interviewers taking turns in leading the question process, and taking notes independently, as well as tape recording the interviews. In turn, some interviewees got more reserved when the conversations were taped, choosing their words more carefully and noticeably filtering their responses, despite being promised anonymity.

**Preliminary Insights from Individual Interviews**

At the time of writing, stage two of collective delegation interviews was in progress, and the final joint session was yet to be held, but the first stage of individual interviews, together with newly available primary source information, have already produced significant preliminary insights, briefly discussed below.

First, the interviewees shared their insights about the personalities on their national teams, as well as regional counterparts, with surprising frankness. With the promise of non-attribution, elaborate pictures were quickly presented of the characters that played the leading roles throughout the ACRS process – whereas discussions of national inter-organizational dynamics were slightly more formalized and assessments – more ambiguous. Furthermore, the interviewees frequently pointed out the contrasting personalities of the lead Egyptian and Israeli negotiators, and, more importantly, their contrarian inter-personal dynamics, as major obstacles for building trust.

Second, testing the theoretical frameworks on trust building proved challenging: it turned out that many lead ACRS participants knew each other before the process had started from previous interactions in diplomatic forums of New York and Geneva, as well as USA-Israel Joint Political-Military Group (JPMG) and brought a certain level of trust (or rather distrust) to the table. Indeed, it transpired that previous connections to parties in the region, as well as belonging to the small national communities of arms control professionals, were key to being selected to the ACRS delegations to begin with. Since the formative stage of these inter-personal dynamics had already unfolded, the interviewees recounted few episodes reflective of initial bonding, instead focusing on later stages of trust development. The parties
recalled naturally gravitating towards the persons they already knew; gradually increasing the levels of trust in these relations, whereas previously untrusted and unfamiliar parties continued their interactions at an arms-length. Whilst such behavior of seeking comfort in familiarity would generally hardly be surprising, the fact that this dynamic unfolded amongst highly skilled diplomats, changing little over the course of five years was somewhat unexpected and disconcerting. Interestingly, the bottom-up effect of trust building amongst lower-level staff being gradually channeled up the chain of command was also hardly discernable.

Third, with regards to cultural aspects, it was not the lack of cultural awareness, but rather fundamental political disagreements that made it hard for the parties to connect and trust each other. Many recalled substantial initial reservations - to even shake hands, much less talk across the divide - which dissipated only marginally as the process unfolded. Nevertheless, the cultural and institutional factors surfaced in the different ways that the parties tended to (or not to) draw a line between national positions and actions in official capacity, and personal interactions. For instance, the negotiators recalled political frustrations exploding into personal animosities at times of heightened tension, and some felt cheated when a fellow negotiator they felt they were getting to know on a personal level would stubbornly stick to a national position counterproductive to the process. Overall, most participants expressed a preference for more directness in conduct of their counterparts, even when the content to be delivered was inevitably unpleasant.

Fourth, the interviews revealed that the USA, the leader of the process, came to it with very limited objectives, namely, promoting a dialogue between the Arab states and Israel. Arms control turned out to be simply one of the issues at hand, largely selected following the recent success of the USA-USSR arms control agreement, and shred regional concerns over WMD programs revealed in Iraq. There was a marked disconnect between the national institutions that set the process in motion during the Madrid Conference and its implementers, as well as diverging views – amongst the participants, and between the USA and the regional parties, about the objectives of the process.

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The Classroom as Peace Incubator: A US-Gaza Case Study

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Abstract

This paper describes the design, implementation, and lessons from a case study in transforming two university classrooms into what we call an international “peace incubator.” In the besieged Gaza Strip, opportunities for normalization of relations with Israel are almost non-existent, and there is very limited desire or personal capacity among the student population of Gaza to do the work of peace-building. A semester-long videoconference class linking IUPUI and Gaza University students sought to address this deficit by developing a model for building ties of friendship and cooperation. West Bank peace activist Juliano Mer Khamis once spoke of a coming Third Palestinian Intifada (or uprising) that would be mounted through art, music, poetry and film. Inspired by his dedication to long term peace-building, we set about opening a channel of communication through our classroom experiment to allow the students to see beyond the negative stereotypes and allow friendship and understanding to flourish. Our experiment was designed to not only promote trust between US and Palestinian faculty and students, but to also creatively endorse Mer Khamis’ strategy for peace-building, and giving voice to those struggling to be heard.

Introduction

Since 2005, IUPUI (Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis) has been engaged in a multi-year project to examine whether virtual study abroad can replicate, in significant ways, a regular study abroad experience for its students. Learning from semester-long experiments in virtual team-teaching with universities in Iran, Russia, Indonesia, and Macedonia, in 2012 anthropologist Ian McIntosh of IUPUI and political scientist Jamil Alfaleet from the newly established Gaza University (formerly the Gaza Women’s College), the authors of this paper, initiated the Gaza Visioning Project. Our goal was to explore the potential use of the university classroom as a tool for international peace-building. As a virtual study abroad experience that was focused on conflict resolution, we witnessed how the
shared coursework and activities were having a profound impact on our students. By bringing our classrooms into the international realm, and the international community into the university, we added an entirely new dimension to the student experience. In this paper, we present the major findings from the first year of our collaboration, including student appraisals, a review of the underlying theoretical perspectives, and also the logistical challenges, in a reflection on the significance of such an intervention in the longer-term search for peace and prosperity in the Middle East.

In teaching anthropology we make a study of the rich diversity of the peoples of the world in the full expectation that in so doing, we will also be learning something about ourselves. We begin to see our own cultures with a fresh eye, a relativist’s eye, and we see our “American” culture for example – in its many forms – as but one iteration of a complex whole. This is also the case with peace studies. When we explore the ways in which conflict is being addressed in other places, especially in cases where contested narratives and demeaning stereotypes are a daily reality, it helps prepare our own students for thinking critically about the conflicts that they face in their own societies, and how they might constructively deal with them. There can be no long-lasting solution to our differences without dialog, and the university virtual classroom is an ideal place to hone our skills in international diplomacy, with each side benefiting from the encounter in their own unique ways.

Project Context

IUPUI sends approximately 1% of its student body on study abroad each year to multiple destinations but predominantly in Europe and East Asia. Out of 30,000 students, that is about ~ 300-400 students. IUPUI is a commuter campus. Many of the students commute to the class and an ever-increasing number are undertaking their classes online. They are parents, people working full-time jobs, or first generation students. IUPUI desires that all of its students have an international experience and, through the “RISE initiative” the university insists that all students graduate with at least one research, one international, or one service experience, and ideally all three. To facilitate such international research and service experiences, in 2005 IUPUI began an experiment with virtual study abroad with an emerging focus on conflict resolution and peace-building. What better way to challenge our students than to allow them an opportunity to reflect upon how in the US they might take for granted their freedom of speech, freedom of movement, and freedom from the threat of torture, and start to develop an empathy with those for whom these are not part of their daily lived
In 2012, the authors of this paper created the Gaza Visioning Project and agreed upon a joint curriculum that focused on a search for the pathways to peace and prosperity in the Middle East. Our students would partner up across the great divide in this creative exercise and work together in developing novel solutions to the conflict between Palestine and Israel. They would not be hamstrung by past failures or thoughts of intractability, but open to all manner of solutions. By taking such an approach we found ourselves in an entirely new type of virtual study abroad experience. We decided to utilize the broader community as a teaching resource and, as we will explain, our classrooms were transformed into what we call a peace incubator. So we were not just trying to replicate the study abroad experience. Rather, we were embarking on something entirely new and exciting for the students, namely education and advocacy in the service of peace and cooperative development.

