



The Pearson Global Forum

FORUM REPORT
October 6-8, 2020



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, *The Climate of Conflict*. The objective of this paramount gathering is to bring together scholars, leaders, and practitioners to address pressing issues of global conflict through the identification of important lessons for conflict resolution from around the world. Your participation is pivotal to the realization of this goal, and to the essential transmission of this crucial information to the wider audience at our Global Forum.

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 at the University of Chicago, 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 policymakers 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 effect positive change. I'd like to extend my personal thanks to you for joining us, and I welcome you to our virtual 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 at the University of Chicago*



The Pearson Global Forum

In October 2020, the University of Chicago's Pearson Institute for the Study and Resolution of Global Conflicts presented the third annual Pearson Global Forum, *The Climate of Conflict*. The Forum is a significant public event, with the goal of convening leading scholars and high-level policymakers 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 as well as strategies to intervene and mitigate conflict and to consolidate peace.

Conflicts around the world persist and worsen; conflict can often seem intractable or indomitable. Against the backdrop of an ongoing global pandemic and the deteriorating climate-related reality, societies, economies, and futures are being ravaged. As the international community continues to deal with these countless active conflicts and the quickly shifting relationships between and among nations, it is our responsibility to deconstruct conflict in order to find paths toward resolution, peace, and stability. At The Pearson Institute, we are mobilizing our mission to convene international leaders and world-renowned academics at The Pearson Global Forum to explore rigorous research and analysis to influence solutions, strategies, and policy 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 Pearson Family Members Foundation, and led by Institute Director James Robinson, coauthor of *Why Nations Fail* and *The Narrow Corridor*, the Institute achieves this by employing an analytically rigorous, data-driven approach and a 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 its 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 ninety 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
- thepearsoninstitute@uchicago.edu
- +1 773 834 3652
- ThePearsonInstitute
- PearsonInst
- bit.ly/2SZN4Kn
- linkedin.com/company/the-pearson-institute

WRITTEN BY: Sheila Kohanteb and Jovany Dorsainvil
EDITED BY: Sheila Kohanteb and Alex Carr

PHOTOS • **Front cover:** migrants and refugees cross a river north of Idomeni, Greece; drone footage by Ververidis Vasilis on shutterstock • **Page 1:** emergency food, drinking water, and shelter distributed to people displaced in Rakhine State, western Burma; photo by DFID Burma on Wikimedia Commons • **Page 8:** rivers and lakes in Alaska and Canada; original footage from NASA, digitally enhanced by rawpixel • **Page 22:** “Love and Protect”; photo by John Cameron on Unsplash • **Page 38:** “No Planet B”; Photo by Markus Spiske on Unsplash • **Back cover:** Port-Au-Prince, Haiti; drone footage by Duane Codrington on pond5.

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

- Note of Welcome from the Institute Director
- About the Pearson Global Forum, Pearson Institute, and University of Chicago

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2020

- Welcome: James A. Robinson
- Keynote: Confronting the Climate Crisis
- Climate Conflict: Water
- Flash Talk: The End of Water as We Know It
- Climate Conflict: Migration
- Flash Talk: Environmental Migration, Urbanization, and Conflict Processes

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2020

- Welcome: Katherine Baicker
- Keynote: Ending Endless Wars Requires Preventing Them in the First Place
- Global Pandemics
- Case Study: Haiti
- Flash Talk: How Security Transitions Fail and What to do About It
- Fireside Chat
- Case Study: Afghanistan
- Flash Talk: Dictatorship and the Missing Students

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2020

- Welcome: Ka Yee C. Lee
- Keynote: Setting the Conditions, Avoiding the Consequences
- Unintended Consequences of Conflict
- Flash Talk: The Road to Conflict Resolution—5 Gaps
- How Negotiations Take Place
- Flash Talk: Combating Polarization
- Closing: James A. Robinson
- Participation Infographics



Welcome

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,
The University of Chicago*

Institute Director James A. Robinson described the Pearson Global Forum as a *caldo de cultivo*, or breeding ground, where academics and policymakers could convene and share ideas to combat conflict. Robinson opened the Forum by urging the audience to look at all of the social, economic, and political conditions that serve as the *caldo de cultivo* for conflicts around the world.

Robinson discussed how climate change redistributes economic power and resources in a country, hurting economic potential and threatening the viability of the human race. With such a collective human crisis, similar to COVID-19, there needs to be collaboration across borders and administrations in order to proactively prevent the damaging effects of such global conflicts. It was in this spirit of urgent global collaboration that Professor Robinson positioned the third annual Pearson Global Forum, setting the stage for the audience to receive key insights from speakers to come.

Tuesday, October 6, 2020



Keynote: Confronting the Climate Crisis

Alice Hill

David M. Rubenstein Senior Fellow for Energy and the Environment at the Council on Foreign Relations

Opening the first day of the 2020 Pearson Global Forum, Alice Hill began with a discussion of the US Department of Homeland Security's contributions toward combating climate change. Prior to her current role, she served as Senior Counselor to the Secretary of the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS), where she led the formulation of DHS's first-ever climate adaptation plan.

Hill highlighted climate change as the element that may upend the future of conflict. As US President, Barack Obama signed an executive order, for the first time ever, that instructed federal agencies to engage in climate-adaption planning. Under a backdrop of projected hurricanes, wildfires, droughts, and extreme precipitation, Hill's committee in DHS recognized the deleterious trajectory of climate change, and began creating climate change reduction strategies, developing road maps, and drafting an implementation plan to integrate climate risk into each department's goals. Working on climate change led to a huge realization within DHS: climate change has the potential to disrupt everything as we

know it. Droughts, rain bombs, and wildfires would affect everything from agriculture to infrastructure, transportation to financial markets, and many of the choices we've made as a society rest on a fundamental but erroneous assumption that the past is a safe guide for the future. With climate change, all of these systems are at risk because the past is no longer that safe guide for the future. Given this reality, she concluded, society has to change.

Hill outlined several ways that climate change hurts the Earth. Heat is at the forefront of climate change, and the world is heating up quickly. The year 2019 was the second hottest in the last 140 years. In 2020, a Siberian town hit 100°F/37.7°C and Arctic sea ice levels hit their lowest ever recorded. Besides heat, wildfires rage in the western United States—sending much CO₂ into the atmosphere—hurricanes have been pummeling the Atlantic Coast of the Americas, and locust invasions rage in the Middle East and Africa as a result of climate change. On the international agenda, policymakers have focused on mitigating emissions; however, further heating in the atmosphere has already been precipitated by past emissions. Even if tomorrow we cut global emissions to zero, the atmosphere will continue heating for the next few decades.

Hill claimed that most US foreign policy experts view climate change through one of two lenses: 1) a need for diplomacy and international cooperation to reduce harmful greenhouse emissions; or 2) a potential threat to national security, including the increasing demand for humanitarian assistance and the capacity that climate change has to destabilize

fragile states. According to Hill, relying heavily on these lenses omits an essential point: the climate is currently unstable and will continue to tear people from their communities, undermine economic wealth, and exacerbate preexisting tensions. There needs to be a more proactive, preventive, and holistic approach to attacking climate change that is cognizant of the capacity for destruction and destabilization.

