ROOT OF

√ CONFLICT

Root of Conflict Podcast

Episode: Quantifying Global Peace

featuring
Steve Killelea, Author, *Peace in the Age of Chaos* and Founder, Institute for Economics and Peace

interviewed by
Deqa Aden, Pearson Fellow
Reema Saleh, Pearson Fellow

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Full Transcript

Reema Saleh: Hi, this is Reema, and you're listening to the University of Chicago Public Policy Podcasts. You're listening to Root of Conflict, a podcast about violent conflict around the world and the people, societies, and policy issues it affects. In this series, you'll hear from experts and practitioners who conduct research, implement programs, and use data analysis to address some of the most pressing challenges facing our world.

Reema Saleh: Root of Conflict is produced by UC3P in collaboration with the Pearson Institute for the Study and Resolution of Global Conflict, a research institute housed within the Harris School of Public Policy at the University of Chicago.

Reema Saleh: In this episode, Deqa and I speak with Steve Killelea, a global philanthropist focused on peace and sustainable development. He's the founder of the Institute for Economics and Peace and the Global Peace Index, which measures and ranks the peacefulness of 163 different countries around the world. We talk about his recent book, *Peace in the Age of Chaos*, and how we can build more peaceful, resilient societies.

Steve Killelea: *Peace in the Age of Chaos*, it covers a number of different themes. The first is the personal journey to peace. Does it really happen by accident? Secondarily, it covers an entrepreneurial story on how you go about developing a world class think tank. And then finally it talks about the state of global peace, and then also describes a concept called positive peace, which is the attitudes, institutions, and structures which create and sustain peaceful societies, combines that with systems thinking to then come up with a transformational concept for how we could go about better running our societies.

Steve Killelea: But really, if I look back on it, peace to me happened by accident. So, my background's in business, I've set up two international IT companies. First one ended up publicly listed on NASDAQ, second on the Australian stock exchange. From that I accumulated quite a bit of money.

Steve Killelea: And so I set up a family foundation to work with the poorest of the poor. And so it's done a bit over 220 different projects down different parts of the world and direct beneficiaries about 3.6 million people. And so, working with the poorest, the poor took me into a lot of war zones, near post-war zones. And it would've been northeast Kivu in the Congo, I was walking through there one day and I suddenly

wondered what is the opposite of all these stressed out countries I'm spending time in? What are the most peaceful countries and what could I learn from them to bring to my projects?

Steve Killelea: And really it was a fantasy question. We all have these fantasy questions. But what was profound, so I got back to Sydney, searched the internet, and couldn't find any rankings, the countries of the world by their peacefulness. I thought, wow, that's important. So, that's how the Global Peace Index was born. But out of that comes a really very, very profound question and profound realization: Is that a simple business guy like myself can be walking through Africa and wonder, what are the most peaceful nations, and it hasn't been done, and how much do we know about peace? If you can't measure something, can you truly understand it? If you can't measure it, how do you know whether your actions are actually helping you or hindering you?

Deqa Aden: You touched a little bit about positive peace. My question for you is what is negative peace and why is it important for us to distinguish positive peace from negative peace?

Steve Killelea: Yeah, that's a very good question. But I think the question coming back from that is what is peace? And so peace means different things to different people. So, you can hear a politician speak and peace is when the war stops, but that doesn't mean that you've actually got a peaceful society. You've just got one where you haven't got two armies fighting. There's also the concept of inner peace. And so inner peace may be described as the absence of conflictive emotions, certainly the concepts in the East of inner peace, of what they would call happiness, which is very different than the Western concept of happiness.

Steve Killelea: So for me, peace and the definition used for peace is relative to what you're trying to achieve. So, you think, well, what aspect of peace am I trying to understand here? And then you look at a definition to match.

