



# The Pearson Global Forum

PEARSON GLOBAL FORUM REPORT

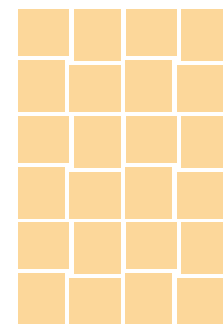
## **DISCRIMINATION & MARGINALIZATION**

OCTOBER 14, 2022



.....

# The Pearson Global Forum







## Note of Welcome from the Institute Director

On behalf of The Pearson Institute for the Study and Resolution of Global Conflicts, I'd like to welcome you to The Pearson Global Forum, *Discrimination & Marginalization*. This paramount gathering has brought together scholars, leaders, and practitioners to address pressing issues of global conflict through the sharing of data-driven research on current and past aspects of conflict and the identification of important lessons for conflict resolution from around the world.

The Pearson Institute for the Study and Resolution of Global Conflicts was established through a grant from the Thomas L. Pearson and Pearson Family Members Foundation and is dedicated to contributing to a world more at peace through research, education, and engagement. As an institute within the Harris School of Public Policy, our distinguished faculty apply a data-driven, analytical approach to examining issues related to conflict and reconciliation and are currently working in Nigeria, Afghanistan, and Colombia, among other countries. Through our Fellows and Scholars program for master's and doctoral students and our course curriculum, we hope to inspire future policy leaders and academics to focus on these topics in a rigorous way.

It is our goal to convene leading scholars and high-level policy makers from around the globe to exchange ideas and maximize the potential for impact in preventing and resolving violent conflicts and informing policy. We hope this Forum is an opportunity for you to learn of current research and active endeavors to promote peace through conflict resolution, and begin important conversations that may impact positive change. I'd like to extend my personal thanks to you for joining us, and I welcome you to our fifth annual Pearson Global Forum.

Sincerely,

James Robinson

*Institute Director, The Pearson Institute;  
The Reverend Dr. Richard L. Pearson Professor  
of Global Conflict Studies and University Professor,  
Harris School of Public Policy and Department of Political Science,  
The University of Chicago*

## The Pearson Global Forum

In October 2022, the University of Chicago’s Pearson Institute for the Study and Resolution of Global Conflicts held its annual Pearson Global Forum, *Discrimination & Marginalization*. The Forum was a significant public event that convened (in person and virtually) leading scholars and high-level policy makers from around the globe to exchange ideas and maximize the potential for impact in preventing and resolving violent conflicts and informing policy. This conference discussed the causes and consequences of conflict, strategies to intervene and mitigate conflict, and to consolidate peace.

Existing marginalization is deepened by increased social polarization, discriminate policies, and untrustworthy leaders. The emergence of new conflicts is outpacing the ability of the international community to cope, new rules now govern old disputes, and discrimination is creating irreparable social chasms whose impact will reverberate for generations. As the international community continues to deal with dozens of active conflicts, and the quickly shifting relationships between and among nations, it is essential to find paths towards resolution, peace, and stability.

At The Pearson Institute, our mission is to convene international leaders and world-renowned academics at The Pearson Global Forum to explore rigorous research and analysis to influence solutions, strategies, and policies for reducing and mitigating conflict to achieve a more peaceful world.

## The Pearson Institute for the Study of Global Conflicts

The Pearson Institute for the Study and Resolution of Global Conflicts at the University of Chicago promotes the ongoing discussion, understanding and resolution of global conflicts, and contributes to the advancement of a global society more at peace. Established through a gift from The Thomas L. Pearson and The Pearson Family Members Foundation, and led by Institute Director James Robinson, co-author of *Why Nations Fail* and *The Narrow Corridor*, the Institute achieves this by employing an analytically rigorous, data-driven approach and

global perspective to understanding violent conflict. It is global in its scope, activities and footprint, attracting students and scholars from around the world to study conflict and new approaches to resolution.








## The University of Chicago

The University of Chicago is a leading academic and research institution that has driven new ways of thinking since its founding in 1890. As an intellectual destination, the University draws scholars and students from around the world to its home in Hyde Park and campuses around the globe. The University provides a distinctive educational experience, empowering individuals to challenge conventional thinking and pursue research that produces new understanding and breakthroughs with global impact. Home to more than 90 Nobel laureates, the University of Chicago is dedicated to an environment of fearless inquiry and academic rigor.



THE PEARSON INSTITUTE  
FOR THE STUDY AND RESOLUTION  
OF GLOBAL CONFLICTS

1307 East 60th Street, Chicago, IL 60637

-  [thepearsoninstitute.org](https://thepearsoninstitute.org)
-  [thepearsoninstitute@uchicago.edu](mailto:thepearsoninstitute@uchicago.edu)
-  +1 773 834 3652
-  ThePearsonInstitute
-  PearsonInst
-  [bit.ly/2SZN4Kn](https://bit.ly/2SZN4Kn)
-  [linkedin.com/company/the-pearson-institute](https://linkedin.com/company/the-pearson-institute)

**WRITTEN BY:** Reema Saleh  
**EDITED BY:** Sheila Kohanteb

**PHOTOS • Front cover:** Photo by Git Stephen Gitau • **Pages 1:** Syrian refugee, photo by Ahmed Akacha • **Pages 6–7:** City in Palestine, photo by Mike van Schoonderwalt • **Back cover:** Photo by Git Stephen Gitau.

**DESIGN AND LAYOUT:** Josh Babcock and Agency EA.

**DISCLAIMER:** The views expressed in this document do not necessarily reflect the views of The Pearson Institute for the Study and Resolution of Global Conflicts nor the University of Chicago. Where the text refers to statements made by participants at The Pearson Global Forum, every effort has been made to provide a fair representation of their views and opinions.



