Conference Report - Exploring the Skills Needed for Effective Violence Prevention in the Current Canadian Context

A CONFERENCE HOSTED BY THE CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF APPLIED NEGOTIATION (CIIAN) AND THE NIPISSING UNIVERSITY PEACE RESEARCH INITIATIVE (NUPRI)
Table of Contents
I. Introduction ........................................................................................................................................... 2
II. Key Findings ........................................................................................................................................ 3  
   On the Nature of Violence .................................................................................................................. 3  
   On Addressing Violence ................................................................................................................... 4  
   On Training Others to Undertake Violence Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities .................. 5  
III. List of Participants and Presentations ................................................................................................ 6  
IV. Background Papers .......................................................................................................................... 7  
   On Violence Prevention - Some Introductory Observations and Questions .................................. 7  
   Learning Needs of Front-line Practitioners & Policymakers in Violence Prevention and Peacebuilding,  
   Training Gaps, and Future Directions .............................................................................................. 12  
   Armed Violence Reduction in Canada – Lessons from South Sudan? .............................................. 18
I. Introduction

Recent gun violence in Toronto and Colorado, while being tragic and perhaps avoidable, has left community leaders, police forces, and politicians searching to find new and effective ways to prevent such horrific events from occurring. One response is commitments for more police and more “target hardening” -- defensive measures that put an emphasis on enforcement and protection.

Notwithstanding these initiatives, a much wider discussion is beginning to take place in Canada. There is increased interest in the topic of violence, in broad terms – and how to curb it. For example, this past spring Montréal was rocked by several weeks of student protests and a mediator was assigned to this case in order to help resolve it. Moreover, Montréal police also employed front-line mediators in order to reduce tensions with student protestors in a hope to control violence. In late July there was a meeting between Canada’s premiers and aboriginal leaders to discuss ways to address violence against aboriginal women. The backdrop to this has been an ongoing debate about Canada’s role in preventing terrorism and working for peace at the international level. Indeed, ‘security’ is now on everyone’s minds, from issues relating to the economy and jobs, to safety in our neighborhoods.

The likelihood of more violent conflict in Canada seems to be on the increase. For example, this summer was one of the hottest on record. Consequently, food prices are expected to soar in the coming months and some pundits have predicted that rising food prices could spark social unrest in some communities. Other violent conflict in the future may be triggered by the extraction of resources from the Canadian arctic, in regards to the proposed oil pipeline to the west coast for shipping and further development of the oil sands in Alberta. We will likely also see more potentially hostile protests against logging such as those in Barriere Lake.

How to equip professionals to function effectively in violence prevention and peacebuilding is the question. Police officers, social workers, community development practitioners, religious leaders, educators, psychologists and mediators need theory-informed knowledge, diagnostic tools and techniques, and practical skills in order to meet this growing challenge.
II. Key Findings

On the Nature of Violence

“Peace” and “violence” are still too broad of categories to be operationally useful - there is a need to further refine these concepts. Within the Transitional Justice field, for example, there is typically a very narrow understanding of violence based on gross violations of human rights – which are seen as largely a legal issue. Additionally, any definition of violence needs to recognize the existence of both direct and indirect (structural) violence. Narrow definitions of violence, on the other hand, can lead to narrow solutions.

Violence is a learned behaviour that is transmitted through cultural mechanisms and sometimes across generations. As an extension of this notion, individuals must choose to initiate violence. There are correlations between other factors and the increase in violence. For example, economic downturns are correlated with increases in domestic violence thus suggesting that pre-existing risk factors and strains will make the choice of using violence more likely. Moreover, new and more lethal weapons have the potential to inflict greater levels of harm by those who choose to be violent. Economic, technological, social, psychological, historical, cultural and political factors are all interrelated with violence and its expression.

However, perhaps sometimes there are good reasons to choose to use violence? This raises the questions: Is violence always bad? Can and should violence ever be used to stop violence?

One view is that “Divine Violence”, a term originally coined by Walter Benjamin, is acceptable because this type of violence is used to counter oppression and injustice in its many forms. From this perspective Ghandi and Martin Luther King could be viewed as extremely violent. Moreover, a modern example of divine violence is the Quebec students’ demonstration.

Another view is that sometimes you need to force people to change via violent interventions that are sustained over the long-term. Iraq and Afghanistan are good examples of this, but this type of approach can lead to the creation of the security state. The security state by its very nature always maintains the threat of further violence in order to keep the peace and this is a less than desirable situation.

