PEACEBUILDING IN DEEPLY DIVIDED SOCIETIES

Toward Social Cohesion?

Fletcher D. Cox and Timothy D. Sisk

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Fletcher D. Cox • Timothy D. Sisk
Editors

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Editors
Fletcher D. Cox
Department of Political Science
William Jewell College
Liberty, MO, USA

Timothy D. Sisk
Josef Korbel School of International
Studies
University of Denver
Denver, Colorado, USA

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Introduction

Fletcher D. Cox, Timothy D. Sisk and Elizabeth Hester

Identity-based violence, articulated along religious, ethnic and sectarian lines, presents grave threats to international peace and security. Into the twenty-first century, violence in deeply divided societies such as Iraq and Syria, the Central African Republic, Myanmar, Yemen, and Ukraine (to name but a few) grab headlines as war in these countries crystallizes along identity lines, often leading to mass atrocities and near-genocidal

F.D. Cox (✉)
Department of Political Science, William Jewell College, Liberty, MO, USA

Sié Chéou Kang Center for International Security and Diplomacy, Korbel School of International Studies, University of Denver, Denver, CO, USA
e-mail: coxf@william.jewell.edu

T.D. Sisk
Josef Korbel School of International Studies, University of Denver, Denver, Colorado, USA
e-mail: timothy.sisk@du.edu

E. Hester
Denver, CO, USA
e-mail: liza.hester@gmail.com

violence. In such settings, a once-held putative sense of "living together" evaporates when deadly violence erupts and identity cleavages become principal social fault lines. Absent partition and breakup of current countries, however, when the guns fall silent, citizens in such deeply divided societies must inexorably continue living together in a shared, invariably contested state.

Incidents of violence with identity-based dimensions are on the rise. According to a 2014 report by the Pew Research Center, conflicts with ethno-religious dimensions became more prevalent as the twenty-first century unfolded.[1] Violent events across a broad range of countries support this finding. Within the current "wave" of religious and ethnic violence globally, conflicts that may begin over other issues – such as in Syria in the context of the Arab Spring demands for regime change in autocratic states – can quickly become ethnic (or in this case, sectarian) in nature (Hashemi and Postel 2016).

In the wake of such conflicts, whether they end in cold truces, negotiated settlements, or in military victories, social divisions that emerged during the conflict not only linger as intractable fault lines but also in some cases they are exacerbated during the course of volatile post-war transitions. Rearranged demographic relationships (such as spatial patterns caused by ethnic targeting or "cleansing"), political organization along ethnic lines, and conflict-coping strategies adopted by individuals seeking security amidst turmoil deepen or create new identity-based social divisions. Similarly, peace agreements, particularly power-sharing pacts, often reinforce ethnic fragmentation as parties-in-conflict seek guarantees of inclusion in the post-conflict order (Sisk 2010).

Within deeply divided, conflict-affected countries, the principal threat to already delicate social cohesion[2] is the pervasive, societal fear that violence leaves in its wake. Each of the country-level studies in this book shows how violence causes deeply experienced and pervasive fear at individual, community and local levels, and in relationship to the state. Civil war, national, or local political violence reinforces widespread societal fears, especially in conflict-affected areas, and crystallizes informal organizations and civil society (including political parties) along identity lines. In many cases, this leads to heightened physical separation of groups, or to the development of parallel social and political institutions in which individuals, families, and communities find safety or seek to mitigate fear through intra-group "bonding." Violence drives both inter-group

differentiation and intra-group bonding as a direct response to pervasive fear. Left unaddressed, pervasive fear becomes the foundation for future threats to fragile peace.

BUILDING PEACE THROUGH SOCIAL COHESION

The book explores this critical issue: if the principal threat to already delicate cohesion in deeply divided societies is the pervasive fear that identity-based violence leaves in its wake, what can international and domestic peace-builders do to help deeply divided societies discover a renewed sense of living together? How can they positively affect social relations in light of politicization of ethnicity in politics and governance using a toolbox of interventions supported by development assistance?

Since the early 1990s, international organizations seeking to end conflicts, implement peace agreements, and address the root causes of conflicts have focused their efforts on peacebuilding: multifaceted security, development, and human rights-related interventions designed to prevent conflict recurrence.[3] In essence, as seen in the analysis presented in this book, international peacebuilding involves a multifaceted approach to addressing the exigent fears for the future that develop at the level of individual insecurity and between social groups. Peacebuilding work, however, is complex and vexing.

International and local peacebuilding alike face a myriad of constraints on their ability to positively affect political systems and societies in the wake of war.[4] In the course of war, the state loses legitimacy, experiences declining capacity to provide basic public services, or a party to the conflict captures the state. Civil society organizations that cross-cut identity lines are weakened or in the worst instances cease to exist. In the immediate aftermath of violence, therefore, interveners understandably work with what exists "on the ground." They often conclude that meeting urgent needs is best furthered by channeling humanitarian and development assistance through informal institutions such as ethnic and faith-based civil society groups or through corrupt, politically captured, and weakened state institutions.