Hill believes that to contain climate change, there needs to be an overhaul in our approach to development and diplomacy. First, we need a revolution in understanding, a term created by the Global Commission on Adaptation, led by leaders such as Bill Gates and Ban Ki Moon.[†] Decision-makers, including government regulators and private sector leaders, typically have no training on the dynamics of climate change, and a revolution in understanding of climate change would reverse that. Next, we need accurate data to quantify the risk of climate change and seek remedies. For example, a study by the nonprofit organization Climate Central revealed a huge data gap: research on rising sea levels must consider existing land elevations; without such consideration, 79 million people have been identified as living on land that would flood every year. Climate Central revealed that by 2050, 300 million people will face flooding every year. Finally, we need to plan for compound, concurrent, and consecutive disasters. Disasters are occurring at far greater frequency all over the world, causing greater damage.

[†] Global Commission on Adaptation, *Adapt Now: A Global Call for Leadership on Climate Resilience*, September 13, 2019. <https://gca.org/global-commission-on-adaptation/report>.

The accelerating impacts of climate change will affect our networks, our economies, our emergency preparedness efforts, and the social cohesion of nations, within nations and among nations. Institutions need to understand the risks, provide as much warning as possible, and ready themselves to respond to accelerating threats.

Hill concluded by citing US Army General Gordon Sullivan, who said, “If you wait until you have 100% certainty, something bad is going to happen on the battlefield. We may not know how much the seas will rise, but we can help communities now adapt and build resilience to a brighter future.” A preventative, efficient, and—most importantly—proactive approach to climate change will help the global community build resilience to a brighter future.



Climate Conflict: Water

Supratik Guha

Professor, Pritzker School of Molecular Engineering, University of Chicago; Director, Nanoscience and Technology Division and the Center for Nanoscale Materials, and Senior Scientific Advisor to the Director, Argonne National Laboratory

Amir Jina

Assistant Professor, Harris School of Public Policy, The University of Chicago

Michael Tiboris

Pearson Associate; Nonresident Fellow, Chicago Council on Global Affairs; Director, Clear Water Farms Program, River Alliance of Wisconsin

Moderator: Margaret Goud Collins

Executive Director, Friends of International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis

Water connects all climate change risks and is a critical element of all climate systems, from the local to the global level. Water systems are connected to all functions of society: public health, agriculture, ecosystem health, industry, and more. Society has historically developed regulations and agreements to govern water distribution and use; however, both water and society’s demand for it are dynamic. If the distribution of water changes due to climate change, then agreements between polities about water use may undergo stress. These policies must withstand shock or be updated to accommodate changes in water distribution, otherwise agreements about water usage may degrade and spur conflict over water as a resource.

In this panel, Amir Jina highlighted that there is a link between shocks to the hydrological cycle of water availability and conflict. Across a broad range, shocks to the water system may be changing the incidence of conflicts by anywhere from 5 to 10 percent. Pinning down the exact mechanisms that cause such conflicts is difficult, as it is hard to quantify the effects of decreasing water availability. One mechanism that

can be measured is agriculture, where less water availability leads to food shortages and thus spurs social tensions. Jina gave an example of another possible water availability mechanism that may have occurred in the case of Syria, prior to its internal conflict: decreased water availability may have led to migration from rural parts of Syria to urban parts of the country, leading to an abundance of young, unemployed men who were thrust into big cities where political and social tensions were already unstable.

The panel urged the audience to analyze water insecurity not only as a result of climate change, but to also realize that human population trends impact the availability of water. The panel discussed how urbanization generally leads to higher per capita water consumption, stressing water resources. Climate change is only one of the various stresses that affect water reliability. Nonetheless, decreased water availability, whether caused by human consumption or climate change, can lead to food insecurity and other issues that may spur conflict.

The panel also discussed the utility of water mapping and water parameters, which would offer an abundance of data to track changes in water. Generating more data and making it available to the public would enable transparency and allow regulatory monitoring, which would be beneficial during conflict resolution. Supratik Guha presented easily collected parameter-monitoring data from India's Godavari River that showed how water carries leached chemicals from nearby waste dumps downstream—illustrating the pure value of collecting more data.

Margaret Goud Collins asked the panel how they would incorporate their data into tangible policies that can help to mitigate the water crisis. Jina stated that data should be used to determine the climate mechanisms causing social change, whereupon cost-benefit analysis, policy design, and public engagement can then take place. Michael Tiboris recognized the need to stop focusing on large-scale, expensive technological solutions (like expensive water treatment plants) and to instead focus on the fine-grain changes, based on academic data, that would have astronomical effects on water resource management.

Goud Collins also asked the panel about the barriers that prevent policymakers from designing systems that can mitigate the water crisis. The panel claimed that institutional weakness, a lack of infrastructure, and a lack of resilience are huge factors. Generally, adoption rates for policies tend to be low due to a lack of infrastructure that would support them. The abundance of trade-offs for policy implementation, not only for governments but also for individuals, leads actors to avoid making changes. In addition, there is a lack of private sector motivation to protect water, since the public benefits of environmental quality outweigh the private benefits.

During the panel's question-and-answer portion, the audience inquired about public education regarding water quality and conflict, market mechanisms and their impact on water conflict, and the accessibility and translatability of data when offered to the public.

All panelists agreed that changing the status quo is difficult, but that education is the best way to inform policymakers and the general public about the water crisis. Jina explained that the costs of getting water is not factored into food subsidies, which distorts society's perception of the price of food. Guha added that accessibility and translatability of data is important, but the data just isn't available yet and needs to be dispersed. The panel agreed that patience, persistence, and communication are important in communicating the need for change in water policy to the public.



Flash Talk: The End of Water as We Know It

Seth B. Darling

*Director, Center for Molecular Engineering and
Senior Scientist Chemical Sciences &
Engineering Division, Argonne National Laboratory
Fellow, Pritzker School of Molecular Engineering, The
University of Chicago*

What is the real value of water? Water is invisible and hidden all around us. For 683 gallons of water, you can grow six pounds of alfalfa hay, feed a cow, and get only one gallon of milk. One hamburger represents almost 600 gallons of water, and a single smartphone represents almost 3,300 gallons of water. To make anything, you need water, and we are gradually running out of it. Not only is water scarce, but by 2050, the global demand for water will be about 50 percent higher than it is today, which will lead to even higher per capita water consumption. Water scarcity and high demand mean that we are destined for conflict driven by water scarcity. Speaking on these themes and more, Seth B. Darling analyzed the importance of water cooperation and recycling.

