Summaries of Working Group presentations
WG 3 - Regional conflicts and peace-building
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Contents

Presentation 1: Mental health trauma in Syria
Rebecca Brindza (Israel SYP)

Rebecca's presentation provided a glimpse into the grave mental health situation in Syria and brought rise to questions on what this situation may mean for the country's future. She examined past and present mental health trends and traumatic stressors in Syria as well as global mechanisms for mental health service provision and support.

In the four decades prior to the onset of the Syrian Civil War, state spending priorities and cultural beliefs created a mental health vacuum in Syria. Parallel to such were traumatic stressors before and amid the conflict including, among others, a five year drought, near constant socio-political strife, violence, forced displacement, and the destruction of essential infrastructure. Her research examined how this long term neglect in state service provision and socio-cultural acceptance alongside these stressors enveloped into the current situation of protracted internal insecurity and vulnerability for Syrian civilians— a phenomenon that has ultimately left half of the population in need of mental health and psychosocial support.

She argued that the global community has largely ignored these signs of a large scale mental health crisis inside Syria, despite the general consensus that exposure to the traumatic stressors so negatively impact the psyche and compromise an individual's ability to function normally, as well as exacerbate the risk for maladaptation for a indefinite period of time. Instead, she asserts, for six out of the seven years of conflict, global awareness and service provision has consistently focused on the mental health needs of refugees and largely ignored those of the millions of individuals remaining in Syria. Moreover, she argued that recent civil society efforts to provide mental health service provision and support have fallen short. On the one hand, while humanitarian operations seeking to provide medical care in Syria have made leaps and bounds, the much needed provision of parallel psychological first aid has been sparse. On the other, the WHO's Mental Health Gap Programme, which aims to provide mental health services in countries with little to no existing infrastructure, is inherently flawed when it comes to dealing with situations of protracted conflict, as the programme lacks a comprehensive framework for dealing with Trauma-Related Disorders.

In looking forward, she advocated for the need for greater international acknowledgement and research of trauma-related mental disorders, especially that which takes into account situational and repetitive traumas as well as cultural differences in presentation. This may include revising the WHO Mental Health Gap Programme to include a section dedicated to trauma-related disorders with specific tactics geared for different cultural presentations of trauma. Second, establishing a protocol for psychological grace periods (PGPs) following violent events would adequately provide humanitarian personnel the ability to come in and deliver psychological first aid (PFA) to the affected community. Such PGPs could be set up in parallel to truces when common humanitarian aid is delivered. Third, is the need for better training and greater funding for PFA among all humanitarian organizations acting in conflict zones. Fourth, the need to constructively address the stigmas surrounding mental health health and trauma in Arab societies in a way that supports community resilience. In looking at the Israeli model of emergency mental health infrastructure, tactics may involve establishing Community Stress Centers within safe zones in Syria that are separate from traditional medical facilities as well as the creation of a global coalition of Arab mental health care professionals to provide direct mental aid to patients, to educate and train intervention teams, and to promote resilience among victimized Arab populations across the world.

Presentation 2: Cyprus-Turkey Relationship and its Challenges for EU-NATO Security, Angeliki Jacovidou, University of Warwick

Following a brief explanation of what the "Cyprus Problem" entails, the presenter moved on to discuss how this issue between Cyprus and Turkey influences security within the international sphere. Cyprus and ally nation Greece are European Union (EU) member states, while Greece and Turkey are members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). Taking into account that the nations involved in the on-going conflict are also part of two of the main guarantors of international security: the EU and NATO, the author explained the various complications that arise which bring cooperation and collaboration among the two institutions to a halt.

As of 2004, NATO and the EU have not held any formal meetings, a phenomenon that various scholars credit to the "participation problem." Essentially, the "participation problem" refers to the various policies and principles that each of the two aforementioned institutions have in place, ultimately blocking them from formally meeting and collaborating. Referring to the multiple instances where Cyprus and Turkey veto collaborating with one another, and ultimately stopping the two establishments from working together, it becomes apparent how the "Cyprus Problem" hinders international security. The author also referred to the effects that the conflict in Cyprus has on the EU independently from NATO, and vice versa. This was done in an attempt to illustrate the magnitude of the issue in comparison to the attention that it receives from the international community.