Contents

2	Note of Welcome from the Institute Director
4	About the Pearson Global Forum, Pearson Institute, and University of Chicago
8	Welcome Remarks: James A. Robinson
10	Keynote: Amina Mohammed
12	Keynote   Discrimination & Marginalization in the Digital Era
15	Panel   A New Colombia
18	Flash Talk   Decolonizing Palestine
20	Panel   Crisis in Lebanon
23	Flash Talk   How to Make Multidimensional Poverty Visible and Actionable
25	Panel   Social Cost of Discrimination
28	Panel   Discriminatory Bias in Media Coverage of Conflict
31	Fireside Chat   Why We Fight
33	Participant Demographics





# Welcome Remarks

## James A. Robinson

*Institute Director, The Pearson Institute;  
Reverend Dr. Richard L. Pearson Professor of Global  
Conflict Studies and University Professor,  
Harris School of Public Policy and  
Department of Political Science,  
University of Chicago*

Opening the 2022 Pearson Global Forum, Institute Director James Robinson described the annual conference as a meeting place between academics and the policy world, where both try to understand how to change the world.

The 2022 theme of Discrimination and Marginalization is a heavy one; however, as Robinson said in his welcome, “there are always good things happening.” He continued: “There are always people succeeding, there are always people trying to make things work. Some people are already doing it, so they’ve cracked it. You just need to figure out how to make that spread and how to scale that up.”

Robinson started the day with the uplifting note of women leading, despite discrimination and marginalization. He talked about women’s autonomy in eastern Nigeria, and how women are empowered through some of the most powerful political institutions. Just as important as the subjects of discrimination and marginalization are how marginalized groups use and mobilize power.

“There are so many challenges facing many people in the world—minorities, different groups, women, different genders. All sorts of people in society face enormous challenges,” Robinson said. “You should think about all the cases that you know about how people have overcome these barriers [and] how they’re fighting against them because that’s where the seeds of changing the world really are.”

**“Think of all the cases of how people have overcome barriers, how they’re fighting against them and organizing against them...that’s where the seeds of changing the world really are. These examples will show you tangible ways that will help empower people who are suffering from marginalization and discrimination.”**

*James Robinson, Institute Director, The Pearson Institute;  
Reverend Dr. Richard L. Pearson Professor of Global Conflict Studies  
and University Professor, Harris School of Public Policy,  
University of Chicago*

**“Since its inception, the Harris School has been focused on bringing evidence to bear to wrestle with some of the most complex problems that society faces.”**

*Katherine Baicker, Dean and Emmett Dedmon Professor,  
Harris School of Public Policy, University of Chicago*



# Keynote

## Amina Mohammed

*Deputy Secretary General, United Nations*

Setting the stage for the 2022 Pearson Global Forum, United Nations Deputy Secretary Amina Mohammed's keynote address highlighted some of the most pressing challenges facing our world. She situated her remarks in energy and optimism surrounding the United Nation's seventy-fifth anniversary in 2020. She described how world leaders, amid a global pandemic and a world in crisis, committed to the UN75 declaration to promote peace, better address all forms of threat, and prevent war and conflict. At a time of tremendous upheaval, the UN75 declaration further built on the UN's core commitment to collective action. Mohammed acknowledged how far we still are from those important tenets. "Two years later, we must face the grim reality: we are farther away from meeting that important commitment."

Mohammed highlighted some of the most pressing challenges facing our world, such as the return of interstate warfare to Europe and the war in Ukraine. As the latter rages on, millions around the world find themselves pushed to extremes because of skyrocketing food and energy costs. Fears of nuclear

conflict are greater than ever, and climate shocks are leaving communities at existential risk. The Sustainable Development Goals have created a blueprint for a brighter future, but in many ways, progress has gone in the wrong direction.

Mohammed pointed toward Secretary-General António Guterres's proposal for a new agenda for peace as part of the UN's commitment to solving today's conflicts and to reshaping its responses to all forms of violence and investing in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. While the Deputy Secretary General spoke to the bleak uncertainty that the world is facing today, she ended with a hopeful reminder that "we have the capacity to find solutions," and "there is a vast untapped power of youth to generate new ideas and catapult progress toward Agenda 2023." Mohammed described the latent potential of women and girls, civil society organizations, and the private sector in working toward sustainable development and peace.

"We must go back to a sustainable and resilient path safeguarding the planet and the rights of all peoples and affording each the opportunity to reach their full potential, leaving no one behind," Mohammed said. "Together, let us walk the path toward conflict resolution, peace, and sustainability."





## KEYNOTE

# Discrimination & Marginalization in the Digital Era

**Melissa Fleming**

*Under-Secretary General for Global Communications,  
United Nations*

How has polarization shaped our digital media landscapes, and how can we keep ourselves safe when the information and tools we use to understand the world are weaponized against us?

In Melissa Fleming’s keynote address, she echoed Deputy Secretary General Mohammed’s warning of the intertwining crises facing our world. Discrimination and marginalization impact society’s most vulnerable, but those with the most power are stalled and divided. As humanity faces war, hunger, the pandemic, and climate catastrophe, the solutions seem out of reach. “What we’re seeing is the pain of this volatility is not being shared equally. The powerful, the wealthy, the privileged can cushion themselves against the worst impacts and shift more of the burden to others,” Fleming said.

While leading communications for the United Nations, Flemings has seen information ecosystems grow ever more toxic. Polarization has become a hallmark of the digital age—easily perpetuated and spread through social media platforms. She characterizes the digital revolution as a double-edged sword—one that

has brought improvement to marginalized groups who can find community online and rally for change, but also one that has fostered violence and hatred without accountability. Social movements for racial and Indigenous solidarity, women’s rights, and LGBTQ+ equality flourished on social media.