The Roadmap

Earlier in 2012, project co-leader Ian McIntosh had explored possible videoconference classes with Israel and, in conversation with IUPUI colleagues, the idea came forward for a three-way class involving the US, Gaza and Israeli universities where the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could be frankly discussed, and the pathways of peace explored. Unfortunately the timing for the Israel connection did not work but even if it had, Gaza counterparts were not enthused by the idea. While self-proclaimed peace activists, they were forthright in saying that Gaza was not yet ready for direct talks with Israel and that participants would come to understand their position over the duration of the class. So the focus became: How do we overcome such a stalemate and build capacity for making those vital connections that are so necessary for peace and reconciliation?

The ideal structure for a peace classroom would have been to facilitate a three-way Skype conversation in which US students could act as mediators between students in both Gaza and Israel but suspicion was evident from the outset. Just several months before the class began, Jamil Alfaleet was quite open in saying that the idea of his students speaking to an American, a presumed Israeli proxy, was anathema. When selecting papers for the class, one by an expert on reconciliation, Dr. Zvi Bekerman from Hebrew University in Jerusalem, co-author of Teaching Contested Narratives (2012), was rejected. Such is the level of distrust towards their Israeli neighbors that Jamil Alfaleet doubted that the Gaza students would even open the attachment. And yet this was a paper focused on that handful of schools in Israel that are multicultural and multilingual and which actively promote coexistence between...
Israelis and Palestinians.

Dr. Alfaleet compared the situation in Gaza and the West Bank to that of African Americans in the Deep South in the 1960s, or to South African Blacks under Apartheid. So we could not underestimate the magnitude of the challenge. Even by conservative estimate, a very significant proportion of Gaza’s mostly poor and disaffected youth, have perhaps no greater desire or goal, or indeed opportunity, to be anything other than a martyr for their cause. Embittered, often traumatized, and hungry for justice, they are often drawn into the conflict in ways that are ultimately self-defeating and merely escalate tensions.

In considering the range of options for the unfolding class, it was important to stay flexible. We decided to proceed with a Gaza-only focus in terms of the subject matter but as the semester progressed, Ian McIntosh added more and more Jewish and Israeli voices, including those advocating for a one-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict, a two-state solution, and even a supporter of the continued stalemate, who wanted to see the peoples of the region solve the conflict in their own way and time without any outside intervention. So apart from regular weekly Skype communication with our Gaza professor, his colleagues, and our students, Ian McIntosh connected his US students via videoconference with the aforementioned Hebrew University professor, with members of the peace-focused “J Street” group, and others. As part of this class, not only would the US students visit a mosque in Indianapolis and speak with the Imam, but they would also meet with a local Rabbi. The deep and protracted conversations with Gaza then, would be at least partially informed by Jewish and Israeli perspectives.

Of note is that Gaza University is a private institution catering to a somewhat privileged class. The students tend not to be the children of the refugee camps, many of whom eke out a living by working in the illegal underground smuggling tunnels from Gaza into Egypt, and survive in large part through UN food relief. The Gaza students that US students interacted with, and also developed close bonds of friendship, were young men and women who could more easily envision a future beyond the blockaded borders of what is frequently described by people like Noam Chomsky as the “world’s largest open air prison” (2012). The offer of summer scholarships to IUPUI for the top Gaza students to undertake focused research on our topic was certainly a strong inspiration to be a part of this learning experiment and to participate fully in what were often hard-hitting and controversial discussions.
A Meeting of Worlds

The Spring 2012 collaboration involved sixteen IUPUI students and, via the medium of Skype, sixteen Gaza University students. For the Indiana students, the course was advertised as a “virtual study abroad” experience to the Gaza Strip. The US students each had a virtual host family in Gaza: they exchanged personal videos with their Gaza counterparts, and they had an opportunity to learn firsthand about Gaza lives and hopes for the future. From their new-found friends and in lectures they learned of the impact of Israel’s blockade of Gaza and the Hamas dictatorship. This unexpurgated glimpse into life in the densely populated 25-mile narrow strip of land revealed the hardship of power rationing, the high unemployment, the anarchic and controversial tunnel economy, and the nightly bombings and deadly retaliation.

The US class was coupled with another in the IUPUI Department of Communication Studies on the topic of argumentation in which the students at IUPUI role-played the multiple perspectives of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, brainstorming various avenues for the resolution of the issues that appear intractable, namely borders, settlements, refugees and Jerusalem. This would be the main project topic for students in the US-Gaza peace incubator.

Indiana students included the usual mix of those with very limited exposure to life outside of their home state, as well as refugees from Bosnia and Venezuela and immigrants from Nigeria and Syria. There were Blacks, Latinos, and Whites, as well as Republicans, Democrats, Libertarians and an Anarchist. There were eight male and eight female students.

The multicultural US classroom was juxtaposed on a Gaza classroom with nowhere near the same level of diversity. Gaza is a conservative Muslim society and the majority of the students were female and veiled. They enjoyed few of the freedoms that the US students took for granted, including the freedom of speech and of movement. All were imbued with the spirit of Sumud by which is meant resilience and resistance, the inner cry for freedom, a philosophy symbolized in Palestinian minds by the ancient olive tree or the mother with child (Musleh, 2011).

Our initial goal for the course was as provocative in Gaza as it was in Indiana. As an academic who is also a peace activist, McIntosh’s interest was in first overcoming the reluctance of his Gaza partners to work with Americans on projects exploring the pathways of peace in the Middle East. Levels of suspicion ran high, for the US and Israel are perceived in a similar light. To be accused of appeasement with Israel is a serious charge in Gaza, just a short step removed from an accusation of being a spy, which can lead to serious
consequences. Alfaleet was therefore under considerable pressure to prove to his administration that building the capacity of both US and Palestinian students to collaborate and begin the work of long-term peace building was in everyone’s best interests.

Barriers, both physical and political, prevent meaningful contact between Palestinians in Gaza and Israelis. Knowledge of life on the other side of the separation barrier is all but non-existent. It is a most unfortunate scenario, typical of intractable conflict, where each side considers the other to be the embodiment of evil: Israel views Gaza’s Hamas government as a terrorist organization bent on the destruction of Israel; and all Gazans, whether or not they are affiliated with Hamas, are considered as legitimate targets and suffer therefore from a form of “collective punishment.” But then the official Hamas political stance is a refusal to acknowledge the right of Israel to exist.

In the classroom setting, the Palestinian students openly debated the relative merits of Hamas rule and the circumstances of life in the Gaza strip: the lack of elections, endemic poverty, erratic service provision, pollution, and high reliance on foreign aid. In terms of Israel, however, the Gaza students spoke with one voice. Most were refugees or from refugee families from cities outside of the Gaza Strip and they wanted to visit their homes in Israel (to which many still possess keys) and their holy site in Al Quds (Jerusalem) – Haram al-Sharif. They wanted to see a one state solution where Jews and Palestinians lived side by side with the same rights and responsibilities, and an end to the Jewish character of the Israeli state.

Our challenge was to provide Indiana students with an opportunity to hear from both sides of the separation wall and to reflect upon, and respond to, Palestinian perspectives on reconciliation not readily available or accessible elsewhere. For Gaza students, the goal was to impart the basics on processes of peace-building and reconciliation in a way that might inspire some consideration of the preconditions for moving forwards. But it was very hard to speak of peace and reconciliation, when, during March 2012, for example, Israeli bombs were raining down on Gaza for five straight days killing many innocent civilians and traumatizing not just the Gaza students, but also their new friends in Indianapolis. How would the students respond to a Gandhian “sermon” on non-violence? By the moving words of Martin Luther King on the arc of the moral universe being long but bending toward justice? By Desmond Tutu’s Ubuntu philosophy for instilling that sense of courage necessary for envisioning a better future and also pathways leading to that destination?

With the very real possibility of an escalating conflict and a ground war, we began our lectures addressing the pressing issues that divide Arabs and Jews without specifically

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mentioning the protracted conflict at all. We wanted the students to be thinking “outside the box” so we began with a discussion of Enlightenment ideals and the associated vision of social inclusion or plurality. We had already initiated a series of introductory lectures on the history of the Middle East by both IUPUI and Gaza University political scientists. But we wanted to provide a framework for considering international relations from an entirely different lens.

