

RELIGION, PEACEBUILDING, AND SOCIAL COHESION IN CONFLICT-AFFECTED COUNTRIES

RESEARCH REPORT

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This report presents case study findings from a two-year research and policy-dialogue initiative that explores how international peacemakers and development aid providers affect social cohesion in conflict-affected countries. Field research conducted by leading international scholars and global South researchers yields in-depth analyses of social cohesion and related peacebuilding efforts in Guatemala, Kenya, Lebanon, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria, and Sri Lanka. The project was coordinated by the Sié Chéou Kang Center for International Security and Diplomacy at the University of Denver from 2012 - 2014, and supported by a generous grant from Henry Luce Foundation's Initiative on Religion and International Affairs.

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OVERVIEW AND SELECTED FINDINGS

This report presents findings from a project of the Sié Chéou Kang Center for International Security and Diplomacy at the University of Denver conducted in July 2012-November 2014 supported by a grant from the Initiative on Religion and International Affairs of the Henry Luce Foundation. The project features country-level case studies of Guatemala, Kenya, Lebanon, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria, and Sri Lanka, employing the methodology of structured, focused comparison. This report provides principal findings from the case studies, and an integrative comparison that in turn leads to a final section articulating potential research-to-policy implications for peacebuilding strategy and practice aimed at fostering social cohesion.

Context

Incidents of violence with religious, ethnic, or sectarian dimensions appear to be on the rise in the 2010's, reversing the overall trend of a steady decline in armed conflict more generally, and identity-based conflict in particular, that characterized the post-Cold War era. Religious- and ethnic-oriented violence in deeply divided societies continues to present grave threats to international peace and security. In 2014 alone, violence along identity lines in Iraq and Syria, the Central African Republic, Myanmar, and Ukraine grab headlines and present worrying scenarios of mass atrocities. In such settings, a once-held putative sense of "living together" evaporates when deadly violence erupts and often crystallizes along religious, sectarian, or ethnic lines. Absent partition, however, when the guns fall silent, groups in such societies are forced to continue living together in a shared, though invariably contested, state.

This research explores a critical question, simply stated: *In the wake of identity-based violence, what can internal and international peacebuilders do to help "deeply divided societies" rediscover a sense of living together?* The principal conceptual approach places analytical priority on "social cohesion" in conflict-affected countries, or relations within society across deep divisions (horizontally) and the relationship of individuals and groups with the state (vertically). The research speaks to contemporary scholarly and policy debates on peacebuilding by development partners, international organizations, and transnational and local civil society in the wake of conflict on the application of the social cohesion concept for informing strategy and practices of peacebuilding in countries that have experienced widespread, identity-based, political violence.

Overall, the project explores how development assistance policies and programs can more effectively engage diverse identity groups, with a particular emphasis on religious actors, in the pursuit of conflict-mitigating social-cohesion outcomes in countries emerging from mass violence and war. Two principal research questions guide the project:

- How do development actors seek to promote, directly and indirectly, social cohesion in deeply divided, conflict-affected countries?
- Under what conditions do externally sponsored initiatives lay the foundation for social cohesion, and under what conditions do such initiatives reinforce or even catalyze social divisions that negatively affect peacebuilding and development objectives?

Selected Findings

- There is often an assumption that religion speaks with one voice, and tends to drive social fragmentation and conflict. In actuality, every religious tradition expresses “multi-vocality.” As such, religion is highly “ambivalent” – it can inform social exclusion or cohesion under various conditions and within various contexts.
- The relationship between religion and social cohesion is deeply contextual and constantly evolving. Religion is a social arena that is highly interactive in relationship to other social cleavages. The globalization of religion and the emergence of transnational religious communities affect the dynamics of local social cohesion.
- Highly ethnically diverse states are not necessarily less stable than less ethnically diverse states. Social cohesion breaks down under various combinations of pressures. Social cohesion and fragmentation are constantly moving targets, especially in fragile and transitional states, and thus social cohesion functions as both an independent and dependent variable. The absence of social cohesion is often a condition for conflict and violence. At the same time, conflict and violence impact the dynamics of social cohesion and fragmentation.
- The ways in which external actors have interacted with religious communities in the past deeply impacts the potential for future engagement. For example, international engagement is often met with resistance within the Arab/Islamic world and other post-colonial states. There is a regional tendency toward suspicion of foreign organizations with resources to engage faith-inspired communities due to historical experiences of colonialism, imperialism, and authoritarianism. Engaging religious leaders, organizations, and communities is thus a dynamic and often arduous process. However, it is both necessary and expedient for international actors to navigate these challenges, especially within processes of conflict recovery.
- The principal finding in the Guatemala case study is that its long history of state repression and direct marginalization of identity groups severely constrains the effectiveness of donor interventions meant to foster social cohesion. Even though direct civil conflict has ended, deeply entrenched patterns of deprivation and inequality remain along the rural/indigenous versus urban/Ladino divide.
- Identity politics remains the key intervening variable undermining positive progression toward social cohesion in Kenya; patterns of ethnic patronage and elite coalition-making undermine equitable public goods provision and delegitimize the state as a neutral actor in national development and peacebuilding processes.
- The major finding from the Lebanon case study is that the sectarian system of governance deeply constrains efforts to foster crosscutting social engagement and to reconfigure state-society relationships. Spillovers from conflicts in the region (Syria, Iraq, and Israel/Palestine) now function to deepen social fragmentation, mistrust, state fragility, and rising identity-based violence. The notion of “negative resilience” is Lebanon’s foremost contribution to the study of social cohesion: elite calculations and social and political dynamics have created economically interdependent, yet socially separate communities.
- Political and economic transformation, unleashed by the government of President Thein Sein, is testing social cohesion in Myanmar’s in new ways. Tentative democratization has led to new social strife, especially of a religious nature. Compromises between ethnic and religious groups are clearly necessary for stability, yet they prove elusive as religio-political groups play strong roles and assert new influence in the process of forging a new national identity.
- When it comes to donor efforts to promote social cohesion in countries divided along ethnic, religious, and sectarian lines, Nepal has become a “development laboratory.” However, efforts to foster social cohesion through development assistance are beset by a dilemma. As Nepal itself undergoes significant social, economic,

and governance transformations, donors must seek to tread lightly in the spirit of “local ownership” while at the same time undertaking significant efforts to transform society by empowering long-disadvantaged and marginalized groups, helping shape a more sustainable, just, and thus peaceful social contract in Nepal. Seeing beyond this dilemma is a matter of context assessment, balance, and, over time, shifting the nature of investment toward reforming and empowering the state.

- There is some evidence that social cohesion interventions have been effective at the hyper-local level in Nigeria. Efforts to build cohesion, however, have not created “upward cascades”; that is, they have not had a detectable impact at national level where ethno-religious bi-polarization remains a key conflict driver. Moreover, donors appear to remain unclear on how to address globalized religion and to counteract divisive global trends (*e.g.* fundamentalisms and divisive practices of proselytism) that have an impact on local conflict dynamics in the Nigeria case.
- The relationship between international donors and the social cohesion concept is highly complex and politically contentious in Sri Lanka. The most important finding in this case is that the government formally has embraced international peacebuilding frameworks (*e.g.* “social cohesion” and “social integration”), but these frameworks allow the government to demonstrate a surface-level commitment to global norms without effectively implementing structural reforms necessary for social change.
- Across all of the cases, the idea of social cohesion is surprisingly widespread. In some cases, it has become directly embedded within new domestic institutions.
- 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. Social cohesion is advanced when political systems are fully inclusive of all major groups, yet there are often practical and normative barriers to full inclusion, in part as a consequence of radicalization and extremism.
- Dialogues between identity groups and between state-level and civil society-level actors have worked well to reach agreements on the cessation of direct hostilities, and to address very specific, hyper-local conflict issues. Upward cascades and long-term sustainable cohesion, however, remain elusive.
- Social cohesion is dependent upon the formation of a system of public goods provision that provides resources transparently and equitably. Thus, the presence of competing systems of social protection, funded by various donors for various groups can play a strong role in preventing the formation of cohesion.
- Direct approaches to fostering social cohesion can be risky. The case studies suggest that more indirect and complimentary approaches are more effective in fostering social cohesion.

1. INTRODUCTION

According to a 2014 report by the Pew Research Center, social conflicts with ethno-religious dimensions are more prevalent now than they have been in the past six years.¹ The case study-based findings presented in this report reinforce this trend—there is significant evidence for a new wave of ethnic conflict, and a renewed period of turbulence that threatens international peace and security in multiple world regions.

- Violence in Myanmar between Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims has led to hundreds of fatalities and widespread population displacement.
- In Nigeria, tension between Muslim and Christian groups deepens social divisions and continues to spark sporadic bombings and very deadly attacks.
- In Kenya, in 2013, a large-scale terrorist attack at the Westgate Mall in Nairobi increased inter-group tension along the coast, especially in Mombasa, where Muslim and Christian clerics have been killed or disappeared, leading to escalating riots. In 2014, Islamic militias have conducted multiple attacks directly targeting Christian groups in the Northeastern Province and along the Coast.
- Identity-based violence has recently increased in Lebanon. The assassination of Mohamad Chatah in the center of Beirut in 2013, a highly symbolic event, led to renewed sectarian clashes between Sunni and Shi'a groups.
- In Sri Lanka, while direct civil conflict ceased in 2009, Buddhist monks have engaged in deadly clashes with Muslim groups, recently in June 2014 during riots in the towns of Aluthgama and Beruwala in Southern Sri Lanka.

In other situations globally, particularly in the Central African Republic, Iraq, South Sudan, and Ukraine, conflicts have quickly crystallized along identity lines, resulting in crimes against humanity approaching in some cases (notably, in terms of intensity, CAR and Iraq) genocide and ethnic cleansing.

In the wake of civil wars and large-scale social violence during the 1990s and 2000s, international interventions for peacebuilding and statebuilding have generated a broad spectrum of “lessons learned”² around the challenges of international engagement in environments with high levels of identity-based social fragmentation, often called “deeply divided societies.” As a result of careful reflection on prior interventions, policy frameworks now suggest that a pivotal factor for successful post-conflict recovery and violence reduction is strengthening inter-group social bonds, as well as re-establishing trust between social groups and the state. In other words, peacebuilding and development actors have learned that “social cohesion” is a necessary condition for the sustainability of peace settlements, for building state capacity, and fostering socio-economic development. International peacebuilding networks, which include international organizations, states, and local non-governmental organizations, have in recent years oriented themselves around this concept to answer, in part, longstanding concerns that peacebuilding interventions are often not sustainable because they are not based on a deep understanding of social dynamics.³

For example, Sri Lanka and Nepal have had international donors working for long periods of time to improve inter-group relationships and generate “peace dividends” with mixed results at best, and often with government “capture” of the peacebuilding agenda. In both cases there is evidence that interventions have generated conditions conducive to identity-based mobilization that has, at crucial points, triggered new manifestations of intergroup conflict.

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 For example, see the UN Peacebuilding Commission’s Working Group on Lessons Learned (http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/doc_lessonslearned.shtml) or the “Lessons Learned” reports from USAID’s Office of Transitional Initiatives (http://transition.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/transition_initiatives/lessons.html). Indeed, there is a wide body of organizational literature from multilateral, bilateral, governmental, and donor institutions outlining agendas for future peacebuilding and development work based on the relative ‘successes’ and/or ‘failures’ of the past.

³ The World Bank’s 2013 book *Social Dynamics and Fragility: Engaging Societies in Responding to Fragile Situations*, by Alexandre Marc et al. is perhaps the best extant volume to explore the application of the social cohesion concept to conflict-affected countries..

In Guatemala, social cohesion remains challenged by deep inequalities along identities lines, indigenous group mobilization, and persistent threats to human security. Internal and international peacebuilders have struggled to promote social cohesion through national dialogue, transitional justice, and indigenous-group empowerment programming. In Kenya, social cohesion has been rocked by recent terrorist violence and a sense of common destiny remains elusive as political elites fan the flames of ethnic discontent for political gain, all in the context of institutional reforms such as devolution, new electoral systems at national and local levels, and spillovers of conflict drivers from Somalia, Ethiopia, and South Sudan. Moreover, the international community invested heavily in peacebuilding efforts in Kenya in the wake of severe post-election violence in 2007-2008. Even though large-scale election-related violence was avoided in 2013, it is not clear that donor intervention played the linchpin role.

Social cohesion and confessional power sharing in Lebanon has faced deep challenges in recent years as a result of the spillover of the Syria imbroglio, and internal peacebuilders and external actors have worked tirelessly to prevent intergroup violent escalations from re-igniting the civil war. As well, Nigeria has become a key testing ground for donor support for peacebuilding and social cohesion-related efforts among conflicting groups, even as attacks by the Islamist group Boko Haram have escalated. 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 are largely uncoordinated and ad hoc in Myanmar, indicating that intervention might be playing a role in deepening social divisions in some regions of the country. The government recently expelled some international actors on claims of exacerbating inter-ethnic tension.

1.1 DILEMMAS OF PEACEBUILDING IN DEEPLY DIVIDED SOCIETIES

In efforts to build peace in countries emerging from civil war or internal strife, even the most well-intentioned (and ostensibly neutral) international interveners face challenging choices regarding how to meet urgent humanitarian needs and jumpstart economic recovery and development in conflict-affected countries. Often, during the course of war, the state has lost its legitimacy, its capacity as a service provider is compromised or eviscerated, or the state been captured by a party to the conflict. In the immediate aftermath of conflict, interveners understandably work with what exists, and they often conclude that meeting urgent needs is best furthered by channeling aid through informal institutions such as faith-based civil society groups and on-the-ground religious or identity-based institutions.⁴

In light of such processes, critics argue that external intervention in countries affected by identity-based conflict often leads to unintended consequences. It can strengthen nationalistic or exclusive social forces at the expense of building cross-cutting, conflict-ameliorating ties, undermine social cohesion across religious, ethnic, or other identity lines, and at times, limit the capacity of the state to expand its authority and recover its legitimacy. Strengthening clientelism and ethnic or faith-based service delivery may weaken the state, and the inclusion of presumed leaders of such groups in national dialogue does not automatically lead to more cohesive societies or to statebuilding. Supporting religious institutions in 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 and actors can undermine the advancement of certain global norms, particularly on key global agendas such as women’s participation and empowerment.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTION: WHEN DO EXTERNAL PEACEBUILDERS FOSTER SOCIAL COHESION?

Social cohesion recently has become an overarching issue for peacebuilding actors working in countries affected by identity-based conflict. Research and policy reflection in the area of social cohesion is informed by a new set of international agendas for peacebuilding and development, namely the World Bank’s World Development Report (2011) and Societal Dynamics of Fragility (2013), UNDP’s 2012 *Governance for Peace* report (2012), and the so-

⁴ 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, Roger MacGinty “Hybrid Peace: The Interaction between Top-Down and Bottom-Up Peace.” *Security Dialogue* 41 (4) (2010): 391-412.

called “New Deal” for Engagement in Fragile States put forward by the “g7+” (2011).⁵ In line with these new multilateral agendas, development strategies in fragile contexts are moving toward targeting the nexus between state and society, with social cohesion and strengthening the social contract as primary aims for conflict-sensitive international engagement.

More broadly, the project speaks to efforts of the United Nations peacebuilding “architecture” in the further evolution of an international regime for preventing, managing, and ending the scourge of international conflict as the leading challenge since the end of the Cold War. Among relevant actors at the United Nations level are the increasingly deployed “special political missions,” countries on the agenda of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission, and a wide range of United Nations countries teams in countries that are vulnerable to, witnessing, or emerging from armed conflict. The social cohesion concept also speaks to those working across the United Nations organization, to include the specialized agencies in which indirect or outcome-oriented social cohesion efforts are found, as well as those working on environment, health or labor. More broadly, the social cohesion concept is also found throughout the broader network of peacebuilding organizations – from other international and intergovernmental organizations, to regional organizations, transnational NGOs, and traditional (OECD) bilateral assistance providers.

This project explores how development assistance policies and programs can more effectively engage diverse groups, with a particular emphasis on religious groups, in the pursuit of conflict-mitigating social-cohesion outcomes in countries emerging from mass violence and war. As such, two principal research questions guide the project:

- How do development actors seek to promote, directly and indirectly, social cohesion in deeply divided, conflict-affected countries?
- Under what conditions do externally sponsored initiatives lay the foundation for social cohesion, and under what conditions do they reinforce or even catalyze social divisions that negatively affect peacebuilding and development objectives?

Social cohesion is a classic social science concern,⁶ and current approaches to the study of conflict in deeply divided societies continue to employ the concept. For example, the OECD suggests 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.⁷ In the literature on “fragility,” multi-faceted social exclusion and marginalization operates as a fundamental source of religious and ethnic mobilization and social and state disorder, often leading to violent encounters. As such, these theories serve as key 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.⁸

Practitioners, however, readily lament that working to promote social cohesion (for example, engaging with religious groups and other informal institutions to deliver aid, conduct dialogues, or manage development projects) can be problematic for internal and international peacebuilding alike. Since the 1990s, peacebuilders have been vexed with how to best deliver development aid in a way that contributes to building peace among war-ravaged populations divided along identity lines. Balancing humanitarian imperatives, practical aid-delivery realities, and peace and development goals in divided societies is especially challenging.

⁵ See, for example, International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, *A New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2011).

⁶ Durkheim was concerned principally with “solidarity.” See, Emile Durkheim, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, trans. John Spaulding and George Simpson (London: Routledge, 1951).

⁷ OECD, *The State’s Legitimacy in Fragile Situations: Unpacking Complexity* (Development Assistance Committee (DAC), Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2010).

⁸ See also, the World Bank’s *World Development Report* (2011), UNDP’s 2012 *Governance for Peace* report (2012), and the so-called “New Deal” for Engagement in Fragile States put forward by the “g7+” (2011), and the Report of the UN Secretary General on *Peacebuilding in the Aftermath of Conflict* (2012).

In many cases, as those in this report attest, social cohesion remains elusive and peace can be ephemeral, even where strategically designed “conflict-sensitive” approaches to intervention have been employed. Fragmentation, conflict, and violence persist, and, in some of the cases explored in this project, appear to be on the rise. Institutional reforms across all of the cases seek to promote cohesion, inclusion, integration, and crosscutting participation in governance; yet, governments in deeply divided societies regularly fail to address historical grievances and provide for basic human security needs of the most marginalized groups. Sometimes exclusive governments exacerbate such dynamics, particularly when elites mobilize for power along divisive religious, ethnic or sectarian theme; this issue has long been a key concern of the literature on deeply divided societies. Ethnic entrepreneurship works against national goals of unity in diversity and inclusive politics. Today, “inclusion agendas,” often funded and promoted by international organizations, have raised social expectations for the state among historically marginalized groups, yet the institutionalization and practice of inclusion remains highly uneven across various spheres of governance, particularly at the local level. Debates over devolution, ethnic federation, and local-level power sharing are fraught with problems and dilemmas.

Due to these challenges, integrating a social cohesion approach into larger post-conflict recovery strategies remains contested. As the case studies in this volume show, various forms of intervention have been undertaken to redress root drivers of violence, but such interventions have not clearly functioned to suppress inter-group clashes in all cases. Uncertainty remains around how international actors can most effectively engage informal, non-state actors within national and sub-national peacebuilding and development agendas. Notwithstanding these criticisms and challenges, donors continue to press on in the face of uncertainty about the impact of programs designed to build social cohesion.

This project, therefore, explores the complex roles that external peacemaking initiatives and development assistance providers play in societies that are emerging from conflict and that are deeply divided along religious, ethnic, racial, or sectarian lines. We are particularly interested in exploring the role of engagement when assistance is channeled through the United Nations and how, particularly, UN country teams, manage the dilemmas of engaging religious actors and institutions in the explicit pursuit of improving social cohesion.

1.3 ABOUT THIS PROJECT

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 twenty-person advisory group of leading scholars and policy practitioners. Throughout, the project has been guided by an international advisory group of leading scholars and policy practitioners, who participated in consultation and mid-project engagement through several high-level symposia in which preliminary and integrated results have been 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 derived from the literature (presented in Appendix 2, below), each case study 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

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instability; the extent and nature of donor-sponsored projects that engage diverse communities in national and local dialogues; 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 religious communities and government may advance social cohesion and facilitate peace and development.

Through the comparative, case study-based research carried out by top specialists working from a common analytical framework, the present report derives cross-case findings (so-called contingent generalizations) and lessons learned on the ways aid may reinforce social divisions and inadvertently serve to reinforce drivers of conflict and barriers to good governance. It also advances knowledge of the conditions under which engagement of religious and ethnic group leaders and their involvement in dialogue programs can serve to build bridging social capital and create the conditions for tolerance and enduring peace. As such, this project explores:

- The connections among ethnicity, religion, conflict dynamics, and state policy in these contexts;
- The role of ethnic and religious actors and movements in reinforcing or mitigating social divisions that drive instability;
- The utility and meaning of “social cohesion” in deeply divided societies;
- The extent and nature of donor-sponsored projects that directly or indirectly engage diverse actors in national and local dialogues with the direct or indirect aim of fostering social cohesion;
- Findings on the peacebuilding approaches, programs, and initiatives through which external organizations have sought to build social cohesion through aid-funded projects; and
- Lessons learned on the extent to which aid-funded cooperative relationships between religious and ethnic communities and government may advance social cohesion and facilitate peace and development.

Among the secondary research questions that guided each of the case studies in this project were the following:

- To what extent can external actors impact social relations and improve the capacity of the state to manage diversity in the wake of violence?
- What are the key factors necessary for the restoration and strengthening of social cohesion?
- Can international development aid help build peace in countries emerging from civil war and large-scale social violence, especially those where ethno-religious difference was a strong feature of conflict?
- What are the assumptions, theories, and paradigms of domestic-international interaction underpinning various actors’ approaches to social cohesion?
- What are the tools and projects external donors employ to try to improve social cohesion?
- What are the institutions and policies that donors and NGOs advance to try to improve social cohesion in different contexts?
- Is it possible to determine whether external interventions increase or decrease “social cohesion”?
- If so, to what extent do programmatic interventions and institutional reforms help to reduce vulnerability to identity-based conflict?
- Why are some external interventions more “successful” or “effective” than others?

Case Studies and Research Teams

<i>Guatemala</i>	Guatemala: National Fragmentation, Local Cohesion Otto Argueta and Sabine Kurtenbach
<i>Kenya</i>	Identity and Insecurity in Modernizing Kenya Fletcher D. Cox, James Ndung'u, and Esther Njuguna
<i>Lebanon</i>	Confessionalism, Consociationalism, and Social Cohesion in Lebanon Joy Aoun and Marie-Joëlle Zahar
<i>Myanmar</i>	Religion, Identity, and Conflict in Transitioning Myanmar Nicholas Farrelly
<i>Nepal</i>	Nepal: Identity Politics in a Turbulent Transition Subindra Bogati, Fletcher D. Cox, Sachchi Karki, and Timothy D. Sisk
<i>Nigeria</i>	Religion and Social Cohesion in Nigeria: Frustration, Polarization, and Violence Yahaya Hashim, Darren Kew, and Judith Ann Walker
<i>Sri Lanka</i>	In the Eye of the Beholder: Social Cohesion in Post-War Sri Lanka Susan Hayward and Mirak Raheem

The project methodology engages the approach of a structured, focused comparison of seven cases where international actors have aimed to reshape relationships among identity groups that have played a role in violent conflict: Guatemala, Kenya, Lebanon, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria, and Sri Lanka. Case studies capture regional variation, variation of ethnic divisions and religious traditions, and a variety of donor approaches to peacebuilding and statebuilding, and they allow for process tracing and causal analysis derived from qualitative research of interviews with leading experts on each case.

In particular, field research was conducted to assess how peacemakers and donors – often with or through international organizations (particularly the United Nations Development Program or UNDP) have sponsored projects that directly or indirectly involve identity-based groups in national or local dialogue processes aimed at facilitating social cohesion. To address and analyze the research questions, seven field research teams, comprised of both international and national scholars, collaborated with local research institutes and UN country team offices, employing the following methods to gather relevant data:

- Structured interviews with country-level development program leadership;
- Structured interviews with key civil society leaders and actors engaged in “bottom-up” programs (to gain local actor interpretation of pre and post intervention social cohesion dynamics);
- Structured interviews with past UN Peace and Development advisors for the country (key specialists in engaging informal actors);
- Process-tracing⁹ to outline initial causes of conflict (e.g. social exclusion in combination with what?) and dynamics of the larger intervention, and;
- Identification of key changes in social cohesion five years after the initial external invention (for the sake of comparability).