“When we look out at the digital landscape, we see a forest of red flags,” Fleming said. “Their design flaws are clearly causing real-world harm.” Social media platforms facilitate the spread of emotionally charged misinformation, which impacts how people perceive world issues. The algorithms that curate content find themselves amplifying falsehoods and driving their spread against marginalized communities. She cited a report from NewsGuard on the war in Ukraine on TikTok, finding that one in every five videos automatically suggested by the algorithm contained misinformation. She also brought up examples from reporter Max Fisher’s book *The Chaos Machine*, which explored how social media triggers our inner desire to conform. Using words that conveyed disgust or shame in posts boosted their reach and often helped them gain more attention, but they also alienated members from the opposite side. In many ways, social media encourages polarization. Users feel validated by posting emotionally charged and often hateful language. When in real life, this behavior would be discouraged, it is given acceptance online. “Social implies [a] collective good . . . but we’re often finding ourselves at a very disadvantaged starting point because we are not using the kinds of emotive, hateful, fearful words and moral outrage that would get us noticed and get our posts to go viral,” Fleming said.

In modern conflict, social media can be lifesaving, but it can also become catastrophic, by normalizing hatred, spreading misinformation, and inciting violence. From the 2018 disinformation campaigns that stoked violence against the Rohingya population, to the incendiary posts that incited killings and displacement in Ethiopia’s Tigray region, information is consistently used as a weapon of war.

“What are the solutions against this avalanche of hate?” Fleming asked the audience. She argued that we must build resilience by empowering those most vulnerable. In Myanmar, where disinformation was the cause of such great harm, Facebook was simply the internet for many. When social media is the key source of news, people lose opportunities to counter the narratives they are fed. In many parts of the world, independent media is under threat—from poor financial models or political attacks. When many communities lack the media literacy skills to determine which information is true, how can they be expected to protect themselves against missing misinformation? Fleming advocated for better supporting public interest media and developing targeted campaigns to boost digital literacy. She also argued that a critical responsibility is on the tech companies themselves, which must establish structures for reducing and remedying the spread of harmful misinformation. For platforms to properly regulate civil discourse, they must move decisively against those profiting from hateful content and limit their reach.

“Social media does have the potential to do and be what it claims to be: a space of connection, a space of

community, and of exchange,” Fleming said. “But that can’t happen until social media platforms reconfigure the tools being used to harm our society and threaten our planet; and unless they do, the marginalized will continue to suffer the most.”

After a moderated discussion, audience members asked questions about how to navigate the emotional drive behind misinformation and how to change peoples’ minds when fact-checking is not enough.

In a discussion between Melissa Fleming and Umama Zillur, both elaborated on many of the themes of misinformation, rising authoritarianism, and accountability explored in the keynote. Fleming touched on the difficulty the United Nations faces as an intergovernmental institution as it supports those organizing for change. “We’re often extremely frustrated and sad to see civil society groups under attack. But we’re also incredibly inspired when we see people rising up, demanding change, [and] demanding their rights be respected,” Fleming said. They also discussed how the UN has navigated our current misinformation landscape, and how organizations can break through these barriers and affect change. Audience members asked questions about the emotional drive behind misinformation tactics and how to talk to people polarized by it.

**“The fight for women’s rights is the entry point through which societies can call into question the entire social and political order in which they exist.”**

*Umama Zillur, Pearson Fellow, Pearson Institute for the Study and Resolution of Global Conflicts; MPP Candidate, Harris School of Public Policy, University of Chicago; Founder and Director, Kotha; Obama Foundation Scholar, 2022*



## PANEL

# A New Colombia

### **Paula Gaviria Betancur**

*Executive Director, Compaz Foundation; Member, United Nation Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement*

### **Juan Camilo Cardenas**

*Professor, Economics Department, University of Massachusetts Amherst*

### **Paula Moreno Zapata**

*President, Manos Visibles; Former Minister of Culture, Colombia*

### **James A. Robinson**

*Institute Director, The Pearson Institute; Reverend Dr. Richard L. Pearson Professor of Global Conflict Studies and University Professor, Harris School of Public Policy and Department of Political Science, University of Chicago*

### **Moderator: Juan Forero**

*South America Bureau Chief, Wall Street Journal*

Setting the tone for the Pearson Global Forum, this first panel focused on Colombia’s new government and its implications on recognizing victims and perpetrators of violence, which has played a crucial role in peace negotiations. Panelists placed a great focus on what can be expected from the new government and what change is needed to reduce violence and inequality. The panel also highlighted how the country is contending with issues of discrimination, as well as how to include all communities in this transformative change.

Moderator Juan Forero set the stage for the panel with a few words about the last twenty years in Colombia and how much change has taken place, both positive and negative. Forero described how frustrations with violence and inequality led to the historic election of President Gustavo Petro and Francia Márquez this past June. With a new government, many Colombians have high hopes for change. “Those who banked on him the most are some of the most vulnerable and forgotten in Colombia,” Forero reminded the audience.