Steve Killelea: So now, if we look at the Global Peace Index, we use the definition called the absence of violence or fear of violence as the definition of peace. And that's what you could call negative peace. Now it's very, very good. It's a definition just about everyone can agree on. You don't get too much argument. And it's something which leads to being able to get metrics to be able to measure peace. So, if you look at the Global Peace Index, it's got three different domains. So, it's got internal safety and security, maybe things like homicide rates, violent crime, terrorist acts, number of police, number of people in jail, etc., ongoing conflict and militarization. So, you can measure them. Now that's very, very good because now you know the state of peace. You know the state of peace with all the countries you're measuring – in our case, it's 163.

Steve Killelea: And then you also understand the velocity of peace in those countries. Is it improving or is it getting worse? And along a whole range of dimensions. So, that's truly, truly insightful. But what it doesn't do is tell you what it takes to create a peaceful society. Now that is what positive peace is. So, that's positive peace. And so we describe that as the attitude, institutions, and structures which create and sustain peaceful societies.

Steve Killelea: Now what sets that apart from the work of other people working in these fields is we've derived this through mathematical modeling and statistics. So, we've got something like 50,000 different data sets, indexes, attitudinal surveys at the country level in Sydney. So, what we do is mathematical modeling, statistical analysis against those data sets to find out the factors which are most closely associated with the Global Peace Index. And so those factors then, we take them, we do further analysis to be able to clump the

ones which are most statistically significant together, that then forms a framework, or it's eight pillars, of positive peace.

Steve Killelea: Now the beauty of that is, one, it's not my ideas on what creates peace or the researchers' ideas on what creates peace. It's factually driven within a positive peace index and not set by us. They're dependent on the way, on the strength of the correlations with the Global Peace Index. Now, as we pull that all together, we can now create a positive peace index and that's really quite profound because that now gives us the ability to be able to look at how a country's momentum's changing on the factors underlying what creates peace.

Steve Killelea: But what's more profound is what we found is when we took this Positive Peace Index, the same factors, which create peace, also create a whole range of other things which we think are really important in society. Such as high per capita income. In fact, countries which are improving in positive peace on average have 2% per annum higher GDP growth rate than countries which are decreasing. Perform better on measures of ecological sustainability, perform better on measures of your wellbeing and happiness and on measures of inclusion.

Steve Killelea: So, from that, what we derived is that positive peace, in many ways, describes an optimal environment in which human potential can flourish. And that's quite important. We then take the positive peace and then combine it with a whole set of systems, thinking, and theory to better understand the way societies operate. And that is when we start to get looking at the transformational way, Western governments and societies, about how we go about doing societal development.

Reema Saleh: Can you talk a little bit more about the Global Peace Index and the methodology in scoring countries?

Steve Killelea: Sure. So, if we look at the Global Peace index, as mentioned earlier on consists of three different domains, first one's safety and security, the second is ongoing conflict, and the third is militarization. So, we bring these together to create these three dimensions to create a compass and index. Consists of 23 different measures. We have an expert panel that looks at the indicators and assesses them and makes recommendations on what indicators we should and shouldn't include. And the index itself has been slowly evolving over time. Having the three different domains, you can take all of it as composite index and see what's happening and where the changes are or alternatively, you take each of the domains separately and see the momentum and direction of them. So, one of the more fascinating things which comes out of it is if we look back over the last decade, more countries have actually improved in peace than deteriorated. Most people wouldn't believe that, would they?

Steve Killelea: In fact, we've had 86 countries improve and 75 deteriorate. However, peace globally actually deteriorated over that time. And that speaks simply because when countries fall in peace, they fall faster than they improve. Takes a lot longer to improve in peace. You need the outbreak of the conflict or something, and it really drops significantly. So, if we come back and we look at, let's say domains like safety and security, it consists of a number of different measures, which are able to balance each other out. So, some of the things would be, let's say, the number of police, the levels of incarceration, levels of violent crime and homicide. And all those come together. So, if you have a police state, let's say a spy in every 10,000, it'd be really quite peaceful in terms of violent crime. But on the other hand, it's not a very peaceful place to live. So we look at the level of policing, the level of incarceration, and the level of violent crime. We also got the availability of small arms within the society. That's also a negative. We also measure the number of violent demonstrations,

let's say, and a number of other measures. State-sponsored terror on its citizens, that'd be another measure which we have in there as well. So that's the safety and security. So that's really focusing on the internal.