Water cooperation is not unprecedented. The Treaty of Mesilim in 2550 BC between Umma and Lagash in ancient Mesopotamia was not only the first water treaty; it was also the first treaty of any kind. Water cooperation is as old as mankind—but so are water wars. Water has no tie to national boundaries, and in a world of nation states, water crosses various national boundaries,

potentially becoming a subject of dispute. With impending water scarcity, and water stress increasing, conflict between nations about water is sure to occur in the future. According to Darling, water cooperation is the key to mitigating future water conflicts.

Darling offered an additional solution to mitigating future water conflicts: recycling water. Water cannot be used up, and no matter how dirty it becomes, it can always be restored to a drinkable, usable state. Cooperation about efficiently recycling water may help ensure that water is always abundant, and never a cause for conflict.



Climate Conflict: Migration

Elizabeth Ferris

*Research Professor,
Institute for the Study of International Migration,
Walsh School of Foreign Service,
Georgetown University*

Walter Kaelin

Envoy of the Chair, Platform on Disaster Displacement

Kayly Ober

*Senior Advocate and Program Manager,
Climate Displacement Program, Refugees International*

Moderator: Abrahm Lustgarten

Senior Environmental Reporter, ProPublica

As climate change begins to alter the environment we live in, one expected outcome is that many of the world's citizens will be displaced by extreme weather events, and many people will be forced to migrate as sea levels rise and drought places stress on food supplies. Academic and public literature suggest that between 50 million and 300 million people will be forced to migrate in the next thirty years due to shifts in their climate.

This panel began by discussing the definition of a climate migrant. Elizabeth Ferris explained that migration is quite multi-causal, rendering it difficult to determine who is a climate migrant and who is not. Walter Kaelin considered whether or not climate migrants are refugees, since 90 percent of climate migrants typically remain in their own countries. He also explained the legal and connotational ramifications of designating these migrants as refugees. Many migrants do not want to be designated refugees, whether to preserve their ties to their nation or out of a desire to avoid receiving handouts. Moreover, designating climate change migrants as refugees has the potential

to undermine the already struggling asylum system by vastly increasing the number of refugees that need to be resettled. Additionally, integrating climate migrants into the same legal framework as those persecuted on account of their race, ethnicity, religion, or other protected categories will further complicate the asylum legal system.

Ferris highlighted the difference between migration due to climate change, and migration due to environmental change, such as earthquakes or volcanoes. The question then arises: How do we determine who most urgently needs restitution and resettlement? Ferris also highlighted the issue of responsibility for climate change, and whether the countries who are most responsible for emissions should be held responsible for resettling those migrants forced to flee due to climate change. The panelists agreed that this question is something worthy of discussion within the international community.

Kayly Ober asserted that there should not be a distinction between forced displacement and voluntary migration, as often the latter is driven by regional conditions that determine the safety and sustainability of migration. Ober spoke of the importance of good methodology in analyzing migration data. Intention and framing behind data are important—some data simplifies displacement risk to an unnatural degree. Data needs to incorporate analyses that are more nuanced and cognizant of specific populations that may be displaced, instead of grouping entire country populations together (which is often done) as potential climate change victims. Ober also addressed the likelihood of migration based on age and income,

stating that poorer victims tend to be more likely to migrate due to their inability to withstand shocks. She offered sustainable development—environmentally friendly development that will prevent and protect against environmental damage—as a potential aid.



Flash Talk: Environmental Migration, Urbanization, and Conflict Processes

Vally Koubi

*Professor and Senior Scientist,
Center for Comparative and International Studies,
Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich;
Professor, Institute of Economics, University of Bern*

Climatic events such as storms, floods, droughts, sea-level rise, and wildfires force people to move away from their homes. The number of people forced to move away from their homes due to climatic events is often more than double the number of people forced to move away due to civil conflicts. Most environmental migrants move to urban areas within their own countries, which accelerates urbanization, which in turn impacts economic growth but also accelerates poverty and inequality. In this context, Vally Koubi analyzed the effect of environmental migration on social disorder and violence.

Koubi's research focuses mainly on Vietnam and Kenya, two countries that are particularly susceptible to climatic changes and have experienced fast urbanization in the past few decades. In this research, urban residents were surveyed on their attitudes toward environmental migrants. Urban residents were split: half of the residents surveyed perceived climatic events as a legitimate reason for migration, while the other half did not. Generally, urban residents claimed to prefer migrants who were younger, better

educated, and financially stable. Most environmental migrants do not fit this profile, so urban residents generally had negative attitudes toward them. This widespread dismissal of the struggles of environmental migrants has made it difficult to integrate into urban environments.

There is a link between being forced to migrate due to climate change and one's willingness to participate in social movements against migrant discrimination. Mindsets of grief, injustice, and victimhood prevail among sufferers of both sudden and gradual environmental issues. These mindsets and psychological stresses push environmental migrants to participate in social movements. Koubi's research showed that migrants who have suffered from both gradual and sudden environmental change have a 60 percent likelihood of participating in peaceful protests.

Does environmental migration lead to urban social disorder? According to Koubi, the answer is most likely yes. To address this risk, national and local authorities need to provide assistance and basic services to migrants and facilitate their socioeconomic and political integration. Koubi claimed that the most important policy is to avert the need for climate-induced migration in the first place, by providing sustainable development assistance and strengthening the coping capacity of communities impacted by climate change.



“This is a time when hard thinking and an analytical approach is needed more than ever. Our scholars are dedicated to bridging academic scholarship and practice. Bridging academic endeavors and policy-making houses an important set of scholarship that can drive better decisions than what we currently see today around the world.”

Wednesday, October 7, 2020

Welcome

Katherine Baicker

Dean and Emmett Dedmon Professor, Harris School of Public Policy, The University of Chicago



Keynote: Ending Endless Wars Requires Preventing Them in the First Place

Elizabeth Hume

Vice President, Alliance for Peacebuilding

Elizabeth Hume began her address with a jarring quote from her time working in war-torn countries: “Afghans in Afghanistan say, ‘This is where God comes to cry.’” Hume set the stage of the current phase in the protracted history of conflict in Afghanistan, in which the United States is desperately trying to end its military presence, all while the Taliban and the Afghan government are negotiating their peace process. Simultaneously, US President Donald Trump and Democratic US presidential nominee Joe Biden mutually promise to end the so-called “endless wars” in the Middle East—a representation of deployment fatigue and vast unpopularity of US involvement in foreign wars. US taxpayers have had to pay more than 6.4 trillion dollars for these endless wars, and over 800,000 people have died. In 2020, the United States held a military budget of 900 billion dollars, yet less than 1 percent of that budget was invested and spent on promoting stability in other countries. In this context, Hume asked, why isn’t the United States investing more in addressing the causes of conflicts?

Hume explained that conflict prevention requires long-term attention to political dynamics on a hyperlocal scale. Evidence shows that conflict prevention and peace processes are best when led by citizens—particularly when women are involved—and that this is when we see the reasons for conflict actually addressed. Not only are civilian-led responses more effective, they are also cheaper than security-focused interventions and responses, which are horribly expensive. Unfortunately, the United States does not yet have a comprehensive, coordinated, civilian-led strategy to prevent conflict. Even humanitarian aid is not enough: selective aid given to “aid-darlings” coupled with uneven spending leads to vast misappropriation of resources and ineffective peacebuilding.