Paula Gaviria Betancur started by saying that the path

toward a new Colombia began with the recognition of its armed conflict and the passage of the Victim's Law in 2011. She outlined its policy achievements and the impact it had on people—how its recognition of the armed conflict led the way to recognize its victims and the failure of the state to protect them. It was an important first step to negotiating with the guerilla, which was impossible when they were considered a terrorist organization. “Victims started to be seen as citizens, as part of the new Colombia, and as actors of peace, and they played a crucial role in the negotiations of the peace process,” Gaviria Betancur said. Colombia has one of the highest numbers of internally displaced people in the world—19 percent of the Colombian population are victims of conflict. As the state began putting forward arrangements to return land to displaced people and repair this harm, it worked to legitimize itself and the harm that had been done, building the groundwork for the peace agreement that came in 2016. She pointed to President Petro and Vice President Márquez's backgrounds as a former guerrilla fighter and a conflict victim, respectively, and how this leadership can lead to a future of political openness and inclusiveness. She ended by talking about some of the recommendations put out by Colombia's Truth Commission—established by the 2016 peace accords—and their importance in paving the way for a new Colombia.

In his remarks, Juan Camilo Cardenas centered on diversity, inclusion, and trust for the future. He discussed the structural discrimination against the Indigenous population and Afro-Colombians, and how much of it is rooted in the history of Colombia. To

embrace diversity, he argued that we must address the contract between the center and the periphery of Colombia. “Many of the implementations of the initial stages of the peace process probably failed because the center, Bogota, wasn't reading well what was happening in the periphery,” Camilo Cardenas said. “Every time there is a problem of corruption in the periphery, the immediate reaction of the center is: we need to recentralize everything, we need to control from Bogota because they are too corrupt.” He argued for changing this discourse, trusting the process of decentralization, and recognizing the natural and cultural diversity of the country.

As the first Afro-Colombian woman to hold ministerial office, Paula Moreno Zapata has worked in racial equality in Colombia for twenty years. She emphasized the progress that ethnic communities made. “We have been working very hard, nationally and internationally to get the spaces in Colombia to say [that] we are 10 to 15 million people,” Moreno Zapata said. “We are not a minority but a majority of this country, and we are not visible in power structures in this country. We need you, and you need us . . . and we need each other to build a country.” She also reminded the audience that this progress is relative, and that while opening this space to share power, they have seen extremism grow. She highlighted the growing presence of women in leadership across Latin America but questions whether representation always translates to power. In the case of Vice President Márquez, she argued “the national agenda is missing in the tasks that the president has designated for the vice president,” and questioned how Petro would share power with her.

James Robinson spoke about his research with colleagues at the University of the Andes on understanding the consequences of political change and political openness in Latin America. Since the 1991 Constitution, Colombia has seen an enormous upsurge of new parties and movements capturing power at the local level. Many come from historically excluded identity groups, and close to a quarter of these positions are now captured by new people, including Indigenous and Afro-Colombian parties. This entry of newcomers into politics has extended to all levels of government, introducing new ideas and legislation, but Robinson's research also indicates that there is little evidence that newcomers are less corrupt. Many newcomers start behaving like incumbents with time, and successful experiences are often short-lived and at the local level. However, evidence shows that many newcomers do better in places with relatively low levels of inequality and with less violence and relative peace and security. He concluded that for real change to happen, Colombia's increased political openness must be combined with effective politics to counteract enduring inequality and violence.

Forero focused the conversation on how to improve the lives of marginalized communities, how to empower local movements, and increase the capacity of municipalities, and what obstacles Colombia will face in opening dialogue with other militias and getting them to demobilize.

**“I witnessed the vastness of our country, isolated by the jungle, with people begging for economic opportunities. Despite these tough living conditions, I also witnessed how faith and resilience over the future kept communities afloat.”**

*Andrea Mariño Varela, Pearson Fellow, Pearson Institute for the Study and Resolution of Global Conflicts; MPP Candidate, Harris School of Public Policy, University of Chicago*





## FLASH TALK

# Decolonizing Palestine

**Somdeep Sen**

*Associate Professor in International Development Studies at Roskilde University*

How do liberation struggles combine anticolonial and postcolonial modes of politics? In his flash talk, Somdeep Sen spoke about the everyday nature of settler colonialism in Palestine and Israel and what this means for the study of liberation globally.

Sen began by describing his experiences entering the Rafah border crossing between Egypt and the Gaza Strip in the summer of 2013, a story that makes up the beginning of his book, *Decolonizing Palestine*. On the one hand, Sen was confronted with the uncertainty of Palestinian life in Gaza—of all the familiar features of a place besieged—but on the other hand, after crossing into the Palestinian terminal, he was confronted with the uniform and insignia of the Palestinian Authority at the passport control desk.

“In some way, the experience of entering the Egyptian terminal was confirmation that, indeed, I was entering the sector of the colonized. But soon I encountered another image of something that looked very much like the postcolonial state—a state you would imagine to see after the era of the official end of colonialism,”

Sen said. “It somehow momentarily felt like an image of the real state of Palestine. It felt sovereign. It had a distinct territoriality.”

In 2007, when Hamas consolidated its control over the Gaza Strip, Sen argued that Hamas remained committed to a dual role as an armed resistance faction but also to govern the Gaza Strip as a real state. “By remaining committed to the armed struggle, it was confirming that Palestine was still colonized. But by engaging in this statecraft, it was also engaging in these rituals and performances of the state, like you would expect to see after the official end of colonialism,” Sen said. Hamas persisted as an armed resistance movement against Israeli settler colonial rule and a civilian governing authority, utilizing both the often-contradictory images of an anticolonial movement and a postcolonial state. This is the dual image that characterizes Gaza in Sen’s book—trying to understand how the rituals of anticolonial resistance and the postcolonial state live in the context of the liberalization struggle.

“How does this performance of the state that doesn’t really exist work within the liberation struggle?” Sen asked the audience. From his interviews, Hamas officials and Palestinians understood resistance as something that unmakes settler colonial rule “Even in those losses, Palestinians saw Palestine coming about,” Sen said. Despite the violence and loss that they experienced from the state of Israel, Palestinians saw them as a reminder of their struggle to exist as a people. But they also talked about statecraft as a way of introducing the anticolonial ethos into the state and violence as a way of establishing its authority.