From December 2012 through July 2014, field research teams comprised of international and national scholars conducted interviews and focus group discussions in the Guatemala, Kenya, Lebanon, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria, and Sri Lanka case studies. Overall, the field research component involved 330 participants, including government officials, religious leaders, scholars, local peace-builders and NGO/CSO program managers, representatives of the development aid community, and UN actors. Field research findings, then, were used to write case-study reports outlining the particular dynamics of the external intervention in relation to social cohesion in each case. Perspectives

⁹ See Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies And Theory Development In The Social Sciences* (MIT Press, 2005).

and insights derived from structured and semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions have been triangulated against data from a wide variety of reports, scholarly publications, and other policy documents related to social cohesion as a conceptual tool for peacebuilding.

This Report proceeds in three main parts. First, in the section that follows, the Report presents the principal findings of the seven case studies. In the second section the Report presents integrated findings on the nature of social cohesion. The third section presents context specific findings on the effectiveness of various programmatic efforts through which international donors, typically partnering with local institutions and NGOs have aimed to affect both horizontal and vertical cohesion as was seen across the seven cases. Across the seven cases, we identify and assess challenges to and opportunities for donors aiming to improve trust, cooperation, and establish peace networks. In the final section, the report offers recommendation for improving international efforts to foster social cohesion in deeply divided societies.

2. CASE STUDY SUMMARY FINDINGS

This section presents the principal insights and finding from the project's seven case studies. The case studies present deep detail and context-specific insights related to the concepts and questions that emanate from the theoretical and practitioner reflection on social cohesion. Authors of the case studies worked against the Assessment Guide (presented in Appendix 2) to systematically frame the analysis and to generate findings for cross-case comparison.

- What are the characteristics of social cohesion seen in these countries?
- To what extent have donors been effective or ineffective in fostering cohesion (both horizontal and vertical) as means to suppress vulnerability to identity-based conflict and improve economic outcomes in each country?

The following section¹⁰ provides overviews of contextual findings related to each case study, before, in the final two sections of this report, describing comparative findings on the principal challenges and opportunities international actors face in working to foster both horizontal and vertical social cohesion.

2.1 GUATEMALA: LOCAL SOCIAL COHESION VERSUS NATIONAL FRAGMENTATION

In the case of Guatemala, historically, the UN played an effective and complementary role to religious institutions (Catholic and Lutheran) in negotiating the CPA that led to the end of direct civil war in 1996. Over time, as multiple donors entered the scene, a high level of fragmentation developed among approaches and interests of donors in the country. Donors tried but largely failed to secure constitutional changes intended to protect the rights of highly marginalized indigenous groups. Donors supported a post-conflict truth commission (CEH, *Comisión de Esclarecimiento Histórico*), which led to new peace accords. The accords, however, were never implemented, effectively contributing to profound social grievances, especially around social and environmental issues and state impunity for past human rights abuses. Also, UNDP attempted to align its programmatic peacebuilding responses with state development priorities. This has been problematic, especially in light of the fact that state elites continue to directly marginalize indigenous groups, and that donors have little leverage to change elite behavior in the country and to foster new channels of participation for excluded groups within the state apparatus.

The principal finding in the Guatemala case is that its long history of state repression and direct marginalization of identity groups severely constrains the effectiveness of donor interventions meant to foster social cohesion. Even though direct civil conflict has formally ended, deeply entrenched patterns of deprivation and inequality remain along the rural/indigenous versus urban/Ladino divide.

The prevailing state-led development model and new forms of state repression of indigenous social movements function to reproduce and deepen these divisions. Donor attempts to work through the state to foster (vertical) social cohesion are consistently undermined by a severe lack of trust toward the state among indigenous groups, and a lack of state accountability and transparency. National fragmentation thus remains deep and persistent.

At the same time, donor interventions (including peacebuilding, efforts for poverty reduction, human rights, access to rule of law, and state institution reform) have introduced and popularized new norms around the concept of inclusion. Norm diffusion has raised local expectations for greater participation in processes of governance. Rising expectations and rising grievances, in combination, have functioned to unify disparate, indigenous identity groups aiming to access and claim new rights. In other words, donor intervention has helped generate "local cohesion." Previously fragmented identity groups in the rural periphery have unified around efforts to counter the state-led extractive resource development model, especially large-scale water and mining projects that threaten indigenous land ownership rights. While donors have, at times, effectively promoted formal institutional changes in the name of social cohesion, these

¹⁰ Text in this section is in part excised from full-length case studies; selected sections presented as overviews and readers are referred to the case studies for full country-level reports.

changes have not generated behavioral changes (especially among elites), and, in total, have done very little to redress deep structural inequalities and social cleavages.

SEVERAL FINDINGS EMERGE FROM THE GUATEMALA CASE.

Guatemala lacks vertical cohesion between the government and society due to the existing development model where the state has no role in decreasing existing social inequalities between rural/indigenous and urban/Ladino life-worlds. International development cooperation functioned as a substitute for state social policies focusing on the empowerment of the marginalized sectors.

Historically, the lack of vertical cohesion in Guatemala constitutes the core of a domination system based on exclusion and inequality. In this system, racism is a fundamental ideological mechanism to justify such exclusion and structures the way in which institutions work. Beginning with the judicial system, the access to justice is exclusive for a minority, which has either economic resources to corrupt justice officials or power relations to influence decisions inside the justice system. In addition, the political system also reduces the access to political power to those who possess the necessary resources, both legal and illegal, to buy access to political parties. In this context, social cohesion remains limited. Social mobility is limited to the access to informal economy for the majority of the population. That is one of the reasons why drug trafficking and retail sales of illegal drugs spread around the country. At the same time, informal and illegal forms of punishment and decision-making processes support, for example, gangs and other vigilante structures. The state remains distant to most of the population, and democracy is only an event that takes place each four years. Hence cohesion between public institutions and the society is limited or absent.

Major gaps between rural and urban life-worlds remain despite some improvements regarding indicators on education and poverty indicators. Social policies failed to compensate disparities produced by an unequal socio-economic system. While the state continues neglecting the need for social policies, international cooperation (at the national level) and religious organizations (at the local level) substitute some of the development tasks supposedly exclusive of the state. This is a vicious circle that reduces the possibility to address the structural shortcomings producing the lack of public resources.

Patterns of horizontal social cohesion exist in the indigenous regions but mainly on the local level due to a lack of shared agenda and strategy.

While the common experience of war and violence has supported the establishment of a new form of ethnic self-identification as Maya, this has not included the development of a political project at the national level. The excessive racism existing in the state and the society is one important element reinforcing the limited cohesion among the indigenous population. At the same time political institutions do not represent the indigenous population; access to the justice system is limited by economical, territorial and language barriers; the economic model reinforces the pattern of limited land property for indigenous communities pushing these populations to survive mainly through the informal economy. In addition, the existence of a limited educational system and the prevalence of a dominant non-indigenous educational model increase the barriers limiting horizontal cohesion among indigenous populations.

The current situation of socio-environmental conflict is an example of the lack of political interest of guaranteeing indigenous rights. Governments ignored the results of local consultation processes and other political mechanisms of representation are inexistent. In this regard, international cooperation has played an ambivalent role. On one hand, international programs support the strengthening of civil and political rights. On the other hand, once these rights were used to claim other rights (economic, cultural) and the lack of response by the state increased conflicts, international cooperation evaded participation. In other words: there is an important gap between successful support to civil rights and political agency and failed support to strengthen the capacities of public institutions to deal with the increased demand for rights. This created the conditions for high levels of social conflicts. After years of international support and many programs to strengthen indigenous rights, communities agglutinate their demands around socio-environmental conflicts. Although the protest is against mining and hydropower projects, the central demand is for the

respect of core civil and human rights. The democratic state and the international community must assume the tasks to respond to the empowerment of the indigenous population, as they cannot evade the related conflicts.

Since the Catholic Church lost its religious monopoly in the mid 20th century, societal fragmentation is reflected in the increasing influence of Pentecostal organizations emphasizing extreme patterns of individualism and the social status quo.

Neo-Pentecostal churches could have an important role in reducing the existing gaps between horizontal cohesion. However, they have a dispersed structure that avoids the existence of clear programs and a unified strategy of support. Although this can be an institutional problem, it is not a limit to generate cohesion at the level of the communities. The importance of a spiritual discourse during a social protest is fundamental in the communal level of action. This is clear when some communities produce cohesion around the defense of a natural resource independently of religious differences. This cohesion is covered by a "religious mysticism" which prevails beyond religious, ethnic and other differences inside the communities. However, this cohesion tends to be temporal because is based on the identification of groups and individuals rather than deep communal ties.

Another important element complicating the role of Neo-Pentecostal churches is the participation of their religious leaders in politics. At the national and the local level the last elections were marked by the existence of both open evangelical candidates and also the use of religion as mechanism to increase the number of voters. At the local level, several mayors and other local authorities are also pastors of the local evangelical church. The problem emerges when a conservative discourse penetrates politics and religion is used as an ideological mechanism to seek individual interests. The general discourse of the evangelical church tends to reinforce some authoritarian values especially in rural indigenous populations. Rather than strengthening social cohesion, this increases divisions inside communities by emphasizing group and individual ties.

High levels of social conflict regarding land use and its environmental consequences are a continuation of the historical conflicts in the rural areas. The experience of violence makes the organization and mobilization of protest difficult beyond the local level. The lack of the state's responsiveness and repressive approaches towards conflict leads to an escalation of violence.

This situation is currently considered the most important threat to social and political stability. Long term unresolved conflicts have triggered polarization inside communities where the influence of the mining private sector increases social tensions. On the other hand, the defense of natural resources and the fight for human rights and land property have produced the cohesion of local based communal movements. However, the de-legitimization of dialogue mechanisms and the excessive use of repressive forces to face social protest constitute major problems. This situation will continue because as mining and hydropower projects increase and the capacities of the state to negotiate and reduce conflicts decrease. The risk of violence is high due to the existence of private armies hired by the companies and the participation of organized crime groups in the expropriation of land. To mitigate the conflicts between actors involved in socio-environmental conflicts is one of the main challenges to the government of Guatemala for the next years.

International cooperation is not able to press for more than formal institutional changes. Attitudinal and social change are well outside of their control.

The constant changes in the international agenda, the competition between international agencies, the high levels of bureaucracy, and the lack of contextualization of most development projects reduce the transformative potential of international cooperation. This analysis showed that international cooperation stands in the middle of a political game between the interests of the state in using international resources to compensate structural deficits without changing its political agenda and the interests of international governments on funding transformation projects without taking political responsibility. The result is a loss of important opportunities to effectively orient international funding to the real needs of the population.

2.2 INSECURITY, INSTABILITY, AND ETHNIC IDENTITY IN MODERNIZING KENYA

In Kenya, donors have effectively spurred broad diffusion of the concept of social cohesion, at national and local levels. This is largely due to a high level of coordination among a “conflict prevention and management donor working group” that formed in the wake of severe post-election violence in 2007-2008 to support the National Accord and Reconciliation Agreement (NARA). Donors have supported effectively the development of a strong set of formal institutions for peacebuilding (a new “national peace architecture”). The peace architecture still remains fairly weak, however. It is largely donor funded with little direct support and political buy in from the state, and resources for peacebuilding directed through local peace institutions are prone to elite capture.

Historically, the dominant mode of donor intervention in Kenya has been reactive, through security and humanitarian responses rather than through proactive and preemptive peacebuilding efforts. Donors’ efforts to support dialogues among identity groups have effectively countered local conflict drivers, especially where dialogues have been linked to improving development outcomes. However, funding for peacebuilding has been highly unstable and linked to crises, making the national impact of peacebuilding efforts largely ephemeral. Donor support for FBOs and CSOs that “circumvents the state” appears to be undermining state legitimacy (or “horizontal cohesion”), especially in periphery regions where, in the words of one respondent, “the state is a stranger” or even, in some areas, such as West Pokot, “an enemy.”

Donors have effectively supported formal institutional changes to the constitution in Kenya that should be functioning to foster less contentious identity-based politics and more equitable state resource allocation. Electoral rules that incentivize crosscutting coalitions, and new algorithms for allocating more resources to the most marginalized communities are now in place. However, informal, divisive political behaviors dominate the state apparatus and are deeply embedded within governance processes. Identity-based divisions continue to shape the allocation of state resources, even peacebuilding resources. In other words, new formal rules that promote inclusivity do not clearly result in improving social cohesion. “Prebendalist”¹¹ political behavior overrides incentives designed to encourage the formation of crosscutting coalitions. Elites play the peace game publically, accepting formal institutional reforms without changing deeply entrenched behaviors (patronage, clientelism, and identity-based political

Identity politics remains the key intervening variable undermining positive progression toward social cohesion in Kenya.

The behavior of political elites regularly undermines cohesion, both horizontal and vertical. As depicted by the 2007/8 post-election violence, and recent deadly clashes in Isiolo, Moyale, and Mandera ethnic communities that have coexisted peacefully engaged in violence against each other largely due to political positions that were driven by ethnic interests. Mistrust among communities is exacerbated by fear of the unknown, especially in situations of turmoil.

Even though crosscutting social engagement occurs frequently in everyday life (religious, economic, business, families, shared traditions), the “rules of the game” for politics and state resource allocation remain deeply divisive and played out in terms of ethnic competition.

Whether or not “unity in diversity” will be realized in Kenya, depends greatly upon whether or not domestic political elites truly decide to turn rhetoric about “national cohesion” into reality. Elite behavior is deeply tied to clientelism, in which state resources, jobs and contracts are allocated on an ethnic basis, which continues to feed inter-ethnic competition and stereotyping. As long as political appointments and competitions remain high stakes, divisive political narratives, ethnic stereotyping, and hate speech will continue. These behaviors will also continue where “Big Men” within the political system directly mobilize ethnic groups, and remain deeply divided along ethnic lines as the basis for political party affiliation. The nature of ethnic politics in Kenya makes it very difficult for leaders to truly rally and support the broader social cohesion agenda.

¹¹ See, Richard A. Joseph, “Class, State, and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria,” *The Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 21 (November 1983): 21–38.

Entrenched forms of marginalization, exclusion, and inequality also stand in the way of progress toward cohesion in Kenya. Periphery areas within Kenya have long experienced the highest levels of poverty and underdevelopment. With discovery of resources like oil, the state is now paying more attention to the periphery through flagship projects aimed at entrenching and safeguarding the interests of the state but, as some respondents suggest, this process is disguised as taking services, infrastructure, even “development” and “social cohesion” to the people. These forms of development will likely function to deepen the cleavage between the “hinterlands” and the “center” (Nairobi), and generate new grievances, perhaps even local autonomy movements in areas like Turkana where very large oil reserves have been discovered. At the same time, rising resource scarcity could increase competition based on ethnic mobilization. High youth unemployment generates a large population of disenfranchised actors who are more easily mobilized for violence against perceived enemies which takes on ethnic dimensions in areas where particular groups tend to specialize in particular economic activities (e.g. pastoralist; agrarian division; Kenyan Asians as business owners, etc.), which also feeds stereotyping and grievances.

Historical narratives and grievances continue to stand in the way of inter-group reconciliation necessary for cohesion.

Unaddressed historical injustices, especially in the form of land allocation by past political leaders and direct use of state power for violence against ethnic groups will continue to foster inter-group grievances if not directly addressed by political elites. The long history of big man presidentialism, patronage, clientelism, and handouts has created a situation where access to political power ensures access to scarce economic resources. This type of regime has benefited some groups, but largely marginalized others. Without continued movement toward more equitable power and resource distribution, deep social fragmentation will persist.

Religious identities and practice retain the capacity to continue to foster fragmentation.

In general, religious institutions help unify ethnic groups at the local level, especially where they provide equitable access to public goods (health and education). There also seems to be a very high level of willingness to engage in local intra-religious dialogue across the country. At the national level, however, religion tends to divide more often than it unites. Contentious debates around Islamic courts, spillovers from state failure in Somalia, and symbolic terrorism foster insecurity and inter-group fear, a key factor that deepens hatred and mistrust among ethno-religious groups. The persistence of attacks with religious undertones will continue to deepen the cleavage between Christian and Muslim communities within the political sphere.

In periphery regions, religious and identity-based civil society organizations are often more legitimate and effective than the state in providing basic public services such as health and education.

This raises the issue of “hybridity.” Interventions at the hands of religious development organizations might improve crosscutting relations at the local level, but it is not clear that external interventions help improve state legitimacy. To some extent, a high level of FBO intervention in rural areas might be contributing to horizontal cohesion and vertical fragmentation at the same time, effectively preventing the state from having to take full responsibility for redressing structural inequalities in periphery regions. Many actors in periphery regions “circumvent the state”, which undermines legitimacy of state institutions, and actors see IOs as more efficient source of public goods, effectively undermining “social contracts.”

International institutions have made great strides in helping to embed human rights norms and political rights for marginalized communities within formal institutional structures in Kenya. These norms are not yet embedded fully within Kenyan culture and political behavior.

This suggests that Kenya has experienced an imbalance in investment in “soft-core” peacebuilding initiatives (e.g. dialogue and reconciliation efforts) and the development of “hard-core” mechanisms for promoting peace (e.g. institutions and corresponding tools/ equipment). Institutions for peace are in place, but they have not yet begun to foster social, attitudinal change.

The effectiveness of donor interventions for cohesion depends largely on the degree of accuracy of context/conflict analysis. Peacebuilding strategies generated from biased and or inaccurate analyses can lead to ineffective intervention.

Considering the complexities of identity in Kenya and the very high level of identity-based competition that surrounds the allocation of state and donor resources, it remains very difficult for external organizations to acquire the knowledge necessary to effect long-term social cohesion among groups. This trend is exacerbated by reactionary approaches to conflict management in Kenya. Short-term interventions have not been effective in generating social cohesion. Focusing on direct suppression of violence has often resulted in unstable peace, or situations where social divisions (re)escalates into cyclical conflict patterns. The, "business of peace and social cohesion" is such that donors are most active and "happy" when there is conflict. In the words of one respondent, "the business of peacemaking booms when there is violence, not when there is peace," such that most peacebuilding work is reactive, rather than proactive and preemptive. Within this business, donors can "easily escape from realities." That is, they can stay alive by responding to needs and interests of states, without actually addressing complex social realities within a given country context. Even though Kenya is in need of more, and more effective long-term pre-emptive peacebuilding interventions, the types of programs that may be most effective for truly building social cohesion are the first to be cut after direct conflict risk is perceived to decline.

Local peacebuilding and development efforts designed to foster social cohesion are reported to be very effective, especially where they have engaged religious organizations, but it remains difficult to support this claim. Local cohesion-building efforts tend to have little national impact, and new institutions with access to external resources are subject to "political capture."

International interventions shape local politics. Many peacebuilding projects are supported on a piloting basis with unpredictable timeframes, and international donors tend to constantly review and revise internal strategies rather than "stay the course." For examples, many donors expected violence after 2013 elections and designed post election strategies expecting another surge of funding for peacebuilding efforts. Constant change in strategies introduces new forms of development work in areas where key actors in Kenya may have limited capacity. In other words, human capital and skills for peacebuilding can be undermined where donors' priorities shift too regularly. Moreover, suspicion and competition amongst donor organizations might be impeding information sharing that is critical for coordination and collaboration in peace-building efforts. This issue is compounded by the evolving nature of international funding. Donors and development partners are required to demonstrate measurable performance records for investment of their resources, but it remains very difficult to measure "social cohesion." Even though the concept is difficult to measure, however, does not mean is not a critical need for the realization of stable peace and human development.

2.3 CONFESSIONALISM, CONSOCIATIONALISM AND SOCIAL COHESION IN LEBANON

In the Arab world, religion is assumed to play an important political role, making it a very relevant region for assessing the relationship between religion, social cohesion and international engagement. For example, the Arab Spring was a reflection of social cohesion dynamics in the Arab world. Citizens in multiple states aggregated in the public sphere in a bottom-up endeavor to redraw the social contract, void of external intervention. The Arab Spring has revealed a high degree of "intersectionality" – protesting groups displayed a distinctive capacity to transcend communal borders and sectarian backgrounds in processes of collective action. Horizontal social cohesion was also generated through a high degree of "presentism." That is, diverse social groups all demanded immediate change from the state, not future promises or institutional processes.

Lebanon, in particular, is a case where civil war caused deep and lasting social fragmentation. The war strengthened the role of religion in the public space and, at the same time, transformed communities and institutions in the post-war period. Sectarian groups emerged that refuse to engage across communal lines even in instances where shared interests exist. These lines are drawn sharply and, as such, show a strong degree of resistance to external influence. State provision of services even plays out along sectarian lines. In this case, local reputations of various organizations and actors in very particular contexts create distinctive and complicated advantages and disadvantages for

engagement to foster social cohesion. Islamic charities play distinct roles in fostering crosscutting social networks, but, in some instances, they have become deeply politicized as the result of criminalization.

In the wake of civil war in Lebanon, the Ta'if agreement included provisions to shift the country away from its "confessional" system based on ethno-religious, identity-based political representation. However, the confessional system has not changed, and three deep social cleavages persist: 1) the religious identity divide, Christian and Muslim, 2) sectarian divisions between Shi'a and Sunni communities, and, 3) nationality divisions between Lebanese, Palestinian, and now Syrian communities.

The most important finding from the Lebanon case related to the pursuit of social cohesion by donors is that the sectarian system of governance deeply constrains efforts to foster crosscutting social engagement, and to reconfigure state-society relationships.

In Lebanon, donors have very little leverage to encourage the formation of "crosscutting civil society": "alternative" NGOs (those directly interested in reforming the sectarian system) still must "play sectarian game" in order to access areas where a particular group has control over a particular territory.¹² There is some evidence that donors, such as UNDP, have been effective in ameliorating localized inter-group tensions and fostering cohesion through direct support in Mount Lebanon, in the South, and in areas of the North. Problematically, however, evidence suggests that most peacebuilding interventions have not reached or impacted the most marginalized groups and regions of the country. With Hezbollah members now in government, donors' efforts to foster cohesion have been complicated and constrained.

The sectarian system makes horizontal social cohesion very difficult, and perhaps even impossible, to attain. Bridging civil society remains very weak, while bonded communal societies are very strong and highly institutionalized. The parliamentary system in Lebanon is designed for integration and the electoral system aims to create incentives for the emergence of crosscutting parties ("centripetalism"), but traditional community leaders continue to use intimidation and patronage to secure the election of preferred candidates from lists. The "personal status regime," or religious tribunals that determine laws for each communal sect, functions to exacerbate sectarianism and, in the words of one respondent, the "re-tribalization of politics."¹³ Deeply divisive identity-based politics remains the status quo such that, attitudinally, a majority of middle class urban professionals prefer to live within homogenous confessional groups. The confessional system cements and deepens social divisions and differences. The education system and media are very strong forces for construction and reproduction of identity-based social divisions within the country.

Spillovers from conflicts in the region (Syria and Israel/Palestine) now function to deepen social fragmentation, mistrust, state fragility, and rising identity-based violence in Lebanon.

At the level of the state the pursuit of "social cohesion" is considered to be a nearly impossible task among peacebuilders, especially with the presence of over 800,000 Syrian refugees increasing pressure on the already fragile social system.¹⁴ The Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon has become deeply political. Many citizens fear that "permanent settlement" could reconfigure and rebalance social and political relationships. Recently, there has been a sharp rise in Sunni extremism, in part due to spillovers from the Syrian conflict.

The notion of negative resilience may be Lebanon's foremost contribution to the study of social cohesion.

Whereas research on peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction suggests that cohesion and stability go hand in hand, Lebanon puts the complexity of the relationship under a magnifying lens. Since the outburst of armed conflict in neighboring Syria, Lebanon's apparent stability has been incorrectly described as a sign of social cohesion. While some wonder about the country's seeming ability to weather the storm, others describe it as constantly on the brink of collapse and disaster. From tensions between the Sunni and the Shi'a communities to intra-communal strife –

¹² Research Participant 7, Interview with the authors. Beirut, Lebanon, October 15, 2013.

¹³ Research Participant 4, Interview with the authors. Beirut, Lebanon, October 8, 2013.