Steve Killelea: Now militarization, that consists of a number of different indicators. So it's like percentage of GDP spent on the military, number of troops per 100,000 people in the population, sophistication of the weapons – countries with nuclear weapons score the worst possible score on that. And then the size of the imports and exports of military equipment as well.

Steve Killelea: And now, so if you look at the definition which we use for the Global Peace Index, absence of violence or fear of violence. So some people would say, well, the military keeps the peace. In some ways, that's a very, very true statement, but why do you have a military? It's, one, because you fear your neighbors and that you need to protect yourself against them. So that's fear of violence. Alternatively, you really do have to keep yourself safe or that you want the military to exert geopolitical influence. And that comes back to the use of the military for a country's own advantage. So that's the reason the military's in there. And so we're neutral on the military in terms of what the size of the military should be. Obviously, we don't live in a peaceful world. We need military, but the size of the military really comes down to choice for each individual country. What's the level you need to feel safe without it being then used extensively overseas in conflicts, which didn't need to happen?

Steve Killelea: The final domain is ongoing conflict. And so ongoing conflict measures the number of people killed in conflicts. It measures the intensity of the conflicts, and also the number of the conflicts as well which is going on. One of the more interesting things which is coming out of the work we've done, over the last 15 years what we've seen has been a growing global inequality in the levels of peace. So the countries which are most peaceful are becoming more peaceful, while the countries which are less peaceful are becoming less peaceful. What we find is once you actually get into a conflict trap, very, very hard to get out of it. And similarly, once you get very, very high levels of peace, we haven't had any countries with very high levels of peace, but major falling peace while we've been doing the index.

Deqa Aden: What are some best strategies to collect data from fragile countries? And how can we ensure accuracy when there's still some sort of violence that's happening? And what has been your strategy to ensure that we collect data from everywhere?

Steve Killelea: Yeah, well, we cover 163 countries, so about 99.7% of the population in the world. Some countries, the smaller ones, you just can't get valid data. So there's two ways of doing it. One is you use whatever official statistics you've got. The second is through using expert assessment. So if you're looking at the indicators within the Global Peace Index, they're a combination of the two. And so also you go for the best data resources that you can get your hands on.

Steve Killelea: So if you can go down into some countries, let's say DRC, for example, getting an accurate rate on a homicide rate is very hard, but you'll have estimates there. And the reality is that you are out by 10%, 15%, because you've got the 23 indicators from different directions, it doesn't matter too much. So whether something's 120 on the Global Peace Index or 130, it's not really so important - you're still getting an idea of the relative peace. But the best way of doing it, you balance it out with the best statistics you can get then combined with some things which are expert assessment. So like political instability, that'd be the example of one indicator which we use which is expert assessment.

Reema Saleh: What are the difficulties that come with quantifying this kind of data?

Steve Killelea: One is the availability of data. So it's a lot of things we'd like to measure, but there aren't yet decent data sets to measure them. Domestic violence would probably be one good example. The other thing is there's political dimension in this. And I think that's one of the reasons why we were the first organization to really do it. So because we've done a lot of work, let's say, with the European Union, for example, and they'll measure all the countries around the world by a level of peacefulness, but they won't measure anything inside the EU. Just too politically difficult.

Steve Killelea: So at times, you've got to be very, very sensitive to the political issues around this. So the mechanism we've taken with inside the Institute is we talk to the data. We don't talk to the politics. And then we let people draw their conclusions from the data. And so we've got a quite rigorous standard for just the way we talk about things so that we don't talk about them from a moral, emotional, or political lens wherever we can. But at times you'll find things like, let's say, democracies are highly correlated with peace. And so democracies are correlated with a number of other things as well. So we try and let the data do the talking.

Deqa Aden: We were wondering if you can share with us some trends about the Global Peace Index for 2021.