Sen pushed against the notion that liberation is a single moment. “The moment of liberation is not a moment at all. When everyone talks about liberation, we think about this euphoric moment when the colonizer is forcefully kicked out of the country, and we celebrate this moment that we are liberated now,” Sen said. “But this dramatic image represses the awkward reality that liberation is rarely that euphoric and it’s rarely limited to that one moment.” He described it as a mix of the anticolonial and postcolonial struggles—as a material and psychological process that emerges before the colonizer has left and lingers long after.

With no start and end date, liberation offers a complex path for the colonized. “It’s this long, convoluted, idiosyncratic process trajectory that it takes that continues irrespective of the presence or the absence of the colonizer,” Sen said. “This path of liberation is a reflection of the treachery of colonialism and the brutality of what it is and what it does to the past and present of the colonized people.”

**“It’s why I’m here at Harris now, so that I may further study fragile environments, but also learn how research and evidence inform the creation of policy that alleviates some of their most pressing challenges.”**

*Mahnoor Khan, Pearson Fellow, Pearson Institute for the Study and Resolution of Global Conflicts; MPP Candidate, Harris School of Public Policy, University of Chicago*



## PANEL

# Crisis in Lebanon

### Kim Ghattas

*Non-Resident Fellow, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; Contributing Writer, The Atlantic; Author & Journalist*

### Lina Haddad Kreidie

*Academic Director, Tomorrow's Leaders Program, Middle East Partnership Initiative, Lebanese American University; Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of Social Sciences School of Arts and Sciences, University of California, Irvine*

### Ambassador Elizabeth Richard

*Senior State Department Fellow; Former U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon (2016–2020)*

### Randa Slim

*Senior Fellow and Director of Conflict Resolution & Track II Dialogues Program, Middle East Institute; Non-Resident Fellow, School of Advanced and International Studies Foreign Policy Institute, Johns Hopkins University*

### Moderator: Rami Khouri

*Director of Global Engagement, Senior Public Policy Fellow, and Adjunct Professor of Journalism, American University of Beirut; Non-Resident Senior Fellow, Harvard Kennedy School, Harvard University; Syndicated Columnist, Agence Global, USA and The New Arab, London*

From the ongoing financial crisis to the Port of Beirut explosion in 2020, Lebanon has experienced a tumultuous past few years. As the crisis continues, Lebanon has witnessed a dramatic collapse in basic services, fuel shortages, and large-scale unemployment. This panel centered on the implications of the situation in Lebanon today, as well as what lessons can be learned from its history. Panelists drew attention to the unaccountability of the ruling elite, the obstacles to political reform, and how fundamental change can be achieved between the political system and citizens.

Moderator Rami Khouri started with a brief overview of how Lebanon has gradually lost much of the democracy and pluralism that made it exceptional within the Middle East. In the past half-century, citizens have led ongoing strikes and protests to spark change—reaching their peak in the 2011 protests of the Arab Spring. Much of the stressors that have led to greater inequality and marginalization have been building up over a long period of time. Khouri also explored how the political situation in Lebanon and across the region came from retreating European colonial powers. “We’re seeing the cumulative and almost collective failure of the triple tests of citizenship, statehood, and sovereignty,” Khouri said.

Kim Ghattas began by describing the intensity of economic collapse. According to the World Bank, Lebanon is experiencing one of the world’s worst economic and financial crises in the last 150 years. “That’s whiplash for a population that enjoyed the ills of capitalism, consumerism, and all you want and was rebuilding after fifteen years of war,” Ghattas said. “Despite this collapse, we still see an incredible sense of solidarity across communities.” She also homed in on the importance of regional dynamics, including Iran’s role in the country, and how the international community must take more responsibility for feeding corruption and maintaining the status quo. “We’re very grateful as Lebanese for all the aid that we’ve received over time, but it has lined the pockets of our leaders, and there’s been no accountability and no auditing of the aid that Lebanon has received.”

Lebanon’s history since independence has been marked by periods of political instability. Lina

Haddad Kreidie focused on how marginalization has exacerbated conflict in Lebanon since its inception. The confessional system, the power-sharing model that divides political representation among Lebanon’s religious communities, has largely led to a political establishment with little accountability for its people. “What they have formed is a collaborative of elites that are corrupt, that are benefiting their own private interests versus the public interest by making themselves the saviors of their own sect,” Kreidie said. The concessional system, meant to temporarily balance political representation among these groups, has formed a clientelism, where reforms cannot stand against the power and interests of political elites. As a political psychologist, she sees marginalization as happening along ethnic and gender groups. Since the large-scale protests of 2019, gender discrimination and a lack of female political representation are issues that have come to the forefront. She also pointed to how marginalization has extended to refugees. Lebanon has hosted large numbers of Palestinians since 1948, and Syrians since 2012, and many of these populations face discrimination and marginalization within Lebanon.

Elizabeth Richard outlined some of the US national security interests in Lebanon: 1) its geographic location between so many other touchpoints in the Middle East and 2) what lessons can be learned from the context for other crises. “Lebanon in many ways can be the proof of concept as we look at crises around the world,” Richard said. “How do we then create a system not only diffuses power so that no one group can’t take advantage of the other group but also then can transition into something that can actually govern?”

Randa Slim spoke about how entrenched the confessional system and political oligarchy are in Lebanon. She had two key questions: How can you incentivize people in power to share some of it, and how can you change the incentive structures of voters to abandon the current system? She referred to an Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, United Nations (ESCWA) poll in which Lebanese people ranked corruption as the primary driver of social and economic inequality, arguing that combating corruption requires reforming the political system that institutionalized inequality. She also talked about Hezbollah’s role in protecting the sectarian system, as well as the challenges that Lebanon has faced in reorganizing the judiciary to fight corruption.