The alternative to the security state has to be a multi-cultural, fully democratic and inclusive state with well-established rule of law and basic human rights guarantees for all of its citizens. This can be
considered an overarching peacebuilding goal to strive for no matter which level one is working at (ie, from the individual to community to national).

**On Addressing Violence**
The starting point for any intervention is to recognize that each situation is unique and needs to be fully unpacked/understood. One must also strive to know the reality of those in violent situations and then speak ‘with them’ rather than ‘for them’. That is, responses need to be based upon the real needs of those whom you will help. Perceptions of those experiencing war can be accessed through studying war art. Similarly, their visions of what peace might look like can also be depicted through art.

However, interventions are not always welcomed and sometimes the first step is to gain entry. Early entry into a possibly violent situation is preferable because once violence has commenced it is too late; the result of violence is, often times more violence. Peace must therefore come prior to eruption of violence through common understanding and mediation. It is often said that the best defense is a good offence; similarly, the best way to deal with violence is to prevent it. In this sense, violence prevention is something of a common good.

Typically, however, it is very difficult to initiate violence prevention work because of a lack of adequate funding. This reluctance could be due to an inability to measure results in a tangible way. Consequently, the question becomes, how do we adequately fund violence prevention work? This question becomes all the more relevant because we know that even relatively modest investments in prevention can effectively stem gang violence, avert workplace violence and help prevent the outbreak of wars at international levels.

Nevertheless, in general terms, all violence prevention and peacebuilding interventions need to be:

- Early
- Active and sustained, not passive
- Directive and intentional
- Long-term
- Community-wide
- Holistic or broad
- Accountable, because accountability in interventions creates integrity
- Based on theory

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1 The Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) has recently developed a new framework for building healthy and safe communities.
• Focussed on creating deeper-level structural changes to address both direct and indirect violence
• Concerned with changing the way power is used (moving from “power-over” to “power-with”).

On Training Others to Undertake Violence Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities

Training programs need to combine a number of elements in order to be effective, as follows:

1. The unique strengths and characteristics of each student must be accounted for in the program design and delivery (ie, learner-centric training is required).

2. Materials must be grounded in reality and delivered by experienced scholar-practitioners who are well-recognized as subject matter experts in their respective areas. This provides exposure to a wide range of perspectives and expertise.

3. A focus on security, violence and power is needed (ie, an interdisciplinary focus).

4. Practical skills are needed (ie, an applied focus).

5. Complex and ever-changing conflict situations require that practitioners are equipped with critical thinking skills, problem solving skills, new ways to think innovatively and the ability to operate with maximum dexterity. These things cannot be learned by reading books alone and therefore there is a personal development aspect that is important too. This personal development aspect comes from experiential learning that engages the whole learner. Therefore, mixed teaching methods are required including clinics, seminars, simulations, lectures, and workshops in both a classroom and/or field environment.
### III. List of Participants and Presentations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Title of Talk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09:00-09:30</td>
<td>Welcome and Opening Remarks</td>
<td>Dr. Ben Hoffman, President CIIAN Dr. Toivo Koivukoski, Director NUPRI</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09:30-10:15</td>
<td>Exploring the Problem: current trends in violence in Canada and abroad</td>
<td>Dr. Herminio Teixeira, Assistant Professor of Political Science at Nipissing University</td>
<td>Walter Benjamin: some lessons on violence and the security state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:15-11:00</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dr. Rosemary Nagy, Associate Professor of Gender Equality &amp; Social Justice at Nipissing University</td>
<td>The Scope and Bounds of Transitional Justice and the Canadian TRC</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:00-11:15</td>
<td>Break</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11:15-12:00</td>
<td>Addressing the Problem: promising initiatives in violence prevention and peacebuilding</td>
<td>Dr. Susan Cahill, Assistant Professor of Fine and Visual Arts at Nipissing University.</td>
<td>Visualizing Peace: Afghan war rugs, Canada, and the War on Terror</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:00-13:00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<td>13:00-13:45</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mr. Pierre Gautier, Provincial Gang Issues Coordinator (Crime Prevention Section), Ontario Provincial Police.</td>
<td>Dealing with youth violence, domestic violence and gang violence</td>
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<td>13:45-14:30</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ms. Karena Kyne, Phd Candidate at York University, Toronto and Graduate Fellow at the York Centre for International and Security Studies (York University, Toronto).</td>
<td>Theory informed techniques for front line workers in violence prevention and peacebuilding: bridging the gap between parties</td>
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<tr>
<td>14:30-14:45</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ms. Frema Engel, Author, Consultant, and Speaker on Workplace Violence.</td>
<td>Prevention of Violence (via Skype)</td>
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<tr>
<td>14:45-15:00</td>
<td>Break</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15:00-15:45</td>
<td>Learning needs of front-line practitioners and policy makers</td>
<td>Dr. Evan Hoffman, Executive Director CIIAN</td>
<td>Learning Needs of Front-line Practitioners &amp; Policymakers in Violence Prevention and Peacebuilding, Training Gaps, and Future Directions</td>
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<tr>
<td>15:45-16:30</td>
<td>The Way Forward and Closing Remarks</td>
<td>Dr. David Tabachnick, Associate Professor of Political Science at Nipissing University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IV. Background Papers