¹⁴ Research Participant 18, Interview with the authors. Beirut, Lebanon, October 12, 2013.

particularly but not only within Lebanon's Sunni community, there is ample proof that social cohesion is being put to the test. So, what accounts for the country's stability? The standard explanation that seems to emerge brings us back to the notion of shared interests. A prominent Lebanese politician describes the country as a business with communal leaders as the stakeholders. From his perspective, it is the shared interests of these stakeholders that explain the ability of Lebanon to remain stable in spite of growing tensions locally, nationally, and regionally.

Lebanon's negative resilience is as much the result of elite calculations as it is the outcome of social and political dynamics that have created economically interdependent yet socially separate communities.

In Lebanon, social cohesion is strong within communities yet weak across them. In other words, there is much more bonding than bridging social capital in the country and the system has been designed so as to allow elite cooperation to substitute for inter-communal social cohesion. For the time being, the Lebanese coexist but different communities do not share a common lived experience nor do they have a joint vision for the country and its future. As one of the foremost thinkers of Lebanese nationalism, Georges Naccache, wrote back in 1949 referring to the National Pact's foreign policy compact whereby Maronites agreed not to pursue close ties with Europe and Sunnis not to seek Arab unity, "two negations do not create a nation."¹⁵

What then of efforts to promote social cohesion in Lebanon? The case study highlights two hopeful avenues: widespread societal mobilization against some of the most egregious aspects of the sectarian system, particularly women's rights and civil marriage, and mobilization in favor of better service provision. In both instances, the issues cut across sectarian lines. These issues affect citizens in ways that challenge the current compact between sectarian elites and the communities that they represent. Indeed, in both instances, citizens have looked to the state for answers to their problems. Whether it is by demanding that the state challenge the hold of religious leaders on civil status or by demanding more state accountability particularly in the form of decentralization at the local level to address the needs of citizens, these kinds of mobilization break with the traditional mold whereby communities would address their grievances to their own communal leaders. It might just be that this is the kind of social cooperation that will, in due time and given a favorable setting, create the conditions for social cohesion in Lebanon. In a country enmeshed in a web of regional and international politics, one cannot but reflect upon the role of outside factors on the dynamics of social cohesion. In this regard, and for the short- to medium-term, no other factor is as important as the Syrian crisis and its reverberations in Lebanese politics and society.

There is no easy solution to the pressure that displaced Syrians currently residing in Lebanon exert on social cohesion in host communities and beyond.

Whereas all leading Lebanese factions agree that the problem must be addressed, there is no agreement on how to go about it. The issue is multifaceted. First, the Syrian civil war exacerbated political disputes between the various Lebanese factions, further slowing down an already cumbersome and contentious process of policymaking. Second, most Lebanese political and religious leaders are more concerned with internal stability and security than providing services and support to Syrian refugees but, paradoxically, the longer the refugees' needs remain unmet, the more pressure their presence will exert on ill-equipped host municipalities and the communities therein. One thing is already clear: service provision to displaced Syrians cannot be perceived by the local population to be "at their expense." Indeed, disagreement over the presence of displaced Syrians in Lebanon has already exacerbated societal polarization particularly as refugees are often settled in otherwise already disadvantaged Lebanese communities.¹⁶

¹⁵ Georges Naccache, "Deux Négations ne Font pas une Nation!" *L'Orient*, 10 May 1949.

¹⁶ Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Department, Middle East and North Africa Region, *Lebanon*

Economic and Social Impact Assessment of The Syrian Conflict, Report No. 81098-LB, World Bank: Washington, D.C., September 20, 2013, available at http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2013/09/24/000333037_20130924111238/Rendered/PDF/810980LB0box379831B0OP14754500PUBLIC0.pdf.

This report was requested by the Government of Lebanon and conducted in collaboration with the UN, the EU, and the IMF.

Another vector influencing social cohesion in Lebanon is the manner in which international donors engage with the various communities.

Currently, donor engagement is complicated by the convergence between internal political polarization and regional/international dynamics. For instance, important donors like the United States – and to a lesser degree the E.U. – will struggle to engage the government of Lebanon directly so long as Hezbollah remains in government, something that – given popular support for the “Party of God” – is unlikely to dissipate any time soon.

Another consequence of the Syrian conflict, the territorial consolidation and advances of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant is likely to affect the dynamics of social cohesion. ISIL may have a constituency among Salafi Sunnis in Lebanon, whose number is on the rise since the beginning of the war in Syria.

However, it has also triggered an intra-communal divide with some groups like Lebanon’s Jamaa Islamiyya, the local branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, agreeing with liberals and Sunni moderates to call ISIL and its leadership heretics. Further, if one accepts the description of Lebanese elites as stakeholders in a shared business venture referred to earlier on in this concluding section, then ISIL may be perceived as a threat by all stakeholders equally, triggering a movement toward social cohesion. Similar reactions have in the past happened with Israeli attacks in 1996 and 2006 triggering ‘rally around the flag’ effects. What remains to be seen is whether this punctual social unity created by a common threat can outlast the disappearance of the threat or whether, once the danger has passed, the Lebanese will once again fall back on the divisions and the inter-communal bickering that have been the norm in the country since independence if not earlier.

2.4 RELIGION, IDENTITY, AND CONFLICT IN TRANSITIONING MYANMAR

Donor intervention in Myanmar is fairly recent, and efforts to foster social cohesion are in nascent stages, occurring within a space between peace and war. International sanctions were in place against regime until 2008, preventing inflows of aid. The first opening occurred in 2008 following cyclone Nargis. Respondents largely view the response to the cyclone as a rare moment of cohesion, with diverse NGOs and CSOs unifying identity groups around a common response directed by the state. This stands in contrast to evidence from Sri Lanka, where post-tsunami aid negatively affected inter-ethnic relationships. Large sums of financial support flowed into Sri Lanka without accompanying mechanisms for accountability and coordination.

The process of democratization in Myanmar has generated a massive inflow of development actors and aid (as well as private sector actors). In order to prevent duplication of efforts and the development of parallel peacebuilding institutions, the government has established a coordinating body called, the “Myanmar Peace Center” (funded by Norway and Australia). Respondents suggest that “lessons learned” among donors from working in other deeply divided countries have led to a high level of coordination among peacebuilding and statebuilding donors and actors in Myanmar. Many specialists have relocated from other countries in the region (e.g. Sri Lanka and Nepal, *inter alia*) to work in the next “development wonderland.”

The Burman – non-Burman division, a largely binary cleavage between the dominant ethnic group and a large number of diverse minority groups, remains deep and contentious. New social fault lines are emerging, especially around pockets of violence against Muslim minority groups in Rohingya. Conflict between Buddhist and Muslim groups in the west has sparked a sharp rise in inter-religious peacebuilding initiatives. A narrative that Muslim groups are “illegal Bengali settlers” drives these new clashes. This has become a powerful narrative at the level of the state. Recently, the government forced the NGO Doctors Without Borders to abandon their projects, accusing the organization of displaying favoritism toward Muslim minority groups.

Myanmar’s social cohesion is being tested in new ways by the unfolding political and economic transformation unleashed by the government of President Thein Sein.

The number of challenges emanating from this transition from entrenched authoritarian rule would be difficult for even the most capable government to manage. The profound capacity constraints relevant to the Myanmar context

exacerbate the political, managerial and ethical problems confronting those working to deliver a more peaceful future for the country's people. They are seeking to bring long-standing ethnic conflicts to an end, a process that has been central to President Thein Sein's agenda. Yet nothing is simple in a situation where new conflicts have emerged at the same time as others have diminished. The re-ignited war in Kachin areas that raged from 2011 to 2013 is one key example. The other is the ongoing tension between Muslim and Buddhist communities, most acutely in Rakhine State. In a country where a fundamental principle for political management has remained the "non-disintegration of the union" the overall picture is uncertain and requires ongoing attention.

In this context, and with ongoing violence against vulnerable minorities, inter-communal confidence remains fragile. With the resources that have been devoted to Myanmar in recent times there are important lessons that will be relevant in other context. From this perspective, four lessons of Myanmar's complex and incomplete transition will be especially relevant to policy-makers.

In Myanmar a tentative democratization has led to new social strife, especially of a religious nature.

Buddhist extremists have taken to targeting Muslims. Some radical anti-Muslim agendas have proliferated in online forums, especially on Facebook. As a result communal distrust is high, with anxieties among minorities, especially Muslims, continuing to rise. This would not have been permitted under the military dictatorship where any semblance of potentially destabilizing activity was quickly discouraged. The freedoms that are so welcomed by Myanmar's people and the international community have been used to undermine some of the progress that could be made. It has been asserted that the government is complicit in some anti-Muslim episodes but the evidence for this remains unclear. Yet again it appears likely that what is merely a lack of capacity on the part of Myanmar authorities is interpreted as malign intent.

In this context compromises between ethnic and religious groups are clearly required, yet they prove elusive.

The deliberate efforts to exclude the Rohingya from institutionalized political discussions undermine their chances of ever playing a significant role in Myanmar's politics. With no adequate representation in the country's emerging legislative system, especially at the local level in Rakhine State, the Rohingya are being forced to look elsewhere for political support. Their destitution and lack of options continues to encourage those who can to seek futures outside Myanmar. In 2014 they are the major minority group that is still seeking sanctuary in foreign lands. More generally it is clear that on the government side, many of the old negotiating positions are softening slowly. Democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, for her part, has kept a focus on the 2015 elections, and has decided that she cannot afford to be too generous in her concessions to religious minorities, like the Rohingya, especially when their citizenship is heavily disputed (for analysis see Lee, 2014). Even if Myanmar becomes a full democracy, with adequately robust institutions for the peaceful transfer of power, it will likely still face a deficit of compromise. The sense that politics requires complete victory has infected all levels of society and could prove destructive in the context of unresolved ethnic and religious enmities.

Contradictory trends introduce profound ambiguities and complexity.

For Myanmar there is clearly no single or simple story of social cohesion. Across the country different trends are perceptible. Taken together they are better than many expected. Nonetheless, such improvements to Myanmar's overall political and economic situation are matched by regressive incidents, with new hotspots of conflict emerging. There is clearly more participation in politics for some, but not all, of Myanmar's peoples. There is also some peace, some war, and *something in between*. This complexity requires a more subtle calibration of policy, for the diversity of contexts that are in play. There is no single solution to the challenges facing Myanmar at this pivotal time in the country's history.

It is too early to know how specific programs are working with respect to international engagements.

The frustration for those who are working to remedy some of the problems in Myanmar is that the post-dictatorial context muddies clear analysis of precisely what is happening and what the long-term implications may be.

Speculation about the direction of Myanmar, whether good or bad, is the natural outcome. The real test will come with the 2015 general election. In the meantime, goodwill remains astonishingly high among the international community but there are scenarios where this could evaporate quickly. The specific interventions that are underway, whether they relate to peace negotiation or cultivating religious tolerance, will take time to bear fruit and assess. For now the indications are relatively positive and lessons have clearly been learned on all sides, and most importantly among senior Myanmar government figures. Their appreciation of international support is a good sign and suggests that much deeper relationships will be possible in future.

That the future offers cause for optimism does not mean that the major issues are resolved.

In Myanmar today there is the risk of further and significant violence along a number of different ethnic and religious divides. Some political groups continue to feel alienated from the national political process, and they will seek further concessions from the government before agreeing to the demands of the 2008 constitution. There is also a risk of instability at the elite level, perhaps with another coup, or with some other effort to re-assert military control. In a context of widespread violence, especially targeting Muslims, there is no guarantee that Myanmar can heal itself. The challenge is to moderate or even eliminate the hatred felt by the dueling social groups.

With wise leadership and the articulation of a culturally astute vision, Myanmar could become a beacon of religious and ethnic inclusion. It can draw on histories of co-existence and plurality: in its languages, cultures and religions.

In theory, the goal of a peaceful multi-ethnic and multi-religious society can be achieved by making some relatively small changes to the national story of "union spirit." By gradually including Rohingya and Chinese among the country's "national races," and by accepting the need for a more fluid style of multiculturalism, Myanmar would set an example far beyond its own borders. For now such an inclusive vision is a distant mirage. For interested international actors there is a clear need to identify Myanmar partners who are similarly concerned about the violent potential of future inter-ethnic and inter-religious tension. The changes required to safeguard against even more violent outbreaks will not come quickly or easily. For those seeking to minimize the damage strong relationships with the government in Naypyitaw will help.

Such relationships might also lead to a new phase of mutual knowledge that will benefit international actors. Myanmar's leaders remain cautious about too much foreign intervention in what they determine are fundamentally domestic issues.

The history of British colonial meddling, to say nothing of Japanese and Chinese invasions, and foreign support for ethnic secessionist movements, needs to be carefully considered. Coordinating different foreign interests will likely prove impossible but if Myanmar is to resolve its internal fractures then many years of consistent effort will be required. The sustainability of Myanmar's transformation to a more democratic system of government will only be possible where capacity is built at every level, and across the prevailing ethnic divides. To work cooperatively with different factions in Myanmar will be a profound test of the concepts of peace building and conflict resolution. Yet given Myanmar's history of bloodshed and trauma, creating a society that is cohesive or even harmonious is a goal worth pursuing.

2.5 NEPAL: IDENTITY POLITICS IN A TURBULENT TRANSITION

The key puzzle for the case of Nepal is, with so many deep identity-based social divisions, why was the conflict not much more severe and violent than it ended up being? What was it about the society that prevented erosion/co-optation that could have led to more extreme violence? Nepalese society is highly inequitable with multiples layers of "horizontal inequalities," but has managed to sustain social bonds, primarily at the religious level, the kinship/friendship level, and even at the policy level (to some extent – especially in contrast with a case like Rwanda where state policies were specifically designed to break down society). The role of the state in promoting interreligious activities is important; however, this is generally ignored in international initiatives. On the whole, the role that the UN has played in the post-conflict period in Nepal has been either positive or innocuous, but the local view remains that the UN is a negative actor due to the lack of credibility of the international community.

The dominant mode of donor intervention in Nepal is best described as, “highly networked modes of post-crisis governance.” The coordinated intervention directly aims to restore social cohesion and reduce identity-based conflict vulnerability. This is largely due to the fact that the CPA, itself, provides a common framework for actors to pursue a highly progressive “inclusion agenda.”

Clear evidence that “horizontal inequalities” played a strong role in driving civil war in Nepal caused donors to aggressively design and implement direct interventions to ameliorate forms of marginalization and exclusion across the state. For example, a broad based program called Support for Participatory Constitution Building in Nepal, supported by the UNDP and others, fostered effective norm transmission of the concepts of inclusion, social cohesion, and political and social rights among the most marginalized groups in Nepal. Inclusive processes of governance and rising demand for even greater inclusion, however, have made consensus very difficult to achieve. This has generated a very strong empowerment dilemma. The expansion of norms around inclusion and social cohesion (largely funded and supported by donors) has played a role in generating conditions conducive to identity-based political mobilization, which has undermined the capacity of the parliament to achieve consensus on a new constitution. This has led to political sclerosis across the state apparatus, and governance remains highly dysfunctional. In the case of Nepal, the pursuit of social cohesion seems to have led to “too much inclusion,”¹⁷ which is generating political deadlock and new forms of social fragmentation.

On the surface, it appears that donors have a high degree of engagement with the government of Nepal in efforts to restore “vertical cohesion.” In reality, however, donors regularly circumvent the state (due to inefficiencies, the complexity of developing effective working relationships, and the need for donors to maintain high “burn rates”).¹⁸ Donors work primarily through a myriad of local CSOs in Nepal, which undermines state legitimacy formation (or “horizontal cohesion”). In general, respondents suggest that the donor “project mentality” tends to lead to the establishment of parallel and superficial institutions, with little actual social change. Parallel bureaucratic structures (GoN and UN system[s]) also create a very strong coordination dilemma. There has been little effective coordination among the largest peace actors, and various actors employ different models for peacebuilding. The lack of effective coordination is exacerbated by a weak peace infrastructure. The UNDP (and other donors), in a very large effort, helped established local peace committees across all 75 districts in the country. While there is evidence that some LPCs have been effective in resolving local conflicts, others have completely failed in their mandate.

SUMMARY FINDINGS FROM THE NEPAL CASE ARE AS FOLLOWS.

When it comes to donor efforts to promote social cohesion in countries divided along ethnic, religious, sectarian lines, Nepal has indeed become a “development laboratory.”¹⁹

Most donors do readily acknowledge that knowledge of the conflict context, awareness of societal and economic conditions, and a neutral development outlook are essential prerequisites for acceptance of engagement.²⁰ At the same time, donors are generally risk averse and despite the allegations of their being too interventionist for transformation – or in support of the status quo – they are often reluctant to enter into the most socially contentious issues (such as transformation of the caste system), where their assistance may actually be more effective in fostering a new sense of social cohesion in Nepal.

However, efforts to foster social cohesion through development assistance are beset by a dilemma.

As Nepal itself undergoes significant social, economic, and governance transformations, donors must seek to tread lightly in the spirit of “local ownership” while at the same time undertaking significant efforts to transform society into a more sustainable, just, and thus peaceful social contract. In the turbulence of the transition, donors tend to bypass the state in order to address the needs of most vulnerable, but, in this, they often fail to develop state capacity to meet

¹⁷ Research participant 44, Interview with the authors. Kathmandu, Nepal, December 9, 2012.

¹⁸ Research participant 9, Interview with the authors. Kathmandu, Nepal, December 12, 2012.

¹⁹ Research participant 21, Interview with the authors. Kathmandu, Nepal, December 10, 2012.

²⁰ Research participant 17, Interview with the authors, Kathmandu, Nepal, December 7, 2012.

those needs in the long run. A key question that remains unanswered is: how does circumventing the state affect the longer-term imperative of strengthening the state to be more inclusive, responsive, and resilient?

Seeing beyond this dilemma is a matter of context assessment, balance, and, over time, shifting the nature of investment toward reforming and empowering the state.

There is likely little to be done in this regard until Nepal is able to move beyond administration by caretaker governments, or until there is meaningful reform and reconsideration of local and decentralized government. However, more collective action, coordination and thinking about how international community can be effective during a time of political transition could make a significant difference.

Focusing on social cohesion, however, is part of seeing, over time, the evolution of a stronger and more capable state in Nepal.

Already, there is a high level of diffusion of the concept of social cohesion across a large network of developing governance structures in Nepal; however, there are deep challenges encountered in ensuring these networks actually foster social cohesion as a foundation for larger peace building and development outcomes. Thus, there is a need for improved local, endogenous policy innovation on ways to promote social cohesion until a new CA can codify new rules of the political game, and the time needed for a long-term reform of public administration.

Donors must also address problems with the level of analysis.

With a hierarchical political system in Nepal, working with grassroots actors means working with agents that have no political power, and “empowering them” means encountering the power of elites who have access to the state. Thus, donors need to be aware that there are advantages, and trade-offs, to circumventing the state and “going directly to the people” (Guthis or local trusts; Panchayats) or supporting religious systems that provide local services to the vulnerable) is a “risk worth taking” for international development actors.

Fostering social cohesion in transitioning Nepal requires a very long-term perspective.

Indeed, there is now some retrospective thinking that it was in fact a good thing that the first effort at a Constituent Assembly was not successful. Nepalis, and the international community alike, may need much more time to re-imagine society and to transform the state.

2.6 RELIGION AND SOCIAL COHESION IN NIGERIA: FRUSTRATION, POLARIZATION, AND VIOLENCE

Nigeria is a unique case where oil wealth greatly outpaces development and peacebuilding aid. In this context, donors have very little leverage and influence, especially among wealthy state elites.²¹ The primary donor modality, therefore, is the use of programmatic interventions that focus on civil society (or, less “statebuilding,” more “peacebuilding”). This modality is largely due to the fact that donors have recognized that their efforts in many African countries have functioned to reinforce neopatrimonialism. In other words, statebuilding efforts have provided elites with access to donor resources that have been (albeit, indirectly) allocated to particular regions and identity groups for political purposes. This realization has led donors to shift toward a strategy of allowing for more “local controls” over donor funding. Some respondents suggest that this modality is the key to fostering cohesion in neopatrimonial contexts; others claim, however, that circumventing the state and using donor funding to solve local social issues only allows the state to continue to abuse state resources without setting up functional welfare systems to effectively provide public goods and develop a more sustainable “social contract.”

²¹ Note: some have called this the “MIFFs” dilemma (Middle Income Fragile and Failing States). See, Economist, “Wealth, Poverty and Fragile States: MIFFed by Misrule,” *The Economist*, July 21, 2011, <http://www.economist.com/node/18986470>.

International donors (especially UN actors) tend to directly avoid engagement with religion and religious actors. However, there has been rising donor interest in the relationship between religion, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution in Nigeria. Over time, the country has become a laboratory for peace education and conflict studies. To date, however, there is little evidence to link the surge in the number of Nigerian citizens with degrees in peace studies and the corresponding surge in local peacebuilding CSOs, with higher rates of conflict resolution and falling vulnerability to identity-based clashes. There is some evidence that social cohesion interventions have been effective at the hyper-local level. Peacebuilding programs, however, have not created “upward cascades”; that is, they have not had a detectable impact at national level where ethno-religious bi-polarization remains a key conflict driver. Moreover, donors appear to remain unclear on how to address globalized religion and to counteract divisive global trends (e.g. fundamentalisms and divisive practices of proselytism) that have an impact on local conflict dynamics in the Nigeria case.

Religious and divisions have become more combustible than ethnic divisions, over time.

Religion has always been a central feature of social life in Nigeria and the polities that preceded it. Nigerian stability was predicated upon the slow development of an informal ethnic rotation principle, which has been the bedrock consensus upon which the nation’s elites have bargained since the return to civilian rule in 1999. Since the 1990s, however, religion has taken on a more central role in politics and been a more explosive force in social upheavals. Whereas, in the past, religion’s social impact was often filtered through an ethnic prism, today’s Nigeria is seeing more instances of the reverse happening, with ethnic groups being subsumed under a larger religious political identity of a Muslim North or a Christian South, or in other instances, of religion standing relatively alone as a driver of conflicts. By no means has ethnicity lost its prime position in the nation’s politics overall, but religion is clearly now a growing divide over which the unity of the nation is increasingly stretched.

The middle belt, in particular, is vulnerable to religious clashes, as these are viewed as “swing states” by politicians who trump up religious rhetoric in order to gain political credibility. This has precipitated large numbers of conversions in these states, as political blocs look to increase their power and reach. Additionally, global narratives around religious divides (e.g., the Israeli-Palestinian conflict) have a strong impact on religious self understanding, and thereby understanding of the “other,” in Nigeria. Furthermore, religious identities intersect with socio-economic status, and upwardly mobile Christians often view Muslims as economically backward.

Social cohesion in Nigeria will suffer tremendous strain, if not full collapse, if religion continues to evolve toward a bipolar, Muslim-Christian political identity that overlays a developing two-party system.

Yet, we also note the many ways that religion can also be a unifying force, especially if civil society and political actors are able to bridge inter-religious divides, assist in pluralizing intra-religious conversations and giving voice to moderates, and provide political, social, and economic alternatives to religious extremist solutions to Nigeria’s deep sociopolitical corruption and poverty.

2.7 IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER: SOCIAL COHESION AND POLITICAL DISCOURSE IN POST-WAR SRI LANKA

In Sri Lanka, in responding to deep ethno-religious divisions as part of the larger peacebuilding effort, the UN faced a primary challenge in addressing macro, structural drivers of conflict without having any access to the political environment at the state-level that was sustaining conflicting social divisions. Thus, strategies to build social cohesion were instituted at the community level to try to bring about peace. Because of this, interesting insights into the dynamics of “upward cascades” of social cohesion and lessons from addressing state-level structural divisions from the bottom up can be gleaned from this case.

Also, in Sri Lanka, international actors have a mixed (if not overtly negative) record when it comes to peacebuilding initiatives. This is due in large part to the failure of the international community to understand the complex nature of religion, religious division, and the intersection between Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism throughout the country. In particular, the Muslim community in Sri Lanka was not initially engaged in the conflict; however,

marginalization and exclusion from post-war peace processes generated new identity-based divisions and sparked inter-minority violent conflict within Muslim communities. Furthermore, poorly coordinated development aid (notably after the 2004 tsunami) exacerbated social and communal divisions and created inter-group competition. Thus, the tendency of international aid groups to show preference for minorities and historically marginalized groups stoked fears of international favoritism, and exacerbated social conflict.