Khoury directed the conversation to the incredible work done by women at the community and national levels, as well as what steps can be made to organize political parties and civil society. Audience members asked questions about women’s rights and inclusion in political leadership, civil society in Lebanon, the impact of regional actors in the Middle East, and the role of the Lebanese diaspora in the crisis in supporting the country from abroad.

**“Where my American-ness begins and my Arab-ness ends I do not know. All I know is that through deployments to the greater Middle East, fate saw fit for me to see—clear as day—that “over-there” and the “over-here” are linked. Chicago, Pearson, the US Army: these are tools with which I render my service to the nation.”**

**Hisham Yousif**, *Pearson Fellow, Pearson Institute for the Study and Resolution of Global Conflicts; MPP Candidate, Harris School of Public Policy, University of Chicago*



## FLASH TALK

# How to Make Multidimensional Poverty Visible and Actionable

**Sabina Alkire**

*Director, Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, Oxford University*

What is multidimensional poverty, and how do we measure it? In her flash talk, Sabina Alkire spoke about how policymakers can use this data to understand and act against poverty.

“When we talk about poverty, sometimes we think about money,” Alkire said. “But when we talk with poor people, as our students do [and] as our research does, they describe it differently.” In her experience, people tend to describe poverty among a range of dimensions, including health, education, and living standards. To measure multidimensional poverty, researchers must assess which are relevant to their context at the time and figure out if a person or household is deprived or not in that indicator. Using a real-world example, Alkire drew attention to the indicators that capture the complexity of poverty, such as their ability to access nutrition, housing, and schooling. Their deprivation profile—showing what key indicators they are deprived in—can help researchers come up with a deprivation score.



To measure multidimensional poverty, researchers must first identify the percentage of people who are poor because they are deprived in at least some share of weighted indicators. By determining the average deprivation score among the poor, they can determine its intensity. Multiplying these two values together creates a Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), which can then be used to capture poor people’s experiences within a country. The MPI is a weighted sum of the deprivations of the poor, so if the deprivation of any poor person goes down, multidimensional poverty goes down. “You can see the profiles of poverty by different regions or groups and what to do to reduce it, so it’s creating incentives [and] feedback loops.”

How can countries utilize MPIs to create actionable policies? In practice, Alkire described MPIs as a friend, not a competitor, to monetary poverty measures. “Having monetary and multidimensional poverty dimensions gives you better insight into people’s lives—important for action and policy, important for legitimacy.” National MPIs can be used to help policymakers track poverty over time and decide how to allocate their budgets most efficiently. They can also be used to target those most marginalized in a society, overlapping with the day’s discussions on discrimination and marginalization. In the United States, while 9 percent of White people were multidimensionally poor, it reached 23 percent among African Americans, 29 percent among Latinos, and 30 percent among American Indians and Alaskan natives. MPI disparities were higher than monetary poverty disparities. “You can also use this to target households—who is poor and how they are poor, which

children need scholarships, which people are lacking access to healthcare, [and] which people need support to go back to work.”

In 2009, Mexico became the first country to launch a multidimensional poverty measure, followed by Bhutan in 2010, and Colombia in 2011. Now seventy-five countries report this in their sustainable development goals, using multidimensional poverty measures to inform poverty reduction efforts. Alkire ended by inviting the audience to view the updated figures of the Global Multidimensional Poverty Index on World Poverty Day—covering 6.1 billion people and unpacking the deprivation that people are experiencing across the world, across regions, and across countries.



## PANEL

# Social Cost of Discrimination

### **Marianne Bertrand**

*Chris P. Dialynas Professor of Economics,  
Booth School of Business, University of Chicago*

### **Pablo Castillo Diaz**

*Policy Specialist, UN Women, United Nations*

### **Stephanie Seguino**

*Professor of Economics, University of Vermont*

### **Moderator: Caren Grown**

*Senior Technical Advisor, World Bank Group;  
Former Global Director, Gender Group, World Bank*

This panel focused on the economic cost of gender and racial inequality and how these discriminatory practices impact society in the long run. The costs to societal welfare are far-ranging, encapsulated both in the lost economic growth that exclusionary policies have, to the long-term impacts that trauma and deprivation have on those most vulnerable. The exclusion of women and racial or ethnic minorities has negative, well-documented impacts on peace processes. Panelists also focused on the long-term impact of trauma, changing norms and values, and other policy issues.

Moderator Caren Grown grounded the discussion in the different dimensions of disadvantage and vulnerability that impact those most marginalized: “We’re all stratified in different ways, and we need to understand which stratifications make people the most vulnerable to the risks and power dynamics that prevent people from accessing resources and gaining their rights.” Grown quickly reviewed the different lines of inquiry that make up this emerging body of research—from costs of gender gaps in education,

labor force participation, and mortality rates—and how these costs are exacerbated in low- and middle-income countries.

Stephanie Seguino began by describing the productivity losses that come from systems of racism and patriarchy. Excluding groups from access to education and high-quality jobs has tangible impacts on innovation and economic growth. Gender inequality is costly to the whole of society, but she pushed the audience to consider which groups benefit the most. “If it’s so costly, why is it that countries have not addressed this?” Seguino asked the audience. “The answer is because there are beneficiaries of gender inequality.” She described her research on how gender inequality has been a stimulus to economic growth in many countries, especially semi-industrialized economies like South Korea, Malaysia, Thailand, and others. She characterizes women and people of color as shock absorbers in economies that tend to be unstable and economically insecure in the advent of globalization—a role that maintains resistance to addressing racial and gender inequality. She also highlighted the importance of understanding the interaction of systems of racial and gender equality and how they create different dimensions of disadvantage and vulnerability.