Hume positioned the 2019 Global Fragility Act (GFA), drafted with the help of US senators and the NGO Alliance for Peacebuilding, as a needed redirection in US-directed efforts toward peace. The GFA requires the US government to create its first-ever comprehensive strategy to address and prevent the acceleration of violence in at least five fragile countries over a ten-year period. It also forces the US government to address the actual drivers of violent conflict and fragility, and to self-correct its own foreign assistance strategy according to the data accrued.

Hume recognized that even though the GFA has been signed into law, it doesn’t mean it will be robustly implemented without difficulty. The development of the GFA strategy has faced bureaucratic and political disagreements as well as difficulties in creating

and designing robust strategies. The amount of money allotted toward supporting political stability is insignificant in relation to the overall US military budget, and Hume called for even greater resourcing toward global peacebuilding efforts.

Hume also realizes the need for a fragility act at home in the United States. She notes that violent conflict happens not only in far-away lands but also locally. Peacebuilding at home is necessary to help us understand these same processes overseas. Ending wars responsibly and sustainably will be difficult, but these strategies should not detract from our efforts to prevent future wars. Hume finished her presentation with a strong statement: A conflict prevention-focused agenda needs to be at the forefront of US foreign policy.



Global Pandemics

Mark Koyama

*Associate Professor, Economic History,
George Mason University*

Ada Palmer

*Associate Professor of Early Modern European History
and the College, The University of Chicago*

Moderator: Katherine Baicker

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

Mark Koyama opened the panel with comparative historical context for the current coronavirus pandemic, detailing the economic impact of the Black Death in the Middle Ages. COVID-19 has spread much more quickly than the Black Death did in Europe, but it has not been nearly as deadly. Koyama showed data collected about economic development due to the Black Plague, arguing that major changes in labor institutions, state development, and urban patterns can be traced to these events in 1347–1352.

Panelists considered whether COVID-19 will grow or shrink economies in the long term, agreeing that it depends on policy and the decisions made by local institutions and governments. Ada Palmer discussed the differences between the real effects of the pandemic and the imagined effects of the pandemic. While analyzing data, some people expect homogenous distribution—that statistics will match exactly to their real-life situations. For example, if someone sees a statistic that one in five people will get COVID-19, and one of their best friends gets it, they might assume that they have immunity. Instead of expecting homogeneous

distribution, civilians should instead focus on data instead of relying on their own intuitions. This would help to prevent further transmission of COVID-19.

Palmer also discussed the effect of pandemics on demand. During a pandemic, some areas of the economy will hurt more than others. For example, while the sale of flour, chicken breasts, and home improvement goods might boom, the sale of chicken wings and amusement park tickets might be hit astronomically due to large-scale closing of public events. She noted that local policy determined the recovery period for the Black Death, and that for COVID-19, policy will determine society's capacity to surpass the devastating epidemic.

Audience members inquired about the reliability of data compiled from the fourteenth century. Cross-referencing data from archeological records (such as plague pits, where bodies were buried) and tax records is an efficient way to compile data, but it is bound to have much error, panelists acknowledged. When accuracy is so hard to achieve, panelists agreed that assessing bias is a useful tool to test the veracity of data. Some recordkeepers sought to exaggerate the death tolls and danger of the Black Death, but if we figure out the motives of these recordkeepers, we can get closer to ascertaining the accuracy of this fourteenth-century data.



Case Study: Haiti

Paul Farmer

*Chief Strategist and Cofounder, Partners In Health;
Kolokotronis University Professor, Harvard University*

Chelsey L. Kivland

*Assistant Professor of Anthropology,
Dartmouth College*

Michèle Duvivier Pierre-Louis

*President, Fondation Connaissance et Liberté-FOKAL;
Former Prime Minister of Haiti*

Moderator: 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,
The University of Chicago*

Paul Farmer opened the panel by reflecting on his experiences working in Haiti and the struggles that his organization, Partners In Health (PIH), faced in implementing their programs. PIH focused on revitalizing public clinics in the central plateau of Haiti and implementing other initiatives that would improve health infrastructure in Port-Au-Prince. To illustrate the institutional barriers that challenged the work of PIH in Haiti, Farmer offered a contrast in the case of Rwanda, where the state is willing to invest a fraction of its income in its health-care delivery system, focusing on care delivery instead of disease control. Farmer's research in Rwanda shows that in the years following the brutal genocide, the state has been able to effectively implement policies with a relatively low corruption level. In comparison, according to Farmer, Haiti still has yet to do the same, and should invest in institutions and in incorporating transparency into the health and carceral systems.

Chelsey Kivland turned the discussion toward Haitians' views of the Haitian state. Her research focused on Haitians' desire for not only a strong, Black sovereign

state but for a just, fair state that listens to the public interest. Based on this desire for a just state that listens to the people, Kivland advocated for community-based health and political initiatives that would incorporate the public into higher-level political discussions, to ensure that the peoples' voices are heard.

Next, Michèle Duvivier Pierre-Louis reflected on her time in office, identifying key themes that limit development. First, she outlined the brain drain from Haiti and its deleterious effect on Haitian infrastructure through the example of the numerous qualified Haitian engineers who live abroad. Pierre-Louis offered criticism of the international community, which sometimes pledges aid but does not meet its promise, or which sometimes continues to feed corruption in the state. She also commented on the judicial and carceral systems in Haiti. She stated that prior to her being in office, the Haitian government's police system had very little means to combat kidnappings and crime. During her time as prime minister, her contributions to the police budget helped to astronomically bring down crime and the number of kidnappings in Haiti. Pierre-Louis also advocated for the use of private property as a means to enfranchise citizens, ensuring that needs such as electricity and water are taken care of, and ensuring that each respective community can fulfill what the state cannot.



Flash Talk: How Security Transitions Fail and What to do About It

Austin L. Wright

*Pearson Faculty Affiliate; Assistant Professor,
Harris School Public Policy, The University of Chicago*

When foreign military occupations end, countries are at a critical juncture: governments that emerge from a security transition may be stable and secure, or they may be weakened and on the brink of collapse. Regime change, suppression of armed groups, and implementation of agreements hang in the balance after withdrawal, and without robust data, these regime changes are hard to study.

In this context, Austin L. Wright constructed the first rigorous microlevel assessment of how security transitions impact local security, using data from US Department of Defense documents and social media accounts of both stages of US occupation. This data specifically analyzes the security transition from international to local forces in Afghanistan following Operation Enduring Freedom, using recently declassified data from Iraq Significant Activities reports (SIGACTS) and the Afghanistan Nationwide Quarterly Assessment Research (ANQAR) survey. This data allows us to catalog the attacks carried out against international and local forces, and assess territorial control and government performance during the security transfer.

