

Seton Hall University

**eRepository @ Seton Hall**

---

Center for Peace and Conflict Studies  
Newsletter

Center for Peace and Conflict Studies

---

5-2021

## **Bridging Academia and Practice on Peace - May 2021**

The Center for Peace and Conflict Studies

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarship.shu.edu/cpcs\\_newsletter](https://scholarship.shu.edu/cpcs_newsletter)

---

### **Recommended Citation**

The Center for Peace and Conflict Studies, "Bridging Academia and Practice on Peace - May 2021" (2021).  
*Center for Peace and Conflict Studies Newsletter*. 1.  
[https://scholarship.shu.edu/cpcs\\_newsletter/1](https://scholarship.shu.edu/cpcs_newsletter/1)



## Newsletter

May 2021

The Center for Peace and Conflict Studies

### *Bridging academia and practice on peace*

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

It is with much hope that we at the Center for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPCS) write to you. Since our [January newsletter](#), the global vaccination campaign on COVID-19 has gathered pace, potentially signaling that the worst of the pandemic has passed. We hope that by the end of the year we can return to meeting with our international colleagues in person, to learn and work together. COVID-19 is not merely a public health crisis; it has affected conflict dynamics worldwide by impacting relationships between states, and between communities living in them. The pandemic has also triggered a global rise in nationalism and xenophobia. As such, the work of the broader peace community has never been so important.

The Center is making a modest contribution to the broader peace community by providing a platform for academics and practitioners to share their ideas and learning. In March, we held the inaugural discussion in our learning process “[Women Peacemakers Before and After 1325: Learning Process on the Role of Women Peacemakers Globally](#),” in which Rajaa Altalli described the impact of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325 on the work of women’s groups in promoting peace in Syria. We are honored that Rajaa will join the School of Diplomacy and International Relations as a Sergio Vieira de Mello Endowed Visiting Chair to further this important learning on women peacemakers. Further discussions in the learning process are planned for the Fall semester. In April, we hosted Dr. Hans Gutbrod as he presented a new experimental framework on the [ethics of commemoration](#). The question of how to deal with the past is critical in peace processes globally. We at the

Center are interested in how we can encourage those living through conflict to engage with the past in constructive ways that help to transform relationships and build hope in the future. Hans' framework provides one way of approaching this question and we look forward to exploring its application with him.

Below you will find short articles from Hans and Rajaa describing their learning and how it can be applied. You will also find a brief summary of our project and research work during the Spring semester.

Thank you and best wishes,



Zheng Wang  
Director



David Wood  
Director of Peacebuilding and Statebuilding  
in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)

### **Towards an ethics of commemoration**



How to commemorate ethically is a question that many societies are grappling with. "Ours is an age of memory rather than history," the historian Timothy Snyder [lamented in a 2013 article](#). In other words, the discipline of history does not necessarily help us when we try to assess how best to deal with the kind of past that can overwhelm the future. The questions of commemoration are often political, affecting how people legitimize and vindicate their actions, and judge or dismiss others. What, then, could be a framework to

approach the question of commemoration? One potential answer is what we could call an **Ethics of Political Commemoration** based loosely on Just War Theory, as originally developed by Thomas Aquinas. This approach uses a set of *Ius ad Memoriam* (*how do we justify commemoration?*) and *Ius in Memoria* (*what is appropriate commemoration?*) criteria to inform decisions on how to commemorate, based on whether commemorative actions help to build a better peace.

We suggest four *Ius ad Memoriam* criteria. The most important is *Right Intention* – are we trying to gain advantage over ‘the other’ or to build a better joint future? Commemoration is plausible as an ethical undertaking if, for example, it helps to build bridges of empathy, if it promotes mutual understanding, or if it supports re-conciliation. The goals to be pursued should also have a *Reasonable Chance of Success*. This stipulation was essential to Just War Theory, with the idea that enterprises become unethical if they create cycles of violence. *Legitimate Authority*, as a criterion, seeks to ensure that commemoration speaks for the experience of wider society in a compassionate way, rather than being used by elite groups to strengthen their authority and voice over society. Comparatively less attention should be given to *Just Cause*, which currently is often a primary focus as sides seek to establish absoluteness of innocence and guilt.