Steve Killelea: So if we're looking over the last decade, there's a number of trends you can see there. The first, as I mentioned, more countries have improved in peace than have deteriorated. However, when we look at overall peace, it deteriorated by 2% over the period. And it's back to what I said earlier on is that it's a lot easier for countries to deteriorate in peace than it is to improve in peace. It's also a system theory concept of tractable planes, which I've already mentioned. So a tractable plane's an area where countries get pulled into, and once you are in it, very hard to get out of. And so that's high levels of peace and low levels of peace. Then those two are tractable planes. So whereas, we find the top and the bottom of the index doesn't move around a lot. Whereas, the middle you bounce around quite a bit.

Steve Killelea: One of the other things which is interesting, I think, is militarization. So militarizations have been improving for over a decade. And then in the last three years, we've seen that trend change. And so we've now seen percentage of GDP spent on the military increasing in more countries than deteriorating and seeing the number of soldiers per 100,000 populations starting to increase after years over decreasing as well. And so I think what we're seeing is change. And this change in what appeared to be an historic trend which had been going on probably since the '80s, the end of the Cold War, and I think that's because of increased tensions in the South China Sea. It's all the militarization of China, and also an unraveling of relationships between Russia and Europe and NATO as well.

Steve Killelea: So I think these are sort of the underlying facts, not good. Violent demonstrations are on the increase. If looking at violent demonstrations, they're up 161% in the last decade. That's just steadily increasing each year. And down in the United States, if you look carefully, you can see the same trend going on there as well. So that'd be a few of the things. Homicides globally have improved, so that's an encouraging sign from one direction as well. So there are a few of the highlights which we can see out of studying the Global Peace Index.

Deqa Aden: So Iceland has been ranked the most peaceful country for the last 10 years. We are wondering why is that the case?

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Steve Killelea: Yeah, well, there's always the standard joke in Iceland. Well, it's so cold, no one goes outside, do they? But I think that's a bit of a throwaway line. So I spent quite a bit of time in Iceland over the years, beautiful country. Any of your listeners ever want to have a great holiday, go to Iceland. It's one of the most spectacularly stunning places I've ever been in. But if you look at Icelandic history, it's been peaceful for a long, long while. And part of it is the environment: it's fiercely hostile. It's one of the most hostile environments in which people live. And I think what that's done is means if you're out and you've got big distances between people, if you're out and you get caught in a blizzard, you just go to the nearest house and people will welcome you in. In fact, up to about probably 30 years ago, no one locked their houses up. And if you turned up at someone's house, you're quite okay socially to go in and pour yourself a cup of tea. Put a kettle on the stove and have a cup of tea. Can you imagine doing that in Chicago or Sydney, for that matter? You'd be arrested.

Steve Killelea: But if you go back even in history, there's only been one real war fought internally within the country and that goes back to about 1200 AD, so a long, long while ago. Similarly, what happened is the men would be on boats. They'd go away for long periods of time because they had to go to get goods, bring them back, and things like that. And so the communities themselves were very, very good at integrating together.

Steve Killelea: And so I think you've got all these things which go back. One is the environment. Two is the history because they weren't into killing each other. They were into reconciling things. There's a place in Iceland where you've got two tectonic plates meeting, because it's one of the most volcanic active places in the worlds. Literally, you've got the two plates meeting, and one plate's 20 meters higher than the other plate, just the most significant place like it anywhere in the world. But they used to meet there for a big huddle once a year for about two weeks, and everyone from Iceland would come around and that's where they'd set their laws. And then the laws would be set, but you never had police or military to enforce them because the country was too scattered. It was up to the people of the country to actually enforce the laws themselves. So you've got all these rich traditions in it as well, which also I think lead to that underlying sense of high levels of peacefulness.

Deqa Aden: Now that we've discussed the current key trends in the Global Peace Index, we would like your opinion on climate change. When I think of the Global Peace Index, the first thing that comes to mind is political violence, not necessarily climate change. We were wondering why is climate change mostly excluded from the peace talks, and will there be a shift in putting climate change at the heart of peace and security discussions?