**Theoretical Framework**

Enlightenment thinking prioritized the interests of humanity over the interests of nations. Philosopher Immanuel Kant (1939), for example, envisioned a future federation of free states bound by laws of universal hospitality where a violation of rights in one part was felt everywhere. But, at the beginning of the 21st century, we asked the students, are we any closer to overcoming the narrow confines of national self-interest and achieving a universal cosmopolitan existence, as described by Appiah (2006), where members renounce patriotism and nationalism and defend universal values as opposed to national ones? We discussed whether there was an emerging global division between those states where the majority believed that their country should be either: 1. A home to all and that race, color, religion, and creed should be no bar to belonging; or 2. Home only to their own. The rallying cry of “one nation, one state” among various ethnic and religious groups strikes a note of terror for those non-majority or oppressed peoples seeking a sense of belonging, equality, and self-worth in their adopted or native homeland.

**Globalization and Multiculturalism**

We then debated the ways in which globalization was reducing the economic sovereignty of nations and we emphasized how the clash of rival nationalisms within states was still the main cause of violence in the world today. It was once presumed (in Enlightenment thinking) that ethnicity would decline in the face of a shrinking planet, as people became increasingly interdependent in economic and cultural terms, and there was increased awareness that we are “one world” facing common ecological, political, and security problems. Yet the rapid dissolution of the known has led to the now well-documented phenomenon, described by Thomas Friedman (2000) in *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, of people clinging to the familiar and reaffirming and reifying what is believed to be true at the local level. In so doing they are re-energizing the primordial standard-bearers, namely, ethnicity, tribe, race, language, religion, and nation. Mortimer and Fine’s (2002) excellent volume *People, Nation and State: The Meaning of Ethnicity and Nationalism*
informed much of the class conversation.

David Napier (2003), in his book *The Age of Immunology: Conceiving a Future in an Alienating World* speaks to this alarming and divisive trend by reference to a metaphor; the immune system and its all-consuming drive to protect the self from the other. In the battlefield of the body, the role of the immune system is to distinguish between the self and the non-self and to subdue the latter. All things “other” are viewed not as a means of learning and growing stronger through a process of incorporation, but as a potential threat to the body’s integrity, well-being and future survival. Napier suggests that we are immunizing ourselves against the possibility of systemic change or adaptation in this new global dawning. When seen through this lens, the blending of peoples and the merging of civilizations that have given rise to the greatest breakthroughs of human history is an anachronism. The idea that Israelis and Palestinians were in the process of immunizing themselves against each other did not require amplifying.

In a related narrative, Steven Pinker (2011), in his book, *Better Angels of our Nature: Why Violence has Declined* argues that human civilization has become steadily less violent over recent centuries and that the years since 1945 have been especially tranquil. But, as Ross Douthat (2011) argues, there has been a price for this advance. The most successful modern states have often gained stability at the expense of diversity, driving out or even murdering their minorities on the road to peaceful coexistence with their neighbors. Europe’s harmony, for example, was made possible only through decades of expulsions and genocide. Douthat (2011) quotes Jerry Z. Muller (2008) essay *Us and them. The enduring power of ethnic nationalism*, on how the two world wars rationalized the continent’s borders, replacing the old multiethnic empires with homogenous nation states and eliminating minority populations and polyglot regions. A decade of civil war and ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia completed the process. In 1900 there were many states in Europe without a single overwhelmingly dominant nationality, but by 2007 there were only two, and one of those, Belgium, is close to breaking up. Consider also, for example, the fate of Coptic Christians in the new Egypt. Douthat suggests that if a European style age of democratic peace awaits the Middle East and Africa, it lies on the far side of ethnic and religious re-sortings and he asks whether it will it be worth the wars, genocides, and forced migrations that might make it possible.

From an Enlightenment perspective (Kant 1939), the doctrine that each state should be composed of one homogenous nation is pernicious. No state is an undifferentiated...
monolithic whole. Most modern societies are socially, culturally, sexually, religiously, and ethnically heterogeneous. But how do we promote multiculturalism in a globalizing world where some view this concept as inherently evil and a threat to their integrity? Consider in silence for example, the shooting rampage by Norwegian Anders Breivik who was concerned for the purity of Norwegian blood and the danger posed by immigrants, in particular Muslims (Borchgrevink, 2013).

Our classroom conversation then turned to how the survival of “homogenous” states around the world depends on their relationship with the multicultural states, and their pockets of homogeneity. We see the threat of homogenization or “Balkanization” not just in the Middle East but on multiple fronts around the world, following the European pattern in the twentieth century. Confronting these new waves of ethnic and religious separation and the associated “cleansing” requires fresh and imaginative thinking regarding borders, citizenship and nationality and this theoretical perspective informed the students’ thinking with regards to their main assignments.

The Peace Curriculum

The course content included the full range of experiences expected in a normal study abroad program. There were films, lectures, and a range of readings supplied by both project leaders. An Iranian expert on Middle East history and politics, Dr. Manochehr Hosseinzadeh, provided additional context with his lectures. This coursework was complemented by presentations by a Rabbi, who was also a member of the Jewish NGO J-Street, to both the US and Gaza classes. In addition, a former Israeli military officer who is a self-proclaimed “dove”, and a professor of education at Hebrew University, Jerusalem, who specializes in the study of those few schools in Israel that foster coexistence and have a multilingual (Arabic and Hebrew) curriculum, also made presentations to the US classroom. A number of documentaries were shown to the students and, where possible, these were also shared in the Gaza classroom. With limited internet connection in Gaza and restricted access to some web sites, this was not always possible. These films included “Tears of Gaza” about the devastation caused by the Israeli attacks in 2008/9, and “Peace, propaganda and the promised land,” where the classes debated the biased or pro-Israeli reporting in US media, and the controversy generated by the film in places like Canada where it was condemned as being one-sided in favor of Palestinians.

As our goal was to familiarize the US students with Palestinian life and culture, we provided an opportunity for them to meet with IUPUI-based Palestinian students, faculty, and
staff, and also Palestinians from the broader community. They visited a local mosque where there was a lively discussion with the Imam on the place of women in Moslem society. They also enjoyed Middle Eastern food on several occasions and learned some basic Arabic language.

We assessed student learning in Gaza and the US through a journal of reflections on the weekly private communications that each student had with their partner through email, Skype and Facebook. The task of interviewing their partners to learn about their hopes and dreams was coupled with an exercise where each student made a short 6-8 minute video of their life. This was a surprisingly difficult and eye-opening exercise for us all. What do we include or exclude and why? There were certainly many preconceived ideas held by the US students about Gaza lives, and vice versa. One Gaza student, for example, spoke out in her video about her love of marathon running, of chocolate milk-shakes, and horse-riding along the beach, which all seemed totally at odds with the reality that we expected to hear about. But then we learned that in order to enjoy such privileges, both the horse and also the chocolate, needed to be smuggled 60 meters beneath the ground through the illegal tunnels from Egypt into Gaza.

Apart from the individual pairing of students, we also placed them into groups of four US and four Gaza students in order to tackle the larger topic of the course which was to explore solutions to the four main points of division between Arabs and Jews namely settlements, borders, refugees and Jerusalem. Both project leaders were on hand each and every day to answer questions from the students as were the various visitors who had come to the class throughout the semester.