There are also four criteria for *Ius in Memoria*. Commemoration should *Transcend the Collectives* to put the emphasis back on treating people as individuals rather than group representatives. Ethical commemoration should *Exit Circular Narratives* that trap people in debilitating interpretative loops that distract from their own agency and responsibility. Groups should *Assert Moral Autonomy* and justify their actions in universal terms, rather than excusing transgressions with reference to what others, in turn, have done. Finally, commemoration should encourage *Contained Unfathomability*: precision with dates, locations, and names can help to tether past trauma. Conversely, there is something to be said for general categories when it comes to numbers, as loss of large magnitude, remains, as Albert Camus put it, “just a mist drifting through the imagination.”

So, how can we apply these criteria? This Ethics of Political Commemoration can potentially help debates on the past, not with a view to resolution but at least to provide a better structure for disagreements. In the absence of a robust paradigm, disagreement can escalate in part because sides feel that dimensions that are important to them are disregarded entirely. In this way, the Ethics of Political Commemoration also provides a paradigm to describe when commemoration is done well. One standout example is the [Aurora Prize](#) from Armenia, which takes deep historical trauma as a starting point for recognizing “those who risk their lives, health or freedom to save the lives, health or freedom of others.” As the discussion during the talk illustrated, the criteria can also be applied closer to home in the U.S. and Europe as we grapple with our own past.

A video of the lecture is available [here](#).



**Dr. Hans Gutbrod** teaches at Ilia State University in Tbilisi, Georgia. He has worked in the Caucasus region since 1999 and regularly publishes on political, economic, and social developments in the region. He holds a Ph.D. in International Relations from the London School of Economics.



## Enabling women peacemakers in Syria



The Syrian conflict has provided an important opportunity to experiment with approaches and mechanisms for delivering Security Council Resolution 1325 (SCR 1325) on Women, Peace, and Security, setting important global precedents in women's participation. However, SCR 1325 has only helped so much. Women's participation can be symbolic, with limited leverage over, or meaningful involvement in, political decision-making, despite the impact that women have in promoting peace and human rights locally.

At the *political* level, there has been a substantial increase in women's participation since the outset of the Syrian conflict. With support from the U.N. and some U.N. member states, Syrian activists used SCR 1325 to lobby for greater women's participation. As a result, women comprise about 30% of the country's Constitutional Committee, which brings together the Syrian government, the opposition delegation, and civil society to negotiate a new constitution. SCR 1325 also provided the impetus for the formation of the Syrian Women's Advisory Board (WAB) of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary General for Syria, providing advice on the Geneva Peace Process, the constitution, and detainees, among other topics. Finally, SCR 1325 helped establish the Civil Society Support Room (CSSR), where representatives of civil society organizations engage with the Office of the Special Envoy, the international community, and wider Syrian society. Women make up about 50% of the participants in CSSR.

The use of SCR 1325 as a tool to guarantee better women's participation in the Constitutional Committee, and through the WAB and CSSR, was pioneering, demonstrating foresight and ambition by the U.N. Special Envoy, parts of the diplomatic community, and most importantly Syrian women. However, while their

participation has as a result increased, women still struggle to be involved as meaningful decision-makers in the political process. This is most evident in the WAB, which has an ‘advisory’ status, instead of a full membership status in the peace process. Syrian women have consequently had to accept less influence in order to guarantee their participation.

At the *local* level, Syrian women have been at the forefront of attempts to address human rights violations, including the use of chemical weapons, the targeting of civilian areas, detentions, and torture, winning some important victories on behalf of Syrians caught up in the armed violence. For example, thousands of Syrian women from across the country came together to successfully lobby the U.N. Security Council for a ceasefire in Northwest Syria. Similarly, local mediators have worked diligently for the release of political prisoners nationally. Women have demonstrated an ability to promote peace and human rights locally beyond that of men. However, this work has not been enabled directly by SCR 1325’s protection and prevention provisions, which are still very limited. Women’s impact in transforming conflict dynamics on the ground should be seen to provide the legitimacy for more meaningful participation at the political level.