Steve Killelea: I think it's a complex issue. We've got the absence of violence or fear of violence as the definition of peace in the Global Peace Index. So putting in climate change would mess the Index up, it wouldn't be an accurate index anymore. Climate change is a very serious threat going forward, and it's going to be an amplifier on conflict, I think everyone sort of agrees with that. However, what it's amplifying is a lot of ecological degradation, and the ecological degradation is there now, and ecological degradation is a driver of conflict.

Steve Killelea: So we just put out a report, an ecological threat report, about three weeks ago. So part of it was to align with COP26, part of it was to get people focused as there's a lot of ecological threats there which we need to address now, which are drivers of conflict. For example, if we look at the 15 countries with the worst ecological damage, 15 of them are currently in conflict and four of them are on our watch lists for further large falls in peace. Now, if we look at what we call hotspot countries - there's 30 of them - so they're

countries with very high ecological damage or threat, and also countries with low societal resilience. And we use positive peace to measure societal resilience. Of the 30 countries which are hotspot countries there, 28 of them are in the bottom half of the Global Peace Index.

Steve Killelea: So again, you're driving home this nexus. There's 12 countries in the world, all of them are in Africa, which are going to more than double their population in the next 30 years. Niger is the worst, it's with a projected population increase of 161%. So these countries are already ecologically degraded and stressed, and so these increases in population are just going to increase it further. And then climate change over the top of it is then just going to act as an amplifier yet again, increasing the droughts, increasing the floods. So I think climate change is going to have a real impact on the planet in the next 30 to 100 years, we really need to be taking what measures we can to reduce it.

Steve Killelea: But climate change is just one of a whole range of stresses we've got. Biodiversity is another one, it's very hard for a lot of us to fully understand the ecology and our dependence on a healthy ecology, but it's there. A lack of water is another one, and there are other stresses as well. So if we're looking at let's say food insecurity, this is one which is intimately tied in with this ecological degradation which we study and conflict, so if you look at food insecurity, it's increased 44% since 2014. And if you went back for decades prior to that, it'd been improving every year, but since 2014 it's got worse every year. In fact, it's 44% worse than what it was in 2014.

Steve Killelea: So today 2.3 billion people are food insecure, that's about 30% of the population of planet. But if you went to Africa, what you'd find is that two thirds of the population are food insecure, and getting worse. And the whole population of Africa is meant to increase by 90%, it was projected to increase by 90% in the next 30 years. So these are urgent problems which are existing there today, and so we really need to start to look at and address it. And we've got to address it in systemic ways, so we need to be looking at the whole of the system.

Steve Killelea: And so the Sahel in Africa's a pretty good example. So if you look at the Sahel in Africa for example, you've got Islamic militants there which have got loyalty to the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda, so you've got refugee issues. You've got ecological degradation, lack of food, lack of a water, water is needed for the food, you've got weak governance as well. And so we need to start look at all these issues systemically, how can you pull them together and do things to improve the societal systems to tackle many of these things simultaneously? But the systems we use, and all the institutions I should say, we use are siloed.

Steve Killelea: So let's come back to the Sahel, you've got military operations there, we'll just look at this through the lens of the UN. So you've got military operations going on there, that could be UN Peacekeeping. You've got UNHCR for refugees, you've got FAO which looks at the food, you've got UNDP which looks at development. But even it comes down to siloes, like WaSH programs and standard developmental programs somewhere else. And I could keep going, but you're getting an idea. So if these are systemic problems, we need institutions which operate systemically to be able to try and tackle them and solve them.

Steve Killelea: And in the book *Peace in the Age of Chaos*, that's what a lot of is about, we've got to start rather than seeing these as siloed problems, a military problem, a refugee problem, a development problem, a population problem. So you've got the UN Population Fund working on family planning, another silo, it's how do we bring them together to look at a specific area and how do we now tackle that? Weak governance

as well, so if you look at a lot of the states there, they've got very, very weak governance and very, very weak rule. So now if you're looking at building governance, well, that's back into the IMF and the World Bank, how do we bring it all together? That'd be the major thing that I'm talking about. And climate change fits as one of the issues under all of that, but a very, very big and very, very important issue.