Wright's research showed that the security transfer was not effective in decreasing violence. Violence declined drastically during the international overwatch stage of the Afghanistan security transfer, when security forces had not yet left the country. However, immediately following the complete, physical withdrawal of international troops, violence surged. His research revealed that civilians actually felt less safe after withdrawal, despite there being an increase in Afghan National Security Forces patrols. Additionally, his findings demonstrate that insurgents like the Taliban acted strategically around the withdrawal, manipulating US military assessments and accelerating withdrawal—the same strategy used in the 1989 Soviet Transfer to Afghan forces or at the end of US-led operations in Iraq in 2011.

In his conclusion, Wright offered a solution: there needs to be a more robust mechanism for evaluating local allies during a security transition, using high-quality data to allow these local forces to optimize and strengthen themselves against insurgent threats. Prior metrics suggested progress, but they were flawed. Using new, higher-quality data will reveal where actors are truly positioned during a security transition, and will prevent premature withdrawal that can quickly spur new conflicts.



Fireside Chat

Zalmai Khalilzad

*Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation,
US Department of State*

Andrew Wilder

Vice President, Asia Programs, US Institute of Peace

In a year of negotiations led by Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, the United States and the Taliban were able to sign an agreement that would allow US troop withdrawal from Afghanistan by May 2021, in exchange for Taliban counterterrorism assurances. Ambassador Khalilzad helped initiate peace talks for an enduring nationwide ceasefire, and finally on September 12, 2020, the Taliban and the Afghanistan government were able to initiate successful peace talks.

Ambassador Khalilzad spoke of the ongoing discussions between the Taliban and the Afghan government, where both parties talked about reducing the internal violence that has occurred due to US troop withdrawal. While many accuse the Taliban of deflecting attention by engaging in discussions, Khalilzad reaffirmed his belief that many of the current leaders of the Taliban are serious about negotiating. While there are many challenges to reconciliation due to the forty-year duration of the conflict, Khalilzad affirmed his hope that these negotiations may serve as a long-term solution to the conflict in Afghanistan. He also hoped that these negotiations would lead to

a long-term partnership against terrorism between both the United States and the government of Afghanistan. While violence is still high, the number of Afghan civilian and military casualties from January to July 2020 has significantly decreased, and Khalilzad estimated that this number will continue to improve through the end of the year.

Andrew Wilder highlighted Khalilzad's help in drafting the 2004 Afghanistan Constitution, which enshrined fundamental rights for women and minorities and laid out the fundamental infrastructure for representative government. Assuring these rights is what Khalilzad called "the United States' second priority in Afghanistan." Ambassador Khalilzad continues to offer his support and advice to the negotiators on these topics. The panel also discussed Pakistan's current role in assisting the peace process, which is a critical component in achieving peace in Afghanistan. Pakistan has been planning to invest in Afghanistan's infrastructure by constructing railroads and exporting gas and natural resources to the country. This infrastructure, of course, cannot be implemented without security. Khalilzad affirmed that Afghanistan and Pakistan are working on an agreement that would bolster internal security, where Afghanistan and Pakistan would secure their internal territory to ensure that the Taliban cannot use these territories as a faraway springboard for attacks against either country. This security would allow for a large amount of resource exchange and trade between the two countries, benefiting both.

Wilder and Khalilzad also discussed the dichotomy of Iran: its Foreign Ministry, which would like to rehabilitate relations with the United States, and the executive of Iran, which expects to keep the United States entangled in a perpetual war using Afghanistan as leverage vis à vis the United States. Khalilzad expressed hope that a Foreign Ministry-led Iran will be dominant in these peace discussions and that Iran will continue to make efforts in support of peace. The panel also made remarks about the political economy of the Afghanistan situation: some groups prefer the status quo due to the war resources available and power vacuums to fill. Overall, Khalilzad and Wilder concluded that though the challenges of supporting peace in Afghanistan are great, continuing the current conflict situation is not sustainable for the future.



Case Study: Afghanistan

Laurel Miller

*Program Director, Asia, International Crisis Group;
Former Deputy and Acting Special Representative for
Afghanistan and Pakistan, US Department of State*

Gretchen Peters

*Executive Director, Center on Illicit Networks and
Transnational Organized Crime*

Michael Semple

*Professor, The Senator George J. Mitchell Institute for
Global Peace, Security and Justice,
Queen's University Belfast*

Moderator: Andrew Wilder

Vice President, Asia Programs, US Institute of Peace

In this panel focused on Afghanistan, moderator Andrew Wilder led panelists in a discussion on the extraordinary time required for successful peace negotiations.

Laurel Miller asserted that having genuine belief in the plausibility of peace following the war is necessary for all diplomats and actors in the conflict—even if there is just a 5 to 10 percent chance. She stated that Afghan officials need to agree not only on rules of procedure but also on a robust agenda for these talks.

Gretchen Peters expanded on the scope of the peace process. She noted that not only does the United States influence the peace process, but regional powers such as Qatar and Saudi Arabia are also involved. She spoke of the need to address the conflict according to political economy, asking how the different actors—such as the trucking mafia or the drug traffickers—are going to be economically incentivized to stop their actions. The opium economy is a huge driving factor in Afghan political decisions, and such illicit businessmen may be more conducive to negotiations due to their private interests. She stated that “war

transforms economies, and creates new elites,” and these new elites in Afghanistan need to be taken into consideration in order to realistically achieve progress in peace negotiation. Of course, negotiating with elites opens avenues for corruption, and may lead to public perception of corruption within peace negotiations.

Michael Semple spoke of a potential negative result of peace negotiations, where Taliban forces might end all violence against US troops yet sustain their violence against current Afghans in order to consolidate power over the government. This reality, while fearful, would be due to the more successful negotiations that the United States has been able to achieve with the Taliban. Semple’s analysis of this potential result is actually the current reality: panelists agreed that the Taliban is not reducing violence but rather calibrating their violence toward current Afghans and the Afghan government. Additionally, the Taliban has not signed a cease-fire or issued an agreement to reduce the violence. Despite this, this violent dynamic might be resolved through a decrease in recruitment. Panelists discussed how the Taliban has struck a deal with the United States, which may incentivize young men—who were recruited to fight against the United States—to stop fighting against their fellow Afghans.

Panelists also discussed the necessity of incorporating women in the peace process in an inclusive manner. Often, in these public negotiations, women are tokenized and perceived only as representatives of women’s issues, instead of having representation as wholesale Afghan citizens. Miller contributed that

women need to be holistically involved in the peace process in order for such processes to be successful.

Audience members inquired about the parallels between Colombia’s negotiations with the guerrilla group FARC and Afghanistan’s negotiating with the Taliban. When these guerrilla groups prey on their local communities through kidnappings and ransoms, the groups become increasingly unpopular and the local populace is more likely to abandon their loyalty to them. Similarly, Zalmay Khalilzad noted in the Fireside Chat that where the Taliban has targeted the local populace, the Taliban became quite unpopular among the population and struggled to implement its initiatives. During the question and answer section, audience members asked if the November 2020 US presidential election may slow or expedite the peace process. They also asked whether the American public supports maintaining troops in Afghanistan throughout the duration of the peace negotiations. The panel concluded that despite the military strength of the Taliban, they are still politically marginal and only serve as a small minority of the country’s high politic. Successful peace negotiations will require engaging not only the government and the Taliban but also regional actors and local villages.