Finally, particular focus was granted to the discussion of current developments concerning the island of Cyprus and the conflict. More specifically, it was mentioned that discovery of natural gas in Cyprus' Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) resulted in additional tension among the nations involved: Cyprus, Turkey and Greece, as opposed to acting as a unifying factor as optimistic analysts had hoped for. Discussion of how Turkey threatening Italian and French companies over the natural gas found in Cyprus surfaces further complications among the EU member states and NATO member Turkey, creating friction between the two establishments. Moreover, the presenter mentioned that since Greece, Italy and France are all NATO member states as well as EU members, tension from within NATO itself hinders co-operation among its members and consequently, security.

It was emphasized that the "Cyprus Problem" is certainly not the only issue hindering co-operation among the EU and NATO, ultimately challenging the establishment of security measures. Instead, the presentation discussed how this particular issue contributed to already existing issues among the two institutions. Finally, the author discussed the extent to which the possibility of escalated tension exists in contrast with the minimum attention and literature provided by both institutions concerning the conflict.

Presentation 3 - Peace in South Asia – An elusive dream? (Afghanistan Focus), Umar Farooq Khan, Islamabad Policy Research Institute

South Asia is at an inflection point currently. The region has been marred by geopolitics that primarily center around the Pakistan-India hostility, the Afghanistan quagmire and intra and interstate terrorism. On the other hand, there are silhouettes of new emerging geo-economic trends in the region. Economic ventures such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas project, Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) gas pipeline are a manifestation of these geo-economic trends.

In Afghanistan, new peace offers have been made by both, the Taliban and the Afghan government. The Afghan Taliban have made renewed offer of negotiations with the United States followed by Afghan President Ashraf Ghani proposing peace talks with no preconditions, a ceasefire, prisoner swaps and recognizing the Taliban as a political party. It is important to analyze the current state of affairs in Afghanistan to contextualize these latest overtures.

First, the Afghan Coalition Government has had its own fair share of internal issues. Even in 2014 when the coalition government was formulated, it took more than one year to make the cabinet and get approval from the Parliament. Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) has been unable to restore the write of the government. They are still heavily dependent on the US for training, equipment and for provision of air support in operations against terrorists. Presence of "ghost soldiers" and desertions are also common in the police and army. Second, increasing influence and control of Taliban in Afghanistan is another reality. According to a recent BBC report, the Afghan government only holds 30 percent of the country. In the rest of Afghanistan, home to 50 percent of the Afghan population, the Taliban have at least one "open and active physical presence." Incapacity of the Afghan government to fulfill its promises to the Afghan government has also presented the Taliban as an alternative. The Taliban aspire to be a political interlocutor in Afghanistan and have a following amongst the people. For instance, during the month of Ramadan in Kunduz last year, the Taliban would fight the Afghan forces during the day and provide food to the local people during Iftar time in the evening. However, the rebellion is not as united as it once was. There are clear divisions amongst the different ranks of the Taliban since the death of Mullah Omar.

Furthermore, role of the United States has been problematic to say the least. There seems to be no long term strategy. The U.S. approach is more tactical whereby decisions are taken on case to case basis. According to the Human Rights Watch, the U.S. has given preference to short-term security and political gains rather than pursuing policies which would bring sustainable peace and development. This has led to collaborations with war lords. Also, the military surge has had its own blowback. According to the United Nations, in the first nine months of 2017, at least 38 percent of civilian deaths were due to bombing by international forces.

A lot of the blame for Afghanistan's current ills is put on regional actors such as Russia, Iran and Pakistan. But these allegations are often based on simplism and omissions of important facts. For instance, Pakistan's interests in Afghanistan are still seen through the lens of seeking strategic depth. However, this concept has

become outdated and lost its relevance since reaching of nuclear parity in subcontinent after 1998. Pakistan now views the conflict in Afghanistan through the lens of its own insurgency. Also, it's important to look at the historical security dilemma which has existed between Afghanistan and Pakistan impaired by border issues, ethnic considerations which has made bilateral cooperation difficult.

To ensure that the region can fully realize the dividends of the abovementioned economic ventures, geopolitical bottlenecks will need to be addressed. With regards to Afghanistan, a negotiated political settlement which is Afghan-led and Afghan-owned is the way forward.

Presentation 4 - Into the mind of a War Criminal (Kashmir focus)
Ujjaini Chatterji, University of Nottingham

On April 9 2017, Major Gogoi, tied Farooq Ahmad Dar to his jeep and took him around several villages for five hours. The Kashmiri civilian was allegedly beaten before being taken around as human shield, bearing a sign, pinned to his chest, saying, '*this is the fate that will befall stone throwers*'. The acts of Major Gogoi, despite being forbidden by the Geneva Convention 1949, won him several accolades and an award. The Indian media applauded his bravery.