Due to these constraints and operational dilemmas, critics of peacebuilding argue external intervention in conflict-affected countries often leads to unintended consequences.[5] Whether deliberately or inadvertently, some critical voices contend external actors strengthen ethnic or faith-based forms of service delivery that in turn weaken the state and its legitimacy as a neutral service provider. At times, aid strengthens nationalistic or exclusive social forces at the expense of building cross-cutting, conflict-ameliorating

ties, which may limit the capacity of the state to expand authority and recover legitimacy. Supporting religious institutions during peace or development efforts, for example, may create "bonding" social capital (strengthening within-group ties) at the expense of supporting a state and a civil society that is based on "bridging" social capital (strengthening between-group ties). Moreover, the "illiberal" nature of some religious institutions may undermine the advancement of global norms, particularly on agendas such as women's participation and empowerment.

In response to such criticisms of peacebuilding in divided societies, international development practitioners have begun to advance the concept of "social cohesion" as both a necessary ingredient for progress toward violence reduction and sustainable peace, and as an important outcome of development efforts. In this book, while we recognize the challenging definitional boundaries of the expansive social cohesion concept, we find it a useful, rigorous, and scholarly informed concept for analyzing contemporary conflict patterns and for informing post-conflict development assistance programming. Fostering social cohesion is an important starting point or "theory of change" perspective for identifying ways in which development assistance providers can have a conflict-sensitive perspective on ostensibly technical service delivery, such as environmental, livelihoods, or gender-based programming. While social cohesion does not resolve all the dilemmas of peacebuilding, which have been identified by scholars and practitioners alike, the concept provides a platform for better analysis of the identity-based dimensions of contemporary armed conflicts. It also holds promise for developing more informed and strategic efforts to positively affect the willingness of populations in post-conflict contexts to live together. Social cohesion is essentially about realizing sustainable peace.

Social cohesion has become an attractive approach to peacebuilding among a wide set of international organizations and development practitioners. A new set of agendas for peacebuilding informs research and policy reflection in the area of social cohesion, namely the World Bank's World Development Report (2011) and Societal Dynamics of Fragility (2013), the United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) 2012 *Governance for Peace* report (2012), and the so-called New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States put forward by the "g7+" (2011).[6] The social cohesion concept also recurs as a theme throughout the network of peacebuilding organizations – from other international and intergovernmental organizations, to regional organizations, transnational non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and traditional bilateral assistance providers. In line with new

multilateral agendas, development strategies and policies in conflict-affected countries are moving toward targeting the nexus between state and society, with social cohesion and "strengthening the social contract" as primary aims for international engagement.

Particularly, the United Nations (UN) peacebuilding "architecture" – an evolving international regime for preventing, managing, and ending the scourge of war – increasingly sees sustainability as critical to its mission. While peace agreements and peacekeeping are important dimensions of interventions, UN practitioners have realized that sustaining the peace requires long-term interventions that address fundamental social and political relations in conflict-affected countries. Among relevant actors at the UN level are the increasingly deployed "special political missions," countries on the agenda of the UN Peacebuilding Commission, and a wide range of UN countries teams in countries that are vulnerable to, witnessing, or emerging from armed conflict.

Social cohesion has two dimensions, first, the relationships within societies across deep divisions, and, second, the relationship between individuals and groups with the state.[7] Within the broader debates on peacebuilding, the cohesion concept is a leitmotif for assessment of social dynamics and as a common strategic goal of interventions to promote resilience to conflict and in recovery when it occurs. Jane Jensen, for example, argues that "in many countries the focus on social cohesion emerged from a recognition that classic neoliberalism had hit a political and ideational wall and was generating negative outcomes such as high levels of poverty. Social cohesion, as a macro-goal to be maintained or fostered, appeared as a consensual substitute [for neoliberalism] across a range of policy communities" (Jenson 2010, p. 21). In a "post-neoliberal" or "post-Washington consensus" environment, in which social policy is being rethought across multiple contexts, "social cohesion" has become a shared concept among academics and policy-makers alike for thinking about how to design public policies and institutions that address the causes and effects of social exclusion, social distrust, and political marginalization.