The relationship between international donors and the social cohesion concept is highly complex and politically contentious in Sri Lanka. The most important finding in this case is that the government formally has embraced international peacebuilding frameworks (e.g. "social cohesion" and "social integration"), but the frameworks function to allow the government to demonstrate a commitment to global norms without effectively implementing structural reforms necessary for social change.

The social cohesion framework makes it easy for state elites to avoid addressing past abuses, deep divisions, and inequalities between identity groups. The social cohesion approach in Sri Lanka has been interpreted to promote the idea that welfare provision or "livelihoods" improvements are key causes of peace without directly recognizing the need for truth and reconciliation as equally necessary conditions. In other words, the social cohesion framework allows the Sri Lankan government to "play the peace game" and adjust formal policies to align with donor language and narratives, without truly implementing new policies that support post-conflict reconciliation. In this case, the "social cohesion" approach is questionable. Perhaps it is not appropriate for a post war context with a military victory.

Political realities in Sri Lanka strongly constrain external efforts to foster social cohesion. A lack of political will to allow for inter-group reconciliation casts a long shadow over donor efforts. Donors tend to uphold the global norm of providing services for the most marginalized groups, but this results in aid directed toward Tamil dominated areas, sparking fear among Sinhala groups of a return to the colonial "Tamil preference." The government, therefore, has been directly hostile toward external donor efforts to ameliorate "horizontal inequalities." To avoid government hostility, peacebuilding interventions in Sri Lanka are often based on "political neutrality." Respondents suggest that the neutrality of programs leads to superficial and limited inter-group dialogue, shallow engagement, and elite only participation. Politically neutral peace programming thus reinforces social cleavages, and leads to a high level of duplicated efforts and a lack of sustainability among peace networks. Crosscutting civil society networks that formed within long-term peacebuilding efforts in Sri Lanka largely crumbled when civil conflict resumed, displaying a high level of "non-resilience" of peace networks. Beyond being largely ineffective due to government constraints and neutrality as the basis for access, some external donor efforts have done direct harm. In particular, humanitarian aid in the wake of the tsunami in 2004 eroded trust between government and the LTTE, which sparked the resumption of hostilities.²²

SUMMARY FINDINGS FROM THE SRI LANKA CASE STUDY ANALYSIS ARE THE FOLLOWING.

The lack of attention to religious dynamics by outsiders seeking to strengthen peace in Sri Lanka – both as part of national peacemaking and local-level peacebuilding – meant that religious leaders felt threatened by the peace processes, and so became more strident in opposition to it over time.

As the religious sectors – primarily Buddhist monks – became oppositional towards the peace process, they elevated narratives about a Buddhist state, about threats to Buddhist territory and integrity, about the neo-colonial agendas of outside facilitators (and particularly a Christian agenda from Norway), that raised fears among the majority community and alienated minority communities. There are a few on-going efforts to address religious actors with the purpose of increasing social cohesion. While these initiatives attempt to connect religious actors at multiple levels and there is some variation in the approaches followed by the organizations and individuals implementing these projects, there are some basic problems:

²² See, for example, Georg Frerks and Bart Klem, "The Political Dynamics of the Tsunami, Aid and Conflict," in *Conflict and Peacebuilding in Sri Lanka: Caught in the Peace Trap?*, ed. Jonathan Goodhand (Taylor & Francis, 2011).

Limited Meaningful Dialogue: Much of the inter-religious work around the island has been fairly basic or even superficial – prayer/meditation sessions, panel discussions or workshops.

The focus has been to emphasize the peaceful teachings of all religions and that which is shared in common between them, without necessarily attempting to deepen the discussion and address contentious issues, including inter-religious tensions and clashes, the political situation, and threats to democracy. It is also not clear that the dialogue goes beyond cultivating very rudimentary understandings of other religions; the focus tends to be on creating bonds between individuals. While the latter is foundational to creating social bonds, it may not compensate for the lack of understanding of key concepts and principles of each of the major religions. Thus, clergy involved in such forums may be unable to explain issues relating to other faiths to their own congregations, as they do not completely understand the issues and positions of their counterparts. It appears that there is a fear that in doing so as such discussions could create controversy and divisions within the forum that could contribute to its collapse. This effectively speaks to the limitations of those implementing such projects at the ground level and who may lack training and experience in managing and facilitating critical dialogue and debate.

Differing impacts on participating religious actors: At the most basic level these initiatives are meant to have a positive impact on the perceptions, attitudes and knowledge of the participating religious actors.

In addition, it is expected that they will form relationships with clergy from other faiths that will have a personal impact while creating conduits for communication across religious tensions and divides. Clergy involved in these initiatives did cite their lasting friendships with clergy from other faith traditions, and times when those relationships have been crucial to addressing local disputes. As noted above, in some of the initiatives that were studied it seemed that although there was some personal rapport and trust that was established, it did not necessarily mean that the clergy had been able to develop a deep understanding of the central precepts and practices of other religions. This could be due in part to the overall design of these initiatives and the capacity and interests of the officers coordinating and facilitating these initiatives at the community level itself. It was, however, observed that lack of knowledge about other religions was also the case with national level clergy, some of whom are perceived to be active moderates and involved long-term in inter-religious initiatives. This in turn raises questions of relating to the content and depth of the discussions these national level initiatives and those involved. There was, however, at least one initiative operating mainly at the community level where the project is designed with a long-term perspective in mind and where the discussions aimed at creating understanding on what each of the religions had to say on specific issues.

Mixed impact on community level change in perceptions and understanding: These initiatives are intended to create understanding and trust between the participants from different faiths, which in turn would foster positive relations between their communities.

In interviews with some of the individual religious clergy and the NGO personnel involved, it was clear that there was some rapport created as a result of these forums, including in areas where the violence and fear resulting from the war had created polarization and distrust between neighboring communities, to the point where there is very little non-functional contact and where children grow up not knowing members of other communities or even what a clergyperson from another religious community looks like. In Trincomalee a Muslim imam pointed out how a young boy in his village who had not seen a Buddhist monk asked why there was a man wearing a sari.²³ The expected role of participating religious leaders is that they would provide some understanding to their community members through their sermons and other interactions. That these religious leaders meet members of other faiths is also intended to serve as an example of crossing ethno-religious divides. In addition, the religious leaders do sometimes engage in joint activities such as collective community volunteer work like painting a mosque or school prizes where other religious leaders also attend the event and participate. A Muslim imam who organized a mosque painting project stated that he received objections from some members of his community who felt that clergy from other religions should not be there, but he felt that this provided him an opportunity to explain the importance of such interactions.²⁴

²³ Research participant, Interview with the authors, Trincomalee, Sri Lanka.

²⁴ Research participant, Interview with the authors, Trincomalee, Sri Lanka.

Very rarely a forum for macro level change: These projects do little to connect to the root drivers of the conflict – to transform society and the state centralization – and to bring about solutions to address the ethnic conflict.

This would seem an obvious point but the rhetoric and expected outcomes of some projects suggest otherwise. This is both due to the design of the projects – intentionally seeking not to take on critical issues—but also due to the inherent limitations of such forums. With regards to the latter especially in cases where these are community level or even district level forums, religious actors who are involved in such issues feel that they are powerless in the face of overwhelming political actors, especially the State. In speaking out, they risk losing the limited space that they do have. As a result, most of these forums, if they do decide to take up issues with the authorities, largely focus on constructive and direct dialogue with the authorities and avoid taking a public and vocal stance on such issues even where there is consensus within the forum. Minorities (and others) feel cynical about the dialogues or engagement – particularly when the Buddhist monks do not take stands in opposition to other monks who are fostering discord between religions. This effectively alienates participants and minority communities. However, it is important to note high expectations that these forums will be bases for macro level change need to be grounded in the realities of power dynamics, the nature of socio-political change and the capacities of religious actors, be they community level clergy or district level religious figures. As one analyst noted, “Our analyses have been surface level. We bring people together and do small programs and we think that will translate into bigger interventions but it doesn’t happen. It’s a long process if you do it right.”²⁵ Efforts tend to be project-driven, conducted over short time periods with unrealistic objectives. This leads to a fragmentation of efforts that inevitably fails to create the momentum or trust for initiatives that can transform the wider structure and culture. The inability to impact wider society is part of larger civil society problem. The last three decades has seen an increased “NGO-ization” of civil society and a failure to sustain or create movements to bring about macro-level change.

Projects may reinforce the power dynamics within society, as the forums and activities may often unintentionally reflect the asymmetry within society. For instance these projects may bolster majoritarianism and Buddhist supremacy.

Clergy may reflect the social cleavages and power dynamics within their societies so may be unwilling to address problems relating to class or caste. Organizations involved in inter-religious forums may use meditation as a central component, which is associated more with Buddhism and Hinduism. In addition, there is often a deference given to the Buddhist monks that is not given to others. For example, Buddhist monks will sit in chairs draped in white fabric while others do not. Women religious figures are few in number in Sri Lanka but they exist (Buddhist nuns, Christian pastors, and Muslim women scholars); however, they tend to be marginalized from these efforts. International agencies tend to target primarily, if not exclusively, male clerics. Male-dominated religious authorities may prove patriarchal and object to addressing issues confronting women, or simply fail to consider women’s priorities as part of their peace work. Thus, religious forums may not prove effective in dealing with some human rights and community concerns, and may even prove obstacles for gender empowerment. Clergy may also be unwilling to challenge the positions taken by religious authorities, political groups or society at large, preferring instead to work on less controversial issues and in less contentious ways. Even while some of these projects may help strengthen or even create social bonds, they “may also consolidate inequality and power relations.”²⁶

Duplication: In the efforts of national organizations and donors, or even district-based actors to set up forums with religious figures there is the potential for duplication to take place at multiple levels.

Duplication can take place in the form of different actors attempting to create similar forums at the district or even the community level, or where the same individuals are involved in multiple forums. Given the relatively limited number of such initiatives it was not observed across the districts. Instead, the more common occurrence is for a district to have a number of such committees, with almost no coordination or even knowledge of what the other was doing. This results in scenarios where there may be two or three such forums with some overlap in activities and purposes. For instance at the district level in Batticaloa, there are at least two different high-level forums including the Batticaloa Peace Committee and the Inter-Religious Forum, in addition to initiatives by more national level organizations such as NPC,

²⁵ Research participant, Interview with the authors, Batticaloa, Sri Lanka.

²⁶ Centre for Policy Alternatives, “Informal Dispute Resolution in the North-East and Puttalam,” 2003, p 35.

Sarvodaya, and CPBR. Although they do share some similarities there are some distinctions in terms of their composition, stated purpose and how they operate, so the duplication is not as overt as it seems. Both in Colombo and at the district level, however, it was clear that there are multiple initiatives with little collaboration and sharing between, or sometimes even competition. This is a systemic problem not just seen within the NGO sector but also with environmental groups and business chambers.

Sustainability: The life span of externally created or supported initiatives, particularly at the community level, differs significantly.

Some the more recent initiatives which were highlighted by actors interviewed for this research had already stopped meeting and being active, even though it has been barely two years since sustained funding for these projects slowed down. Initiatives implemented by a national level organization or donor-created at the district or even community-level committees seem to have a limited shelf life. It needs to be noted that this high mortality rate is not unique to initiatives involving religious actors alone, but in other projects which attempted to establish peace committees, dialogue forums and other collectives. An earlier study on informal dispute resolutions offers some insight into the possible reasons for the collapse of such mechanisms: "While un-sustained donor funding may explain why external mechanisms tend to be short-lived, the research pointed out that the main causes of their ineffectiveness lay at the stage of project design, whether by donors or local partner NGOs. A lack of proper assessment regarding local needs, coupled with unrealistic peace building expectations, appear to be key factors behind the poor track records of external[ly established] mechanisms."²⁷

There were other collectives involving religious actors who have continued to meet for more than two decades, albeit under different names over the years. Some of these collectives have participated in larger country-wide networks and continue to function although the network may have ceased to be active. It seems that the longer life times are seen with committees where there is active ownership and interest by those involved, as opposed to forums that are driven by donor agendas and external actors select the individual members. Sustainability of such initiatives is clearly a critical challenge. It needs to be noted that the individuals involved in such initiatives may continue to remain active in newer forums or in informal networks. These short-term funded projects may be useful in the long-term as they sustain local level dynamism which is maintained although the individual mechanisms may die or transform.

²⁷ IDR Study, CPA, p 36.

3. EVALUATING SOCIAL COHESION: PRINCIPAL PATTERNS AND SUMMARY FINDINGS

While the seven cases under consideration each reflect their own unique experiences of intergroup conflict and social fragmentation, several patterns emerge across the cases. Social cohesion is necessary for reducing violence and conflict, and yet it remains most elusive when the root causes of conflict have not yet been addressed or are not being addressed sufficiently and systematically. Intergroup grievances that form during experience of social violence are very long lasting. The ability to achieve social cohesion is influenced by levels of human security, ever-changing social cleavages and reorganization, and incentives (or lack thereof) for elites to share power in an inclusive manner.

New patterns of social organization, and particularly of religious identity and expression, combine with horizontal inequalities to create situations of deep social frustration and strife. Within these contexts, the relationship between social cohesion and conflict is recursive. Careful analysis of social cohesion in a particular context, and the identification of opportunities for positively contributing to its (re)emergence in conflict-affected countries requires, first, in depth of understanding of the impact of prior conflict on social patterns, and, second, careful analysis of the key factors and trends within international interventions that have a high likelihood of continuing to further divide the polity, rather than unite it.

3.1 THE EFFECTS OF CONFLICT ON SOCIAL COHESION

Social cohesion and fragmentation are constantly moving targets, especially in fragile and transitional states. Social cohesion thus functions as both an independent and dependent variable. The absence of social cohesion is often a condition for conflict and violence. At the same time, conflict and violence impact the dynamics of social cohesion and fragmentation. Conflict impacts social relationships, and the relationship between state and society in multiple ways.

Conflict reorganizes social relationships. Forms of ethnic identification change over time. Ethnicity is not static, and conflict is a very powerful factor that can rapidly create shifts in identity. For example, Alesina *et al.* in their seminal study of ethnic fractionalization note that citizens in Somalia self-identified with different ethnic groups before and after the emergence of civil conflict.²⁸ Conflict disrupts both political and social relationships, which is clearly reflected in all of the case studies. The experience of conflict or civil war has a marked impact on group identity and thus on social cohesion. Conflict deeply impacts relationships both within and between groups, such that inter-group exclusion often becomes necessary for survival under conditions of state fragility.

Critically, however, in some cases, the shared experience of violence unifies groups. The shared experience of war or state repression has been found to be one of the most powerful factors contributing to identity formation and re-formation. For example, in Guatemala, during the civil war, it was dangerous to be perceived as indigenous, but after its end there has been a dynamic of "mayanization." A Pan-Maya identity has grown out of a collective experience of violence and victimization.

In other cases, conflict deepens social fragmentation or causes shifts in prior social cleavages. For example, in Sri Lanka, the war contributed to a further radicalization of the polities, an increased sense of isolation of the Tamil community from the State, and a polarization between communities. In some areas, such as the multi-ethnic East of the country, decades of fear and violence from multiple formal and informal bands of armed actors resulted in the deterioration and weakening of ties between communities, including those economic, associational and personal. Yet, even while the war had a significant impact on both the horizontal and vertical axes of social cohesion, it is important to note that the state and, to lesser extent, social ties between communities did not completely break down.

²⁸ Alberto Alesina et al., "Fractionalization," *Journal of Economic Growth* 8, no. 2 (June 1, 2003): 155–94.

Hence, Sri Lanka illustrates a series of complex relationships and effects of the war – including ghettoized communities in parts of the country and heterogeneous societies in others.

Conflict also causes demographic shifts, such that the composition or “ethnic balance” of a country can change rapidly in the midst of conflict due to internal displacement, refugee crises, mass migration, or immigration, etc.²⁹ Conflict in rural areas can lead to rapid urbanization, which can undermine social relationships by increasing competition for resources in densely populated areas with very poor living conditions.

Conflict generates mistrust and suspicion within societies that greatly impact post-conflict peacebuilding efforts. For example, even after the immediate conflict is over, and groups have returned to their home areas, persistent mistrust, suspicion, and inter-group tension can undermine efforts to re-build local institutions, which is necessary to secure lasting peace. Donors often work to reconstruct destroyed infrastructure and formal government institutions, without realizing that the reconstruction of deeply broken social relationships is equally important for the stability of peace and the effectiveness of development efforts. Armed conflict also undermines economic outcomes and destroys livelihoods, creating or exacerbating poverty and patterns of social inequality.

Conflict can undermine social cohesion in the following ways:

Horizontal Effects

- Physical separation and segregation (geographical);
- The fragmentation of public services across different ethnic groups (different groups receive services and support from different actors) (institutional – service delivery);
- The separation and segregation of markets and trade networks (particular groups only purchase and trade with groups they still trust) (economic);
- Intensification of hatred and distrust toward other groups; patterns of exclusion become more intense (attitudinal);
- Intensification/shift of religious interpretations of the “other”; fundamentalism(s) emerge (religious); and
- Destruction of social institutions (civil society weakened).

Vertical Effects

- State capacity is undermined;
- Undermines trust at the grassroots level of the state (increases belief that the government is not interested in needs/interests of local groups) – groups feel disenfranchised from the state. Trust in the state’s ability to maintain rule of law erodes;
- Causes the emergence of new forms of inequality and marginalization – state repression of groups is often based on nature of post-conflict compromises and power sharing agreements.
- Regime change (formal institutions change); state institutions dominated by single group.

Conflict also has a deep impact on gender relationships. There is a strong link between social violence and gender-based violence through the linkage between conflict and masculinity, and the rise in female-dominated households following social violence and civil war.

²⁹ See, Stephen Castles and Alastair Davidson, *Citizenship and Migration: Globalization and the Politics of Belonging* (Psychology Press, 2000).

3.2 SOCIETAL DYNAMICS AND SOCIAL COHESION

Social cohesion varies but is more attainable with higher levels of human security.

Within the “everyday,” diverse social groups tend to interact and cooperate peacefully, even under conditions of insecurity, economic scarcity, prior conflict, and deep mistrust.³⁰ Patterns of social cohesion and the strategies that groups use to co-exist peacefully vary from case to case, especially where there are high levels of human insecurity.

In many cases, groups (even without assistance from the state or international actors) renegotiate unique ways of resolving grievances and living together, even with former enemies, in relative peace. However, very high or eroding conditions of human insecurity make it increasingly difficult for groups to negotiate new foundations for cohesion and peace, especially where group survival is highly dependent on a particular form of livelihood that is specific to one group. The protection of economic resources largely controlled by a particular identity group, under conditions of declining human security is often a motivating trigger for inter-group conflicts and clashes.

Highly ethnically diverse states are not necessarily less stable than less ethnically diverse states. Social cohesion breaks down under various combinations of pressures.

Critical junctures occur where social cohesion breaks down and violence ensues. Dominant groups that acquired power post post-independence tend to hold onto power, often using repression and political violence as tactics to prevent marginalized groups from gaining access to power. Social cohesion requires reformulating the balance of power and preventing marginalized identity groups from being left out of governance processes and being prevented from access to power.

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.

The historical dominance of single ethnic groups or blocs of larger ethnic coalitions creates deeply entrenched forms of marginalization that are especially volatile (e.g. Kenya, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, in contrast to Tanzania, where no single dominant group or coalition has emerged). Political and economic institutions that are in place in post-colonial, post-conflict 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 social fragmentation and exclusion very difficult to overcome.

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 mistrust and tension among competing groups. Groups that attain access to political power become highly protectionist – even engaging in deceptive and violence strategies to maintain control. This makes political contests extremely high stakes. Formal institutional changes at the state level meant to redress marginalization and social grievances, and even foster a more unified “national identity” (e.g. constitutions, devolution and local governance reform, police reform, specialized “cohesion and integration” institutions) do not have an immediate impact at the local level on horizontal or vertical cohesion. For example, in Kenya and Nepal, new institutions are now in place that are highly progressive and inclusive of the most marginalized groups. On the ground, however, the most marginalized groups tend to have the highest levels of distrust state institutions and thus retain deep ethnic group affiliations. Where the state is not trusted as a source of security, ethnic identification and inter-group mistrust are persistent.

³⁰ See also, James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, “Explaining Interethnic Cooperation,” *The American Political Science Review* 90, no. 4 (December 1, 1996): 715–35.

Good governance is very difficult to achieve in the absence of social cohesion. Cohesion among the various components of a state system is necessary for the system to function efficiently; extreme inequality makes such cohesion elusive.

Identity based conflicts emerge from a sense of both perceived and real marginalization. Reducing vulnerability to identity-based conflict requires remediating various forms of marginalization, whether real or perceived. Donors do have agency to impact marginalization, but this tends to be pursued indirectly through economic development programming. Donors that try to engage directly with the politics of identity and marginalization (e.g. World Bank in Nepal), tend to face resistance from dominant state elites. Initial unequal access to public goods (infrastructure, health, education), now leads to unequal access to private goods (capital, jobs, advanced education, high paying positions in the public service sector etc.), deepening ethnic divisions in terms of economic inequality (e.g. this is clearly the case in Kenya, where Kikuyu dominate public and private positions; in Guatemala with the Ladindo; and with Burmans in Myanmar) – rising “horizontal inequalities” is a general trend.

The deeply divided societies under consideration all have very little capacity to extract taxes, and have large informal or “shadow” economies. Social fragmentation and lack of state legitimacy (little social trust) undermines tax extraction capacity, which is a key factor for improving governance. For example, in Lebanon, there is an ongoing, contemporary process of “retribalization” – even middle class urban professionals express the preference to live apart with their own homogenous confessional group. Across all of the cases there is evidence that where social groups encounter insecurity, or a widely shared sense of danger within a political system, that this erodes horizontal social cohesion.

Religion is a key social cleavage that is highly interactive in relationship to other social cleavages.

There are three main social cleavages that tend to overlap and reinforce one another in conflict-affected countries: ethno-religious divisions, geographic divisions (rural urban/ or core-periphery), and class divisions (income inequality). There is evidence across the cases that local cohesion is attainable with donor support, but national cohesion, especially within the political sphere, is very difficult for external actors to impact. The restoration of social trust in state institutions, in the wake of armed conflict, is a very long-term process. In particular, in post-conflict environments, trust in religious institutions tends to remain much higher than trust in state institutions (e.g., perception surveys in both Guatemala and Kenya demonstrate this pattern).

The globalization of religion affects domestic social cohesion.

With globalization and the spread of information, traditional religious institutions and leaders are losing their hold on religious authority in many contexts. While traditional leaders are still respected in certain contexts, there has been something of a flattening of religious authority with the advent of the Internet and the expansion of the religious marketplace. This does not mean that religious authorities, however, have lost power. The considerable role that elites have played in generating conflict and soliciting participation in violence points toward a key finding that religious elites continue to be key in shaping the content of religion and in mobilizing masses. However, it does mean that religious authority has become more global and more diffuse. Thus identifying religious actors and communities with authority to spark social change in a particular context is more difficult, and external donors must take care to avoid inserting themselves too heavily into internal religious debates over theology and sources of authority.

For example, in the case of Nigeria, religion has become a binary social cleavage, and is now more polarizing and conflict-inducing than ethnicity. In this context, new religious groups have recently emerged that are competing for loyalty in the middle (less homogenous) regions of the state, and thus high levels of inter-religious competition in areas that are deeply-divided (along ethnic lines) creates conditions for inter-group violence. Most importantly, globalized religious narratives (Christianity and Islam, in particular) make domestic negotiations between religious and ethnic groups more difficult. In the cases of Sri Lanka and Myanmar, for example, the global narratives radical Islam and “jihad” impact local conditions for intergroup coordination. Local religious groups can easily make appeals, through transnational religious networks, to a broader, often global, religious community. Donors and peacebuilders are struggling to deal with this trend.

Sectarianism challenges prior patterns of social cohesion.

Sectarianism as a particular form of “bonding” social cohesion can create hostility along larger social/political cleavages. When religions splinter into smaller sects, it challenges more established social hierarchies that often serve as the basis for political mobilization or the projection of political power. However, new forms of religious identity (more global and more individualistic) are impacting older inter- and intra-group relationships in many of the cases. For example, religious movements, including Pentecostalism, Evangelicalism, and Islamism, have played very important roles in many of the conflict-affected countries under consideration. These religious trends, all of which tend to be thought of as highly individualistic, could also be viewed as establishing new frameworks for social cohesion, where states have failed to generate unity. While sectarianism is creating new forms of strife, the breakdown of older, religious hierarchies that underpin binary social cleavages could potentially help lead to the formation of bridging social cohesion.