On Violence Prevention - Some Introductory Observations and Questions
By Dr. Toivo Koivukoski, Associate Professor of Political Science at Nipissing University and Director of the Nipissing University Peace Research Initiative (NUPRI)

Observations on the terms “Violence” and “Prevention”

In this strategic concept of prevention we have a goal – that is a way of understanding peace in its own terms, as a civil society capable of acts of voluntary consent and cooperation, free from domination. The strategic concept thus offers a way of answering the question of what is peace if not the mere simple, material absence of violence. And in this concept of violence that we are setting out to prevent we have a socially mediated term, where what is registered as violence describes a society as what it is- in terms of its ethics, its institutions, and its social-economy. What ‘counts’ as violence is thus socially - and historically - specific, and is prone to critique and to change.

There is something intriguing to this idea of preventing violence, much as there was something astonishing to the notions of preemptive defence and preventative detention that we saw emphasized as policy responses to our technologically interconnected world, where the new stakes of global conflict made it supposedly imprudent to confront violence after the fact. However critical one may be of the practicality or rightness of such policies, and short of measures to preempt violence with violence, there is some good sense to such a forward-thinking approach within the context of an emerging global civil society. After all, by the time violence is taking place, it is in a sense already too late for peaceful, civil society to be an effective agent of change, with patterns of domination crowding out participatory forms of politics. Restoring the conditions of peace and civility would mean much more than a cessation of conflict. Witness, for example the violence in Syria and now surrounding countries, where the impasse between an authoritarian state and armed revolutionaries demonstrates both the self-perpetuating qualities of violence, as well as its impotence, producing very few real choices and seemingly little chance of political miracles and reconciliation. There is a sense in which, by the time violence has ceased, the damage has already been done, with lasting wounds on a civil society and the constitutive trusts that hold it together. Hence, it is not right to identify peace merely as the end of hostilities. That can be only the beginning.

The fulsome realization of peace would take much more than a declaration- it would require mediation, for example, productive talks over time that create a willingness for cooperation, a sense of common understanding, and a desire to work towards shared purposes. And beyond this, it would mean peace as the actual fruit of consent and cooperation, the kind of peace enjoyed in the absence of economic
hardship, social inequality, and political authoritarianism – that is a peace described by objective economic, social and political conditions.¹

Building and sustaining these conditions where one can be free from domination to live at ease in the company of others is part of what violence prevention means.

By the time violence has broken out, or when systemic violence has become entrenched in a society, one is already far from a peaceful set of conditions.

Shared efforts, social trusts, and voluntary consent are all compromised when violence occurs or when domination is encoded into a social order.

So it makes sense to focus on preventing violence, recognizing that putting an end to violence would be merely preliminary to these active peace-building efforts that must follow from any such end.

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This would be the purposive dimension of these talks around preventing violence- i.e. what we may hope to achieve, an end uniquely suited to dialogue. It is hard to imagine how one could prevent violence through violence, how to square that circle of means contradicting ends. Here the Bush-era American geopolitical strategy of preemptive defence seems in retrospect, so evidently wrong. Now looking more wildly ideological than realist, the so-called “Project for a New American Century”, that is preemptive violence on a global scale to deter any contestation of American hegemony, and especially its preemptive war on Iraq, undercut American global influence and made the world a more dangerous place. One truth though that can be garnered from that extreme episode of recent history is a certain sense in which, in a technologically interconnected world, “the best defense is a good offense”. The failure consists rather in just what they did with their preventative measures, i.e. starting a war to prevent some potential future war.