PRIORITY OF THE POLITICAL: GOVERNANCE AS A PRISM FOR IDENTITY-BASED RELATIONS

We argue in this volume that peacebuilding programming and policies aimed at "fostering social cohesion" in deeply divided societies regularly fail to adequately address political dynamics that drive

fragmentation, fear, and conflict vulnerability. Social cohesion is an attractive concept that we endorse, but as research in this volume shows, progress in peacebuilding requires a priority on the political, or "vertical" dimension, of social cohesion. Without addressing the distortions, institutions, and incentives of governance, many efforts to build cohesion among groups in conflict-affected countries have limited impact. In each of the cases we analyze and compare, politics and governance operates as a prism for identity-based relationships. This finding reinforces earlier research in the comparative politics discipline that demonstrates the critical relationships between ethnic groups, identity and the state.[8]

Specifically, we find in the study that there is a crucial link between political systems, access to power, and access to resources (public and private) that increases social fragmentation vis-à-vis the sense of "relative deprivation" among highly marginalized groups. Political systems and the "rules of the game" shape various forms of marginalization and impact which groups have access to power. Where political power and access to power to distribute state resources is linked to processes of ethnic mobilization, there are high levels of fragmentation, mistrust, and fear among competing groups. Groups that attain access to political power tend to become highly protectionist – often engaging in deceptive and sometimes violent strategies to maintain control, even over scarce peacebuilding or development resources.

Dominant groups that acquired power post-independence tend to hold onto power, using repression and political violence as tactics to prevent marginalized groups from gaining access to power. The historical dominance of single ethnic groups or blocs of larger ethnic coalitions creates deeply entrenched forms of marginalization that are especially volatile, as illustrated by the cases of Guatemala, Kenya, Nigeria, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka. Political and economic institutions that are in place in post-colonial states play a key role in shaping the dynamics of marginalization and determining which groups have or do not have access to political power. These structures make entrenched patterns of identity-based fragmentation and exclusion very difficult to overcome even with the best-designed, well-intentioned peacebuilding interventions. Effectively peacebuilding, therefore, requires reformulating a balance of power and preventing marginalized identity groups from being left out of governance processes and being prevented from access to power.

Conceptual Orientation: Conflict, Fear, and Governance in Deeply Divided Societies

The country-level analyses in this book show how violence, captured political institutions, and economic inequalities reinforce deeply experienced and pervasive fear across conflict-affected countries. Civil war, national, or local political violence along identity lines reinforces widespread fears and crystallizes informal social organizations and civil society (including political parties and factions) along identity lines. When such violence occurs, it drives inter-group differentiation and intra-group bonding as a direct response to pervasive fear. Existential threats arise from being identified as a member of a particular group and from potential or real threats of violence, discrimination, marginalization, or targeting from the local manifestation of the state, which should be the ultimate source of protection from fear. As dignity is a basic human need, fear of state-institutionalized marginalization or social disadvantage (or fear of reversal of fortune for dominant groups) gives rise to collective fears of becoming unequal citizens in one's own country when societal structures are ranked or re-ranked according to "relative group worth." For national-level cohesion, the state must confirm and advance parity of esteem, distributional fairness, and equitable political participation. At the local level, cohesion depends on inclusivity and freedom from "ranked" micro-societies or pervasive networks centered on identity ties.

Fear in conflict-affected communities also leads to greed-based patterns of co-ethnic clientelism. In the wake of violence, fear of future insecurity incentivizes the pursuit of immediate gains. Extreme greed becomes the primary mode of accumulation. Personal and co-ethnic accumulation of wealth and power may be the response of wealthy, influential leaders who engage in predation to address their own existential fears-often by playing the ethnic card. Instrumentalist political mobilization at the hands of greedy ethnic entrepreneurs is unsuccessful unless it can capitalize on more widespread fears broadly shared within entire identity groups.

Earlier work on deeply divided societies in the twentieth century suggested that such fear could be contained by providing security guarantees to ethnic groups and structuring the state in a group-based or consociational power-sharing framework (Lijphart 1977). Such approaches do not adequately address the underlying social drivers of conflict, rooted in fear, as they rely on elites to prevent the further conflict along identity lines.[9] These findings resonate closely with social psychology literature on the

origins and manifestations of identity-based fears and problems of mutual perception of threats emanating from outgroups. A number of theoretical approaches to the causes of inter-group prejudice analyze emotional reactions to perceived threats.[10] According to these perspectives, threat – both realistic and symbolic – leads to both psychological and behavioral outcomes (Stephan and Renfro 2002).

Inter-group emotion theory, for example, posits that individuals understand a situation in terms of the potential harm or benefit to one's group under conditions when social identity is politically salient (Devos et al. 2002). Individuals tend to move away from and avoid antagonists in situations characterized by weakness and fear (Neuberg and Cottrell 2002; Neuberg and Cotrell 2005).

In other words, fear not only persists on a personal level, but also on a societal level with implications as a shared emotion. Due to the inherently stressful and pervasive nature of social conflict and violence, collective fear offers a way to cope with uncertainty and creates mistrust and de-legitimization of groups perceived as opponents (Bar-Tal 2001). Since fear can be unconsciously aroused by a particular cue as a result of stored memories of past emotional experiences, the binding of past and present experiences within collective social fears may cause individuals to automatically fear situations that do not necessarily imply threat or danger, overriding rationality and logic systems (Bar-Tal et al. 2007).