This, however, raises key issues related to identity: why are people turning to new religious movements? How does this shift in modes of religious leadership shift the role of religious leaders in peace and conflict more broadly? Anyone can become a pastor, and the shift toward *ijtihād* in Islam allows for more lay-level leaders, or at least leaders with less formal religious training, so we see leaders multiplying, and thereby further fractionalization of religious communities.

The case reports demonstrate that Pentecostals and Evangelical (particularly in Guatemala and Nigeria, respectively), and Islamists in Lebanon, Kenya, and Nigeria, are challenging old forms of social cohesion and creating new, uncertain situations. The democratization and individualization of religious authority and identity has reduced the power of the old guards, while simultaneously creating new forms of social strife, including creating family and tribal divisions and spurring rogue acts of violence. This reflects a breakdown of old forms of bonding social capital, and it remains to be seen if bridging social capital will be achievable considering these new patterns of religious affiliation and engagement.

3.3 NARRATIVES AND THE CONSTRUCTING OF “NATION”

Social cohesion can result from the emergence of a shared vision for a plural society, but “nation-building” efforts have proven very complex.

The construction of a collective, national identity can serve as the foundation for social cohesion.³¹ More cohesive national identities in advanced industrial countries emerged within culturally specific contexts, based on shared histories and sets of shared values. In the US, for example, national identity is historically linked to Protestantism and a shared belief in individualism. In Europe, collective identity is more closely linked to social class. Other countries, such as South Africa and Rwanda have worked to construct a national identity, through policies based on particular sets of values such as “Ubuntu,” and the “One Rwanda” policy, respectively. Efforts like these are common in divided societies, working to construct a set of ideals and values to unify groups from various ethnic identities, but have had varying levels of success. It is important to note that the construction of “imagined communities,” has proven destructive in the international sphere. Moreover, in many developing countries, such as Indonesia, efforts to construct a national identity have not had great success. This finding is consistent across the cases under consideration.

The key challenge for nation building is the articulation of a vision and a set of shareable values for a plural society. Different states have used various symbols and strategies to try to construct the nation. For example, Kenya, has tried to promote *pamoja* (unity in diversity) as the basis for national unity. The NCIC, in Kenya, exists as an institution tasked with constructing a national identity. The newest strategic plan, for instance, states, “the NCIC puts in place

³¹ On the role of persuasion and political communication in Costa Rica and Nicaragua see, Cruz, Consuelo, 2000. “Identity and Persuasion: How Nations Remember Their Pasts and Make Their Futures,” *World Politics* 52 (3): 275-312. On the idea of “imagined communities,” see, Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin And Spread of Nationalism* (Verso, 1983).

strategies that nurture a national identity of the Kenyan people while providing systemic conciliation structures that inspire communities towards national values rather than individualistic tribal affiliations" (NCIC Strategic Plan, 2013). This institution has faced numerous challenges in carrying out its mandate, not least of which is the current ICC trial which has led current leaders to constrain space for dialogue around issues of ethnicity and violence.

Similarly, at present, Myanmar's government endorses a narrative of the "union spirit" as an effort to construct a more unified national identity. Key minority groups, however, remain deeply excluded and marginalized, especially the Rohingya and ethnic Chinese. Myanmar is a case of deeply contested national identities. Ethnic minority groups aim to protect individual cultures, customs, and languages in the face of perceived domination by the Burman national identity. Constructing a Buddhist nation in Myanmar, or attempts to develop a larger religio-national identity, is instigating systematic violence against Muslims; politicians are hesitant to denounce the violence because they need the support in the fragile context without a clear national identity. In certain ways, these new forms of violence reflect the empowerment dilemma, since democratization is opening the field for defining the nation, with large, bonded groups, such as the Buddhist Burmans, trying to inscribe their group identity into the state as a whole.

In the case of Lebanon, while there is a sense of national Lebanese identity that goes beyond sectarian divisions, the very construction of the modern Lebanese nation state enshrined sectarian identity into the political system and the distribution of resources. Thus, sectarianism has been part of the fabric of society for just under a century and thereby has become a key part of the national identity- one that is difficult to shake.

Overall, findings from the cases indicate that defining "the nation" is a very contentious process, fraught with conflict and the emergence of new forms of marginalization against groups that do not fall with the articulated vision. Most importantly, efforts to develop a shared pluralistic vision for the country often do not stick, due to the fact that the political economy continues to allocate resources based on ethnic or religious identity. In other words, nation-building policies are regularly undermined by deep divisions entrenched through political and economic processes.

3.2 PUBLIC POLICY: LANGUAGE, LAND, AND SERVICES

Historically, the emergence of common language has functioned as a foundation for social cohesion in many countries (e.g. European states, Tanzania).³² Easterly, for example finds that linguistic fractionalization is one of the strongest predictors of weak institutions and poor economic growth (the other being income inequality).³³ Across all of the cases, linguistic homogenization is highly contentious topic. Language and identity are deeply intertwined, such that the politics of language can be especially contentious, especially around education policy. Therefore, even though changes in language policy may be a potential channel for fostering social cohesion; politically, this is a very difficult arena for developing consensus, especially in divided societies. The homogenization of language intensifies fear of assimilation and the sense of relative deprivation among minority groups, which can trigger conflict.

Social cohesion is a function of equal access to state resources, services, and land rights.

Across all of the cases under consideration, issues of land rights and indigeneity have become highly volatile (especially, Guatemala, Kenya, Nepal, and Sri Lanka). Thus, there is a "land-identity nexus" that must be taken into account in relationship to social cohesion. The unequal distribution of land along identity lines is a major factor that prevents the emergence of cohesive societies. This is common grievance among marginalized groups who mobilize violently against other groups.

Similarly, unequal allocation of state resources along identity lines, or unequal service delivery also plays a major role in deepening social divisions. In contrast, ensuring equal and universal access to public services plays a strong role in generating social cohesion. Direct state-led efforts aimed toward constructing trust through new narratives of "cohesion" and "integration," directly, have little measurable impact. Social cohesion is more likely to form over time

³² See, for instance, Edward Miguel, "Tribe or Nation?: Nation Building and Public Goods in Kenya versus Tanzania," *World Politics* 56, no. 3 (November 5, 2004): 327-62.

³³ Easterly, Ritzen, and Woolcock, "Social Cohesion, Institutions, and Growth."

where strong institutions cause groups to experience interactions with other groups that are shaped by a deep sense of equality.³⁴

Identity-based service delivery has a major impact on generating very deeply entrenched marginalization and a sense of relative deprivation, over the long term. For example, weak and highly unequal service delivery to particular areas generates pockets of poverty. Groups without access to state resources have lower levels of access to education, higher levels of illiteracy and unemployment, worst health outcomes and lower levels of overall human development. Lack of access to health services, the absence of infrastructure, and access to modern communication systems leaves some regions deeply mired in poverty, which over time fosters animosity toward groups that have had access to state resources and have overcome poverty traps. Nigeria and Kenya are clear examples where elites benefit greatly from state resources in comparison to society at large. Nigeria stands out in its ability to largely disguise deep ethnic divisions through the distribution of oil rents in relatively equitable terms.

In general, the importance of the relationship between social services systems and conflict vulnerability has been underemphasized, particularly in the most recent World Development Report. However, the ways in which state services are delivered play a critical role in uniting or fragmenting a society. The Netherlands, historically, is a key example of cohesion achieved through a particular type of social system. Political bargaining at the top led to social cohesion at the bottom (horizontal level). Social cohesion among very diverse groups emerged because there was a deal struck that each "pillar" would receive the same social services from the government, which has led to long-term stability of a diverse, divided society.

3.3 POLITICAL PARTICIPATION: MYTHS AND REALITIES OF "INCLUSIVITY"

Social cohesion is advanced when political systems are fully inclusive of all major groups, yet there are often practical and normative barriers to full inclusion, in part as a consequence of radicalization and extremism within groups that claim representation of group interests as a result of their being "true believers."

There is a striking lack of vertical cohesion throughout many of the cases. Democratizing states promote inclusivity at that national level, but minority groups or the most highly disenfranchised display a vast distrust in their governments' commitment to their best interests. The experience of intergroup conflict and violence deeply erodes social trust in the state, and this relationship between state and society is particularly difficult to rebuild.

In multiple cases, local actors remain high skeptical of national level policy dialogues or projects related to "social cohesion." For many local communities, these debates appear to be merely symbolic debates among elites trying to appease international donors, rather than sincere efforts to include the most marginalized groups within process of governance. This raises key questions for the development of "social cohesion agendas" in divided societies: How effective can international actors be when 1) governments (even if formally democratic) are not committed to inclusivism/pluralism; and 2) when conflicting social groups in question do not trust the government's commitment to their interests? In other words, what exactly is the correlation between vertical and horizontal cohesion?

In Lebanon, for example, sectarian elites benefit from the status quo, as clientelism remains profitable. As noted in the study, Lebanese elites are the stakeholders in the business of Lebanon. Elites have little incentive to de-mobilize, even though much of the population would like to see a move away from the sectarian/communal system.³⁵ Like in Kenya and Nigeria, the patronage system still drives politics and will arguably continue to do so as long as there are no substantive incentives for shifting away from a clientelist sectarian system.

³⁴ See also, Robert Foa, *The Economic Rationale for Social Cohesion - The Cross-Country Evidence*, Paper presented at the conference "Social Cohesion and Development" (OECD, Paris France, January 2011).

³⁵ Mansoor Moaddel, Jean Kors, and Johan Garde, "Sectarianism and Counter-Sectarianism in Lebanon," Population Studies Center Research Report 12-757 (May 2012).

Social cohesion can be deeply undermined by political party mobilization strategies

A number of cases suggest that political party mobilization strategies can have a deep impact in terms of creating new and deep social fissures. Three cases are particularly telling. In Myanmar, democratization has created conditions for ethnic mobilization and violence. This would not have been permitted under the military dictatorship where any semblance of potentially destabilizing activity was quickly discouraged. Buddhist extremists have taken to targeting Muslims, and radical anti-Muslim agendas have proliferated in online forums. As a result communal distrust is high, with anxieties among minorities, especially Muslims, continuing to rise.

Similarly, in the case of Nepal, democratization and poor governance have created a window for identity based mobilization and protest. The dissolution of the old monarchy, has exposed extreme diversity in the country, and made identity very contested. "Identity politics" is on the rise, with different and often clashing demands for territorial autonomy, based on identity attributes ranging from regional and linguistic (Madheshi and ethnic groups), religious (Muslim, ethnic groups), and caste (Dalit). Like in many other contexts of incipient democratization, the Nepali transition has been turbulent. The country has been beset by unstable rule through shifting governing coalitions, localized political violence, and, most poignantly, strong identity-based political mobilization.

The Kenya case study also provides evidence of a link between party mobilization strategies and social fragmentation. The nature of multi-party democracy in Kenya generates conditions conducive for social fragmentation and identity conflict. This is clearly evident within Kenya's long history of general elections that have all displayed ethnic-based voting patterns. Across elections, elites promote ethnic divisions as they compete for resources, power and influence such that votes are cast by "ethnic census." In the 2013 election, ethnic census voting behavior formed the foundation for political party mobilization strategies based the notion of the "ethnic tyranny of numbers," a concept that multiple respondents referred to in relation to ethnic politics and coalitions.

4. INTERNATIONAL PEACEBUILDERS: MEDIATORS OR MEDDLERS?

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 for stability and conflict prevention in transitional countries. As Easterly has argued: Cohesive societies do not happen by accident. People nurture good (political) leadership so as to build defenses against attempts to “expose and exacerbate social fault lines” and “harness the potential residing in their societal diversity.”³⁶

However, given that development inherently requires institutional change, there are invariably arenas of instability, periods of social “fragmentation” 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. External aid does not always 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 identity-based dimensions.

4.1 STRATEGIC DILEMMAS AND TRADE-OFFS

Talking about Social Cohesion (Without Talking about Social Cohesion): Most country-based development practitioners refer to social cohesion as a sub-category of the larger “rights-based approach” to peacebuilding and humanitarian intervention.

The rights-based approach is seen as a key mechanism for fostering equality and cohesion among groups within post-conflict intervention processes, and functions as a shared reference for donors and aid actors working to address issues of marginalization, social fragmentation, and state repression of minority groups. This approach views “fostering social cohesion” as a process of norm building and transmission, and eventually institutional and behavioral change. Norm transmission requires contextualized concepts for particular cultural environments. Despite contextual variation around how the term itself is used across all seven cases, there is evidence of a high level of diffusion of social cohesion as a donor policy framework. A large network of donors, NGOs, and CSOs (both within and outside of the UN system) working within post-conflict environments employ the concept as a framework for peacebuilding and statebuilding programming.

The concept itself, however, remains politically contentious and is highly debated across various domestic political environments. Variation in applications of the concept social cohesion is caused by variation in the way actors have attempted to change dominant narratives around exclusion, marginalization, identity divisions, and social fragmentation across different contexts. The concept is especially contentious and debated where identity serves as the primary foundation for political organization and mobilization, or for state control (e.g. Sri Lanka and Lebanon). In some cases social cohesion has become a widely used concept whereas in others, it remains contentious.

For example, the concept of social cohesion is used widely and directly in Kenya. This is largely due to the fact that in the wake of post election violence in 2007-2008, donors integrated peacebuilding and humanitarian responses around a common “community security and social cohesion” approach.³⁷ The concept of social cohesion also has been directly integrated into the national peace architecture through the “National Cohesion and Integration Commission,” whose motto “unity in diversity” is widely displayed on banners across the country. There even has been an effort in Kenya, in working to make the concept more tangible as a policy-making tool, to develop a “social cohesion index.” This process is ongoing in Kenya, but respondents indicate that it has been very difficult for stakeholders to agree on key components of the concept for measurement.

³⁶ Easterly, Ritzen, and Woolcock, “Social Cohesion, Institutions, and Growth,” 5.

³⁷ Research Participant 36, Interview with the authors. New York, NY, December 5, 2013.

In Nepal, with no direct translation for “social cohesion,” local peacebuilding actors tend to refer to a culturally embedded notion of “*sadhbahv*” or “social harmony.” While the concept is linked historically to the caste system (a hierarchical social structure that supposedly generates “harmony” [*sadhbahv*]), donors employ it within projects designed to foster more equal and integrated social relationships and networks. DFID and NEMAF, for instance, have supported long-running community mediation and social harmony programming that employs a dialogical peacebuilding model to engage members of different caste and ethnic groups in communal conversations around local conflict drivers. This model operates under the assumption that developing crosscutting social networks is a necessary factor for conflict resolution and violence reduction. Even though the concept of social cohesion has limited application across the broader polity, international donors and domestic CSOs have broadly embraced the concept. UNICEF views their primary role in Nepal as building the capacity of the state to provide social services (education and health) as a direct mechanism for creating social cohesion and reducing conflict vulnerability. Similarly, the UNDP’s Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery views social cohesion programming as critical for preventing armed violence within the current phase of recovery.

Sri Lanka has the most contentious discourse around the concept of social cohesion – among donors and between donors and the government. One on hand, some respondents argue that donors exploit the term to avoid dealing with complicated issues of identity-based marginalization and exclusion. As one respondent noted about the UNDP and its attempts to deal with social cohesion issues: “[The UNDP has] no political perspective. They use the term social cohesion because it is politically neutral. They won’t talk about land issues or inter-ethnic issues. Or to the extent they do, it’s about putting band aids on conflicts rather than dealing with underlying issues...they are not strengthening social cohesion.”³⁸ In other words, some actors do not see social cohesion as an ideal term for the work that they do, and would prefer to use the descriptive categories of peacebuilding and reconciliation because “social cohesion” and “social integration” are so broad that actors are free to select from a wide arena of activities, approaches and actors with whom they would like to work with under the concepts.

On the other hand, some respondents believe that it is a useful and strategic concept. They argue that donors effectively use “social cohesion” language in Sri Lanka as a “cover” to carry out activities that if labeled as human rights or reconciliation would be unlikely to secure government approval.³⁹ In some cases, the shift toward social cohesion programming is pragmatic as it allows donors to get buy-in from the government and avoid losing the ability to carry out peacebuilding programs and projects that may be rejected due to opposition towards or misunderstanding of the policy concepts being used. From this perspective, the social cohesion approach is advantageous for both donors and the government. Social cohesion and social integration are less politically contentious terms than “peacebuilding” and “human rights,” both of which continue to be controversial in post-conflict environments. Peacebuilding and human rights, at some level, connote continuing disharmony, upheaval, and crisis, whereas social cohesion and social integration are perceived to be “newer” terms, broad enough to capture a variety of issues that are by no means distinct to particular conflict contexts, such as marginalization of various groups. From this perspective, “social cohesion has default legitimacy.”⁴⁰

While the social cohesion concept has diffused broadly across a number of conflict-affected countries, it remains highly subjective and its meaning must be negotiated within particular contexts.

In many ways, the potential power of social cohesion as a peacebuilding approach is linked to its ability to be internally debated and negotiated. Processes of norm change around minority inclusion in governance are highly political and conflict ridden, especially in countries where patronage, clientelism, and elite corruption are rife. In all seven cases, the concept has drawn attention to the need for support for most marginalized and underdeveloped communities as a form of pre-emptive peacebuilding (rather than reactionary humanitarianism and conflict recovery, which is far more costly). The concept has the potential to change debates and narratives around social exclusion,

³⁸ Research Participant 9, Interview with the authors. Sri Lanka, July 22, 2013.

³⁹ Research Participant 6, Interview with the authors. Sri Lanka, July 19, 2013.

⁴⁰ Research Participant 17, Interview with the authors. Sri Lanka, August 1, 2013.

and to increase policy space for the emergence of “pro-poor” governance – an outcome that is clearly very difficult to attain in countries with deeply entrenched “neopatrimonial regimes.”

Evidence that donors have directly impacted social cohesion in many of these contexts is limited. It remains clear, however, that introduction of the concept, alone, has created space for domestic debates around deep social drivers of identity-based violence (e.g. historical marginalization and ethnic power imbalances) – a key first step in the path toward reconciliation and more durable peace in post-conflict contexts.

The Empowerment Dilemma: Equitable influence and representation in the state are expected and sometimes demanded in post-conflict environments, but this condition is rarely accomplished at the hands of external actors.

Engaging marginalized groups in social cohesion programming, under conditions of ineffective governance, can empower new identity-based groups, and generate demands for participation and inclusion. In some cases, donor support social cohesion programming has functioned to empower and mobilize minority groups, generating more contentious politics, less consensus, and less effective governance. International organizations face complex challenges in ensuring interventions achieve their intended peace and development outcomes due to the *empowerment dilemma*. In other words, the social cohesion framework and the spread of the norm of inclusion have caused minority groups to organize protests and strikes to demand access to and protection of their right to participate in governance. In some cases, it has generated new social grievances and hostility toward ethnic groups who dominate the political system. Mobilization of identity-based political groups has led to gridlock in government, inefficiencies in governance or, at worst, new forms of state-led marginalization to try to silence actors who have not traditionally had access to political power. While the international community has been successful in the promotion of the norm of inclusion of marginalized identity groups at multiple levels of governance, often through debates around social cohesion, this norm is not necessarily promoting the emergence of more cohesive and stable societies in all situations.

The Nepal case is paradigmatic of this finding. As one social policy specialist stated, “donors who aim to build social cohesion among marginalized groups get blamed by political elites for encouraging divisions and fueling tensions.” In Nepal, peacebuilding programming and the strong promotion of the “inclusion agenda” has played a role in generating conditions conducive to identity-based political mobilization. The rapid proliferation of identity-based political parties also has undermined the capacity of the parliament to achieve consensus on a new constitution. This has led to political sclerosis across the state apparatus, increasingly ineffective governance, and thus the emergence new forms of grievance against the state among identity-based groups.

A central dilemma for external actors attempting to improve local level participation in governance institutions in Nepal is that, “with an entrenched hierarchical political system, working with grassroots actors means working with agents that have no political power, and empowering the most marginalized groups means directly encountering the power of elites.”⁴¹ Even where external actors are merely researching the nature of entrenched ethnic and economic exclusion as related to conflict vulnerability, as one social policy specialist stated, “they get blamed by political elites for encouraging divisions and fueling tensions.” UN and World Bank leaders agree that the promotion of the inclusion agenda (while clearly a goal of the CPA) has often undermined the legitimacy of international actors in the eyes of political elites.⁴²

In Nepal, therefore, the “inclusion agenda” as a means to address long-running “horizontal inequalities” was successful in generating a highly inclusive Constitutional Assembly, but at the same time, “too much inclusion” has undermined the ability of the CA to achieve consensus necessary for movement toward state restructuring and more effective governance. The inclusion agenda, as pursued by international organizations has generated high social expectations for the state, but the institutionalization of inclusion remains highly uneven and mostly “descriptive” across all levels of governance. Dialogues around inclusion, in general, and ethnic federalism (supported by international

⁴¹ Research Participants 6, Team Interview, Kathmandu, Nepal, December 4, 2012.

⁴² Research Participant 11, Team Interview, December 5, 2012.

donors), in particular, have played a role in generating, “a strangely paralyzed system of governance.”⁴³ As stated by a key UNDP analyst, “there is a multi-party system with leaders making power deals among themselves, but incapable of consensus, or majority-based, action; key commissions are not functioning, there is still no constitution, and not even a clear budget.”⁴⁴ Under these conditions, there is rising fear among stakeholders in Nepal that the rise of “identity politics” has the capacity to spark social conflict, especially under the conditions of governance “paralysis.”

As is reflected in the case studies presented in this project, one of the main effect of the expansion of institutions and norms for social cohesion in the absence of more integrated governance practices is that post-conflict reforms have unintentionally contributed to rising levels of political disaffection, effectively creating conditions conducive to rising social frustration, identity-based political mobilization, and persistent identity-based fragmentation. In some cases, the mobilization of identity groups has been met with new tactics of state repression, including symbolic political violence – a low cost form of violence directed toward controlling and limiting mobilization among minority groups.

This dilemma also has played out in Guatemala. Social cohesion and human rights-based approaches within donor programs have raised expectations for state performance at the local level, and the most marginalized and excluded social groups now believe institutional change is possible. International cooperation (bilateral as well as multilateral and NGO) has empowered local groups with resources and bureaucratic structures to claim their rights. At the same time, donors have had very little influence on dominant elite groups, such that and the state has not responded to new claims for rights and inclusion. In fact, the government dismantled or downsized many of the institutions established for the implementation of peace accords such as CAS, CENAP, and SEPREM. The government even returned money to UNDP as it, “did not want to be manipulated.”⁴⁵ The pursuit of social cohesion in Guatemala has created a context in which local identity groups now organize to claim new rights for participation and inclusion. The state, however, continues to repress these movements, sometimes violently through selective targeting of movement leaders. In the wake of peacebuilding efforts that involve programs to improve social cohesion, there is often corresponding horizontal polarization and hardening of ethnic/identity divisions in response to state-directed repression of groups working for minority and excluded groups’ interests.⁴⁶

In contrast, in other cases, the link between donor funded efforts, identity-based mobilization, and rising ethnic fragmentation or inter-group violence is not as strong.

In Kenya, for example, the process of building cohesion is geared toward overcoming deeply entrenched ethnic-based political mobilization, and it is used to try to identify common interests, to develop cross-cutting forms of social interaction and political participation, and to develop a national sense of unity and a collective vision of the future. These efforts have not spawned the emergence of new political voices for minority identity groups, considering that politics remains highly elite-centric. Group mobilization tends to play out through regularly shifting, elite-led party coalitions. Ground-up movements are rare. The nature of ethnic identity as the primary basis for elite-driven political coalitions in Kenya makes it very difficult for leaders to truly rally and support the broader social cohesion agenda. Whether or not “unity in diversity” will be realized in Kenya, depends upon political elites, and the extent to which they truly decide to turn rhetoric about “cohesion” into reality through more policy-based or platform based political mobilization.⁴⁷

Donors working to foster social cohesion in deeply-divided countries need to pay careful attention to the empowerment dilemma.