Sharing in that element of truth is this new orientation towards the prevention of violence becoming a goal of action, this kind of vigorous advocacy for peace that Director Camilla Schippa, who describes it as being subjectively important that peace means different things to different people, with the genuine subjectivity of peaceful agents requiring fora for the articulation of difference, as well as requiring quite objective determinations when it comes to real world living conditions.
See for example in the Hoffmans’ work abroad- locating potential future sources of conflict and addressing them before they manifest. Preventing violence thus comes to mean much more than simply exiting from violent circumstances- violent politics, violent social structures, violent economies. It is precisely this critical discussion of what is good for a society, what would allow people to live at ease in the world and with each other, voluntarily consenting and contributing to this common good, that constitutes peaceful relations.

So we have our goal in mind, with peace expressed in its own terms, as much more than just the absence of violence.

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From a theoretical perspective, the thing that we are setting out to prevent seems altogether more indeterminate and questionable in terms of precisely what it is. This may seem counterintuitive, that violence is an indeterminate phenomenon. One may be inclined to say that it is obvious what violence is.

It stands out as a shock and affront to the senses.

It literally hurts.

It is obviously distressing.

It crosses over a body’s boundary, trespasses on who a person is, and compromises the victim of violence in their very being.iii

And yet at the same time as touching on the essence of our humanity in our mortality and fragility, because it is a relational and social concept, violence always has this element of questionability to it.iii

One may ask just what violence is, and get a range of politically diverse perspectives.
This question of what “counts” as violence, politically speaking, and what is falsely naturalized, or routinized, or just simply ignored, frames our society as what it is.

The question defines in many ways what groups of people, what nations, which classes, which races, which ethnicities, are empowered and which are suppressed.

What “counts” as violence?

Do we count the economic discipline of markets as violence?

People being locked out of their workplaces while their jobs are relocated elsewhere, is that a kind of violence?

Do we interpret property damage by protestors as a form of violence, even if no people are physically hurt?

Should we take the corralling or “kettling” of assembled demonstrators as violent acts, the confinement of groups of people en masse to prevent some supposed potential future violence?

This question of what is violence is something like the debate on what constitutes torture, a term stretched to the limits of credulity in legal opinion provided to the US government that it would be limited to physical or psychological pain commensurate with organ failure, impairment of bodily function, or death.

Clearly such a view is too narrow.

Clearly the concept of violence is more than strictly biological, having this intrinsically social dimension to it.
And because it is a social concept, and since societies are structured in particular ways institutionally, economically and ethically, there remain structural forms of violence that are not reducible to a strictly biological definition.

That is, patterns of domination do not have to come to blows to be real.

Because it is a socially-mediated phenomenon, questions of representation surround violence, shaping how we come to see and recognize violence, and which forms we see as legitimate, or insensate, or unavoidable, or reconcilable. Because it is again, a socially-framed phenomenon, violence is also an historical phenomenon, associated with revolutionary changes as well as conservative entrenchment.

Here then is the opening where violence can be problematized, called into question, and traced out at the limits of peace.

Violence is called into question as somehow necessary, or natural, or legitimate, while its prevention becomes a positive goal in its own right, replacing patterns of domination, whether structural or outright, with freely given consent and cooperation as the goals of a democratic society.

Hopefully then, it is this purposive concept of peace that we approach in words, via mediation and the continual renegotiation of precisely what our common good is, so that we can work towards this shared goal in action.
Learning Needs of Front-line Practitioners & Policymakers in Violence Prevention and Peacebuilding, Training Gaps, and Future Directions

By Dr. Evan Hoffman, Executive Director, Canadian International Institute of Applied Negotiation

What’s Currently Being Offered?

**theoretical vs practice focused programs**

Globally and within Canada there are many Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding programs at both undergrad and graduate levels (See Annex 1 for a list of university-based programs within Canada).

There is some tension between purely academic programs (in which usually the main task is to produce a thesis) which produce new scholars and policymakers versus purely practitioner oriented programs (which are actually relatively non-existent).