Reconciliation Studies

The starting point for discussion of the pathways to peace was the literature on reconciliation, most notably the foundation text “From Conflict Resolution to Reconciliation” edited by Yaacov Bar-Suman-Tov (2003), and also the work of Cynthia Cohen (2005) on creative approaches to reconciliation. Cohen says, for example, that:

Reconciliation refers to a set of processes designed to transform relationships of hatred and mistrust into relationships of trust and trustworthiness. Reconciliation reflects a shift in attention from blaming the other to taking responsibility for the attitudes and actions of one’s self and one’s own community. Former enemies must empathize with each other’s suffering, express remorse, grant forgiveness, and offer reparations. (p. 10)
The tasks or preconditions of reconciliation that Cohen (2005, pp.10-11) describes, are in broad agreement with those of Bar-Suman-Tov (2003), and include, but are not limited to:

1. Appreciating each other’s humanity and respecting each other’s culture
2. Telling and listening to each other’s stories, and developing more complex narratives and more nuanced understandings of identity
3. Acknowledging harms, telling truths, and mourning losses
4. Empathizing with each other’s suffering
5. Acknowledging and redressing injustices
6. Expressing remorse, repenting, apologizing, letting go of bitterness, forgiving
7. Imagining and substantiating a new future, including agreements about how future conflicts will be engaged constructively

All of these tasks, Cohen (2005) says, require … learning new skills and unlearning what was formerly believed to be true. In many instances, however, the very notion of trust has been destroyed. Ethnic violence and long-standing oppression can leave people and communities with insufficient capacity to undertake this work. And yet, this is the only way forward… (p. 11)

As McIntosh (2013, 2014) details elsewhere, the quest for reconciliation has three broad dimensions, namely desire, personal capacity, and opportunity. In the Gaza Strip, opportunities for peace-building and reconciliation are extremely limited. The massive separation walls that are mined and lined with barbed-wire prevent any meaningful contact between Gazans and Israelis. In terms of personal capacity to do the work of peace, this has been seriously eroded on both sides by repeated attacks and counterattacks. A number of the Gaza students had PTSD and were very bitter and emotionally scarred. One showed a photo of a burning Israeli flag on her Facebook page. She exclaimed “Let them drink from our cup,” when a Hamas missile took off towards populated Israeli townships in retaliation for the killing of a Palestinian civilian. When asked by one of the US students if she was afraid of being injured in the repeated bombings raids she replied, “Sister. We are not afraid. The Israelis are nothing.” And yet even with this widespread level of mistrust and even hatred, many of the Gaza students opened up in their conversations with the US students, and expressed a strong desire to find a way to work out differences in some meaningful fashion and to end the conflict.
Gestures of Reconciliation

How do we ensure the official recognition of all peoples in a manner that honors their traditions and secures their rights, and legitimizes and values their existence and membership? McIntosh’s work in the field of peace and reconciliation and in the development of a methodology called Reconciliation Process Analysis (RPA) complements that of Gene Sharp (2002) and his development of a vocabulary of non-violent resistance to dictatorship. He is engaged in building a similar vocabulary of reconciliation initiatives suitable to any specific setting. Apart from an examination and analysis of the full range of reconciliatory gestures for making amends for historical injustices, from trials and truth commissions, apologies and forgiveness, material and symbolic forms of reparation, and so on, he also explores strategies for building inclusive national identities, and he stressed this in his lectures with Gaza.

In Israel and the West Bank we can witness many impressive grass roots peace and reconciliation initiatives designed by some of the most creative brains in the academic field of conflict resolution. Noted mediator William Ury, author of *Getting To Yes* (2011) and *Getting Past No* (1991), advocates for a pilgrimage through the Holy Land to build a sense of solidarity between the Abrahamic Peoples of the Book. Maestro Daniel Barenboim who started the Divan East-West Orchestra with Palestinian and Israeli musicians is another inspirational peacemaker. Then there is the mathematician who won Israel’s most coveted prize and donated the proceeds to Palestinian mathematicians and to an Israeli organization working for coexistence in the West Bank. Chefs for Peace, Combatants for Peace, the Israel Palestine Comedy Tour, Rabbis for Palestine, Anarchists against the Wall, and so on, are all making a contribution. But as Karen Brouneus (2003) reminds us, the total number of reconciliatory gestures in any given location is no measure for determining if reconciliation is actually being advanced. It can often mean the very opposite; that the society is moving away from peace.

Small scale initiatives like the above can be harbingers of meaningful change but on the whole, the net result is usually minimal and the most that can expected is “first order change” which occurs within a system that remains unchanged. Focused programs like the Arab-Israeli Mt Everest Climb, or Football for Peace, do not, ultimately, speak truth to power, and they rarely empower the oppressed so that they can pursue their political interests more effectively. While based on the contact hypothesis that intergroup interaction can bring about attitudinal change which can result in a reduction of tension, the breakdown of
stereotypes, and the promotion of more harmonious relationships, group prejudices and taken-for-granted images live on in the post-game, post-climb and post-pilgrimage period.

How do we deliver second-order change where the system itself is transformed? How do we reach “tipping points”, those decisive moments when there is a significant movement or development of a positive sort in human relations? An example of such a tipping point is when South Africa’s Nelson Mandela chose a new national anthem for his country that incorporated the words and music of both Afrikaner and African songs, or when he made a new flag for the rainbow nation, or created the National Day of Reconciliation to coincide with the Afrikaner sacred Day of the Vow. Mandela also embraced the white-favored Rugby Union football over soccer and inspired South Africa to become World Cup Champions in the mid-1990s. His white bodyguard, whose story is reflected in the Hollywood movie Invictus, spoke of how Mandela’s wearing of the “Springbok” jersey did more for reconciliation than any other single gesture in the whole post-Apartheid period.

For Mandela, civic rather than ethnic nationalism was in focus; that is, promoting a form of nationalism that appeals on the basis of shared allegiance to certain constitutional principles (Habermas’s constitutional patriotism) and not on the basis of ethnicity, language, religion, or race. Michael Ignatieff (1999) has also argued for the grounding of national symbols and traditions in civic values with which all can easily identify—like France’s “liberty, equality, and fraternity”—symbols and traditions that will unite citizens in patriotic attachment to a shared set of values that celebrate plurality and difference, and not the old standard bearers. This was Mandela’s challenge, and it is a challenge that Israelis and Palestinians now face.

Rabbi Michael Lerner (2012) in Embracing Israel/Palestine: A Strategy to Heal and Transform the Middle East examines how the mutual demonization and discounting of each sides’ legitimate needs drive the antagonism, and he explores the underlying psychological dynamics that fuel the intransigence. He describes the importance of being both pro-Israel and pro-Palestine and argues that long term peace and security is best achieved through an ethos of caring and generosity toward the other. In accord with Bar-Suman-Tov (2003) and Cohen (2005) he calls for a psychological change in the way that we approach the conflict, believing that we must first work at becoming friends. But as Andrew Rigby (2001) argues, for any of peace and reconciliation initiatives to be successful there must be equal status and common goals in and out of the encounter, and participants need the endorsement and support of opinion leaders. Such gestures, in other words, need to take place within the
context of a society that wants them to succeed. Is this the case for Israel and Palestine?

Student Reports

US and Gaza students presented their final reports jointly via Skype to an audience that included professors and administrators from both universities and community members. In this “public” setting, the Gaza students were somewhat restricted in what they were prepared to say but, as none of the topics focused directly on Gaza, but rather on Palestinians in general, they were forthright in their presentations.

In one essay, US and Gaza students made reference to a very powerful article by noted Jewish blogger Robert Cohen (2012) entitled *Occupy the Haggadah-Radical Thoughts for Passover*. Cohen quotes from the scriptures:

Wandering in the desert, without our own land or borders, we recorded the commandments that were meant to shape us as a people. “You shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the feelings of the stranger, having yourselves been strangers in the land of Egypt.” (Exodus 23:9)… “The stranger who resides with you, shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” (Leviticus 19:34)

Robert Cohen’s plans for his own family Passover celebration were quoted by the students:

This year when my family sits down for the annual retelling of the Exodus story, there will be some new additions to the evening’s order of service. We will include prayers for justice, thought-provoking reflections on the meaning of the Holocaust from Jews and Palestinians, and acknowledgment of our own complicity in taking freedom from others. We will dip into salt water three times to remember not only our tears but the tears of our neighbors too. And alongside the salt water, Elijah’s wine glass and Miriam’s cup, we will make an addition to the Seder plate. Next to the bitter herbs, the horoset, the shankbone, we will add some Palestinian olive oil to remember that the land has meaning to another people too. And when we break the motzah, we will do so as a symbol of sharing the land. And to soften our brittle “bread of oppression” we will pour on some of the Palestinian olive oil.