Deeply divided, conflict-affected societies clearly exhibit collective fear. Findings derived from the research presented in this book support this point of departure. Peacebuilders interested in reducing vulnerability to identity-based violence must focus on managing individual and collective fears as a strategic approach. Countries that have experienced identity-based violence and corresponding peacebuilding interventions provide robust evidence that pervasive fear fosters behaviors that limit the effectiveness of even the most carefully designed and strategic efforts. The chapters in this volume provide evidence for these links among armed conflict and violence, ethnic mobilization, and mutual security fears at individual and collective levels. In such environments, groups contend over control of the state as a means of coping with collective fear, and as an in-group protective strategy. Deep understanding of the origins, pathways, and manifestations of collective fears, therefore, is critical to building sustainable peace. Externally supported and internally led interventions to promote social cohesion must mitigate the root causes of fear.

In the country analyses in this book, religion as a form of identity plays a unique role related to dimensions of social fear, with deep implications for

peacebuilding. The book confirms the "ambivalence" of religion as related to cohesion or fragmentation (see Chapter 2), but, more importantly, stresses that religion plays a unique role in societies impacted by violence and working to re-establish foundations for social cohesion. At the communal level, religious institutions (of multiple varieties in what has become an expanding, and global religious marketplace) are deeply embedded in society and are powerful institutions that make appeals for unity that bridges familial, ethnic, class, or other social divisions. Religious groups and faith-based organizations span well beyond state borders, and are often the very first actors to respond to episodes of crises and conflict. As such, religion structures societies in unique ways that donors regularly fail to account for. At the individual level, religion(s) address existential threats through sacred texts, processes of interpretation and religious practice that can function to reduce individual-level fear of "the Other." Such forms of identity may not necessarily have the same capacity to deal with the psychological dynamics of trauma and reconciliation.

At the national level, religious identity often matters more than other forms of identity (race, class, language, clan, etc.) due to the content of religious systems. Religions have very diverse sets of ideals related to the organization of government, how power should be exercised in society, who should lead, and how perpetrators of violence should be dealt with. All of these factors matter greatly within peace processes. Minority groups can become especially fearful when the content of a legal system contradicts religious belief, or fails to ensure protection of religious values. Minority groups often remain well organized and mobilized for potential conflict when they fear another group will construct a society that constrains their right to practice religion or other forms of ritual related to the group's identity. For these reasons, the study emphasizes assessment of religious actors and organizations within various conflict settings without prejudging whether and how religion is defined or plays a role in social relations and in governance. The chapters that follow, particularly, bear out the complexities and context specific findings related to religion, conflict, and peacebuilding.[11]

STRUCTURE OF ANALYSIS

Focusing on the principal research puzzle, case studies by leading international scholars and "global South" researchers yield in-depth analyses of social cohesion and related peacebuilding efforts in seven countries: Guatemala, Kenya, Lebanon, Nepal, Nigeria, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka.

First, the book presents an argument for the social cohesion lens in understanding and evaluating peacebuilding interventions in deeply divided, conflict-affected countries. A conceptual chapter defines the social cohesion concept more fully, and a succinct literature review informs the presentation of a common country-level assessment framework. Drawing on the scholarly literature on deeply divided societies and on peacebuilding, the project team developed a country-level assessment guide that was reviewed by a 20-person advisory group of leading scholars and policy practitioners.

The methodology follows the approach of a structured, focused comparison of seven cases where international actors have aimed to reshape relationships among identity groups that played a role in violent conflict. The seven country analyses capture regional variation, variation of ethnic divisions and religious traditions, and a variety of donor approaches to peacebuilding and statebuilding.[12]

Second, seven in-depth country-level analyses present findings of the research teams, which collectively conducted in-country analysis. Based on the common assessment guide derived from the literature, each of the case studies explores the nature of and challenges to social cohesion in various contexts. Each case analyzes: the role of religious and ethnic communities, organizations, and movements in reinforcing or mitigating social divisions that drive instability and conflict vulnerability; the extent and nature of donor-sponsored projects that engage diverse communities in national and local peace processes; the direct and indirect approaches, programs, and projects through which external actors have sought to build social cohesion through aid-funded projects; and lessons learned on the extent to which aid-funded cooperative relationships between identity-based communities and government may advance social cohesion and facilitate sustainable peace.

Overall, the field research component involved over 330 participants, including individual interviews and focus group dialogues with local analysts and international policy practitioners together with site visits to peacebuilding programs addressing issues of social cohesion. Field researches engaged with a broad spectrum of actors including government officials, religious leaders, scholars, local peacebuilders and NGO/civil society organization program managers, representatives of the development aid community, and UN actors. Research teams, then, used interview data to write case-study reports outlining the particular dynamics of the external intervention in relation to social cohesion in each case.