Somewhere between these two types of programs are those that aim to achieve a balance of sorts between focusing on both theory and practice. The MA in Conflict Analysis and Management (MACAM) program at Royal Roads University is a good example of this.²

While splitting the focus in this manner may seem like a good solution to addressing this dilemma, it presents another set of challenges. First, students entering the program come from a wide variety of backgrounds: some have never been in the field and enter directly after finishing their Bachelor’s degree. Whereas there may be many others entering the program that haven’t written an academic paper for many years. This imbalance can create problems for the students and instructors, and therefore special care has to be taken to help put everyone on an equal platform so that they can succeed in the program and gain something useful from it. Moreover, the content and delivery aspects of the program also have to be specially tailored to strike a balance between teaching skills and teaching theoretical concepts.

In general, there are enough similar (and thus competing programs) being offered at the moment that some are now considering branding issues and how to stay relevant in a market that seems to be increasingly becoming flooded with more ‘competitors’. Word of mouth matters however and programs

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² The MA in Conflict Analysis and Management is a two-year interdisciplinary program that provides both the theoretical and practical skills necessary to identify, analyze, and manage group conflict in a variety of international and domestic arenas. To accomplish this, the program stresses a holistic, cross-cultural approach to conflict analysis and management; and focuses on multi-party disputes between governments, corporations and civil society.
with good reputations seem to get a lot of their applicants because of alumni referrals. Offering new and cutting-edge training would also help new programs stand out from the rest.

**Domestic vs international focus**

While some of the ideas and content that is focused on international level work can be applied at home in a domestic context most programs usually have either only one focus or the other.

Many programs have a cross-cultural component in the sense that they may touch upon this factor in some of the course work. None, however that I know of specifically focus on the Canadian context and the unique requirements of operating in this multi-cultural environment.

In sum, it would make sense to offer customized and separate content for both contexts instead of trying to lump it all together.

**Delivery methods: online vs in-person**

Aside from the differing focus of these programs, there are also a wide variety of teaching methods ranging from the purely in-person to almost entirely online to the blended approach.

While the blended approach seems to have much appeal in the sense that it is extremely flexible much is lost in terms of the experiential aspects and dynamics created from doing in-person group work and teaching.

In order to overcome this shortcoming many programs require students to complete one or more residencies that range from 3 days (Antioch University Midwest) to 3 weeks (MACAM program at RRU) to 2 months (Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice at the University of San Diego).

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3 This has been the experience of CIIAN’s mediator training program in Ottawa.
4 For example, the MA in Post-war Recovery Studies at the University of York, UK uses an entirely in-person delivery method. See [http://vimeo.com/28781161](http://vimeo.com/28781161)
5 See, for example, a recent article in *The Globe and Mail* which makes the point that different types of approaches are more appropriate for some people in some circumstances and that a purely online program may not be suitable for some types of learners [http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/time-to-lead/graduates-of-the-keyboard-campus/article4593025/](http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/time-to-lead/graduates-of-the-keyboard-campus/article4593025/)
Further experiential gains are also sometimes created by having students complete a placement or internship and/or undertake additional skills development workshops that complement their mandatory courses.

What is Needed?

Training programs need to combine a number of elements in order to be effective, as follows:

1. Materials must be grounded in reality and delivered by experienced scholar-practitioners who are well-recognized as subject matter experts in their respective areas. This provides exposure to a wide range of perspectives and expertise.
2. A focus on security, violence and power is needed (ie, an interdisciplinary focus).
3. Practical skills are needed (ie, an applied focus).
4. Complex and ever-changing conflict situations require that practitioners are equipped with critical thinking skills, problem solving skills, new ways to think innovatively and the ability to operate with maximum dexterity. These things cannot be learned by reading books alone and therefore there is a personal development aspect that is important too. This personal development aspect comes from experiential learning that engages the whole learner. Therefore, mixed teaching methods are required including clinics, seminars, simulations, lectures, and workshops in both a classroom and/or field environment.
5. The unique strengths and characteristics of each student must be accounted for in the program design and delivery (ie, learner-centric training is required).

Future Directions

We need to avoid using cookie-cutter approaches to teaching violence prevention and peacebuilding skills from this point forward. Rather, we should aim to identify innovative new ways to teach these skills, perhaps by drawing upon the teaching methods employed in other fields.

Promising new directions in this sense could be achieved through “deep immersion” in a program for a short period of time (ie, spending one or two semesters in the learning environment), creating apprenticeship types of experiences for students, creating “learning labs” where students can practice developing their skills in a supervised environment (such as teaching hospitals that help train new

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6 A recent publication by the OECD recommends that international mediation teams have diverse and up-to-date skill sets (*Improving International Support to Peace Processes: The Missing Piece*, OECD, 2012). More precisely, they recommend that, ‘training should focus on the soft skills to guide international support and substantive knowledge of typical conflict issues and peace agreement provisions.’
doctors), or by undertaking on-the-job training by working with well-established practitioners (and/or job shadowing). Likewise, coaching and mentoring might be important new teaching tools that can be integrated into violence prevention and peacebuilding training programs.