In the words of a UN respondent, “in many countries donors clearly identify issues of social exclusion a potential problem and help make it a national agenda, but generally have failed to adequately ameliorate issues of deep exclusion and inequality through their own programmatic efforts. This can increase ethnic demands for access to

⁴³ Research Participant 32, Team Interview, December 14, 2012.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Research Participant 44, Interview with the authors. Guatemala City, Guatemala, May 5, 2013.

⁴⁶ Research Participants 15, 16, 17, Team Interviews. May 2012.

⁴⁷ Research Participant 24, Interview with the authors. Nairobi, Kenya, July 28, 2013.

political power."⁴⁸ This dilemma aligns with Reilly's insight. He argues that that international mediators and especially the UN tend to "prioritize descriptive representation and inclusion over other goals," and that these choices can have deleterious outcomes on the long-term development of systems of capable governance through nationally-focused, ethnically integrative political parties.⁴⁹ As the cacophony of post-conflict programs and institutional reforms described above reveals, there are multiple "descriptive" institutions in place across all seven cases, meant to foster greater inclusion across multiple spheres of governance; however, informal practices and customs of exclusion remain deeply entrenched, and elites and "ethnic entrepreneurs" continue to use ethnicity to mobilize support to gain access to scarce public resources. The empowerment dilemma raises concerns, therefore, about conflict sensitivity for donors. Norm change and pushing for greater minority inclusion, in the absence of effective service delivery and poverty reduction, can, in some cases, create new conditions for communal conflict.

4.2 ENGAGING RELIGIOUS LEADERS, INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

The presence of ethnic and religious divisions within a country does not necessary generate a higher propensity for conflict and violence.

This project's case selection displays variation in terms of the significance of religion in both conflict and peacebuilding. While some cases, such as Nigeria, are more overtly inter-religious, others contend with a dominant and minority religious situation, such as in Sri Lanka, Kenya. In Lebanon, conflict reflects both intra- and inter-religious divides. Additionally, the case selection displays variation in the ways in which international organizations have taken a variety of approaches to religion, ranging from direct avoidance of religion ("we don't go there") or largely secular donors organizations explicitly running programming that deals directly with "the religious sector."

The cases largely confirm that, as Haynes argues, "governmental skill in achieving social solidarity which can transcend potential ethnic or religious schisms may be an important factor in explaining whether inter- or intra-group conflict occurs within a country or not."⁵⁰ In other words, successful governance of diversity is necessary for peace and social stability. For this reason, how to foster social cohesion in deeply-divided, conflict-affected or "fragile"⁵¹ states as a means to prevent violent conflict recurrence and to encourage inclusive, sustainable human development should remain as a central debate within contemporary development programming and policy-making.

It is important to note that violence does not have a direct relationship with religion in all of these cases.

While violence related to conflict over religious ideals and interests does occur, in this project we focus principally on "identity-based" or "ethno-religious" violence. In this category, religion serves as a marker of collective identity, a tool for mobilization, and a framework for understanding and interpreting conflict and necessary conditions for peace. Ethno-religious conflicts are not *about* religious content or ideas per say. As Lincoln describes, "while theological considerations may play a relatively small part in distinguishing the rival communities, those communities quite emphatically define—and experience—their collective identity in terms of religion."⁵²

Even if theological or religious disputes are not at the base of a conflict, identity conflicts take on religious dimensions. Religion plays an important and unique role in identity-based conflicts. In these cases, religious discourse and institutions are drawn upon to inscribe and reinforce bounded identities that are at odds with other religious identities present in the conflict situation. In many cases, conflict becomes "religious" only after the conflict begins, as groups struggle to explain the conflict, interpret its meaning, and understand its impact on society at large.

⁴⁸ Research Participant 15, Team Interview, December 6, 2012.

⁴⁹ Reilly, Benjamin. 2012. Remarks at the Workshop "Institutions for Sustainable Peace," German Institute for Global and Area Studies, San Diego, March 31, 2012.

⁵⁰ Jeffrey Haynes, *Religion and Development: Conflict or Cooperation?* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 57.

⁵¹ OECD, *Concepts and Dilemmas of State Building in Fragile Situations*.

⁵² Lincoln, *Holy Terrors*, 73.

As such, religion is a driver of conflict and fragility in various ways across all of the cases. Easy generalization is elusive.

For example, in divided societies, governments, along with Civil Society Organizations and other Non-Governmental Organizations, tend to distribute goods and privileges along ethno-religious identity lines, which can exacerbate cleavages and foster conflict inducing grievances among groups. Also, religious groups across all of the cases tend to view religion as a key component of national identity formation; while other societal groups resist this agenda, which is often exclusionary of minority groups who often have diverse religious affiliations. Furthermore, colonial legacies also add to the complexity of religious identity in these contexts. Colonists and missionaries, who often overlapped and intersected, identified and helped construct ethnic and religious boundaries, privileging certain groups over others within processes of early state formation. These patterns of interaction have path dependent effects upon contemporary ethno-religious cleavages and conflict dynamics.

Religion, therefore, factors into these case studies in complex ways. The religious dimension is certainly critical, but still one of many elements of identity-based conflict. Inter-religious group relationships are not inherently conflictual, but religion can provide ready fuel for religio-political entrepreneurs. Elites play key roles when it comes to the question of religion and social cohesion. They can pivot societies toward injunctions of tolerance toward the other, or interpret doctrines to be conflictual and exclusive. More importantly, conflict-affected countries, religious actors shape not just social attitudes and norms, but also legal norms and institutions. Religious actors often are deeply involved and invested in the debates and political processes that lead to the formation of new institutions at the level of the state. Thus, the question of how external organizations try to foster social cohesion, while engaging religious actors who often have different, competing visions for new state institutions, is critical.

Religious identity is a critical factor in fragmentation, and thus religious leaders and communities play important roles in creating cohesion.

However, a heavy focus on religious identity can serve to harden these boundaries. In some cases, such as Lebanon and Nigeria, religious identity is explicitly inscribed into political identity and access to the state. Communal leaders represent their groups at the national level, and thus religious identity is consistently reinforced at the state level. At present, Nigeria is fragmented into two exclusively-defined religious identities, Islam and Christianity, rather than into the previously dominant ethnic identities. This has made the middle states vulnerable to aggressive conversion tactics. This relatively new reality has further politicized religion, and identity-based violent conflict continues to thrive. Lebanon, on the other hand, is politically fragmented by communal identities, which map onto political representation and access to social services. In Lebanon, religious organizations, rather than the state, are the principal providers of social services, thereby re-inscribing sectarian identity at every turn, while also excusing the state from governance in this sphere.

The role of new religious movements, including Pentecostalism, Evangelicalism, and Islamism, also emerges across many of the cases under consideration here. These religious trends, each of which tend to be highly individualistic in nature, could also be seen as establishing new forms of social cohesion and they bring up many issues of identity: why are people turning to these movements? How does this shift in modes of religious leadership shift the role of religious leaders in peace and conflict more broadly? Nearly anyone can become an evangelical pastor in a fairly short amount of time, and the trend toward *ijtihad* within global Islam allows for more lay-level leaders, or at least leaders with less formal religious training. Because of this, we see leaders multiplying, and thereby further fractionalizing religious communities. The Guatemala case authors argued that, while Catholicism previously provided a broader base of social cohesion in the country, the new wave of Pentecostal Christianity has challenged the prior dominance of Catholicism and has introduced new fissures in the country.

Thus, while religion interacts with, and sometimes maps onto, other types of identity, such as ethnic identity, religions also brings a unique dimension to certain conflict situations. Religious ideas bring transcendent and global narratives to bear on otherwise localized conflict situations.

Additionally, the authority and institutional structures embedded within religious communities provide strong in-group cohesion, which can be leveraged to build bridging social cohesion, but is often used to fight for in-group interests. Because the content of religious identity is malleable and shifting, religio-political entrepreneurs, who have something to gain from exacerbating religious identity conflict, capitalize upon openings to draw upon religion to solidify group boundaries and to encourage religious support for violence. Membership in or identification with a particular religious label is also not static or as cleanly categorized as we often think, but elites reify these labels when it is politically expedient to do so, and this in turn creates more solidified understandings of hardened religious boundaries and zero-sum configurations of religious identity politics.

4.3 DIRECT APPROACHES: EVALUATING DIALOGUE PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

In terms of the *horizontal-subjective* context (changing society-level attitudes), a broad number of donor organizations have supported and employed dialogue-based projects aimed at mending strained inter-group relationships and changing antagonistic perceptions and attitudes toward the “other.” Dialogical models have been employed across all seven cases.

In general, dialogues between identity groups and between state-level and civil society-level actors have worked well to reach agreements on the cessation of direct hostilities, and to address very specific, hyper-local conflict issues.

However, where dialogues have not been linked to real institutional changes that allow for more equitable power sharing among ethnic groups, or where they are not linked to tangible economic change and improvement in livelihoods, they have not been effective in fostering a larger attitudinal sense of collective good will. Thus, dialogues are more or less effective at various points along a conflict trajectory. In cases where social grievances have not been addressed by the state, dialogues can do more harm than good. The state can use dialogical peacebuilding models as a way to pacify and demobilize opposition groups without pursuing substantive institutional or social change (e.g. Guatemala, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar).

Nigeria illustrates the effectiveness of dialogue for building social cohesion. It has become a testing ground for various models of peacebuilding, and inter-religious and ethnic group dialogue. Over the past ten to fifteen years, there has been an explosion of universities in the country offering courses in peacemaking with cadres of young Nigerians entering into a vast array of NGOs and CSOs who use dialogical models of all types to address conflict dynamics within the country. It is also a unique case where donors that usually avoid engagement with religious institutions have expressed direct interest in religion and engaging faith-inspired actors in dialogue-based, social cohesion programming. However, with so many competing approaches, and very little monitoring of programmatic effectiveness (beyond assessments specific to local organizations), it is very difficult to gauge the conditions under which some programs have been more successful than others in minimizing conflict. In general, respondents suggest that dialogue programming is effective at the hyper-local level. The effectiveness of localized dialogue programs, however, rarely creates “upward cascades.” In other words, attitudinal good will at the local level rarely has an impact at national level.⁵³ Local dialogue projects have very little power to address powerful and increasing religious bi-polarization in Nigeria,

which is linked to domestic and global religious trends (fundamentalism and globalized Islam, competitive proselytism along border regions, etc.).

In Guatemala, national level dialogues initiated by religious actors, and complemented by the UN, effectively helped reach a CPA in 1996. In recent years, however, national “dialogue” has been used by the state as strategy to pacify civil society. Donor experiences in engaging in peace efforts in the spaces between the state and civil society illustrate a fundamental problem of fragile statehood: Guatemalan governments often have compensated for their lack of will to implement reforms and provide equitable public services by multiplying “dialogue processes” on a very diverse range of issues. Dialogues around rural development schemes are a key example. In many cases, local

⁵³ Research Participant 19, Interview with the authors. Nigeria, February 21, 2014.

dialogue processes have led to the formulation of new public policies for addressing local grievances. The implementation of policies, however, often has been delayed or blocked completely by the government. Civil society, therefore, has been “pacified” through dialogues without social grievances actually being redressed.

Regarding national-level dialogue in Guatemala, the European Union finances national dialogues and monitoring of conflicts through the Human Rights Procuraduría. UNDP also supports the “National System of Dialogue” as a mechanism for early conflict warning. The main problems with the national system of early conflict warning are as follows. First, there is a lack of social trust in state institutions, such that working through the state to build cohesion has been very problematic. Second, systems of early warning and civil conflict resolution are not effective without follow-up and political action. Dialogue effectiveness depends on the will of the government, and can only be influenced to a limited extent by external actors with little leverage to change attitudes and behaviors of elites. Third, the dialogue-based early warning system is politically sensitive and demands a high level of transparency and accountability between the state and civil society, which is often lacking due to Guatemala’s long history of state repression.

In Nepal, dialogue projects are mostly localized and largely circumvent the state. Actors such as USIP, DANIDA, Search for Common Ground, and the Asia Foundation occupy this space of engagement and are directly involved in outreach and peace education efforts, employing multiple strategies (e.g. “cultures of conflict resolution”, “social harmony”, and “preventative networks”) at the community level in regions considered to be most vulnerable to identity-based conflict. Program managers of local-level (horizontal), dialogue-based interventions make a case for their continued necessity and efficacy, but have a difficult time reporting a measureable impact on social relationships across various communities, and report problems with securing sustainable funding necessary to foster long-term attitudinal change.⁵⁴ In Nepal, participants in a focus group involved in a long running DFID-funded “social harmony” program in Biratnagar expressed concerns of “dialogue fatigue.” Respondents suggested that ongoing dialogue in the absence of tangible improvements in local governance or economic development has generated political disenfranchisement, especially among religious and civil society leaders consistently targeted to engage in dialogue.⁵⁵ Also, with multiple actors employing various local peacebuilding ideas and strategies respondents report, “consistent disagreement and contestation among IOs regarding whose dialogue program is best.”⁵⁶

Kenya has experienced similar dilemmas with dialogical peacebuilding models. For example, within the wake of post-election violence in 2007-2008,⁵⁷ donors such as DFID, USAID, Netherlands, Finland, Sweden (SIDA), Canada (CIDA) UNDP and the EU helped to support local CSOs in developing “local capacities for peace,” providing technical support for peace dialogues that served as the foundation for follow up development interventions to address key inter-group grievances.⁵⁸ Councils of Elders are thought to help foster peaceful ethno-communal relationships through the development of communal social contracts and declarations, or “informal institutions” to help manage unique local conflict dynamics and help to delegitimize violence. In addition, the NCKK has supported inter-ethnic and inter-faith dialogue at the grassroots as well as national levels helping communities to understand key political processes and exposing communities to countries that have experienced conflicts. Respondents generally argued that history and deep inequalities are rarely addressed with dialogue-based projects. A dialogical “problem-solving approach” usually moves toward debates over compensation for conflict and injustices, which does not help to solve real “deep structural drivers” of conflict. Dialogue based peacebuilding in the Kenya case, similar to Nigeria, has been effective for addressing localized conflict dynamics, but the impact of horizontal-subjective interventions rarely “cascade upward” to impact levels of inter-group trust at a macro level.

⁵⁴ Research Participant 3, Team Interview, December 12, 2012.

⁵⁵ Focus Group, Team Interview, December 8, 2012.

⁵⁶ Research Participant 26, Team Interview, December 11, 2012.

⁵⁷ See Stephen Brown, “Donor Responses to the 2008 Kenyan Crisis: Finally Getting It Right?,” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 27, no. 3 (2009): 389–406. See also, Johannes M. Nebe, *Civil Conflict Management of the Post-Election Violence 2007/2008 in Kenya Lessons Learnt and the Way Forward* (Nairobi, Kenya: Kenyatta University Nairobi/Kenya and the University of Trier/Germany, October 2012).

⁵⁸ Research Participant 9, Interview with the authors. Nairobi, Kenya, July 17, 2013.

Country-level directors of dialogue projects report that both national actors and local civil society organizations have become very accustomed to the “scripts” of donors and very skilled at navigating and appealing to the needs and interests of the larger international peacebuilding system.⁵⁹

They claim that social cohesion programs at the local level have introduced high levels of competition among implementing partners and created “careerism” around foreign-funded social cohesion programming. In short, dialogues are questionable as an effective mechanism for fostering cohesion for the following reasons. Dialogue can become a very shallow form of engagement. Many processes focus on elites with very limited civil society participation or participation of the most highly marginalized actors, which can reinforce social cleavages. Also, dialogues are highly subject to the problem of duplication with poor donor and NGO coordination, and, in general, dialogue processes lack sustainable funding. While they might function to effectively create relationships and networks across social divisions, as the Sri Lanka case has shown, when tensions emerge and conflict recurs, these networks do not always prove powerful enough to constrain violent actors from mobilizing along identity lines.

While donors have supported multiple, successful dialogue-based interventions in deeply-divided societies, this approach to the construction of social cohesion faces key challenges. Instability of aid flows can undermine the successful implementation of dialogue programming. There are few resources available for “preemptive” peacebuilding, such as dialogue and reconciliation projects, relative to resources that become available for post-conflict aid. A majority of donor funds support projects that are reactive to extreme violence, as opposed to proactive for promoting long-term cohesion and stability. Attitudinal change among groups with deeply held, even “ancient”⁶⁰ grievances is a long-term process, while dialogue funding is short term. At the same time, under conditions of resource scarcity, there are very few efforts or interest in mobilizing local resources for supporting community peace initiatives. Overall, with both unstable international funding and low levels of “local buy in,” long-term inter-group dialogue projects are very difficult to sustain at the level of intensity and coverage necessary to truly foster social cohesion.

4.4 INDIRECT APPROACHES: INTERDEPENDENCIES FOR PEACE

If social cohesion is dependent upon the formation of a system of public goods provision that provides resources transparently and equitably, then the presence of competing systems of social protection, funded by various donors for various groups can play a strong role in preventing the emergence of cohesion.

In all of the cases, systems of social protection remain deeply fragmented. Some systems operate only at the local level and others at the regional or state level. Religious communities maintain some social protection systems while others are maintained by secular NGOs. Some systems involve state leaders and are incorporated into the state apparatus, while others circumvent the state and function in isolation. As Kurtenbach states, “In the best cases, over time, these systems become complementary, but in the worst cases, fragmentation among social protection systems leads to a situation in which some sections of the population have very strong access, whereas others have no access at all.”⁶¹

Multiple donor-funded programs are designed to foster inclusive participation in local governance for historically marginalized groups and to create new arenas for cross-cutting participation (to redress the aforementioned problem). In other words, indirect approaches to social cohesion are designed to generate interdependency in process of aid dispersion and local governance of donor programming that are usually occupied by elites from particular groups.

In Nepal, for example, UNICEF holds that, “meaningful participation of civil society organizations” in local legal reform and child protection programming is key for peace. This approach assumes that high levels of inclusion in local governance helps foster greater inter-group cooperation, smooth disparities, and, “indirectly shape a larger sense of

⁵⁹ Research Participant 12, Team Interview, December 6, 2012.

⁶⁰ Marc Howard Ross, *Cultural Contestation in Ethnic Conflict*, Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁶¹ Kurtenbach, *Promoting Social Cohesion and the Relationship between the State and Society as an Aspect of State-Building in Fragile States*, 4.

communal identity, or 'bonding' social capital."⁶² There is a very broad array of examples of ways donors have found to build interdependency through peacebuilding and statebuilding processes, such as crosscutting engagement in program assessment processes (e.g. PIMS) at the World Bank, or more complex forms such as employing new algorithms for public resources allocation to ensure that marginalized groups receive a larger proportion of state funding than more developed areas that historically have received larger portions of public goods (e.g. Kenya).

External actors working in deeply-divided societies, however, face great difficulties in reconfiguring patterns of public resource allocation as an indirect mechanism for fostering social cohesion.

In the Lebanon case, for example, during the civil war, state associations for public goods provision were rendered inoperative. Identity-based associations stepped in, providing an array of social services to citizens.⁶³ By the year 2000, Lebanon had made important strides in its reconstruction efforts and in restoring basic service provision by the state, but reconstruction was marred with corruption, which, "irremediably ravaged the political, administrative and economic institutions in the absence of the rule of law and of a civil society capable of facing a self-interested political elite."⁶⁴ Thus, confessionalism also affects service delivery patterns in Lebanon. The 2008-2009 National Human Development report states, "given the delicate sectarian balance required by the dominant political system this has led to a situation where vested political interests are closely intertwined with sectarian clientelist networks. Often the legacy and power of communitarian factions, in addition to their vested interests, tend to be stronger than those of the state itself. This has a profound effect on the functioning of government and the equitable and adequate delivery of services."⁶⁵ Thus, in Lebanon, the allocation of public goods through identity-based associations within the confessional system remains a key factor that cements social fragmentation and hinders the emergence of crosscutting civil society engagement, thought necessary for sustainable peace.

In Nepal, the World Bank engaged in large-scale efforts to provide the state with data to better allocate resources and improve service delivery for the most marginalized groups, utilizing "Participatory Investigation Methods" (PIM) to develop a large-scale, country-level assessment of "Multidimensional Ethnic Exclusion" (MEI Index).⁶⁶ The program constructed a very systematic database of economic and social marginalization through local level dialogues and highly collaborative data collection methods. The project was designed to serve as a guide for donors to work with the state to develop highly targeted livelihoods projects to redress entrenched horizontal inequalities and advance the CPA. The project, however, experienced "elite capture."⁶⁷ Two key reports were finalized but remain unpublished ("Unequal Citizens in Nepal" 2006; "Toward Equal Citizens" 2011). Critically, however, World Bank social policy specialists report that the MEI study has been blocked from publication due to resistance from central government elites in Kathmandu. Similar to the Lebanon situation, movement toward more equitable resource allocation and service delivery remains block by the narrow interests of the dominant political groups.

In contrast, measures to devolve control over service delivery to county governments were implemented in Kenya, initially with relatively little resistance from state elites. Ongoing reform of the structure for county-level provision of public goods is being implemented to foster new forms of interdependence. New accountability mechanisms and institutions for local governance, such as the new Social Budget Observatory Framework, have the capacity to foster cohesion vis-à-vis improving cross-cutting engagement at the county level. Recently, however, resource allocation to counties has become a source of tension between national and county-level political leaders. Counties are requesting increased allocations of up to 40%, while the national government is opposed to such recommendations due to reports of corruption and mismanagement of funds at the county level and, in some cases, a lack of capacity to spend

⁶² Research Participant 27, Team Interview, December 12, 2012.

⁶³ Paul Kingston, *Understanding governance in Lebanon. Project on Civil Society and Governance. Lebanon Case Study No. 4* (Beirut: Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, 2000), p. 2.

⁶⁴ El-Ezzi, "La reconstruction du Liban," p. 16.

⁶⁵ United Nations Development Program, Lebanon 2008-2009: National Human Development Report, p. 126.

http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/nationalreports/arabstates/lebanon/NHDR_Lebanon_20082009_En.pdf

⁶⁶ See: Bennett and Parajuli, "Making Smaller Social Groups Visible and Providing a Baseline for Tracking Results on Social Inclusion: The Nepal Multidimensional Exclusion Index," 2011, at:<http://un.org.np/attachments/nepal-multidimensional-exclusion-index>:

⁶⁷ Research Participant 9, Interview with the authors. Kathmandu, Nepal, December 8, 2012.

resources efficiently and appropriately. Within the new structure, service delivery across the country still remains very poor and spending priorities are not coordinated, raising questions about the capacity of county governments to effectively provide public services equitably and efficiently. The long-term effectiveness of local governance reform in Kenya, as a means for fostering social cohesion, therefore, remains contingent upon actors learning how to use new institutions to hold leaders to account for the effective use of public funds.

In Guatemala, there is a link between the lack of government capacity to provide equitable access to public goods and criminal activities that foster violence. Equitable access to social insurance systems is very low, segmented and varies widely according to territory, social stratum and sector. Social safety nets, once pervasive, were largely destroyed by 36 years of civil war. Informal social safety networks provide some level of security, especially in areas with strong communal organization (or “bonding” social capital). At the same time criminal and illegal economic structures, established during the war by a network of criminal actors including active and former members of state security forces and local elites, not only continue to function but have recently increased their range of action.

The complex link between politics and illegal activities in Guatemala is directly related to the institutional framework of national and local government authorities and the private sector. Recent studies show high flexibility and mobility of criminal networks across the private sector, public institutions, NGOs and even multinational corporations. Criminal networks have evolved, moving from structured organizations linked with former military or high public officials toward more dynamic and dispersed groups deeply embedded in local government and legal economic activities. Most criminal networks have built strong relationships with local government authorities in order to generate legitimacy among local population. In some areas, criminal networks substitute for state service provision, providing health centers, schools, sport centers and basic services.

Despite large-scale efforts to improve capacity and interdependencies across local systems of governance, respondents report that corruption and misuse of public funds remain critical roadblocks for improving state-society relations in all seven cases. In Nepal, Kenya, Guatemala, and Nigeria the distribution of public goods operates along patron-client networks, and politicians have a very large amount of control over resource allocation such that “rent-seekers” regularly gain access to state resources at the local level.⁶⁸ Donors have a significant impact in reformulating governance institutions or “formal” rules and systems of governance. However, where clientelism is a deeply embedded practice within the process of public goods, donors have very little power to change this pattern of behavior. Patronage based on identity-based divisions, whether at the state or local level is a deeply embedded practice that continues despite the best efforts of donors.