Third, the penultimate chapter by the editors presents cross-case findings across the cases, and a conclusion reiterates the principal argument about the utility and limitations of the social cohesion approach. Overall, we find that three principal approaches emerge as essential for fighting fear of political, economic, and social marginalization: cultural norms and historical narratives that provide for parity of esteem (or non-discrimination), distributive policies that addresses historical marginalization and inequalities, often through "pro-poor" public policies and institutions that ensure human rights protections to all individuals and guarantees to the most vulnerable groups. Without the pledge and effort of the state at the vertical level of social cohesion to eradicate horizontal inequalities, and to provide all groups assurances of security at the social level, collective fears will create persistent conflict vulnerability, horizontal or societal social cohesion will remain elusive.

NOTES

1. Pew Research Center, *Religious Hostilities Reach Six-Year High*, January 14, 2014, http://www.pewforum.org/2014/01/14/religious-hostilities-reach-six-year-high/.
2. Social cohesion – a critical concept for this book – is defined more fully in Chapter 2.
3. For an evaluation of the peacebuilding term in its various dimensions, see Vincent Chetail, ed., *Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: A Lexicon*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
4. See Jarstad and Sisk (2008) and Paris and Sisk (2009).
5. Much of the scholarly debate has begun to describe approaches and outcomes in conflict-affected countries in terms of hybridity: a mélange of institutions that includes the formal state along with informal organizations, networks, and institutions. See, for instance, MacGinty (2010).
6. See, e.g., International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (2011).
7. Please see Chapter 2 for a more full articulation of the vertical and horizontal dimensions of social cohesion that inform our definition.
8. See, e.g., Brass (1985) and Rothchild and Olonrunsola (1983).
9. On elite accommodation as the basis of the consociational formula, through the so-called self-negating prediction in which elites are compelled to compromise to avoid violence, see du Toit (1989).
10. For a review of literature that expands categorization of prejudice beyond a general attitude, see, Mackie and Smith (2002).

11. See Omer et al. (2015).
12. Case selection for this volume involved an initial set of possible cases chosen
     for variation across three dimensions: extent of expected identity-based
     cleavages within society, regional variation, and variation in the approaches
     of international and local peacebuilders. The initial selection was reviewed
     and amended by the participation of an international advisory group of
     scholars and practitioners who convened for a three-day conference in
     2012 to evaluate the conceptual approach, comparative research methodol-
     ogy and case selection, and the country-level assessment framework that
     appears at the end of Chapter 2.

Fletcher D. Cox is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at William Jewell College, and a Research Associate of the Sié Chéou Kang Center for International Security and Diplomacy at the Korbel School of International Studies, University of Denver. He specializes in the study of civil wars, political violence, and peace-building in divided societies, and has managed relief, development, and peace-building programs in multiple disaster and conflict settings.

Timothy D. Sisk is Professor of International and Comparative Politics at the Josef Korbel School of International Studies, University of Denver; his research and writing is focused on areas of democracy and governance, conflict analysis, and international engagement in conflict-affected countries.

Elizabeth Hester is a recent graduate of the Josef Korbel School MA Program in Conflict Resolution with a specialization on the neuropsychology of peacebuilding; she works as an independent researcher and analyst.

Peacebuilding: A Social Cohesion Approach

Fletcher D. Cox and Timothy D. Sisk

External engagement to promote social cohesion in conflict-affected countries remains perplexing in light of the wide variety of experience in the contemporary, post–Cold War, post-9/11 era and in to the twenty-first century. In some instances outsiders appear to have unwittingly reinforced social divisions, both intentionally and unintentionally, while seeking quick access for aid delivery or to institute development and peacebuilding programs in deeply divided, conflict-affected regions. External assessment of Norway's decade-long effort to foster peace in war-torn Sri Lanka, for example, found that the use of development aid in conflict-affected communities was highly complicated. The study, conducted by the Bergen-based Christian Michelsen Institute, found that in addition to high-level mediation, development aid caused social fragmentation and contributed to conflict escalation

F.D. Cox (✉)
Department of Political Science, William Jewell College, Liberty, MO, USA

Sié Chéou Kang Center for International Security and Diplomacy, Korbel School of International Studies, University of Denver, Denver, CO, USA
e-mail: coxf@william.jewell.edu

T.D. Sisk
Josef Korbel School of International Studies, University of Denver, Denver, Colorado, USA
e-mail: timothy.sisk@du.edu

in this case. Norway's high-level mediation efforts not only "failed" to reach a negotiated settlement to end direct hostilities, efforts to use aid to build peace inadvertently strengthened conflict actors and increased inter-group tension. Particularly, aid deployed in the wake of the devastating 2004 tsunami had unintended social effects that undermined the broader pursuit of peace.[1] In other instances, outsiders designed and instituted programs that effectively fostered inter-group tolerance, consensus building, and, in effect, social cohesion (Smock 2006).