Ujjaini Chatterji had read about the Kashmir conflict when she was fourteen years old. Yet, her presentation on the psychology of a war criminal, with a particular focus on Kashmir, was an unfinished one. In fact, her speech was not even intended to have a definite end.

Her slides began with a striking painting, tiled 'War Dance', by Indian artist Mayura Priyan. War Dance is the unabashed representation of the grotesque and ruthless realities of every conflict zone. And thus, Ujjaini recounted, the dichotomies of a young Kashmiri boy, who grew up in Kashmir and lived in India through its years of changing political climate. 'Fayazabad 31223', is that shattering narrative of Hilal Bhat which describes the realism of every hostility. Like Farooq Ahmad, Hilal Bhat, is one of those millions, who were destroyed by the military occupation of over 700,000 Indian soldiers in the most militarized zone in the world. Yet, this presentation was about neither of them. This presentation was about Major Gogoi and the increasing number of army suicides in Kashmir.

The presentation delved into the perspectives and psychology of a soldier who commits war crimes. Ujjaini's particular reference was, the book, 'An intimate History of Killing', by Professor Joanna Bourke', and the experiences and circumstances of Lieutenant William L. Calley in the My Lai massacre. The discussion raised the question about the applicability of International Humanitarian Law. From the Geneva Conventions of 1864 to the complex web of over thirty documents, IHL is an interesting academic topic. However, in ruthless circumstances, where the military enjoys absolute power and States encourage brutalities, humanitarian laws rarely find scope for practice and implementation. In fact, it is nearly impossible to collect evidence and predict the happenings during hostilities with precision. Therefore, the darkest accounts of human degradation not only feed the conditioned military perception of bravery but also satisfies the society and media with their need for sadistic and voyeuristic sensationalism. Under the circumstances, even the military falls prey to political objectives.

Ujjaini concluded that the presentation was unfinished. It was not an end in itself. The conversation was only a means to end the ferocious 'War Dance'. Civil societies like the British Pugwash had a great role to play in educating the militarily on International Humanitarian Law, International Criminal Law and to normalize emotions through psychiatric and emotional support. Military trainings should focus on the emotional development of the soldiers instead of trivializing sensitivity to human sentiments.

Presentation 5 - The memory question in post-conflict Colombia
Will Spurr, University of Warwick

Colombia is emerging from over 60 years of civil conflict between the state, guerrilla insurgents, and paramilitary groups. Civil rupture undermines consensus on national narratives of the past; collective memory constitutes collective identity – which in turn influences joint-action (as per Habermas' 'Past as Future'). The extensive peace process has engaged in preserving precarious memory narratives; such as the human cost of the war amongst civilians through archival preservation and public dissemination. Moreover, truth and reconciliation councils connected to the nascent peace deal will seek to create an orthodox account of the conflict – most likely to be in the form of a respected tribunal report summary similar to the *nunca más* reports in post-authoritarian Argentina (and unlike the broadly ignored and discredited *nunca más* report in Uruguay).

However, with elections to be held in May 2018, the front running candidate, Ivan Duque, is a prodigy of former far-right president Alvaro Uribe. Uribe's state has been held responsible for more civilian deaths than Colombia's notorious Pablo Escobar – moreover, the *falsos positivos* scandal witnessed the murder of over 3,350 (mostly disabled) civilians. These civilians were later marked as guerrilla kills, to provide positive results the Washington-backed 'Plan Colombia'. This example, amongst other, fuels a widespread belief in the international community that any memory-based peace process in Colombia will highlight further human rights abuses by the Uribe regime; hence Uribe and Duque's efforts to derail the peace process – specifically with respect to memory-led restorative justice measures.

Hence, we can see in the Colombian case and example wherein the international community must design policy measures to defend consensus building positive memory narratives. For example, the ICC can (and has) threatened to provide a judicial backstop to any political leaders seeking to evade the special justice courts. Moreover, the UN can improve monitoring of the implementation of peacebuilding measures – such as the handover of governance of guerrilla territory to the government. Finally, the international community can seek to support and defend civil society groups such as the *Centro Nacional de Memoria Historica* in their respective programmes to provide and promote positive memory narratives.