At least one Gaza student was moved to tears by the sentiments expressed here. She had never encountered such language from a Jew, and was quite overwhelmed. She saw this article as having the potential of helping pave the way for reconciliation between Arabs and
Jews.

This same group of students, when considering creative solutions for the future of Jewish settlements in the West Bank, then reported on the need for laying the foundation for reconciliation. They suggested the creation of “reconciliation establishments”, actual physical structures that could be used to help foster good relationships between Israelis and Palestinians on the ground. They saw a need for:

- Economic Centers: The Jewish settlements in the West Bank could potentially serve as centers of economic integration, and facilitate cooperation, while fueling political reconciliation.
- Educational Centers: The settlements could serve as centers of education in a new Israeli-Palestinian state, in which Arabs and Israelis would come together to build multi-cultural schools.
- Sports Arenas: The settlements could also house sports arenas in which Palestinians and Israelis would enjoy soccer and other games together and begin to develop teamwork skills that would allow them to forget about the tensions between their parents and government representatives, and serve as springboards for reconciliation.
- Shopping Malls/Amusement Parks: Israelis and Palestinians would enjoy shopping and hanging out with friends, temporarily forgetting their problems, prejudices and fears.

Reflecting back on the preconditions for reconciliation expressed by Cynthia Cohen (2005), the students understood that their proposed solutions would require a significant shift in the current political and social atmosphere in Israeli and Palestinian territories. By embracing these tasks and principles and by putting in place actual physical structures in the settlements dedicated to the promotion of peace, the pathway can be laid and the journey to reconciliation initiated, they said.

**Teachable Moments**

It is important to mention that this class was not free of controversy. From the US side, the subject of the Gaza class caused an immediate flurry of interest and suspicion on the part of Indianapolis Jewish community organizations. As one Jewish colleague and friend at IUPUI was quick to point out, our subject matter was the “third rail” of US politics; dangerous both personally and professionally.

The fireworks came early in the semester when we decided to host an Arab-Israeli dialog in the broader Indianapolis community in order to model for students the sort of
discussion that we would like to see on the global stage. A local NGO, the Center for Interfaith Cooperation, arranged for two Israelis and two Palestinians, now US citizens, to speak on the pathways to peace and they all enthusiastically agreed. However two days before the event the Israelis demanded one hour alone with the US students as a precondition for their involvement. They assumed that the students were all biased in favor of Palestine. A series of conversations through an intermediary identified their stance as being triggered by the proposed date of the event, which coincided with a global “Anti-apartheid Israel” protest and rally in support of the BDS movement (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israeli settlements and industry in the West Bank). They believed the session was timed to embarrass them but this was not the case. The dialog was cancelled. Finally, we agreed on a three part process which would culminate in the Israelis and Palestinians being invited to a general celebration of Middle Eastern culture where we would watch a film on reconciliation but with no open discussion on the peace process. Some Jews came to this final session, but no Palestinians.

There would be more fireworks later, and more teachable moments after the class had ended, when IUPUI invited the top two Gaza students, both young women, to spend two months over the Summer in 2012 working on their research topics. One focused her studies on domestic violence and women’s empowerment in the Gaza Strip, and the other on the potential role of social media for social change in Gaza. The planned public event was entitled Film, Food and the Future. The two students would share their research and we would show some of the films that Gaza faculty had made as part of the class, including one on the controversial Gaza Tunnel economy, where not only food and building products arrive into Gaza, but also missiles, drugs and other contraband.

The reaction of some members of the local Jewish community to an event flyer was swift, as the advertising was perceived to be misrepresenting the tunnels primary function, which they deemed to be military-based. From some Indiana University Alumni including from as far away as Fort Wayne, Indiana came an ultimatum: The event should be cancelled, or, if it proceeded then 1. the Gaza students should not be permitted to speak about the future of Gaza; 2. the film of the tunnels should not be aired and; 3. Jewish spokespeople should be present on stage to refute the Hamas propaganda of the students. These individuals indicated that the penalty for not addressing these demands would be the withdrawal of continued generous support to the Alumni Association. McIntosh cancelled the event against the wishes of both the US and the Gaza students because he did not want to expose the students to an
ugly encounter with seasoned lobbyists, especially given that their summer experience at IUPUI had been so positive and life-changing.

A legal request under the freedom of information act from a California individual to IUPUI came soon thereafter, requesting all correspondence connected with the cancelled Gaza event, the memos, emails, flyers and so on. This action, we gathered, was designed to intimidate us and dissuade us from proceeding with anything similar in the future. The university lawyer forwarded a package of over 1500 pages of emails to the Californian for we had nothing to hide. This was a class designed to promote peace-building and the search for solutions to problems in the Middle East which are often described as insoluble.

**Conclusion: Embracing a Vision of Change**

To host a successful program, the onus is on the project leaders to create a learning environment where there is a willingness by students to step outside of their comfort zones and to interact with and learn from people from quite different cultures and ways of life. Some students, both in the US and Gaza, reported that this was their favourite class in their student careers. Others, while remaining staunch in their support of one side or the other, appreciated the opportunity to see beyond received stereotypes. We can expect no more of a study abroad experience.

The intercultural component allowed IUPUI students to see their own culture in perspective, and to appreciate the diversity of human experience. The reviews emphasized the need for the students to be open-minded, to reconsider previously held beliefs and to adjust their thinking based on newly received information. The students also understood the necessity of being able to operate civilly in a complex world, and to recognize the connectedness of local and global communities.

US students came to value their freedom of speech and of politics, something that they often take for granted. They greatly appreciated their access to social services, electricity, water, to equality and also respect for diversity and pluralism. They also appreciated the opportunity to develop long-term friendships with a people often derided as “the enemy” in our media. These friendships have extended beyond the classroom.

From the Gaza perspective, student reviews showed that the opportunity to connect to the outside world has provided an avenue of hope. The wall had been breached, if only virtually. This was a strategy of liberation championed by the late Jewish-Palestinian peace activist Juliano Mer Khamis of the West Bank village of Jenin. The instigator of the “Freedom Theater”, Juliano spoke of a coming Third Intifada or Palestinian uprising that
would be mounted through art, music, poetry and film to empower actors and audiences to transcend the walls that imprison them. Through drama therapy or art therapy, for example, Palestinian youth would have a chance to deal creatively with their torment and tormentors. They would develop the capacity, currently lacking, to do the work of long-term peace building and not resort to violence. Words would become their Molotov cocktails, one of Juliano’s students exclaims in the sad and yet ultimately inspiring film “Arna’s Children” (Mer Khamis & Danniel, 2004). For Gaza students, it was this glimmer of hope that was most pronounced.

In the science of visioning, as conceived by peace scholar Elise Boulding (1990), students will anchor their dreams for the future in intensely real images, compelling action in the present to fulfill them. Designing a plan of action to realize the dream and inspiring participants to believe in their vision, was our goal. With our class, then, we hoped to contribute in some small fashion to this grand “third intifada” for reconciliation as this was understood by the Gaza students as being a necessary first step forwards. The late Christopher Reeves (1996) once remarked, “So many of our dreams at first seem impossible, then they seem improbable, and then, when we summon the will, they soon become inevitable.” It is with this spirit that we embarked upon our experiment in peace education by transforming our classrooms into a peace incubator. There were many challenges, and also many lessons and rewards. The most noteworthy was a chance to see a vision of the future emerge from our incubator that was quite different to that constrained and defined by the politics of walls, rockets, drones, tunnels and warships, and the futility of endless retaliation and revenge.