Reema Saleh: You write a lot in your book about the importance of systems thinking and how the elements of peaceful societies come together to make resiliency. How does this approach work to measure a country's resilience to shocks or future conflict?

Steve Killelea: So what we've found is that positive peace is an excellent measure of a system. So what we've done is, the way it's been derived, it's eight different pillars. And so eight's not too many, most people can get their head around it, but it's enough to describe a such societal system. None of this is counterintuitive, things like well-functioning government, strong business environment, equitable distribution of resources, high levels of human capital, acceptance of the rights of others, good relationships with neighbors, low levels of corruption, and so they all come together systemically.

Steve Killelea: Now, what's important when you're looking at this now, and you're taking the positive peace, what we find is it's very, very good at being able to predict future falls in peace. So in that way, you'd say it is a measure of resilience. And so peace in many ways, it's a relative concept, it's only relative to another entity. So show a country as peaceful, that's dependent on the other countries you're looking at, isn't it. Or is it resilience, show a country as resilient, it's depending on what else you're looking at.

Steve Killelea: So what we find is when there's a big difference between the measures of positive peace and the measures of the Global Peace Index, it's a good predictor of large future falls in peace, so you can see that as a measure of resilience. So countries where the positive peace score is much, much lower, the actual peace of the country, they tend to fall. And now when we are using that as a model, we call that a positive peace deficit model. We can get 10 years out, we can get 70 to 90% accuracy in large falls of peace, depending on the number of countries we pick. The smaller the number of countries we pick, the more accurate the model is, which gives you an idea of the strength. So also looking at resiliency. Another example, let's look at civil resistance movements. Countries high in positive peace, they have less civil resistance movements, they last for a shorter amount of time, more moderate in their aims, more likely to achieve their aims, and are far, far, far less violent.

Steve Killelea: And so as we come back to positive peace and again systemically, we see that things which create a peaceful society such as positive peace, also create a lot of the other things which we think are important, which I mentioned earlier on, things like high per capita income, better measures of wellbeing, happiness, better measures on inclusion, better measure on ecology, better measures on development. So again, coming back and we're seeing that if you can get the societal system right, what happens is everything else follows. An example that'll come back, the ecological degradation. So no country, which has high positive peace has really poor ecological degradation. This comes back, a lot of it, to the social system. It all comes together. So if you've got a well-functioning society, you capture the amount of water which you need to sustain your culture. From that, you've got productive agriculture, you should've got good government policies to oversee agriculture, and you've got efficient markets for the distribution of the produce. Your countries like Singapore, where you can't grow enough, you've got export industries which get the income so that you can import food. And also, the country's high in positive peace in this age have all got very small

population growth. So from that angle, they're quite sustainable. That's just an example. It's when you get the system right, it's self-perpetuating. It looks after itself.

Steve Killelea: And countries which are high in positive peace are quite adaptive. I mentioned seven of the eight pillars earlier on, the one I left out was free flow of information. So if you look at the way these things function, they come together. I'll just give a simple example of just how difficult is to find causality in all this. And there's certainly things which do push the system in a particular direction, but think of well functioning government, low levels of corruption, and free flow of information. Free flow of information could be epitomized by a free press, but it's more than that. So does government affect corruption or does corruption affect government? Similarly, does the free flow of information affect the way corruption's done? What is corruption? Stymieing the free flow of information. And similarly, is the government and the things it does affected by a free press or free flow of information, or does the government pass regulations to control and affect the press?