As in immediate post-war Sri Lanka, and in many other conflict-affected countries, working with identity-based organizations bedevils international donors and implementing partners seeking to balance humanitarian imperatives, practical aid-delivery realities, and peace and development goals (MacGinty 2010). For example, in Guatemala, internal and international peacebuilders have struggled to promote social cohesion through national dialogue, transitional justice, and indigenous-group empowerment programming. To date, deep inequalities along identities lines, indigenous-group mobilization, and persistent threats to human security challenge social cohesion. In Kenya, recent acts of symbolic violence have undermined social cohesion, and a collective sense of common destiny remains elusive. Political elites continue to fan the flames of ethnic discontent for political gain, effectively undermining donor-supported institutional reforms such as devolution, and new electoral systems at national and local levels intentionally designed to promote social cohesion.

Nigeria is a key testing ground for donor support for peacebuilding and social cohesion-related efforts among conflicting groups, even as the Islamist group Boko Haram has escalated attacks. The case includes examples of both successes in failures as various actors and organizations have employed a broad range of peacebuilding strategies. Myanmar recently opened its borders to donors, generating a large influx of actors working at the nexus of peacebuilding and statebuilding to reduce identity-based conflict across the state. Analysis suggests that peacebuilding efforts remain largely uncoordinated and ad hoc, indicating external intervention might be playing a role in deepening social divisions in some regions of the country. Careful assessment and comparative analysis, therefore, is essential for identifying the conditions under which some efforts exacerbate conflict inducing social divisions, while others do not.

Defining Social Cohesion

Social cohesion is a not merely a classic social science concern (Durkheim 1951). Current approaches to peacebuilding in deeply divided societies argue that "state-society disequilibria," or an imbalance between society's expectations and the state's capacity to meet those expectations, is a principal source of conflict and violence (OECD 2010). In the social cohesion literature, multifaceted social exclusion and marginalization operates as a fundamental source of religious and ethnic mobilization and social and state disorder ... often leading to violent encounters. Pearlman, for example, builds a strong case that intra-group cohesion among identity-based groups may limit the likelihood of violent encounters (Pearlman 2011; Pearlman and Cunningham 2012).[2] As such, a broad range of theories serve as foundations for the idea that seeking to engineer, foster, or elicit "social cohesion" is a legitimate and strategic way for internal and international peacebuilders to both combat social exclusion and strengthen state–society relations in order to reduce conflict vulnerability and create more "resilient" states (Marc et al. 2013).[3]

Its strength as an emerging, shared international policy concept is also its potential weakness. With expansive use, it faces the problem of becoming a concept without analytical distinction: a "quasi-concept" or hybrid term to help bridge academic work and policy debates similar to other social science terms such as "social capital," "institutions," or even "globalization" that are used so broadly that they are commonly misunderstood, limiting capacity for comparison. In efforts to address these concerns, precision in definitions is paramount.

Building from the works on social capital, a broad range of scholars and policy-making institutions have sought to develop a succinct definition of social cohesion that can be operationalized for empirical research (Berger-Schmitt 2000; Jenson 2010). In this volume, we build on the definition and framework of Chan et al. in seeking to define what many consider a rather nebulous concept (Chan et al. 2006). Chan and colleagues define social cohesion as, "a state of affairs concerning both the vertical [state-society] and the horizontal interactions among members of society [actors, groups, organizations, institutions] as characterized by a set of attitudes and norms that includes trust, a sense of belonging and the willingness to participate and help, as well as their behavioral manifestations" (p. 290). Social cohesion, therefore, is an endogenous property of any given society within any level of the international system

(e.g., city, state, or region) at a given point in time. This approach provides a strong conceptual approach for moving from concept to empirical assessment.

Based on this definition, Chan et al. operationalize social cohesion vis-à-vis two dimensions, "horizontal" and "vertical," and two components, "objectivity" and "subjectivity." The objective level of analysis focuses on the nature of observable points of contact or the sites of access between the state and society; it looks at the ways in which the state establishes various institutions and incentive structures within which religious and ethnic actors and organizations operate. The subjective level directs attention toward values, attitudes, and beliefs that social actors develop toward the state and toward other ethnic and religious groups within the state. The subjective level focuses on the nature of ethnic and religious identity construction, or the processes through which ethno-religious identity emerges in the context of historical struggles and contention and the subsequent ideals of the nation that are reflected within state institutions.