References


The Political Economy of Ivory as a “Conflict Resource”

Natasha White

Abstract

The past year has seen attention directed, both in policy discourse and the media, towards the implication of Central African non-state armed groups in poaching and ivory trafficking. Engaging with both mainstream political economy analyses and work on the “geographies of resource wars,” this paper turns to the case of ivory as a “conflict resource,” through the case study of the Lord’s Resistance Army. It begins by outlining the contextual specificities and conditions of access, before assessing the compatibility of the resource’s biophysical, spatial and material characteristics with the needs of regional armed groups and the LRA in particular. Though the direction of causality is difficult to untangle, the paper finds that poaching and the trade in ivory by armed groups in Central Africa appears to incur low opportunity costs for relatively high potential gains. Moreover, that ivory qualifies as a “conflict resource” under Le Billon’s (2008) definition in the extent to which it is likely to be implicated in the duration of conflict in the region, both financing and benefitting from a context of insecurity. Future research would benefit from more accessible and robust data; interesting avenues would include an evaluation of the effects of the increasing militarization of poaching strategies - including shoot-to-kill policies - and the potential of igniting grievance-based conflict.

The Political Economy of Ivory as a “Conflict Resource”

In December 2012, the United Nations (UN) Security Council called for a joint investigation with the African Union into the alleged involvement of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) in elephant poaching and the illicit trade of ivory. This both reflected the revelations of an array of media investigations and non-governmental organisations’ (NGOs) reports, and triggered increasing scrutiny of the issue from security institutions, such as the United States’ State Department and the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) in South Africa. Ivory – once symbolic of colonial trophies, adventure and ‘Wild Africa’ – has become a component of the “strategic narratives” of national security bodies, both in Africa and abroad.
The ivory trade and plight of Africa’s elephants have long been the concern of a range of conservation and environmental NGOs, activists and scientists, as well as government bodies anxious to protect an important source of tourism income. Indeed, 2013 is the fortieth anniversary of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the international treaty that was responsible for the ban in international ivory trade in 1989. However, it has only been over the last couple of years that public reports have begun linking the resource with Central African armed groups. Popularized in the media as “blood ivory,” tusks have been compared to other conflict resources, including diamonds. Tom Cardamone, Managing Director of Global Financial Integrity, has estimated the global value of illicit wildlife trade in general to be between US$7.8 and US$10 billion, and states that ivory, in particular, can “rival cocaine and gold in value by weight” (Cardamone, 2012, p. 2). References abound not only to regional militia groups, including the Janjaweed, LRA and al-Shabab (Gossmann, 2010; Somerville, 2013; UN, 2013), but also to a transnational organised crime (TNOC) network (Scanlon, 2012). Nonetheless, academic research on the political economy of ivory as a ‘conflict resource’ remains thin on the ground.

This paper attempts to begin to address this gap in a body of literature that has predominantly focussed on diamonds, oil, timber and narcotics (Fearon, 2004; Le Billon, 2008; Nordstrom, 2004; Ross, 2003, 2006). Engaging with both mainstream political economy analyses and “geographies of resource wars,” it will attempt to employ a nuanced approach with the goal of evaluating recent claims on ivory as a conflict resource, a part from essentialist conservation and media discourses. Through an analysis of the resource’s specificity, spatiality and trans-border dynamics, it will aim to move away from state-centric approaches and focus on the micro-dimensions of the regional conflict.

I will begin by briefly reviewing existing literature on natural resources and conflict, before outlining the analytical framework that will be employed. Section three will turn to the specific case of ivory as a conflict resource, analysing the contextual specificities and conditions of access, as well as the resource’s biophysical, spatial and material characteristics. Section four will provide a series of concluding remarks.

Two groups in particular have been reportedly implicated in elephant poaching in Central Africa – the LRA and the Darfuri militia group, the Janjaweed (UN, 2013); this paper will focus predominantly on the former, however, due to the relative availability of information on their whereabouts and activities. Moreover, its focus is on regional, not intra- or inter-state conflict. This is due both to the lack of country-specific data, and the mobile
nature of the armed groups implicated and the trans-border conflict dynamics. It will draw on media accounts, policy reports and data, obtained online and via email communications with a range of policy professionals. However, it is nonetheless limited by the minimal and anecdotal nature of evidence at the time of writing, and lack of robust data on both the illicit ivory trade and transnational (criminal) networks in Central Africa.

Background Literature on Natural Resources and Armed Conflict

Over the past decade or so, scholarly debate on the relationship between natural resources and conflict onset has been largely polarised in the greed versus grievance debate (Berdal & Malone, 2000; Collier & Hoeffler, 1998, 2004). Broad consensus has settled, however, on a three-factor model of the occurrence of rebellion, largely inspired by Gurr (1970) – motivation, opportunity and identity (Arnson & Zartman, 2006; Ellingsen, 2000; Le Billon, 2012; Lujala, Gleditsch, & Gilmore, 2005). Rebels need a motive (e.g. economically-motivated greed or politically-motivated grievances); the possibility to achieve their goal; and a common identity for group formation (Lujala et al., 2005). Predation models have examined the extraction and taxation basis of insurgency; a relationship based around a deal balancing rent extraction versus protection (Snyder, 2006). Some have also employed Mancur Olson’s (1993) differentiation of “roving” and “stationary” bandits, an early model of the spatiality of rule, to understand the balance between extraction and protection (Beardsley, Gleditsch, & Lo, 2013; Thies, 2010; Weinstein, 2007). Natural resources are relevant to all of the above factors (Korf, 2011). However, for the purpose of this paper, I will focus on the opportunity and feasibility aspects.

Fearon and Laitin (2003), for example, look at factors that make insurgency feasible and attractive, but found that financing and opportunity to loot are not the only influential factors. Lujala, Gleditsch, and Gilmore (2005, p. 540) also show how “the looting of natural resources (or extortion in connection with extraction activities) provides economic activity for rebel movements”. These authors build on Collier and Hoeffler’s (1998) proposition that the opportunity to loot or exploit resources was instrumental in the onset of violent conflict and have stimulated a body of literature on conflict resources. This literature shows how, “with the end of the Cold War, more belligerents have come to rely on revenues from commodities such as timber, oil, narcotics or precious minerals” (Le Billon, 2008, p. 345). Precious gems, for example, are portrayed as the primary motive in the onset of warlord-led, greed-driven conflicts (Campbell, 2002; Le Billon, 2006; Lujala et al., 2005).
However, less research has focussed on resource endowments and conflict duration with reference to the micro-foundations of conflict, rather than large-N (cross-country) statistical analysis (Korf, 2011; Lujala et al., 2005). This is of relevance to this paper, as I will not argue that ivory has been an underlying cause in the onset of conflict and violence in Central Africa. Instead, I suggest that through providing a source of finance for armed groups, such as the LRA, ivory is one factor (amongst others, including group organisation, military tactics, international response etc.) in its duration. An early proponent of this argument was Keen (1998), who argued that increased access to and trade in resources within war economies makes ending civil wars difficult. Later, Fearon (2004) has shown that conflicts with rebel groups that have access to contraband goods tend to last longer than other conflicts, as they provide a dependable source of finance. Others have focussed on diamonds and oil (Humphreys, 2005; Lujala et al., 2005; Ross, 2004), but there is little consensus on whether they prolong or shorten civil wars.