Pablo Castillo-Diaz offered insights into how gender discrimination impacts conflict-affected states. The Taliban takeover of Afghanistan resulted in immediate restrictions on women’s employment, which the UN estimated lost Afghanistan 5 percent of its GDP. We know that women disproportionately invest in the

education and health of their children compared with men. Prioritizing women in food distribution, development assistance, and peace talks leads to better outcomes, and yet, a fraction of funding goes toward programs that contribute to gender equality. The cost of exclusionary policy to society and peacebuilding is incalculable.

Marianne Bertrand focused on describing the economic cost of discrimination past its impact on GDP. This kind of research works to quantify the impact of moving toward more equal representation and eliminating barriers to female workforce participation. She also talked about changing norms and views on women’s issues. For example, while Saudi Arabia experiences an extreme level of gender inequality, women in Saudi Arabia don’t report being any less happy with the gender gap between men and women compared with the United States. “It’s really a matter of women not even being able to realize that there’s something else for them in their life, and that’s really complicated to change,” Bertrand said.

Seguino also spoke about the intergenerational costs that racial and gender discrimination brings. Whether it’s racial discrimination, gender discrimination, or poverty, discrimination’s relationship with trauma is well-founded. “What is happening is neurobiological changes to the brain that can be permanent,” Seguino said. “The reality is that when children are living in families that suffer from discrimination of various kinds, the child’s brain itself is not developing in the way that it would in households with greater equality or in societies that had greater social safety nets.”

Moving to the questions from the audience, the panelists discussed political strategies for increasing representation, as well as how economic insecurity can often trigger exclusionary policy.

“My own feeling about this is that any move toward intergroup equality . . . benefits those at the bottom of the subordinated group, but it means a loss of power for the dominant group,” Seguino said. “And the question is how to convince the dominant group that it’s worth it.” If elevating the subordinated group comes at the cost of the dominant group, there will be severe resistance, and she argues that this has become one of the impediments to achieving intergroup equality. From her perspective, the strategy must be to move both groups, but move the subordinated group up at a faster pace.

Grown guided the panelists to discussions on how to transform societal structures beyond inclusion and the intergenerational costs of discrimination and poverty. Panelists also answered questions on the difficulty of quantifying the social costs of discrimination and how to use this information to leverage change and intergroup equality.

**“As a black woman from Rwanda, a country that experienced the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, I grew up with a heightened sense of awareness of the outcomes of discrimination. Oftentimes, people like me, the most vulnerable women in the world, are not the policymakers. The journey for us to bring our voices to the table is a long journey that requires us to prove our humanity and our worth.”**

*Christelle Inema, Pearson Fellow, Pearson Institute for the Study and Resolution of Global Conflicts; MPP Candidate, Harris School of Public Policy, University of Chicago*



## PANEL

# Discriminatory Bias in Media Coverage of Conflict

### Timour Azhari

*Bureau Chief for Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan, Reuters*

### Mark Bauman

*President and CEO, Grid*

### Katherine D. Kinzler

*Professor and Chair, Department of Psychology, University of Chicago*

### Yuri Zhukov

*Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Michigan*

### Moderator: Sasha Ann Simons

*Host, Reset, WBEZ Chicago*

Discriminatory bias in the media coverage of global conflict has become a recent flashpoint in public discourse following coverage of the war in Ukraine. This panel brought journalists and academic researchers together for a closer look at how and why certain decisions are made to cover conflicts. Topics ranged from how media bias is shaped and perpetuated to the ways that viewership and ratings, political and locational contexts, and systemic issues of racism impact coverage. It began with a discussion starting at the individual level, of what goes into how implicit bias informs those consuming media and those creating it.

Katherine Kinzler explained her psychology research on how stereotypes are transmitted to children through media. “Imagine a child as being something like [an] intuitive statistical calculator. . . . They’re adding up all these instances from the different things that they see in the media,” Kinzler explained. She summarized her research on how children’s attitudes toward Northern and Southern accents were shaped by television and film. By nine or ten years old, children in both the

North and South had begun to associate the Northern dialect with sounding smarter. She describes media perpetuating the same biases that its creators might have in mind, showing how early these stereotypes can shape their perceptions of other people.

Moderator Sasha Ann Simons guided the conversation from how media bias impacts children’s views of the world to how bias can manifest in the newsroom. From his experiences covering conflict and teaching journalists, Mark Bauman highlighted the inherent impossibility of objectivity given the different backgrounds and perspectives journalists bring. “I think a better standard is fairness. Because it involves acknowledging implicit bias, it involves acknowledging your humanity, coming to terms with it, thinking about it on every story and how it’s impacting your coverage. . . . It’s not a perfect thing, but there’s a real path there to get to fairness and that allows for some self-examination, whereas there’s no path to objectivity at all.”

Bauman highlighted how many of these problems in journalistic coverage are systemic. While media organizations seek to be balanced and truthful, the need to maximize ratings can perpetuate prejudice. He shares his experiences covering the Rwandan genocide as a global reporter, and the difficulties he faced getting some stories on the air, compared to others that rated better or where companies preferred to advertise. “It’s painful now to see how quickly Afghanistan has been forgotten,” Bauman said. “As a place where America bears a lot of responsibility for the current situation, I’d say there’s as much misery there as there is in Ukraine. But rage sells, patriotism

sells, and shame doesn’t. It doesn’t rate, and it doesn’t draw advertisers, and that’s a problem.”