The social cohesion concept relates to work on social capital and civil society. Putnam, for instance, from a culturalist perspective, argues that social capital has a historical–cultural dimension in particular societies and makes a case that high levels of social capital are directly related to successful governance (Putnam et al. 1994). Coleman, in contrast, from a game-theoretical perspective, discards Putnam's notion of social capital as having a cultural component and looks solely at how social networks, understood as webs of social interconnections, help build confidence in future action and decrease transaction costs (Coleman 1994). Teorell et al., however, in contrast to Putnam and Coleman, contend social capital is endogenous to political systems (2006). That is, levels of social trust are not completely culturally determined or based on rational choice; rather, the internal characteristics of different combinations of political and social institutions either foster or suppress levels of social trust within different contexts. This perspective on social cohesion informs the conceptual approach of this book.

Contemporary theories of political behavior seek to understand the interactive relationship between individual and contextual variables and there is movement toward combining multiple theories to explain different types of participation in the "authoritative allocation of values in society" (Easton 1975, 435). For example, in line with the work of Ashutosh Varshney (2002) on civic groups in divied societies, Sisk confirms, "Rights-based approaches and norms, symbols, and measures that promote 'parity of esteem' are seen in societies that

also witness the evolution of an institutionally structured, integrated civil society that cuts across religious, sectarian, and doctrinal lines" (Sisk 2012, 238).[4]

In contrast, the literature on social cohesion emerging from policy-oriented institutions working in conflict-affected countries such as the World Bank, OECD-DAC, and United Nation (UN), *inter alia*, employs a third dimension: institutions and governance. Easterly *et al.*, for instance, in an assessment of the linkages between social cohesion, institutions, and development, provide a basic definition of social cohesion as, "the nature and extent of social and economic divisions within society" (Easterly et al. 2006). They argue that particular socioeconomic divisions function as key constraints on government leaders, especially in low-income countries working toward institutional reform. Different types of social cleavages may constrain or enable politicians' choices (determine "room to maneuver"), which affects whether states can actually improve the quality of their institutions. From this perspective, social fragmentation has important implication not only for conflict dynamics (often as a putative "root cause"), but for economic performance and growth.[5] Overall, contemporary research related to social cohesion clearly explores the "multidimensionality" of the concept and aims to understand the relationship between social divisions, conflict, and development dynamics in countries emerging from war.

WHY GOVERNANCE MATTERS FOR SOCIAL COHESION

In the pursuit of understanding vertical and horizontal social cohesion, there is broad consensus that institutions matter. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) approach to fostering social cohesion emphasizes an institutional dimension of social cohesion. Its principal policy document on social cohesion programming contends, "social cohesion is about tolerance of, and respect for, diversity (in terms of religion, ethnicity, economic situation, political preferences, sexuality, gender and age) – both *institutionally* and *individually*."[6] In line with new definitions emerging from the development literature, Jensen finds that in both academic and policy conversations social "cohesion" is the end product of policies designed to: (a) engage groups commonly excluded and marginalized in societies; (b) increase social capital (vis-à-vis networks [bonding, bridging, and linking]), trust, belonging, and participation;

and (c) developing responsive and effective formal state institutions (Woolcock 2002).

Within the neo-institutionalist approach, however, informal institutions are commonly relegated behind formal institutions for understanding and explaining a broad spectrum of issues (Helmke and Levitsky 2004). Research tends to focus on how formal bureaucratic institutions incentivize political behavior, trajectories of economic development, international trade, statebuilding, and democratization. However, when informal institutions are evaluated in detail, especially in "fragile" states, it becomes evident that they play very important roles in shaping political and economic systems and are fundamental factors for understanding formal institutional evolution, stability, and change (Jütting 2007).

Policy-makers also suggest that paying close attention to informal institutions in fragile states is crucial for attaining positive outcomes. Michael Ignatieff, for example, argues that, "international action should be seen first and foremost as facilitating local processes, providing resources and creating the space for local actors to start a conversation that will define and consolidate their polity by mediating their vision of a good life into responsive, robust, and resilient institutions."[7] In other words, international actors must allow local, informal institutions to shape the development of formal institutions in cases of fragility rather than vice versa. Thus, there are a number of ongoing debates over the extent to which the informal matters relative to the formal, the issue of "hybridity," how international actors shape domestic institutional change, and whether informal institutions tend to lead to "good" or "bad" development outcomes.

Where formal (state) or informal (social) intermediaries are not legitimate, inclusive, or effective, conflict can escalate and unfold largely without restriction; thus, international engagement remains pivotal. However, external aid does not clearly translate into either peace or development. In conflict-affected societies, outsiders face extremely difficult challenges fostering social and institutional change required to overcome vulnerability to conflict with religious dimensions. Given the fact that "development" inherently requires institutional change, there are invariably arenas of instability, periods of social "incohesion" or "disintegration," and conflict among social actors over how to reorient institutions and power structures. In these gaps, it is unclear whether the primary external approach of fostering locally driven development that addresses concrete needs vis-à-vis mechanisms for collaborative social engagement

among different ethno-religious groups, will, in fact, have a lasting impact on limiting social violence along all social cohesion dimensions: horizontally, and vertically.