4.5 LOCAL PEACE ARCHITECTURES, INSTITUTIONAL PARALLELISM, AND POLITICAL CAPTURE

In contexts of conflict and fragility, formal state institutions tend to lack authority, legitimacy, and capacity, such that international actors frequently engage non-state, informal actors and local institutions in the pursuit of integrated peacebuilding and development goals.

In the wake of civil conflict where state capacity to provide security is lacking, donors often construct institutions to “substitute” for a lack of governance capacity. Within processes of peacebuilding/statebuilding, for instance, donors have helped develop national and local “peace architectures” to redress immediate grievances against the state and between groups, while the state is being built. While circumventing the state can help to achieve immediate development gains, it can create dilemmas for peace consolidation and long-term state formation. Moreover, international organizations often lack cohesive strategies for engaging non-state actors for both security and development in ways that contribute to state resilience; increasingly, at the country level, the UN has been supporting “architectures for peace” – derived in part from network perspectives in global governance – that focus on local-level variation and reinforcing positive feedback between community security and development approaches.

⁶⁸ Research Participant 26, Team Interview, December 11, 2012.

*Many peace practitioners tout peace architectures, especially local peace committees, as highly successful institutions for generating horizontal social cohesion and lowering conflict vulnerability.*⁶⁹

Kenya, for example, has been labeled by some as a critical “success case” for effective local peace committees (LPCs). The first local peace committee in Wajir emerged in 1993 from the ground up and successfully fostered the development of local solutions to inter-group violence. The model was deemed so successful, in fact that the UNDP helped to establish “local infrastructures for peace” across all 47 districts in Kenya. Tongeren goes as far to claim that, “when post-election violence broke out in Kenya at the end of 2007, there was far less violence where there was a District Peace Council than in those districts without one.”⁷⁰ Indeed, in many locations throughout Kenya LPCs have been highly successful in serving as platforms for “collective efficacy”⁷¹; that is, LPCs have provided an institutional framework for the development of integrated social networks among conflict actors that lead to the emergence of local solutions to drivers of violence specific to that region.

Notwithstanding the reported success of some LPCs, respondents involved in developing and managing LPCs across Kenya indicated that many committees have underperformed due to “political capture” within the shift from “bottom up” local peace architectures to state-driven institutionalization of district peace committees. At the county level, government administrators desire to function as “gate-keepers,” or entry points for any financial support provided to peace committees. This behavior undermines the effectiveness and independence of LPCs, and decreases voluntarism necessary for institutional effectiveness where resources are limited. In many cases, politicians have exerted power over LPCs to take advantage of their legitimacy, mobilization capacity, and accesses to donor resources. Nepal has experienced similar problems of “capture” and “rent seeking” within local peace committees.

4.6 WHAT PROBLEM? GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES OF PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

Across all of the cases, the idea of social cohesion is surprisingly widespread. In some cases, it has become directly embedded within new domestic institutions.

Kenya, for example, now has a “National Cohesion and Integration Commission.” Another common strategy among donors interested in fostering cohesion within the political sphere is to establish a national-level bureaucracy, or “national peace architecture” to manage peace and reconciliation efforts. In some cases, these ministries have faced challenges in terms of having access to enough resources to really to be able to pursue a transformative social agenda. Moreover, incentives within political systems rarely provide upward mobility for ministers who “make noise” for disenfranchised groups. In Nepal, for example, ministers of peace and reconciliation usually serve in the role very quietly before trying to make moves to advance within the government hierarchy. An innovative intervention aimed toward addressing this problem is the UNDP program on “Collaborative Leadership and Development.”⁷² A primary justification for this program is that the establishment of the Nepal Ministry of Peace has been problematic for implementation of the CPA. When it became a “ministry” rather than a “commission,” the institution became a tool for political appointment (patronage) rather than a hub for peace and reconciliation coordination. Ministers, aiming to move up in the governance system, became resistant to the pursuit of an “empowerment agenda,” fearing it would undermine the possibility of promotion. Peacebuilding IOs, however, “continue to support this flawed state apparatus.”⁷³

To address this problem, the CLDP project operates on a longer-term budget cycle than other UN-funded projects, involves “south-south” training schemes (e.g. trainers from Kenya travel to Nepal), and aims to improve capacity for more inclusive and effective governance among emerging leaders in Nepal. The program targets second tier political

⁶⁹ For example, see: van Tongeren, 2013; Odendaal 2010; 2013.

⁷⁰ Paul van Tongeren, “Increasing Interest in Infrastructures for Peace,” *Journal of Conflictology* 2, no. 2 (November 5, 2011): 46.

⁷¹ Robert J. Sampson and Per-Olof H. Wikstrom, “The Social Order of Violence in Chicago and Stockholm Neighborhoods: A Comparative Inquiry,” in *Order, Conflict, and Violence*, ed. Stathis N Kalyvas, Ian Shapiro, and Tarek Masoud (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

⁷² Participant Observation 22, Team Program Observation, December 10, 2012.

⁷³ Research Participant 12, Team Interview, December 6, 2012.

and civil society leaders, imparting skills for dialogue. The program operates under the assumption that these future leaders will be able to influence party decisions, and develop consensus around key peacebuilding issues outside of currently ineffective formal institutions.⁷⁴ In other words, the project holds that the key mechanism of change is leadership. In their view, training a new cadre of leaders with a set of conflict resolution skills will foster higher levels of inter-group trust and new relational networks that will enable them to overcome divisive ethnic politics, and eventually lead a broad movement toward change in the dominant political culture.

The action of circumventing the state to build leadership and governance capacity points toward the deep difficulties that peacebuilders have, as external interveners, to work with governments in post-conflict contexts.

It remains extremely difficult for external actors to have a large impact in establishing effective formal bureaucratic structures that function effectively to foster peace and reconciliation.

Overall, managers of programs for building local and national peace architectures suggest that donor-funded peacebuilding bureaucracies, “collaborate with the state at a surface level but ultimately operate as parallel structures for governance.”⁷⁵ In other words, to achieve necessary “burn rates” for program funding with short cycles, donors commonly circumvent the state apparatus while establishing peace architectures (both national and local), such that new institutions are more connected to the donor bureaucracy than the state bureaucracy. This makes substitutive peace architectures largely unstable and unsustainable in the long run.

Respondents also suggest that the donor “project mentality” works against long-term social change necessary to for peace architectures to function well.

Donors have become very adept at developing new bureaucratic institutions, but often fail to promote social change needed to sustain them. This is due to the fact that they often are under pressure from funding organizations to work too quickly to be able actually embrace an ethic of inclusivity within their own organizations (yet trying to promote inclusivity within domestic institutions). Also, donors (the UN in particular) often assume that truly empowering marginalized groups is too political, and risks undermining their standing as “neutral” actors within the country. For example, in the case of Sri Lanka, the authors found that:

“...the post-war context [in Sri Lanka] is marked by an active denial (and even resistance) on the part of the state of the specific challenges related to ethno-political conflict and minority grievances, instead of a debate on the scale and extent of particular problems and the nature of solutions, even those not directly relating to the war. As a result, actors working on programming seeking to bolster social cohesion effectively downplay certain issues or ignore specific areas because they are seen as politically contentious.”

The goal of neutrality, therefore, can undermine the ultimate impact peace architectures, especially where groups are not truly able to voice grievances and move toward solutions to deep conflict drivers.

In other contexts, new “peace architectures” receive very little financial support from the state and thus continue to depend upon donor funding and technical assistance. This suggests that commitment among state elites to truly redressing inter-group grievances and improving social cohesion often remains symbolic.

4.7 COORDINATION AND AID VOLATILITY

In many cases, donors’ efforts to foster social cohesion are themselves deeply fragmented.

Under short time frames and intensive pressure from states that fund donor organizations, programs are often highly unorganized and conducted ad hoc. There is also a high level of competition among approaches, models, and modalities for building cohesion. This issue is exacerbated due to limited funding for what are seen as “soft” or “pre-

⁷⁴ Ram Bahadur Rawal, “Track 1.5, The Political Road of Dependency,” *Nepal Weekly*, 27th January 2013.

⁷⁵ Research Participant 12, Team Interview, December 6, 2012.

emptive” peacebuilding interventions. Alongside the dilemmas of engagement with informal actors and institutions are challenges for coordination of international responses.⁷⁶ Obstacles exist across a wide array of various actors – from the largest multilateral organization to the smallest local group – that assume responsibility for assisting in post-war recovery and development. There is widespread critique regarding, “the myriad [of] international actors involved in these missions...[often] duplicating efforts or even working at cross-purposes, sometimes with limited knowledge of each other’s activities...”⁷⁷

While a general lack of coordination is partially attributable to the plethora of international peace and development actors, it is also related to, “underlying substantive-philosophical differences”⁷⁸ that, in the past, have rendered actors unable to cooperate in peacebuilding and development initiatives despite their shared objectives and purposes. Some headway in addressing institutional differences has been made by drawing attention to the continued need for procedural coordination in order to achieve maximum efficacy in post-war responses.⁷⁹

In practice, social cohesion programming includes state governments as partners and beneficiaries, but then extends to the local level. Thus far, the extension of social cohesion programming beyond the state has faced financial and institutional limitations: local social cohesion initiatives are very costly and require highly nuanced understanding of particular conflict contexts and ethno-religious dynamics – which is very difficult to attain. Donors have a significant amount of power to shape global norms and promote the diffusion of ideas about key features of social cohesion. However, donors have very little direct means of wielding development assistance as incentives to change elite behavior and generate authentic inclusion in post-conflict governance systems.

The research project reveals that there are largely variable domestic views of the UN and other international actors within national and local communities. In some cases, the work of the UN and other external actors have been appropriately designed and very well executed, but the reputation of external actors among local communities was so poor that it affected capacity to have a positive impact (e.g. Sri Lanka). In others, the UN enjoys a high level of local legitimacy. The UN is widely regarded as a neutral actor and thus often is able to initiate interreligious or inter-ethnic group engagement. This is not always the case, however. External “legitimacy” matters for effective engagement along with path dependency of successes and failures within prior engagements.

⁷⁶ Roland Paris, “Understanding the ‘coordination problem’ in postwar statebuilding,” in *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding: Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations*, eds. Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk, (New York: Routledge, 2009).

⁷⁷ Paris, “Understanding the ‘coordination problem,’” 53.

⁷⁸ Paris, “Understanding the ‘coordination problem,’” 59.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

5. POLICY-RELEVANT IMPLICATIONS

Holistic approaches appear required for successfully transforming identity-based conflicts due in part to the fact that root causes of conflict are complex and inter-related (e.g. perceived social injustices, economic inequality, religious and political repression, poverty, exclusion, etc.). Interventions that address structural drivers must work together with interventions that address psychological, identity-based drivers. Drivers are often associated with escalation dynamics, which can in turn help better inform early warning and crisis-response networks when tensions may flare. Misunderstanding of identity-based and religious conflict dynamics can exacerbate conflict or lead to missed opportunities for peace.

Practical questions remain for policy makers aiming to engage in social cohesion programming and interventions:

- How can donors best foster social cohesion dividends?
- Are social cohesion approaches capable of “controlling difference” and helping countries better manage diversity?
- How can donors best avoid reinforcing social divisions, whether between ethnic or religious groups?
- In what ways do development actors reinforce illegitimate state institutions and what impact this has on the social contract and social cohesion? How can these trends be reversed?
- What degree of cross-group inclusion (e.g. in dialogue, reintegration, education, participation in politics, policy-making) is necessary to reduce the risks of future episodes of violence? What are minimum levels of social cohesion that are “good enough” for peacebuilding purposes?

5.1 LIVING TOGETHER: AUTHENTIC INCLUSIVITY IN THE NATION AND STATE

Considering how contentious addressing social cleavages and marginalization can be, especially at the hands of external actors, it remains surprising that the concept of social cohesion has become engrained within peacebuilding policies in a relatively short amount of time across a broad range of deeply-divided countries. However, while state elites have accepted new formal institutions that aim to promote cohesion, at the same time, leaders also continue to govern through informal practices (e.g. patronage, clientelism, and corruption) that generate fragmentation, distrust and grievances among groups. Therefore, the goal of interventions designed to foster social cohesion should be authentic inclusion, rather than symbolic inclusion.

In general, donors and civil society implementing partners tend to circumvent the state to conduct cohesion-related programs that engage the most marginalized populations. While supporting very vulnerable populations can help to model global human rights norms, circumventing the state can also lead to negative outcomes, and undermine the “neutral” status that donors aim to maintain in contentious political environments. This is a risk that interveners must carefully calculate as related to the larger strategy.

The key to post-crisis governance that fosters peace and inclusive development is strengthening local mechanisms for peacebuilding and development policy-making. This requires an in-depth understanding of the various contexts at which external initiatives are aimed and thus greater contextual literacy among development actors who seek to engage “informal,” non-state actors in development policy-making.

5.2 ENGAGING RELIGIOUS ACTORS FOR PEACE: EVOLVING GLOBAL NORMS

Religion can be understood and expressed in both individual and communal ways.

Efforts to engage religion must bear in mind that religion operates in a myriad of ways ranging from the highly individualized and internal to the deeply communal, and from ideological to religio-ethnic modalities. Additionally, the religious sector can be seen as something of a parallel or alternative international system, which expresses itself through both formal and informal structures. Thus, programs aimed at engaging religion in building social cohesion must take care to understand the context-specific functions of religion and religious identities in a particular space. Religious organizations and communities are more than an “informal institutions” that may or many not have capacity to assist in donor-initiated interventions; rather, they are both structured and structuring features of society.

Inter- and Intra-faith dialogue are interlinked.

Overcoming fear of the foreign “other” is an arena of social cohesion where religious communities have a strong role to play. Minority groups tend to engage in violence when they fear a dominant group will create a society that constrains their right to practice religion or other factors related to the group’s identity. This feeling of group insecurity and fear creates windows for violent collective action.

As such, the emerging trend among specialists in inter-faith dialogue within all of the cases is that *intra-faith* dialogue must precede inter-faith dialogue. This is due to the fact that it is important to have consensus on how to approach highly contentious issues (minorities, exclusion, power-relations, etc.), and mentally prepare groups for engaging with social difference. Additionally, extremist actors often emerge to challenge national elites, who may be of their own religious identity, who they feel have left them out of the political framework. While these particular groups may precipitate inter-religious clashes down the road, often it is intra-religious conversations that are most relevant to the emergence of extremist groups. The challenge for the international community is finding innovative ways to support below-the-radar activities that engage in and support both intra- and inter-faith dialogue processes, where they appear critical for conflict resolution.

Inter-religious peacebuilding efforts must put forth in a holistic manner.

Some inter-religious dialogue efforts have remained disconnected from other forms of peacebuilding and have failed to deal with underlying social inequalities, or to look at the ways religious tension is related to other identities/issues. In other words, focus on religious dialogue, alone, is problematic, considering that conflict impacts all types of social cleavages, not only religious cleavages. Rarely is religious tension, alone, the only potential conflict driver. Religion and religious identity, and how these factors map onto or interact with ethnic and other forms of identity, differ greatly from context to context. Sectarian identities, and how they interact with politics in Lebanon, differ greatly from religious identity in Nigeria, despite the fact that both contexts involve Christians and Muslims. Thus, context-specificity is also key.

Another dilemma that emerges for engagement with religious communities is the problem that, in some cases, as in Nigeria or Sri Lanka, where the religious cleavage is binary and deeply divisive, focusing too narrowly on religious identity in a peacebuilding program may function to further inscribe those identities as primary, and thereby exacerbate tensions. In other words, overt inter-religious dialogues may function to categorize groups under a particular identity (religious) when in fact actors have and navigate multiple, more complex social identities, which can aid in developing cross-cutting social bonds.

Engaging Religious Communities: Principal Findings

Case studies reveal that faith-inspired communities have the following capacities for engaging in complex processes of peacebuilding and development in divided societies:

- *Religious identity* can unite groups across ethnic divisions; peace and development (e.g., poverty alleviation and direct support for conflict-affected groups) function as shared inter-religious values.
- *First movers*: Religious actors linked to global religious communities are often already operating in conflict environments, well before other actors. FBOs are initial point of contact during crisis: when crisis breaks, communities turn toward religious institutions (rapid response capacity)
- *Access to transnational networks*: religious communities persist beyond geographic boundaries and have very broad reach, compared to other forms of identity.
- *Access to grassroots social networks* and elite connections, which donors need to access for effectiveness.
- *Financial resources* (platform for local, voluntary donations for peace/development work).
- *Advocacy* (for marginalized groups) – through religious networks and institutions.
- *Contextual knowledge*: resources for deep contextual understanding of conflict drivers (thought necessary for tailored approaches to peacebuilding).
- *Legitimacy*: Religious actors play a key role in changing social norms and promoting human rights (and are often far more powerful actors than development actors). Legitimacy for new institutions can be generated with approval of religious leaders and communities (religion as “moral authority”).
- *Neutrality*: in some cases religious actors can remain neutral and can function as internal mediators in complex conflicts (although in other cases, they can be wrapped up in political conflict).
- *(Re)Interpretation and Nonviolence*: of violence, as a strategy for conflict resolution: religious communities can de-legitimize the use of violence as a legitimate strategy through reinterpretation of sacred texts.
- *Psychological transformation*: spirituality (community based) – healing, forgiveness, reconciliation, compassion, etc. for the restoration of trust; religion as a base for the “capacity to cope.”
- *Sacred texts*: authoritative ideas on peace, collaboration, engagement with poverty, etc.
- *Rituals*: symbolic communal practices that help actors engage across divides.
- *Religious elites* can provide:
 - Leadership (reinterpretation of narratives of exclusion)
 - Mobilization (gaining a support base for external efforts, such as disarmament)
 - Local Legitimacy
 - Function as power brokers: source of authority in absence of state authority.

Religio-political entrepreneurs often instrumentalize religious identities to advance self-serving political and economic goals.

In doing so, they often redefine the religious identities themselves and thus perpetuate narratives of conflict. Development actors must be aware of the shifting nature of religious identity in conflict situations, rather than taking a snapshot picture of religion at any given point at face value. Post-conflict peacebuilding is often dealing with religious identities that have undergone drastic transformation in their content and in their relation to “others,” and thus it is critical to collectively rediscover and rebuild pre-conflict inter-religious relationships, which have often been buried.

Engaging religious communities in the process of fostering social cohesion requires developing collaborative approaches to two of the most difficult problems for divided societies: 1) the problem of identity politics, and; 2) the problem of state legitimacy. Channeling development funds through the state has not clearly functioned to increase trust in the state and restore support for the government in many cases.

A cohesive nation is more likely to experience economic growth and overcome poverty and underdevelopment traps. Cohesion across religious communities is thus useful, and often necessary, for improving both the horizontal and vertical dimensions of social cohesion and its resulting effects. Religious communities can help improve trust and confidence in the state, given that the state is making strides in a more just and inclusive direction. Religious leaders can help engage local communities in political participation, and can help disseminate messages of national cohesion in communities. Helping religious leaders to engage communities in improving vertical trust should be a key focus of development actors.

5.3 PEACEBUILDING AND SOCIAL COHESION: TOWARD COMPLEMENTARITY

What can internal and international peacebuilders do to help “deeply divided societies” rediscover a sense of living together?

External mediation and intervention in settings with deep identity-based social divisions is not a cure-all for conflict, fragility, or underdevelopment. There is a growing awareness that local mechanisms exist with which to solve major social problems, and that these mechanisms should be utilized to promote processes of integration, ownership over peace formation process, and long-term sustainability of peace and development initiatives. In many cases, more subtle and indirect ways of supporting local governments and civil society actors who are personally invested in the pursuit of long-term peace and social cohesion can be the best way to support processes where groups are working to reimagine how to live together in the wake of violent conflict.

Direct approaches to fostering social cohesion can be risky.

In many of the cases, the distribution of aid or the pursuit of “peace dividends,” and even the implementation of peacebuilding dialogues (where external resources are available to fund these activities) have become sources of local tension. In very protracted conflicts, dialogue fatigue has become a major issue. The replication and duplication of various (but still quite similar) dialogical peacebuilding models in the absence of perceptible social, economic, and political change has undermined trust in international donors and local government actors.

Donor efforts can, and often do, have unintended consequences. This is to be expected. However, the primary risk for donors in engaging in direct efforts to build social cohesion is undermining more local, “organic” processes of inter-group reconciliation. The introduction of external resources under conditions of resource scarcity can lead to the emergence of inauthentic or even predatory actors who are interested in economic gains from donor funding than promoting social reconciliation.

Therefore, more indirect and complementary approaches seem to be more effective in creating sustainable “bridging” social capital that can lead to networks across group lines able to urge restraint from conflict within their own communities.

The cases reveal that economic development alone is not sufficient for sustainable inter-group peace, nor is dialogue alone. Economic growth and protracted inter-group conflict continue to go hand in hand in cases such as Sri Lanka, Kenya, and Nigeria. This is due to the fact that economic development (especially large-scale infrastructural development projects) tend to generate new patterns of social exclusion and marginalization, which creates platforms for the emergence of potentially conflict-inducing inter-group grievances.

For these reasons, complementarity in approaches to building social cohesion is necessary. In other words, fostering social cohesion requires the integration of security, peace and development initiatives. Local development projects that address concrete communal needs (shared interests across groups) can function as indirect, but critical, opportunities for inter-group cooperation and collaboration. This recommendation is well known, in theory and has

even become part of norms of best practice in aid in conflict settings. In practice, however, the studies show that various types of donor interventions still tend to operate in separate programmatic streams (“silos”). Development-oriented actors tend to focus on building infrastructure or institutions, and are under pressure to move so quickly that building “cohesion” within the process is rarely upheld as a priority, in practice. Thus, perhaps the most important function that peacebuilders can play is identify and provide as many places, institutions, and areas for interaction and engagement on ways in which societies emerging from conflict can in their own interaction determine the ways – likely, indirectly – in which greater interdependence and “bridging” social capital can be locally fostered.

APPENDIX 1: PRINCIPAL FINDINGS FROM THE CASE STUDIES

<i>Country</i>	Context Assessment: Historical and Proximate Conditions	Horizontal: Social and Economic Conditions, Relationships	Horizontal: Social and Economic Conditions, Attitudes and Perceptions	Vertical: Political Dimensions, State-Society Relationships	Vertical: Political Dimensions, State-Society Attitudes	International-Domestic Interactions: Development Cooperation Analysis	<i>Key Findings: Nature of Cohesion and Fragmentation</i>	<i>Key Findings on External Impact</i>
Guatemala	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Civil war from 1960s – 1996 Catholic and Lutheran churches (later UN) key in CPA negotiations Archdioceses (role in documenting human rights abuses), but then faced state repression (leaders attacked) State directed violence against indigenous population (Mayans and Ladinos) Post-civil conflict social violence (highest homicide rates in the world) Youth bulge and rising unemployment as condition for indigenous group mobilization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three deep social cleavages: ethnic, geographic (rural - urban), income inequality (with high “horizontal inequality”) Marginalization of indigenous groups at hands of elites State-led extractive resource development model drives land/identity conflicts (esp. hydro and mining projects) Poor tax extraction, weak state, strong “shadow economy” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historically, Catholicism (via “inclusive religious liberalism”) as foundation for crosscutting cohesion among diverse indigenous groups Breakdown of historical Catholic unity with spread of evangelical sects Development of unified Mayan identity out of violence experience Social, economic (land ownership), and political grievances drive deep rural - urban grievances Perceptions of ethno-cultural divisions overcome with organization around movements against mining/hydro (perceived land abuses) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State-led development model favors a small wealthy, elite (high “vertical inequality” with elite fearing “indigenous uprising”) Survival of war-time criminal structures, corruption, weak police forces = state uses selective political violence as tool to try to control social violence State highly repressive toward social protest through “selective, symbolic political violence” (low cost, high impact via fear); criminalization of protest. State use of violence to maintain status quo, repress dissent Weak dialogue mechanisms = social protest rises = repressive state responds Long history of unresolved land conflicts undermine state-society relations (land-identity nexus) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historical denial of justice = lack of trust in the state State highly repressive toward social protest, undermines state legitimacy In periphery, churches trusted more as institutions than political parties or the state Racism, poverty, and inequality undermine formation of a national identity History of genocide (recent trial) exposes efforts during war to destroy indigenous culture and identity (but “historical denial” among elites = very low state legitimacy and trust) Very low level of trust in state, correlates with very high trust in religious organizations Christian denominations have different views toward social justice (and participation in political mobilization); which fragments indigenous social movements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Donors tried but failed to secure constitutional changes to protect rights of excluded indigenous groups High level of fragmentation among approaches and interests of donors in the country UNDP aligns with government priorities (which is problematic for cohesion when elites directly marginalize indigenous groups) International actors underestimated the depth and durability of divisions (path dependency) Many actors have moved out of Guatemala due to limited impact (donor fatigue), lack of political will among elites, and shifting priorities (regional) Local NGOs and dependency (principal – agent problem) Nordic countries supported ILO 169 and interests of indigenous, leading strong reaction from the state (some donors seen as “politically dangerous” for addressing marginalization issues). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local cohesion has occurred (across marginalized ethnic groups), but national fragmentation is deep and persistent Defense of local territories = bonding social cohesion at local level (among diverse indigenous groups) Cohesion as a function of human security Fear + lack of justice for human rights violations = lack of trust in the state “Dialogue” used as a tool of social pacification: state strategy to “pacify” civil society, but promised policy reform never occurs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UN played effective complementary role to religious actors in CPA History of state repression deeply constrains peacebuilding projects (lack of trust, accountability, transparency, etc.) that attempt to work through the state External interventions (poverty reduction, human rights, access to rule of law, state institution reform) raise local expectation of state, and empower (and unify) groups organize aiming to claim and access these rights Donors have little power to change elite behavior Donor support for Truth Commission led to new accords that have not been implemented = profound social grievances Donors have achieved formal changes, but not behavioral changes, or redressing of deep inequalities and social cleavages.