Steve Killelea: You can't pull any of it apart, can you? It's all circular. So as you start to move in the systems side of things, first thing one wants to think about is path dependency. That's the path which a culture's been on. We spoke about Iceland earlier on and we could see the path dependency of Iceland. It's a positive path dependency, which has left them with a high level of peace now. All cultures have these path dependencies. It's their history, it's their cultural norms. And so you really need to be able to understand them, because they're actually fueling the system in a particular direction. So you really need to understand them and understand what needs to change. That'd be one concept.

Steve Killelea: You've also got concept of homeostasis, or steady state. So systems try and maintain a steady state. Look what's been happening in the west with the COVID-19, the way we've been attempting to get the system and keep it in balance. This concept of a steady state, all societies are built like that. If you get outbreaks of crime, you apply more policing. Inflation breaks out, you increase interest rates, et cetera, et cetera. You find all these mechanisms, which are called encoded norms built within societies, to try and keep it in a steady state. This may be a good or may be a bad thing. If it's the steady state, which entrenches corruption, that's not so good, is it? Or it's a steady state, which entrenches the police state, that's not a good thing either. So one needs to look at this and understand it from that perspective. And so, one of the things is you've got mutual feedback loops.

Steve Killelea: What happens there, and think of two political parties as a good example. You have an input into the system, you get a response, and the response comes back and alters the input. Systems are just made up of those kind of things all the time, very different than the physical world. So think of two political parties. One makes a policy manifesto, another party now responds to that policy manifesto, and the first party now adjusts and comes back. So you got this interactive game going on, where one has an action, the other responds, the other has another action in response to it, and so you have those things going on all the time through the system. Could think of the same thing with corruption. You bring in the law to control corruption, and corruption then manifests and starts to take a new form and get active in areas where it wasn't necessarily active before, because the system is pushing it down a different direction. And this could come back to then your cultural norms, your path dependency, what is the public perception of what's acceptable corruption? Varies from society to society.

Deqa Aden: So finally, I would like to ask you, what is the biggest takeaways policy makers should take from the book *Peace in the Age of Chaos*?

Steve Killelea: Yeah, well, there's a number of takeaways, but I'll just hit a couple of points. I think the first we haven't really covered in this interview is peace comes with an economic dividend. Don't underestimate how strong it is, because I gave the example earlier on of the 2% higher GDP for countries which are high in positive peace compared to countries which had deteriorated. That, when you compound it over 60 years, is a profoundly big difference. But if you look at cost of violence of the global economy in 2020, it was about $15 trillion. That's about 11.6% from memory of GDP. That's a lot. None of us can imagine a world which is peaceful, but we can all imagine a world which is 10% more peaceful, and that would be equivalent of adding three new economies to the world the size of Ireland, Switzerland, and Denmark. So peace is an achievable, tangible idea and comes with strong economic dividends, which is a key interest for all politicians.

Steve Killelea: The second thing I'd say is that societies operated systems and we don't actually get it. We've got a lot of systems, we think, yeah, there's a health system, there's a policing system, an education system, but we don't understand the principles of systems thinking and the actual study of systems from a societal perspective is still in its very, very early stages. That's a lot of the stuff I talk about in the book, and a lot of the stuff we're now starting to really study at the Institute for Economics and Peace. The second thing I'd say is that we can't go about business as usual. The big issues we've got on the planet, they're global in nature, things like climate change, ever decreasing biodiversity, full use of the fresh water on the planet, but underpinning many of those is overpopulation.

Steve Killelea: Unless we have a world which is basically peaceful, we'll never get levels of trust, cooperation, and inclusiveness to solve these problems, therefore peace is a prerequisite for the survival of society as we know it in the 21st century. That's probably different than any other epoch in human history. In the 21st century, it's in everyone's self-interest, but we have to understand the system dynamics and we have to operate our political systems more systemically, because our issues today are global in nature, and they're all systemic.

Reema Saleh: Thank you for listening to this episode of Root of Conflict featuring Steve Killelea. This episode was produced and edited by Aishwarya Kumar and Reema Saleh. Special thanks to UC3P and the Pearson Institute for their continued support of this series. For more information on the Pearson Institute's research and events, visit thepearsoninstitute.org and follow them on Twitter.