Simons directed the conversation toward coverage fatigue and how this can shape what journalism is published about crises happening in other parts of the world, comparing the heavy coverage on the invasion of Ukraine to the relatively little that Ethiopia’s Tigray region receives. Yuri Zhukov highlighted the compounding forms of bias that shape reporting bias. “It all comes down to the fact that journalists are only able to cover a small subset of the events that happen around the globe,” Zhukov said. “The information that filters down to the public and to folks like me is going to be inherently filtered and selective.” What drives these biases are a combination of newsworthy decisions and access. In conflict, capital cities are easier for reporters to reach than rural areas, where there is less communication infrastructure. News organizations believe consumers want stories about people like them in culturally and physically proximate areas, making stories like them less prone to coverage fatigue, according to Zhukov.

Timour Azhari compared coverage of the war in Ukraine with coverage of conflict in the Middle East. “When you look at the reporting from Ukraine, you see a lot of journalists, be they from Ukraine or from the US or from Europe, who are extremely empathetic,” Azhari said. “Can you imagine CNN embedding with Palestinian resistance fighters in Israel, fighting against Israeli occupation?” Azhari shared examples of how journalists covering the Middle East have pushed back



against this to draw links between Syrian refugees and what is now seen in Ukraine.

Simons discussed the danger of misinformation and how it can perpetuate biases, as well as what is at stake when newsrooms let coverage bias steer them away from important stories. Panelists also talked about the importance of searching for local journalism over mainstream outlets to understand conflicts in other parts of the world. “There are people who’ve been pushing for this for decades, to actually have people from the region tell the story of the region,” Azhari said. The panelists conclude with a discussion of the importance of media literacy and amplifying the voices that often go ignored in the media.

**“Even as an objective, impartial journalist, I know that I can’t be removed from my writing any more than my skin can be removed from my body. If stories are what spark empathy and understanding, what do we do when we simply don’t tell them? What do we do when we tell them wrong without the dignity and respect that conflict victims and survivors deserve?”**

**Reema Saleh**, *Pearson Fellow, Pearson Institute for the Study and Resolution of Global Conflicts; MPP Candidate; Host, Root of Conflict Podcast, Harris School of Public Policy, University of Chicago*



## **FIRESIDE CHAT**

# **Why We Fight**

### **Christopher Blattman**

*Ramalee E. Pearson Professor of Global Conflict Studies, Harris School of Public Policy, University of Chicago*

In conversation with

### **Teny Gross**

*Executive Director, Institute for Nonviolence Chicago*

Chris Blattman and Teny Gross held a fireside chat discussing Blattman’s latest book, *Why We Fight*. His book draws on economics, political science, and psychology to examine the root causes of war and paths to peace. Its main message explores why violent conflict is rare, and how successful societies interrupt and end violence through peacebuilding. While long-standing hatreds, marginalization, poverty, and climate shocks are important and detrimental to the human condition, Blattman explains that these factors are not the reasons for conflict. The reason we do not resort to violent conflict is that it is often the worst and most costly way to solve our differences.

In this conversation, Blattman outlined three of his five main reasons for why we fight—the reasons why a political leader or society is willing to ignore or pay the costs of war: 1) Unchecked interests and unaccountable leaders, who do not have to directly pay the costs of war in their pursuit of war in pursuing their agenda; 2) Intangible incentives, which can come in the form of ideological goals that make societies more willing to pay the cost of violence; and

3) Our own perceptions of conflict, which lets states underestimate the costs of conflict and overestimate the chances of victory.

Blattman described his research on gangs in Medellin, Colombia, and how the city went from one of the most violent places on the planet in the last twenty to thirty years to one of the most peaceful cities in the Americas. “Nobody makes money selling drugs in the middle of a gunfight. The leaders lose the invisibility that is their shield, and so they strive for peace.” By building a set of criminal institutions to resolve disputes, they have managed to overcome these issues of unaccountable leaders, intangible incentives, and uncertainty. Blattman applied these lessons to understanding Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, as well as his work in Liberia, Uganda, and Chicago.

Gross drew from his experiences working as a senior street worker in Boston and Chicago and talked about the difficulty of peacebuilding on the ground. He goes over how outreach models have evolved over the years to incorporate victim services and former gang-involved workers with lived experience in violent neighborhoods. The job of an outreach worker involves being a mediator, mentor, legal advocate, case manager, and trauma advocate, all of which can overwhelm people who are still managing their own trauma. He compares his experiences working in violent neighborhoods in the United States to his work with Israelis and Palestinians, explaining how risky it is to become a peacemaker. “We’re in the middle of a violent neighborhood where the war hasn’t stopped. That’s not something we ask from Israelis

and Palestinians, usually, but we do ask it here from people who are still in very violent environments.” Both Blattman and Gross discuss practical lessons from successful peacebuilders, the role of researchers in better understanding how to interrupt violence and build trust between gangs, as well as how to scale up existing initiatives through policy solutions.

Audience members asked questions about Russia’s war in Ukraine and why Russian territories chose not to mobilize against autocratic repression. According to Blattman, defining peace exclusively as an absence of violence can be a narrow definition of peace. “The idea that enemies prefer to live in peace, that sounds really good, and in some ways, it is. But it can be very, very unjust.” Additionally, Blattman and Gross commented on how states and other actors use the manipulation of fears and emotions to incite conflict, explaining how these intangible incentives leave victims and perpetrators in cycles of violence.

**“Sometimes your existence in itself is powerful. That challenges the status quo.”**

*Deqa Aden, Pearson Fellow, Pearson Institute for the Study and Resolution of Global Conflicts; MPP Candidate, Harris School of Public Policy, University of Chicago*



# Participant Demographics