Flash Talk: Dictatorship and the Missing Students

Maria Angélica Bautista

*Pearson Faculty Affiliate; Assistant Professor,
Harris School of Public Policy,
The University of Chicago*

Maria Angélica Bautista set the scene of the coup d'état in Chile of September 11, 1973, an event that usurped President Salvador Allende and instituted a military junta with Augusto Pinochet at its head.

In the decades following this coup, Chile was hailed as the most prosperous country in South America, which has been largely credited to the military junta's policies. How could this be, asked Bautista, when Pinochet's dictatorship committed mass murder, detention, and torture? Many claim Chile's "economic miracle" is a result of its shift toward free market policies, in line with the economic belief that free markets in general create prosperity. Conversely, Bautista argued that in order to create prosperity, governments have to not only liberate markets but also provide public goods to their populations. Chile did not perform the latter.

Bautista used her research to demonstrate how the military junta's policies actually led to the opposite of economic prosperity. Chile's "Chicago Boys"—the University of Chicago-trained cadre of technocrats

leading Chile's economic shift—reduced the subsidies given to universities, leading to a stagnation in university enrollment and employment, which are typically elements critical to economic prosperity. Similarly, following the 1973 coup, labor force participation decreased, and unemployment increased. While some indices of economic growth may have improved during the dictatorship, the stagnation in education, the reduction in labor force participation, and the increase in unemployment show that the dictatorship actually hindered much economic growth through its brutal policies.

Bautista showed findings from her research that demonstrate when economic growth actually occurred in Chile: in 1990, following the implementation of democracy. It was only beginning in 1990, after the end of the dictatorship, that Chile's economic trajectory truly began to take off. Bautista argued that the real Chilean "economic miracle" was actually democracy, since the military junta's sociopolitical policies actually hindered much of the progress intended to be derived from their free market policies.



“Scholars at the University of Chicago are known for field-defining research, and our culture of rigorous inquiry pushes us to pursue bold and new ideas and challenge conventional norms in pursuit of knowledge. The Pearson Institute shares our commitment to rigorous inquiry, and that is what sets it apart.”

Thursday, October 8, 2020

Welcome

Ka Yee C. Lee

Provost, and David Lee Shillinglaw Distinguished Service Professor, Department of Chemistry, James Franck Institute, Institute for Biophysical Dynamics, and the College, The University of Chicago



Keynote: Setting the Conditions, Avoiding the Consequences

Madelyn Creedon

*Former Principal Deputy Administrator,
National Nuclear Security Administration,
US Department of Energy;
Former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Global
Strategic Affairs, US Department of Defense*

Madelyn Creedon began her address by describing nuclear conflict as the “highest end of conflict, with the most devastating of consequences,” and quoted former US president Ronald Reagan, who famously stated that a “nuclear war cannot be won, and must never be fought . . . we seek the total elimination of nuclear weapons from the global sphere.” Creedon positioned the current global context as an uncertain world where great power rivalry and competition for global influence have returned, creating a dangerous game where new domains of conflict such as space and the internet pit nations against each other.

Creedon noted the vast accumulation of contemporary weapons, with the United States, Russia, and China rapidly modernizing their arsenals, which include nuclear weapons. While the potential for a nuclear exchange between these three superpowers is terrifying, this is the least likely of outcomes. What may be likely, however, is the use of these weapons in regional conflicts. This poses an enormous, destructive risk to global peace.

Creedon considered the following questions: What does effective deterrence look like in the twenty-first century? What conditions will allow for further reductions in nuclear stockpiles? Why do countries seek, have, and maintain nuclear weapons? Creedon noted that such questions need to be asked to figure out how to reduce conflict at any level possible and reduce the risk of fatal failure. In terms of strategy, she argued that educating the public about the dangers of a nuclear war is a good start. Furthermore, she recommended pushing the United States, Russia, China, and North Korea to begin discussions about transparency of nuclear stockpiles. There is a plethora of treaties that can be ratified, reaffirmed, and renewed, like the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) or the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which can help to clarify nuclear responsibility and safety over the coming decades. Creedon concluded by reaffirming the US position: as long as the world has nuclear weapons, the US will make sure that its nuclear deterrent remains safe, secure, and effective. Still, she emphasized the importance of both seeking reductions and maintaining a deterrent, noting that “how to do both effectively is the challenge.”



Unintended Consequences of Conflict

Thomas Countryman

*Chairman, Board of Directors,
Arms Control Association*

Francesca Giovannini

*Strategy and Policy Planning Officer
to the Executive Secretary,
Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization*

Robert Rosner

*William E. Wrather Distinguished Service Professor,
Departments of Astronomy and Astrophysics, Physics,
Enrico Fermi Institute, the College, and
Harris School of Public Policy,
The University of Chicago; Chair, Science and Security
Board of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*

Moderator: Rachel Bronson

President and CEO, Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists

Thomas Countryman opened the panel by commenting on the scale of nuclear weapons, explaining how television has failed to demonstrate the sheer scale of destruction that a nuclear weapon could cause, resulting in a lack of understanding of the magnitude of the threat from most Americans. Creating a comparison between the magnitude of the 2020 Beirut Explosion and the potential magnitude of a modern nuclear weapon such as the W87 missile head, Countryman illustrated that modernized nuclear weapons have the potential to create an unprecedented destruction. Additionally, Countryman highlighted how only nine leaders—all men, he noted—have the single-handed power to start a nuclear war. Finally, Countryman mentioned how accidents can turn into incidents. If accidents occur with nuclear weapons, bad response times and inconsistent lines of communication could quickly devolve into destructive violence between superpowers that is beyond our current comprehension.

Francesca Giovannini discussed the role that international organizations can play in mitigating

nuclear conflicts. In spite of the overwhelming power that nuclear superpowers have in making nuclear decisions, she asserted that international organizations can indeed be effective in mitigating nuclear conflicts. International organizations are often called upon to solve international disputes, such as during the dispute between India and Kashmir. At the same time, international organizations are not able to set the policy direction of nuclear strategies. Giovannini also spoke about regime changes and how they affect relationships with the international community. A regime change in a country might lead to decreased relations with any given international organization, decreasing the efficacy of said organization on the regime's policies. Giovannini also expressed hope in nuclear-risk reduction strategies, that different states come together to work on reducing their nuclear arsenals.

Robert Rosner spoke about the development of improved forensics and new technology to determine where nuclear violations were being committed. New advancements in technology allow scientists to detect whether or not nuclear superpowers are violating international rules for nuclear arsenals and testing. Scientists have a committed and dedicated responsibility to prevent a similar situation to the arms race, as previously experienced.