Kenya

- Recurrent political, electoral, pastoral, religious (symbolic), and inter-personal violence; rising terrorism and religious-related attacks
- Colonialism and history of “extractive state” not “nation state”
- Post-independence: neopatrimonialism and direct construction of ethno-political identities by elites
- State allocations of resources (via “clientelism”) reinforces ethnic divisions and inter-group contestation
- Geographical boundaries linked to history of identity formation
- Severe inequality and core-periphery cleavage
- “Land-grabbing” and the “land-identity nexus” as key conflict triggers.
- Marginalized populations receive poorest public services
- Class cleavage - public servant prosperity, private poverty
- Severe corruption, exacerbates economic inequality, undermines economic growth
- “Everyday cohesion,” yet persistent inter-ethnic grievances (residual and constructed)
- Christianity crosscuts ethnicity
- Religiosity as shared “African” characteristic
- Rising religious violence and Christian – Muslim cleavage (Somalia spillover)
- Stereotyping and hate speech increase around political competitions
- Perceptions of “the other” a function of elite coalitions and human security
- National identity construction efforts in fits and starts – ethnic politics undermines national identity formation.
- Institutions incentivize crosscutting coalitions, but formal rules are less effective than entrenched informal institutions, e.g. ethnic mobilization, and patron-client relations
- Politicization of ethnicity and ethnic census voting = “bonding” rather than “bridging”
- Peace without cohesion in 2013 elections
- Devolution is in question: is it increasing potential for national cohesion, or fragmentation, by re-territorializing ethnic identity.
- Attitudes toward the state (legitimacy) linked to ethnic coalition politics (state viewed as legitimate among groups represented in dominant coalition).
- State also viewed as corrupt and elite-centric
- Access to state power viewed as “ethnic trophy” – state control = group status, group esteem, and hope of economic gains for group
- State seen as a “stranger” in the frontier districts
- Dominant mode of interaction: reactive security and humanitarian response rather than preemptive peacebuilding (peacebuilding receives small portion of funding)
- Donors support FBOs and CSOs, yet often undermine state legitimacy in periphery (religious organizations seen as more legitimate than the state)
- Politicians “play the peace game” (accept institutional change, but rarely change entrenched behaviors that function to construct and promote conflict-inducing divisions)
- Economic growth and modernization, yet, persistence of ethnic divisions (due to strong neopatrimonialism)
- Cohesion as a function of human security
- Identity-based violence putting pressure on state to improve governance capacity and unify groups
- Episodes of violence become highly ethnicized (deepen political divisions)
- Religion complimentary to ethnicity for construction of divisions, but has high capacity for mending social relations (esp at local level; less so at national level).
- Effective norm transmission and formal institutional change, yet informal behaviors dominate
- Effective support of peace architecture, (but system remains weak and subject to elite capture, and organizational failures at local level)
- Dialogues effective where localized and linked to development outcomes
- Funding has been unstable and linked to crises rather than preemptive peacebuilding = impact of programming not lasting

Lebanon

- Cycles of civil war
- Various powersharing arrangements among identity groups, following conflicts
- “Twin vulnerabilities”: internal grievances between groups (often Christian-Muslim) and spillovers from regional conflicts
- Long history of factionalism and sectarian militias
- National pact (1943) to Ta’if accords (1989)
- Role of Syria in politics in Lebanon => Cedar revolution breaks ties with Syria
- Spillovers from Syrian civil war (2011)
- International donors and liberalization (under Syrian custodianship) = very rapid economic growth
- Post-conflict reconstruction process rife with corruption undermined political, economic, and administrative institutions
- Shift from Christian-Muslim cleavage to Sunni Shi’a cleavage
- Multiple competing ethnic identities (17-18 ethno-religious groups) within a very small territory
- Two competing national identities: Sunni Arab vision vs. Maronite Christian vision of state as refuge for minorities
- Evidence for contemporary process of “retribalization” - middle class urban professionals now prefer to live apart with their own confessional group
- Rising Shi’a population and Hezbollah’s national vision
- A deeply divided civil society – reinforced by confessional system (or weak civil society, strong communal societies)
- Community dynamics form foundation for state system, giving religion a prominent role in public life
- Elites function as “guardians” of community rights, and thus the party system formalizes clientelistic links between elites and communities
- Cross cutting civil society groups (claims based or interests based) are weak compared to deeply bonded confessional groups
- Identity-based organizations provide bulk of social services
- Shifting sectarian alliances (parties switching between March 8 and March 14 coalitions) => intra-sectarian tension (previously “cohesive” communal groups split between March 8 and March 14).
- Parliament designed for integration and electoral system aims to foster crosscutting parties, but traditional leaders use intimidation and patronage to secure election of candidates from lists
- “Personal Status Regime” – religious tribunals determine laws for each sect
- Exacerbation of political sectarianism as “retribalization of politics”
- Ethnic security dilemma constantly plays out in political system (e.g. Hezbollah forcefully carving out role within confessional system for survival).
- Resilience of identity-based sectarian politics
- International donors support for liberalization (under Syrian custodianship)
- Donors’ work complicated by presence of Hezbollah members in government
- Pressure on social system in Lebanon due to presence of 800,000 Syrian refugees
- “alternative” NGOs (those interesting in reform of sectarian system) still must “play sectarian game” to access areas where a particular group has control
- Nature of sectarian system, makes social cohesion very difficult (perhaps impossible) to attain
- Bridging civil society is very weak, bonded communal societies are very strong and highly institutionalized
- The confessional system has cemented deep divisions and differences; it does not help overcome differences
- Education system and media are strong forces for construction and promotion of divisions
- Formal institutions (even if designed to crosscut) do not reshape elite behavior – communal politics is status quo
- Sharp rise in Sunni extremism, in part due to Syrian conflict
- Politics of Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon and fear of “permanent settlement”

Myanmar

- History of cycles of insurgency and military rule
- Political violence and repression of opposition actors and social movements (e.g. "Saffron revolution")
- Democratization and liberalization
- Ongoing violence between government and ethnic militias
- Extreme corruption and economic mismanagement
- Linkages between business and military elite
- Extreme poverty, extreme inequality
- Burman – non-Burman division, a binary cleavage between dominant ethnic group (Burman) and very diverse minority groups
- New fault lines – violence against Muslim minority (narrative "illegal Bengali settlers")
- Regime vision for unified, homogenous Buddhist, Burman state
- Demands for political rights from ethnic minority groups - main grievance, lack of access to political voice and power
- Rise of pro-democracy movement groups
- Peace deals pursue "ethnic balance"
- "Democracy"? In first democratic election, military regime won 80% of seats
- Electoral rules constrain participation (many opposition actors still jailed)
- Direct "Burmanization policies" in minority regions = deep grievance toward state
- Lack of state legitimacy = ethnic groups as foundation for public goods (even security) = strong ethnic security dilemma
- State army as common enemy, yet ongoing clashes between armed minority groups
- International sanctions against regime until 2008
- Opening for donor aid, following cyclone Nargis in 2008 (response a moment of cohesion)
- Massive inflow of actors and aid (and private sector actors)
- Establishment of government coordinating body for peacebuilding efforts, "Myanmar Peace Center" (funded by Norway and Australia)
- Rise of inter-faith initiatives
- Democratization as a window for conflict – has led to rise of Buddhist extremists trying to purge Muslims
- Political nature of ethnic violence (e.g. Aun Sang Sui Kyi quiet on Rohingya case as "needs Buddhists on her side")
- Interfaith dialogues, remain highly uncoordinated
- Interventions occurring within the "space between peace and war"
- Lessons learned in other cases have led to a high level of coordination among largest donors

Nigeria

- Neopatrimonialism
- Colonialism "unifies" ethnic nations, yet leads to authoritarianism = strong ethnic security dilemma
- "Iron Frame" of federalism
- History of ethnic conflict over access to state power and resource control
- Boko Haram and ongoing religious violence
- Extreme human insecurity
- Rapid economic growth and growing middle class
- Massive oil wealth ("resource curse"?)
- Rent seeking
- Severe income inequality
- Persistent poverty amidst rising wealth => social grievances (high horizontal inequalities and "frustration – aggression" theory)
- Shared frustrations among diverse ethnic groups, but deepening divisions
- Inter-religious cleavage (roughly half Christian, half Muslim), rising "bi-polarization" linked to domestic and international forces
- Rising intra-religious cleavages, esp. Islamic sectarianism (Sufi, Izala, Shi'ite, neo-Wahabist)
- Christian "wave" and evangelical movement ("under siege" narrative)
- Historical dominance of ethnic-based political mobilization, but religion now used as tool to mobilize ethnic minorities
- Impact of federalist system on state – society relations
- State institute: Bureaus of Religious Affairs
- Jonathan administration and use of religion in politics
- Bi-polarization of attitudes toward the state (linked to binary religious cleavage)
- Corruption culture across the state, used for cross-ethnic accommodation
- Democracy and the ethnic rotation system in the ruling party (elite accommodation used as tool to escape ethnic security dilemma)
- Oil wealth outpaces development aid (little leverage for donors) (the "MIFFS" dilemma)
- Primary donor modality: largely focuses on civil society (less "statebuilding", more "peacebuilding")
- Why? donors realize they tend to reinforce neopatrimonialism, which is driving shift toward allowing for more "local controls" in aid distribution.
- Religion has binary cleavage and thus is now more polarizing and conflict-inducing than ethnicity
- New religious groups competing for loyalty in the middle (less cohesive) regions of the state.
- Democratizing religion = ambivalence (opportunity for cohesion or fragmentation)
- Globalized religious narratives (Christianity/Islam, esp.) make domestic negotiations more difficult and contested.
- Rising donor interest in religion and conflict (Nigeria as laboratory for peace education, esp., but little evidence of impact)
- Programming effective at the hyper-local level, but hard to create "upward cascades", or have impact at national level (e.g. how address religious bi-polarization?)
- Donors unclear on how to address globalized religion and to counteract divisive global trends

Nepal

- Post-civil war context with ongoing social violence, esp. in Terai
- Collapse of last “Hindu kingdom,” democratization and reversals
- Cycles of political and economic change generate social fragmentation and create conditions for civil war
- Maoist insurgency draws on “horizontal inequalities” for recruitment
- 2006 CPA and an “Inclusion Agenda”
- Deep elite-mass division, core-periphery division, and caste divisions;
- Institutionalization of inequality through the caste system = identity + economic marginalization = high “horizontal inequalities”
- Complexity of social divisions and patterns of inequality (geographic, ethnic, religious)
- Deep gender division
- Shift from state-centric nationalism to people-centric nationalisms
- Perceptions of marginalization drive mobilization of identity-based groups (Madhesh, Janajati, Tharus, Dalits)
- The Terai as an excluded region
- Assertive Christian movement among Dalits
- Highly inclusive CA due to PR. System of proportional representation but not “proportional participation” (CA dominated by small bloc of elites)
- Democratization sparks ethnic federalism debate
- Inclusion a key issue, reshapes institutions (formally), but does not re-shape patronage behavior
- Poor governance and state resources provision (VDCs for inclusion, but governance remains poor)
- Identity politics translates into rising socio-political divisions
- Fragmentation within political parties is increasing
- The federalism debate increases inter-group antagonism
- Identity politics causes localized tensions
- Networked modes of post-crisis governance in Nepal aim to restore social cohesion
- Parallel bureaucratic structures (GoN and UN system[s]) create strong coordination dilemma
- Multiple programs use various peacebuilding models
- Donors tend to circumvent the state and work through CSOs (undermining state legitimacy)
- Political factionalization likely to prevent return to civil war
- Political instability, likely to continue to foment protest and social fragmentation
- Poor governance and extreme poverty fosters conditions for social mistrust and violence, if not civil war
- Effective norm transmission (inclusion and rights for marginalized), but inclusive processes make consensus and good governance more difficult to attain (strong empowerment dilemma)
- Weak peace infrastructure
- Donor project mentality = superficial institutions, little social change

Sri Lanka

- Military victory (2009), “post-civil war but not post-conflict” context
- Unresolved root drivers of war (minority rights, majority nationalism, and centralization of power)
- Complex social violence
- Patronage regime
- War drives poverty, radicalization, and breakdown of state society relations
- Country maintains relatively high human development indicators, even in the midst of multiple crises
- Sinhala majority, Tamil and Muslim minorities
- Sinhala nationalism and lack of inclusive national identity
- Inter and Intra ethnic and religious conflicts persist
- Sense of Sinhala triumphalism = rise of nationalism and mythic narratives of kingship
- Rising vitriolic rhetoric of radical Buddhist groups against Muslim groups
- Rising attacks on evangelical churches (driven by Sinhala triumphalism)
- State repression of Tamil nationalist movement, Muslim groups less repressed, increase in wealth
- Ministry of Social Integration is in place, but not powerful voice
- Grievances of Tamils not addressed by the state = rising fear and anxiety among minority groups
- Democracy being undermined = authoritarian behavior on rise
- State, active denial of minority group grievances (which sharply limits space for actors working to foster cohesion)
- Complex frameworks (e.g. “social integration” and “cohesion”) allow government to demonstrate commitment to global norms, without truly implementing positive structural and social change
- Some international efforts have done harm in Sri Lanka (empowerment dilemma); humanitarian aid eroded trust between government and LTTE
- Aid targeted Tamil, marginalized areas, sparked fear among Sinhala of post-colonial Tamil preference
- Civil society networks crumbled as conflict resumed (non-resilience of peacebuilding programming)
- Government supports service delivery and state capacity programming, but rejects ethnic reconciliation or democracy building efforts (limits scope of cohesion work)
- State thwarts efforts to commemorate Tamil lives lost and evidence of human rights abuses
- “Social cohesion” approach, perhaps not appropriate for post war (military victory) context (makes it easy to forget abuses and deep divisions, sees welfare provision as solution without need for truth and reconciliation)
- Livelihoods as “acceptable” approach, allowed in some regions, but strictly monitored
- Political realities constrain external efforts to foster social cohesion
- Nature of current interventions not based on ideas, “lessons learned,” or prior programming; rather, programs are based on what is considered politically “neutral” within highly contested political space
- Neutrality of programs, undermines their potential impact on cohesion
- Lack of political will to truly foster peace is key factor (no lack of plans and proposed policies for reconciliation and cohesion)
- Limited dialogue, shallow engagement, elite only participation, reinforcement of social cleavages, duplication, lack of sustainability

APPENDIX 2: SOCIAL COHESION ASSESSMENT GUIDE

RELIGION AND SOCIAL COHESION IN CONFLICT-AFFECTED COUNTRIES

Social Cohesion Assessment Guide

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I. INTRODUCTION: WHY A SOCIAL COHESION ASSESSMENT GUIDE?

Conflict vulnerability assessment has become a mainstream practice for a variety of settings, from city, county, and state governments to national security agencies to international development organizations. Assessing vulnerability to conflict that combines both structural or underlying determinants and the organizational and interactive aspects of escalation has become a critical skill for the design and creation of early warning, which in turn is closely linked to conflict prevention. New models and approaches have proliferated in recent years, as has the effort of the research community to monitor (mostly quantitative) indicators that reflect the depth or intensity of conflict vulnerability.⁸⁰

Contemporary conflict assessments are informed principally by theories of violence emanating from social-structural variables (such as identity), economic factors (such as inequality), patterned discrimination or political marginalization, and of the role and capacity of governance institutions (formal and informal) to manage root-causes of conflicts that can escalate into deadly social violence, riots and intergroup clashes, and even civil war. Most guides prompt the user to analyze of “ethnic fragmentation,” “group-based, vengeance-seeking grievances,” or “historical narratives of victimization,” which reflects scholarly concerns with identity- or ethnic- or religious-based factors. However, current guides are at best inadequate for understanding the complexity of identity-based conflict drivers and their interactive relationships with other political, economic, and social conditions.

Deep drivers of identity-based conflict are highly contextual and multi-dimensional, yet current assessment instruments tend to aggregate or overlook the complexity of identity-based differences. Rigorous assessment of ethnic conflict drivers, ethnic conflict consequences, and the impact of international interventions meant to mitigate ethnic conflict and foster peace and recovery requires employing multiple theoretical tools from various fields of inquiry.

This assessment guide, therefore, is interdisciplinary and integrated, building upon theoretical insights from literatures on ethnic conflict and violence, sectarianism, religion and violence, political economy and ethnicity, and framed systematically within contemporary debates around the nexus between “social cohesion” and “resilience.” It presents systematic sets of factors that have the ability to constrain or enable vulnerability to ethno-religious conflict in a country, to include the role of outside intervention through aid, program, and project responses.

The guide provides multiple tools for assessing the extent to which social fragmentation functions as a conflict driver or social cohesion operates as a mechanism to decrease conflict vulnerability, and the various ways international actors impact the dynamics of cohesion or fragmentation within processes of post-conflict recovery. In other words, this guide also provides a framework for identifying more innovative ways to enhance highly excluded groups’ “capacity to cope” in fragile, conflict-prone environments. The primary innovations of this assessment guide are providing a foundation for more rigorous assessment and comparison of conflict and intervention dynamics cross-nationally, and providing a framework that can be employed across various conflict environments to develop more effective social cohesion policy and programming.

⁸⁰ For an overview of these various instruments, see the guide on conflict analysis at the Governance and Social Development Resource Center (<http://www.gsdrc.org/index.cfm?objectid=3133E975-14C2-620A-277DFFB9CA069184>) and the UNDP Oslo Governance Center and German Center for International Development. 2009. *User's Guide on Measuring Fragility* [http://www.undp.org/oslocentre/docs09/Fragility_Users_Guide_\(web\).pdf](http://www.undp.org/oslocentre/docs09/Fragility_Users_Guide_(web).pdf)

ASSESSING SOCIAL COHESION IN CONFLICT-AFFECTED COUNTRIES – RESEARCH TEMPLATE

Context	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Context Assessment <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1. Historical Context 1.2. Proximate Context – Conflict Patterns, Drivers 1.3. Empirical Data
Social & Economic	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Social and Economic Conditions: Relationships <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1. Identity Cleavages 2.2. Horizontal Inequalities 3. Social and Economic Conditions: Attitudes and Perceptions <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1. Ancient/Modern “Hatreds” and “Grievances” 3.2. Land-Identity Nexus 3.3. Identity and Inter-group Mobilization
Political Analysis	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Political Conditions: State-Society Relationship <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4.1. Identity Permeation of State Institutions 4.2. Electoral Institutions 4.3. Elite Behavior 5. Political Conditions: State-Society Attitudes <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5.1. Political Discourse and Nationalism 5.2. Institutional Inclusivity 5.3. Public Administration and Service Delivery
International Analysis	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. International – Domestic Interactions <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6.1. Transnational Dynamics 6.2. Peace Actor Analysis 6.3. Perceptions of External Engagement 7. Conclusion: Lessons Learned <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7.1. Nature of Vulnerability 7.2. External Impact

II. ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK DESCRIPTION

1. INTRODUCTION: CONTEXT ASSESSMENT

The introductory section of the assessment will lay out, in three precise sections, an overall historical narrative of the country (drawing on authoritative scholarly sources), the proximate context of conflict trends, political settlement and subsequent international engagement, and a data section that includes the principal empirical material available on the country in terms of a) human security analysis, b) human development analysis, and c) governance indicators. This data section will include an overall snapshot of the country on the major tracking databases in use globally, using international organization or international financial institution data as available or material from otherwise authoritative sources (e.g., Uppsala Conflict Data Program, Small Arms Survey, etc.). This introductory section will include data on annualized aid flows, and, as available, the distribution of international assistance by sector or purpose. Finally, it will also include the findings of gender assessments and the gender dimensions related to the questions below will be mainstreamed throughout the assessment report.

2. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS: RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN CIVIL SOCIETY

This section looks closely at the civil society level of analysis and is primarily concerned with assessing the nature of inter-social group interactions across identity-based boundaries. This section focuses on assessing the nature of “civil society,” mechanisms affecting “bridging, bonding or linking social capital,” local-level political participation (dynamics of local and community governance and participation), and the dynamics of inter-ethnic group alliances or social cleavages that shape participation in civil society. It also assesses the extent to which local markets or business networks affect inter-ethnic interactions along with the dynamics of “horizontal inequalities,” as well as other identity issues that have the capacity to unify or divide groups at local levels (e. g. religion, gender, tribe, clan, race, class, language, etc.).

3. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS: PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES WITH CIVIL SOCIETY

This section evaluates the nature of “states of mind”⁸¹ or beliefs, attitudes and perceptions among various groups at the civil society level. This section focuses on assessing the dynamics and drivers of social trust or fear of the “other,” and highlights factors that have the capacity to generate high levels of grievance between ethno-religious groups. It is more focused on the individual level and the dynamics of identity construction within and among particular ethnic groups. It looks at the role of ethnic elites (ethnic entrepreneurs’ and their motivations) in shaping in-group and out-group perceptions.

4. POLITICAL CONDITIONS: STATE-SOCIETY RELATIONSHIPS

This section evaluates the nature of state-society social cohesion in terms of observable behaviors and forms of participation in the state apparatus. It focuses on assessing ethnic participation in the political system and systems of governance in relationship to ethnic conflict dynamics (e.g. elections, voting, political party formation, power sharing; etc.). This section also looks at the nature of state-level institutions, education systems, police systems, military (etc.), and the extent to which various ethnic groups participate in or “permeate” formal state institutions.

5. POLITICAL CONDITIONS: STATE – SOCIETY PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES

This section evaluates the nature of state-society social cohesion in terms of social views, beliefs, and attitudes toward state institutions or overarching systems of governance. It focuses on assessing the nature of national identity, nationalism, perceptions and beliefs, and political culture related factors, such as the dynamics of political elites and identity construction.

⁸¹ Chan, To, and Chan, “Reconsidering Social Cohesion,” 294.

6. INTERNATIONAL-DOMESTIC INTERACTIONS

This section evaluates international-domestic dynamics and seeks to understand the consequences of external interventions as related to social fragmentation and inter-group grievances that create conditions for conflict and violence. This section has three components: 1) assessment of transnational dynamics; 2) development cooperation actor analysis, and; 3) assessment of perceptions of external actor and donor engagement. It includes analysis of attitudes toward international actors due to the fact that institutional legitimacy matters just as much for external actors in effective governance of post-conflict environments, as it does for the state apparatus.

7. PRINCIPAL FINDINGS AND LESSONS LEARNED

The conclusion to each case study will present the principal analytic findings emanating from the social cohesion assessment and it will reflect the principal lessons learned or policy-relevant conclusions from the research.

- What can be said about the general nature of social cohesion in the country under consideration?
- What lessons have development practitioners learned on effective and ineffective forms of social cohesion programming?
- What are the specific lessons in terms of: a) overall strategy of donor cooperation and interaction with the host government; b) program design and interaction among programmatic interventions; and c) project design, particularly for sustainability and capacity development?

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