List of Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding Programs in Canada

Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Canada

Canadian School of Peacebuilding

Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada

Centre for Conflict Resolution Education (CCER)

Norman Paterson School of International Affairs (NPSIA)

Conrad Grebel College, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario

Peace and Conflict Studies

Certificate Program in Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management

Master of Peace and Conflict Studies

Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Henson College, Negotiation and Conflict Management Programme

McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario

Faculty of Social Sciences, Certificate/Diploma in Family Mediation

Centre for Peace Studies

Menno Simons College, University of Winnipeg, Manitoba

Conflict Resolution Studies

Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Peace and Conflict Studies

Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario

Industrial Relations Centre

Royal Roads University, Victoria, B.C.
Conference Report: Exploring The Skills Needed For Effective Violence Prevention In The Current Canadian Context

Peace and Conflict Studies Division
St. Paul University, Ottawa, Ontario

Canadian Institute for Conflict Resolution

MA in Conflict Studies
Simon Fraser University

Centre for Restorative Justice

Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue
University of Alberta, Faculty of Law:

Certificate in Peace and Post Conflict Studies

Canadian Forum on Civil Justice

University of British Columbia

Liu Institute for Global Issues (Liu Centre)

UBC Dispute Resolution Program, Faculty of Law

University of Manitoba, St. Paul's College, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Arthur V. Mauro Centre for Peace and Justice

University of Prince Edward Island, Charlottetown, PEI

Centre for Conflict Resolution Studies

University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

Native Law Centre of Canada

University of Toronto

Centre for International Studies, Program on Conflict Management and Negotiation

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Transformative Learning Centre

University of Victoria, Victoria, BC, Canada

Master of Arts in Dispute Resolution, School of Public Administration

York University, Toronto, Ontario
Armed Violence Reduction in Canada – Lessons from South Sudan?
By Ms. Sara Skinner

Disclaimer – this piece is meant to be a conversation starter or ‘food for thought’. Research to validate some of the noted assumptions is needed before they are accepted as fact, rather this is meant to highlight general points and provide a new angle to look at the issue in Canada.

Stories of gun crimes are becoming seemingly more common in Canadian news, in Toronto the number of shootings has risen 34% from 2011. This rise is alarming, and conventional wisdom suggests that we should look to our neighbors and our contemporaries on the international stage to look for advice, methods, and best practices to deal with the issue (and in some cases, look at methods that don’t work). Although it may be quite unconventional, I’ve decided rather look to an example that on the surface has few similarities to the problem that Canada is facing but that can nonetheless illuminate the issue for us.

“The gun violence has become increasingly concentrated within our most socially disadvantaged communities. It’s usually men between 18 and 29 from our most economically disadvantaged communities.”

South Sudan holds the title of the youngest country in the world; it came into existence on 9 July 2011 following a referendum in which the people of South Sudan overwhelmingly voted in favor of succession from its parent country, Sudan. Prior to independence Sudan was embroiled in a long and devastating civil war which, depending on which source you refer to, lasted for either 22 or more than 50 years – with only a brief lull in the 1970s when an ill-fated peace agreement had been signed. In 2005 a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed which has paved the way for a fragile peace and among other agreements, led to the aforementioned referendum.

As is true of most contemporary conflicts, the legacy of war left South Sudan with a poor, uneducated, and well-armed population, the consequences have been tragic. Development is struggling to take hold in a county that has seen little advancement in part due to the presence of arms, which for a variety of reasons create an un-conducive environment for development.