Panelists spoke about the inconsistency between winning a conflict and mutually assured destruction, in addition to the risks of incorporating artificial intelligence in calculating bomb threats and reacting accordingly. Panelists also discussed the irony of countries modernizing their military—how some

countries advocate the end of nuclear weapon accumulation, while also stockpiling and modernizing their military.

The audience inquired about which countries' relationships with nuclear energy are the most salient or fascinating. Rosner took up the question, speaking about the United Arab Emirates. The Emirates have recently decided to start producing electricity using nuclear energy in Abu Dhabi and near the Saudi border. Rosner claimed that such actions might serve as a prelude to what Saudi Arabia intends to do. Any country's stockpiling of nuclear weapons prompts inquiries into its motivations. Mapping out and assessing the true reasons for nuclear accumulation might help to prevent nuclear accumulation, but even the most seemingly innocuous reasons may mask ulterior, warmongering motives. Regardless of nuclear intentions and motives, international organizations and international superpowers (including the United States) will have to convene and make decisions on reducing the risks of nuclear conflict and protecting humanity, at all costs.



Flash Talk: The Road to Conflict Resolution—5 Gaps

Clare Lockhart

*Director and Cofounder,
Institute for State Effectiveness*

Clare Lockhart identified five key gaps that reoccur in conflict resolution—informed by her research with the Institute for State Effectiveness—showing that these gaps prevented effective conflict resolution, depending on the nature of the conflict drivers.

The first gap, termed the inclusion gap, refers to the notion that the vast majority of a country's public is excluded from the peacemaking process. Finding ways to include all segments of society is crucial—including, for example, women, minorities, farmers, teachers, and health workers. The hopes and interests of all of these segments of society need to be taken firmly and centrally into account in the decisions that result from the peacemaking process.

In considering the second gap, the accountability gap, Lockhart asserted that “the accounts of the nation and stewardship of the public resources should not be on the table as a first resort.” When one of the drivers of conflict and instability is corruption, the conditions for another violent conflict are created. Trading away the chance of better government and accountability is not

sustainable. Many mediators see accountability as a background function, and they see directly resolving conflicts as more important than addressing larger, deeper issues of corruption.

There are also gaps of implementation. What is promised in capital cities and what actually occurs on the ground tend to be disjointed. Peace agreements often do not have the infrastructure or institutional integrity to allow for effective implementation. As per the business world, strategy is execution, and the policy world is discovering that conflict resolution requires careful design and sustained attention to implementation. Lockhart claimed that improving service delivery, creating jobs, and improving livelihoods must occur in tandem to demobilization in order to achieve peace.

Fourth, Lockhart mentioned the need to look across borders in order to solve a regional gap; otherwise, how can we use the regional economic dimension to help bolster regional security? She referenced the Balkans Forum and the European Coal and Steel Society, both efforts that connected elements within a region and improved security.

Finally, Lockhart discussed the need for a legitimate monopoly on the use of force in eliminating the peace and security gap. Sustaining and maintaining security forces, managing demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration (DDR) processes, and building human security are integral to conflict resolution, assuring citizen security and underpinning peace.



How Negotiations Take Place

Steven E. Miller

*Director, International Security Program,
Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs,
Harvard Kennedy School*

Wendy R. Sherman

*Professor of Practice and Director,
Center for Public Leadership, Harvard Kennedy School;
Former Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs,
US Department of State*

Konstantin Sonin

*Pearson Faculty Affiliate;
John Dewey Distinguished Service Professor,
Harris School of Public Policy,
The University of Chicago*

Moderator: Anne Gearan

White House Correspondent, The Washington Post

This panel discussed the mechanisms behind international negotiations, including the current negotiations that the United States is involved in, and the fate of future potential negotiations that will occur following the November 2020 US presidential election.

Konstantin Sonin discussed the abnormality of under-the-table United States negotiations, referring to US President Trump engaging in secret negotiations rather than doing so in the open where the public is cognizant of the negotiation process. Historically, many deals and negotiations were bilateral arrangements done away from the public eye, whereas modern negotiations typically occur in the public eye with many parties involved. The latter approach assures transparency and consent of all parties that may be affected. Sonin highlighted this abnormality: Trump seeks to approach negotiations in the archaic historical way, by having bilateral clandestine negotiations that shut out all other actors. This isolationist policy makes international actors less able to impact Trump's negotiations with other countries.

Steven E. Miller highlighted US policy's mainstream aversion to doing business with the enemy, which tends to be unrealistic. Peace deals have to be struck with the enemy, otherwise the probability of acceptance and compliance is null. The panel also discussed the intentions and goals of the American executive.

Wendy R. Sherman stated that Trump's goal in Afghanistan is not to protect US troops, make sure US interests are looked after vis-à-vis Russia, or help Kabul stand up as a stable government. Instead, Trump's goal is to get all of the US troops out of Afghanistan in order to make good on his first presidential campaign promise.

Panelists also discussed the likelihood of reconciliation between the United States and North Korea, as well as their nuclear disarmament. It became clear that it is in North Korea's best interest to keep their nuclear weapons, rendering nuclear disarmament a very difficult and unlikely ordeal. Sherman highlighted that a successful Biden administration may be able to revive the United States' relationship with South Korea, strengthen its relationship with Japan, and even collaborate with Russia and China in order to incorporate regional actors to initiate effective talks with North Korea.

Panelists spoke about the recent United States withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal. In the secret bilateral channel with Iran, during the Obama administration, the United States preliminarily agreed to allow Iran to have a very small civil nuclear program if it agreed to an intrusive monitoring and verification regime. This idea was supported by the

European Union, China, and Russia, yet the current US administration has firmly opposed Iran having any nuclear material whatsoever. This opposition has to do with the consolidation of US military power in the geopolitical sphere. Miller explained that the United States' executive sees arms control not as an asset, but a trap that prevents the United States from exploiting its enormous military power, whether for the purpose of regional control or improving national security.

Audience members inquired about whether or not negotiations with hostile organizations such as the Taliban pose the risk of giving legitimacy to terrorist groups or regional guerrillas. Panelists agreed that there is a cost of legitimacy in negotiations, but some regional problems simply cannot be solved without negotiation. In spite of the impact of these negotiations, such talks with perceived enemies may stress internal tensions and introduce much controversy to the domestic political sphere. Additionally, in order to assure that promises are carried through by such groups, Sherman argued that verification and monitoring may help to ascertain the implementation of such negotiations. What will be the enforcement mechanisms to make sure that the rights of women and minorities do not disappear following withdrawal? Mechanisms of transparency for enforcement, monitoring, and verification are necessary to ensure successful implementation of international negotiations.



Flash Talk: Combating Polarization

Mina Cikara

*Associate Professor, Department of Psychology,
Harvard University*

Society has various definitions of polarization: how extreme individual positions are against an issue, the gap between political parties, or even how much each side dislikes the other. Mina Cikara's research focuses instead on the element of belief, where polarization sometimes refers to others' beliefs of another partisan's beliefs, or even what we believe that others believe about us. These are called metaperceptions. Cikara stated an important observation: in the domain of politics, "people's beliefs are not accurate, and not only are these beliefs inaccurate, they are consistently pessimistic."