Overall, resources, as the unit of analysis, have come to be understood in terms of financing hostilities, as well as shaping motives of violence, the behaviour of armed groups and the duration of conflict, not just its onset (Wennmann, 2008). More recently, research has reengaged with the post-Cold War geographical dimensions of conflict, paying greater attention to specific resource characteristics, including distribution and concentration, rather than focusing solely on political boundaries as the defining feature (Klare, 2001; Korf, 2011; Le Billon, 2001, 2008). Auty (2001) and Mac Ginty (2004) demonstrate how some resources are more accessible, or “loottable,” to rebels than others, offering them the ability to scale-up and profit from hostilities. According to Auty (2001), geographically concentrated (“point”) resources and geographically spread (“diffuse”) resources will lead to different conflict dynamics. Le Billon (2004, p. 15) expands on the above, adding a second geographical criterion – the location of the resource site from the centre of state power. Cross-tabulating these, he presents a typology of conflicts associated with different “resource spatialities” (p. 16). Finally, Ross (2003) includes the dimension “obstructability” (value-to-weight ratio and ease of transportation). Research findings in general argue in favour of a relationship between conflict and lootable resources, such as alluvial diamonds and narcotics (Lujala et al, 2005; Olsson, 2006; Snyder & Bhavnani, 2005). This literature has made an important contribution in clarifying some of the rather broad claims in Collier’s original propositions (Ron, 2005).

The paper will proceed to evaluate the evidence for ivory as a conflict resource, according to Le Billon’s (2008) definition encompassing: “the control, exploitation, trade,
taxation or protection of natural resources, which contributes to, or benefits from, the context of armed conflict” (p. 349). With reference to Le Billon’s analytical framework (2008, p. 348), the next section will explore the compatibility of the resource’s biophysical, spatial and material characteristics with the needs of regional armed groups and the LRA in particular. However, first it will turn to contextual specificities and conditions of resource access.

**Ivory and Conflict in Central Africa**

**Context and Vulnerability**

Central Africa has a long history of political violence and brutality, the causes of which are complex and deep-rooted. Political and economic marginalization, weak institutions, an abundance of natural resources, a climate conducive to the spread of tropical diseases, the ubiquity of small arms and uncontrollable borders are factors in the persistence of conflict and insecurity to this day (Flint, 2009; ICG, 2010; Taylor, 2003). While each country has experienced conflict in its own right, together the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Chad, Central African Republic (CAR), Sudan and South Sudan compose a patchwork of regional instability (ICG, 2010), or a “regional conflict complex” (Pugh & Cooper, 2004, p. 2). These are typically characterised by the “cross-border spillover of violence and borderlands as sanctuaries for combatants, nurseries for recruits and centres for shadow economic activities” (Pugh & Cooper, 2004, p. 2) and, according to Taylor (2003), are characteristic of the globalisation of Africa’s conflicts and their progressive insertion into the international political economy. Interregional connections make for prolonged and intractable conflicts, involving actors as diverse as TNOCs, private military companies and multinational companies (Pugh & Cooper, 2004).

Latham, Kassimir, and Callaghy (2001) argue that the regional and transnational forces that traverse Central Africa are important factors to help make sense of the region’s conflicts today. These networks exist in a causal relationship with conflict. On the one hand, they are a facilitated by the “region-wide state of disorder and the modus operandi this offers a variety of actors operating within areas where the formal state is in process of eclipse” (Taylor, 2003, p. 51). On the other hand, these regional networks have facilitated the emergence of “spaces of opportunity” (Le Billon, 2008, p. 361) in what is essentially “a kleptocratic political economy” (Taylor, 2003, p. 45). They offer the conditions of access to markets that bring together a constellation of predatory actors, each seeking to exploit and extract rents from Central Africa’s resources and/or construct chains of influence and control in the region (Le Billon, 2008). These spatial interconnections between actors at local,
regional and transnational scales enable the circulation of commodities and increase the “exploitability” of the resource (Silberberg & Ellis, 2007). In the case of ivory, TNOCs and “shadow networks – “a combination of political, economic and sociocultural forces linked to the international sphere and transactional in nature” (Nordstrom, 2004, p. 218) – have come to support armed militia by easing the conversion of ivory into cash and weapons. In conjunction with the increasing Chinese investment and human presence on the continent (CITES, 2013), they have served to decrease the distance between spaces of supply and demand, increasing price elasticity and providing poachers – including armed groups – with a reliable source of revenue in exchange for their prizes.

Resource Characteristics and Opportunity

Access to and control over natural resources are highly dependent on the mode of exploitation facilitated by this system of regional and transnational networks (Le Billon, 2008; Titeca, 2011). But these “spaces of opportunity” also reflect the material specificities of the resource in question, including its biophysical and spatial characteristics (Le Billon, 2008). Before exploring these elements, this section will examine the territoriality of one particular armed group – the LRA – and elephant range sites.

The LRA is a non-state armed group originating in northern Ugandan and led by the warlord, Joseph Kony. From 1987 to 2007, the group reportedly abducted around 90,000 children and killed up to 100,000 Ugandan citizens alone, committing indiscriminate violence over civilian populations (“Key Statistics,” 2013). Once supported by Sudan, the group’s financing lines and source of weapons have since been dissipating, particularly given the renewed offensive of the Ugandan army and support from the United States (US) (Titeca, 2013). This has had implications for its mobility – the group is now reported to be in northeast DRC and southern CAR (HSBA, 2013; LRA Crisis Tracker, 2013) – as well as its tactics and motivation to poach (Bevan, 2004; Titeca, 2013). The group is extremely efficient, has few material incentives and requires only enough for subsistence and its operations. Two other important dimensions to note are: a) its reliance on small arms in contrast to larger weapons (due to forced mobility); and b) its extreme adaptability (Bevan, 2004; HSBA, 2013).

Territorialization of the LRA and poaching sites.

A brief look at the recent territoriality of LRA activities shows correlation with elephant range sites and, most strikingly, sites of reported carcasses (CITES, 2011) in northeast DRC and southern CAR, particularly in Garamba and Okapi National Parks. A
series of sources have backed-up the LRA Crisis Tracker system, confirming the group’s presence (Gossmann, 2010; HSBA, 2013; United Nations, 2013). Attacks have been launched on ranger facilities, burning equipment and infrastructure, children have been abducted and at least eleven Congolese rangers have been killed since 2008 (Gettleman, 2012). Park rangers from Garamba, tradesmen in Omburman, Sudan and former abductees have also all testified the LRA’s direct involvement in the ivory trade. Meanwhile, elephant numbers in the region declined by more than half between 1995 and 2011 (Beyers et al., 2011).

A geography of risk.

An environment of conflict and insecurity has provided a safe haven for the group, facilitated its access to elephant populations and the ease with which it can convert the resource into cash or exchange it for weapons via illicit networks. Weak spatial control and ease of access decrease the transaction costs and make for an attractive cost-benefit ratio – regional vulnerability that Le Billon (2008, p. 349) terms a “geography of risk”. Moreover, the dangers associated with hunting elephants – risk of injury, the possibility of confrontation with other armed groups, and the likelihood of encountering enforcement action by the authorities – are likely to be child’s play for combatants that have been engaged in the LRA’s reign of terror for any substantial period of time. While the implementation of shoot-to-kill policies in some countries and the recent drive on increasing ranger capacity via training local units or despatching private security companies means they incur an increasingly large risk, combatants are relatively desensitised to the potential of such violence – particularly those from the LRA, where they undergo rituals specifically for this purpose (Allen & Vlassenroot, 2010). The associated threat, therefore, is substantially lower.

The above factors combine to provide for a relatively low opportunity cost and favorable risk-reward calculation. At this point it is unclear, however, whether these events represent “opportunistic looting”, or whether ivory is being strategically sought after to finance the groups’ operations as it adapts its survival strategies (HSBA, 2013). In order to evaluate the theoretical potential of ivory as a “conflict resource” – as actively financing hostilities – the next section will turn to the specific characteristics of the resource itself.

Resource type.