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7 The author Sara Skinner holds a Master’s degree in Conflict Analysis and Management from Royal Roads University. She has been involved with CIIAN since 2008. For the past three year she has been working in Sudan, most recently she was in Juba, South Sudan providing advice on armed violence reduction looking specifically at the demand and supply factors of gun possession, and the legislative needs of the new country to address the proliferation of weapons. She can be reached at skinner.saramarie@gmail.com
8 Andre Mayer CBC 07/17/2012

Conference Report: Exploring The Skills Needed For Effective Violence Prevention In The Current Canadian Context
While the scope of the struggle with arms violence in South Sudan and Canada is vastly different, nonetheless, there is a great deal of similarities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>South Sudan</th>
<th>Canada</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South Sudan is a vast, sometimes remote territory with a diverse population.</td>
<td>Nobody understands the vastness of remote territory like a Canadian.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civilians hold weapons for a wide variety of reasons – generally for protection of self and property but also for status and in some cases hunting.</td>
<td>Canadians own weapons for a variety of reasons – speak to a farmer in Nova Scotia, a gang member in Toronto, or a First Nations person in Northern Alberta and all would provide different reasons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crimes committed with weapons tend to be committed by young men.</td>
<td>Also true of Canada – typically young men between the ages of 19 and 29.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a notable divide between the ‘rich and the poor’ – generally speaking those trying to find solutions for gun crimes are rich attempting to impose solutions on poor.</td>
<td>Specifically considering here young men involved in illegal activities/ gangs, though the divide can also be seen between other segments of Canadian society and lawmakers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence is seen as an accepted method of problem solving alternatives generally are not understood or accepted.</td>
<td>Again, this is specifically considering young urban men who may be involved with gangs in Canada that may feel the same.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence committed with guns is seen as a social issue that needs to be addressed for the safety and security of the population</td>
<td>Canadians are becoming increasingly concerned about the increase (both real and perceived) of gun crimes being perpetrated</td>
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What lessons can be drawn from South Sudan and their struggle to deal with arms can be used to help pave our way forward?

**First and foremost – we engage.** Problems do not go away when we ignore them. Engage with those who are most affected by gun violence – solutions are most sustainable when they are owned by the target groups.

**Don’t address the symptoms of the problem – get to the heart of the issue.** As discussions continue about imposing mandatory minimums consider that jail sentences are only handed out after the fact – lets be proactive in our approach.

**Livelihood opportunities for youth** – Ensure that a diverse array of livelihood opportunities exist for at risk segments of the populations to provide a viable and attractive alternative to violence.
Education opportunities – Education is not an event, it is a process. In order for all Canadians to enjoy the benefits of education not only must the education systems be available to all, but the conditions that allow basic to higher education must be in place. This means thinking holistically and gaining a true understanding of where the problems in our current system exist.

Repercussions – alternative means of justice? Rather than fill our jails with young men who should be productive members of our society, is there another avenue to pursue justice? In South Sudan a parallel traditional justice system exists beside its formal justice sector, the alternative methods to deal with arms violence should continue to be emphasized in Canada, particularly when involving youth.

Cultural Connotations of Violence – violence may be related to cultural ideas of manliness in some communities / social networks. Addressing this will first need a comprehensive understanding of why violence is seen as an acceptable means of problem solving and then will require a concerted and long term effort to bring about social change on this issue.

Role of Women – women can be viewed as both a driver of violence (encouraging/ reinforcing ideas of manliness connected to violence) and proponents of peace – rejecting violence and refusing to be involved with men who use violence. Let’s capitalize on the role women can play as proponents for peace.

Political Will – Governments at all levels need to get engaged and play a positive and direct role in addressing the root causes of the gun violence.

Alternative methods of problem solving – using a weapon as a problem-solving tool is destructive to our social fabric. Alternative means of problem solving need to be introduced and reinforced.

Endnotes

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i See, for example the phenomenological approach of the Global Peace Index, which describes a multi-variant set of conditions, ranging from primary school education to participation in the arms trade, that are indexed in order to rank countries in their relative peacefulness. [http://www.visionofhumanity.org/gpidata/](http://www.visionofhumanity.org/gpidata/) (July 11, 2012) This conception of peace as being multi-dimensional, as any working social concept must be, is emphasized in discussion with GPI Director Camilla Schippa, who describes it as being subjectively important that peace means different things to different people, with the genuine subjectivity of peaceful agents requiring fora for the articulation of difference, as well as requiring quite objective determinations when it comes to real world living conditions. [http://vimeo.com/42779363](http://vimeo.com/42779363)

ii See Judith Butler, Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable? (London: Verso, 2010) p. 43, “The reason I am not free to destroy another- and indeed, why nations are not finally free to destroy one another – is not only because it will lead to further destructive consequences. That is doubtless true. But what may be finally more true is that the subject that I am is bound to the subject I am not, that we each have the power to destroy and to be destroyed, and that we are bound to one another in this power and this precariousness. In this sense, we are all precarious lives.”