The experience of Syria provides three important lessons for how women can be better enabled to promote peace and human rights. Firstly, it is essential to ensure that men and women are treated equally in all types of humanitarian discussions and peace processes. The criteria for women participants should never be any different than those applied to male participants. However, all too often women are required to jump through additional hoops to demonstrate their legitimacy. Secondly, women’s impact in local peace efforts should not be undervalued, but rather treated as of equal importance as political processes. The U.N. could assist through establishing separate mechanisms for channeling support and legitimacy to local women peacemakers. Thirdly, the more women that are included in humanitarian and peace processes, the more such processes are responsive to women’s needs. 30% should represent a minimum target, not the ceiling for women’s participation.

A video of the lecture is available [here](#)

**Rajaa Altalli** is the co-founder of the [Center for Civil Society and Democracy](#), a Syrian-founded NGO. She serves as one of the 16 Syrian women appointed by the UN Office of the Special Envoy to the Women’s Advisory Board.



## Center’s Project News

The Center has increased its global peacebuilding activities in 2021:

- CPCS is working on a book project titled *Superpower Dialectics*, which is based on its “Luce Dialogue on U.S.-China Relations During and After the Pandemic,” conducted since April 2020, wherein 55 U.S. and Chinese experts came together during its 14

sessions. For this publication, each of the seven main chapters will comprise short essays by paired American and Chinese analysts and one commentary by each on the other's arguments. We plan to publish the book by the end of this year.

- CPCS agreed a contract with UNDP to support the development of a regional strategy aimed at strengthening inclusive conflict prevention and peacebuilding solutions in the Arab States region.
- CPCS agreed a contract to support the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs in Conflict Sensitivity Programme Management across its work in the Regional Cooperation Program Middle East and North Africa.
- CPCS has been commissioned by GIZ to undertake an Integrated Peace and Conflict Assessment, including a strong gender dimension, as a baseline for their Peace Support Process Yemen programming from 2022 onward.
- CPCS wrapped-up its partnership with Search for Common Ground on the Yemen Conflict Sensitivity Platform.

## **Publications and News Features**

So far in 2021 our team members published the following academic journals, policy publications and news features:

- Zheng Wang: Western Companies Face Nationalist Backlash in China over Criticism from Home Countries, *PBS Newshour*, May 2021. [Link](#)
- R. Joseph Huddleston, David Wood, Daniela A. Maquera Sardon, and Jarrett Dang: "Conflict has changed Yemen's Economy – what that means for peace," *Political Violence at a Glance*, 09 April 2021. [Link](#).
- David Wood, R. Joseph Huddleston and Harshana Ghoorhoo: "The best way to help Yemenis survive might not be what aid organizations think," *Washington Post Monkey Cage*, 06 April 2021. [Link](#).
- R. Joseph Huddleston and David Wood: "Functional Markets in Yemen's War Economy," *Journal of Illicit Economies and Development*, 2(2), pp.204–221. DOI. 2021. [Link](#).
- R. Joseph Huddleston, "Foulweather Friends: Violence and Third Party Support in Self-Determination Conflicts," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 16 February 2021. [Link](#)
- Fredline M'Cormack-Hale: "Africans want elections, but fewer believe they work", *The Washington Post*, 12 February, 2021. [Link](#).
- Zheng Wang: "12 Heads from the Garden of Perfect Brightness," *99% Invisible*, February 16, 2021. [Link](#).

Read more about our [Publications](#)

## **Team News**

Our team has continued to go from strength to strength, and we look forward to meeting you in our new office space in the School of Diplomacy and International Relations in the Fall! [Visit our website to meet our Team](#)

- Jocelyn Anderson and Zahraa Alribeawi have joined our team to work on our Lebanon and Worldview projects (respectively).
- It is with great sadness that we say goodbye to our colleague Hussein Ibrahim. We are very proud that Hussein has been appointed as MENA Region Director at Ideas Beyond Borders.
- We have appointed Sushant Naidu, a School of Diplomacy and International Relations Alumni, as Hussein's replacement, leading on our work in Yemen.

Read [CPCS's January newsletter](#)



[CPCS, School of Diplomacy and International Relations, Seton Hall University.](#)  
[973-275-2515](#)  
[CPCS@shu.edu](mailto:CPCS@shu.edu)