According to resource economics, ivory would be classified as an exhaustible, renewable resource (Silberberg & Ellis, 2007) – it is conditionally renewable, but its harvesting involves an inter-temporal trade off. Unless elephants are poached to extinction,
the resource will renew via reproduction; however, the time lag is large due to the years it
takes for a young elephant to grow mature tusks. Poachers would thus be expected to have a
positive time preference, exploiting the resource today to maximize immediate profit.

Exploitation incentives and resource access are also influenced by ivory’s spatial and
biophysical characteristics. According to the literature on the geographies of resource wars,
ivory would be characterised as a “diffuse” resource (Auty, 2001; Le Billon, 2008). While
elephant populations are concentrated at a global scale, originating from Sub-Saharan Africa
and East Asia, at a regional level, they are relatively dispersed in comparison to “point”
resources, such as minerals and oil. Moreover, unlike oil, diamonds and minerals, the source
of ivory – elephants – is also mobile (on average a herd will cover up to 80km per day
(Bercovitch, 2008), geographically distant from the centre of power and, in the case of
Central African elephants, a forest dweller (CITES, 2013). As geographically dispersed,
mobile, forest dwellers that do not respect the boundaries of nation states, elephants are
difficult to manage and control (Auty, 2001). Yet their spatial habits, such as moving to
enclaves to wash and drink, mean they are temporarily and habitually concentrated and hence
a relatively easy and low risk target for the informed poacher.

Finally, ivory can be classified as a moderately “unobstructable resource” (Ross,
2003, p. 62). Although Central African ivory comes from a landlocked, remote location and
must be transported overland before it is flown or shipped to Asia, it has a moderate value-to-
weight ratio in comparison to diamonds and gemstones (high), and timber (low) (Ross, 2003),
for example, and is relatively easy to transport. In 2012, an average tusk of 13.6kg would go
for around US$32,000 on the international market (Saunders, 2012). Unlike oil, which
requires significant investment and a vast infrastructure to extract, refine and trade (Ross,
2003), the extraction of ivory is neither capital- nor labour- intensive and can be obtained
with a few shots from a small arm, such as an AK47 (CITES, 2013). Furthermore, unlike
point resources, such as oil or deep-shaft minerals which “often depend on international
political recognition for mobilizing investors and access to markets” (Ross, 2003, p. 63), as
discussed in the previous section, ivory can be easily converted into cash and weapons in the
largely unregulated domestic markets across Central Africa (Apobo, 2004; Milliken, 2004;
Ross, 2003). In sum, it is a resource that is not only easy to extract, but also relatively easy to
transport and trade.
Materiality: Relative financial value.

Ivory makes up a small proportion of the illicit trade in a range of commodities (Haken, 2011). If we compare ivory to rough diamonds and gemstones – other commonly conceptualised conflict resources – its monetary value in terms of global illicit trade is also relatively low (US$180 million and US$660 million, respectively) (Haken, 2011). However, although there is a substantial difference in the value of global trade, the ICG (2010) highlights how earnings from diamonds in the local context (in CAR) are “limited” – miners may expect on average US$160 for a one-carat diamond – “primarily because [they] are mostly ignorant of a diamond’s real value” (ICG, 2010, p. 9). In comparison, one kilogram of ivory is sold for at least US$15-35 in local markets (Apobo, 2004). More recent estimates (Gossmann, 2010) state that ivory is worth around US$100-150 per kilogram. This is a questionable price difference; nonetheless, according to the 2004 estimates, one tusk could fetch between US$200 and US$480, depending on its weight – substantially more than a one-carat rough diamond.

In relative terms, it appears that ivory is a lucrative resource for armed groups. In Mambasa, eastern DRC where ivory is sold for around US$15-20 per kilogram (both onto international criminal markets and to local traders and artists), an AK47 can be purchased for US$80-100 and ammunition for US$0.30-0.35 per cartridge (Apobo, 2004). So, for every 4-7 kilograms of ivory sold – less than the weight of an average tusk – one weapon can be purchased and/or a substantial amount of ammunition. Between 2000 and 2004, 23,687 kilograms of ivory was retrieved from the Okapi reserve in eastern DRC alone (Apobo, 2004), equating to around US$414,500 on the domestic market, or 4,606 AK-47s.

On the international market, the price of ivory has grown significantly over the past decade and in East Asia, for example, its value has almost tripled since 2001 (Gossmann, 2010). Demand has been stimulated by increasing purchasing power in Asia where ivory is sought after by a burgeoning middle class for its beauty, religious symbolism and alleged medicinal properties (Martin & Vigne, 2011). Top-end price estimates from 2008-2010 averaged around US$900 per kilogram in China and up to US$1,800 per kilogram in Vietnam (Begley 2008; Gossmann, 2010; Martin & Vigne, 2011). More recently, one kilogram has been reported to fetch around US$2,300 in Beijing (Gettleman, 2012; Saunders, 2012), showing significant price inflation. This indicates that today, in absolute terms, assuming one tusk of a mature bull elephant weighs on average 13.6 kilograms, a single dead elephant bull could provide up to US$62,560 of ivory in the end market. Moreover, the 23,687 kilograms
of ivory that could purchase 4,606 AK-47s in Okapi Reserve, eastern DRC would be worth around US$54.5m in East Asia. This difference in market price (disregarding transaction costs) suggests that couriers and middlemen are making substantial profits.

Finally, prior research has highlighted how revenues from a single resource, though playing a major role in financing belligerents, are rarely the sole source of income (Le Billon, 2008; Weinstein, 2007). Rather, these groups have multiple sources of financing and shift from one to another as a function of their needs (Wennmann, 2007). As such, the connections opened-up to illicit trading networks through the conversion of the ivory resource into cash are likely to increase the “predictability of economic interactions” (Titeca, 2011, p. 45) and hence the opportunities for trading other illegal goods as and when this becomes an option (Taylor, 2003), acting as a results multiplier.

To conclude, in comparison to other conflict resources such as diamonds and timber, the relative value of global illicit trade in ivory is low. However, at regional and local levels, its relative value suggests it would be an attractive resource for armed groups, such as the LRA, who have little-to-no external funding sources, operate very efficiently and are extremely mobile. Moreover, as highlighted earlier in the paper, the value of a resource is not simply a function of its price, but also the ease of access, the risk associated with its extraction and the ease of conversion into cash and weapons (Le Billon, 2008).

**Conclusion**

The characteristics of the ivory economy outlined in this paper support both the case presented in verbal and media testimonies, and Le Billon’s (2008, p. 349) definition of a conflict resource, in the extent to which ivory is one likely source of revenue among others (via extraction and trade), both financing and benefitting from the context of armed conflict. As is implicit within this definition, it is difficult to untangle the direction of causality in the relationship between ivory and conflict; a difficulty compounded by the lack of robust empirical research and data on the subject at the time of writing. Nonetheless, this paper has attempted to unpack the relationship, drawing comparisons with other conflict resources. It has found that poaching and trade in ivory by armed groups in Central Africa appears to incur low opportunity costs for relatively high potential gains. Booming East Asian demand and ivory’s characteristic as an exhaustible resource provide market incentives to trade, while its spatial and biophysical resource characteristics, embedded in a context of insecurity, weak regulatory institutions and a dense system of illicit networks, provide ease of access and conversion into cash and weapons. Moreover, the low opportunity costs associated with its
extraction and trade are supported by the benefits provided by the likely linkages opened-up with TNOCs and well-connected local tradesmen.

Finally, various sources have pointed to the implication of other actors. Increasing human-elephant conflict, for example, has been levied as a counter-argument, implementing locals in defence of their crops and livelihoods (CITES, 2013; Litoroh, Omondi, Kock, & Amin, 2012). Though this is likely to be the case in certain circumstances – as is the implication of Ugandan, Congolese and Sudanese armies (Apobo, 2004; Gettleman, 2012; Gossmann, 2010) – it does not add up to the current scale of ivory trade. The picture is likely to be much messier; as one interviewee put it, “everyone’s at it”.

References