Development aid organizations have engaged religious organizations at many levels: in national-level dialogue projects (as in Guatemala or Lebanon), in regional and local programs where inter-group violence has been especially acute (as in Kosovo, Sudan, and Indonesia), or in interfaith dialogues that bring together religious leaders in a collective call for peace and social development (as in Northern Nigeria or Kenya following the election-related violence in 2007–2008). Development partners have employed both *direct* approaches, such as sponsoring dialogue initiatives that directly engage ethnic religious actors, and *indirect* approaches that focus on broader dynamics or deeply rooted drivers of conflict and instability. Different forms of intervention that have been undertaken in deeply divided, conflict-affected countries to redress root causes of violence may have different levels of capacity to improve social cohesion. In particular, indirect approaches may have longer-lasting impact and help overcome many of the dilemmas of external intervention.

Examining Social Cohesion through Country-Level Analysis

One of the dominant trends in civil wars, globally, is the rapid "internationalization" of intra-state conflicts (Themnér and Peter Wallensteen 2014). Social cohesion dynamics, therefore, even at the domestic level of analysis, must be assessed in relationship to international factors. This is due to the fact that, today, external actors and organizations are more deeply engaged than ever before in international efforts to control, manage, and ameliorate conditions conducive to the outbreak of armed conflict. Within peacebuilding interventions, as Zahar states, "new relations between locals and internationals introduce new resources and strategies into existing social, political, and economic processes" (Zahar 2012b, 77). External interventions create situations where local actors daily navigate overlapping local, state, and international institutional systems. Assessing the dynamics of social cohesion in post-conflict contexts, therefore, also requires understanding how international factors affect state and local

contexts and increase or decrease vulnerability to identity-based conflict. This represents a key innovation from the project: an assessment framework that accounts both for local or country-level dynamics and the effects of external intervention, or "domestic–international interactions," in the analysis of root social conditions driving conflict vulnerability.

Therefore, drawing on the scholarly literature on deeply divided societies and on peacebuilding, the project team employed a country-level assessment guide that was reviewed by a 20-person advisory group of leading scholars and policy practitioners – particularly those from UN peacebuilding entities – together with several high-level symposia in which preliminary and integrated results were presented for validation and refinement. The advisory group also worked through carefully the consideration of case selection and the methodology of pairing international and local researchers for the in-depth analyses.

Based on the common assessment guide, each case study country-level analysis that follows explores the nature of and challenges to social cohesion in various contexts. The role of ethnic and religious communities, organizations, and movements in reinforcing or mitigating social divisions that drive instability is analyzed, along with the extent and nature of donor-sponsored projects engaging diverse communities in national and local dialogues, and other direct and indirect programs or projects through which external actors sought to build social cohesion. The assessment framework is provided in the appendix.

APPENDIX 1: COUNTRY-LEVEL ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

Historical Context

- How have previous experiences of war, civil war, or mass violence shaped contemporary social cleavages?
- What are key historical factors that display "path dependence" in this case? That is, to what extent do colonial era administration practices, boundaries, land tenure regimes, or resource extraction strategies, *inter alia*, impact contemporary social cleavages?
- Have past leaders instituted direct "nationbuilding" policies and reforms? If so, were they successful in generating a more cohesive national identity?

Proximate Context

- What are the main conflict trends and patterns in this case (*e.g.*, cycles of election-related ethnic violence; urban or rural ethno-communal riots; symbolic, religious violence; inter-personal violence; gender-based violence; small arms violence; armed robbery)?
- What are the principal findings from extant conflict vulnerability and risk assessment analysis with regard to the underlying drivers of conflict (*e.g.,* inequality, poverty, youth unemployment, ethnic competition over land or other economic resources.)?
- In post–civil war cases, how was the conflict "terminated," and what is the nature of the political settlement, or peace agreement?
- Under what mandates are international actors currently operating in the country?

Social and Economic Dimensions: Relationships within Civil Society

Overall Assessment

- What is the overall pattern of society in terms of identity-based groups?
- What is the structure and nature of religious identity? How significant is religious difference in relation to other identity-based cleavages?
- What is the organizational structure of dominant religious institutions (*e.g.*, hierarchical and bureaucratic versus acephalous and localized)?
- What is the nature of national identity? Is it more of a civic identity, or related to a particular ethno-religious identity?
- Is there a higher degree of ethnic nationalism or civic nationalism? Are rights based on ethnicity or citizenship?

Demographic and Socioeconomic Patterns: Horizontal Inequalities

- What are the principal underlying drivers or patterns of deprivation, poverty, and inequality? Are there demographic pressures on scarce resources? High levels of population movement? Rural–urban migration? Food insecurity?