Why are beliefs important? Cikara claimed that erroneous beliefs contribute to an actual spiral of polarization. Inaccurate beliefs about the other side's feelings can be associated with decreased mutual trust between groups and negative expectations about mutual interaction. Metaperceptions guide whether or not one thinks that mutual cooperation and coordination are possible, and democratic processes require cooperation and coordination. Thus, erroneous metaperceptions are inconducive to democratic processes and prevent progress.

Cikara's research showed that metaperceptions of the other party's beliefs were inflated up to 40 percent relative to how the same party would actually feel. If we imagine that the other side is 100 percent opposed to anything that we believe, it is impossible to predict coordination across party lines. Establishing a new concept called "purposeful obstructionism," Cikara also demonstrated that overly negative beliefs lead partisans to believe that the parties will do anything to sabotage the other party, irrespective of the cost to the public.

Cikara's research is not exclusive to the US political spectrum, but also applicable to the global spectrum as well. Across cultures, overly negative perceptions make people believe the worst of the other side and encourage support for hostile actions against them, even generating support for brutal actions like torture and drone strikes.

Fortunately, Cikara's solution to this problem of misconceptions is simple: if we improve the accuracy of metaperceptions, we can improve our capacity for cooperation. Her research shows that providing corrective feedback to respondents about how the other party actually feels can mitigate the political pessimism of individuals. While our experience of the world unfolds through the lens of our expectations, we must engage less with our models and caricatures of the other side, and more with the actual people in front of us.

“Thank you so much for taking a part in the Pearson Global Forum. We have benefited immensely from this blend of speakers, from physicists and economists, to political scientists and policymakers. This is exactly what the Global Forum is for.”

Closing

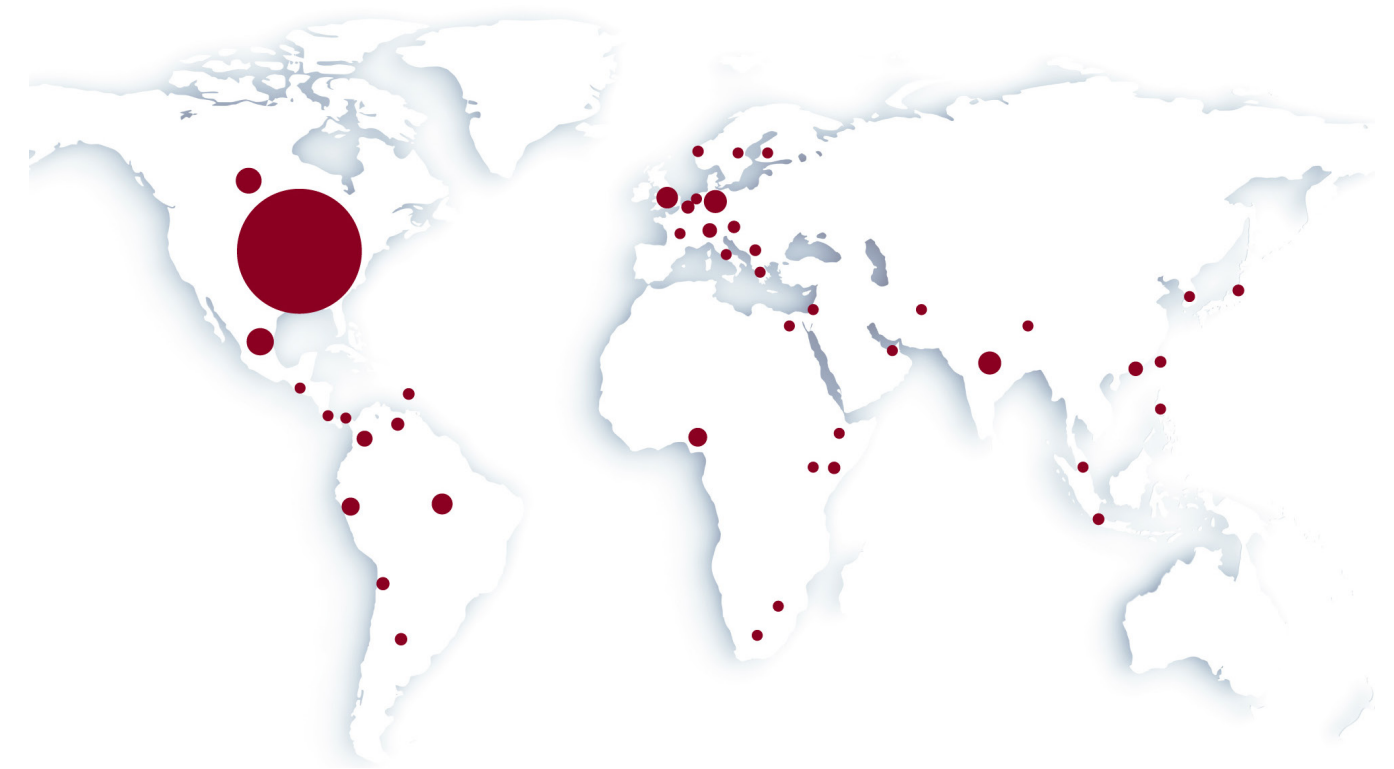
James A. Robinson

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

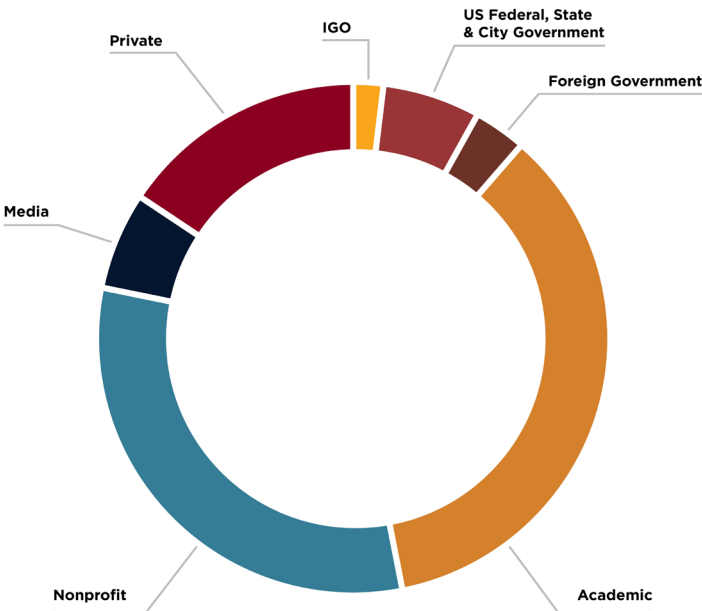


Participation Infographics

Geographic Participation



Sectors Engaged



Academic Participation

