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The *Journal of Transdisciplinary Peace Praxis (JTPP)* is a peer-reviewed, biannual, subscription-based, scholarly journal of contemplative cutting edge research and practice on subjects related to human social flourishing and peace.

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Editor-in-Chief's Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to the sixteenth (XVI) issue of the *Journal of Transdisciplinary Peace Praxis (JTTP)*, Volume 8, No. 2. Thank you for helping us celebrate our sweet sixteenth! We are happy to have you here and hope you will encourage your friends and colleagues to join us! From our first issues' critical lens on the world to this current issue's diversity of critical articles on topics as far ranging from peace professionalism to interreligious dialogue, the *JTTP* remains committed to supporting collaborative transdisciplinary peace scholarship. Our desire to break down disciplinary boundaries continues with the excellent pieces you see in this sixteenth issue. More than simple welcome, this introduction is an invitation to build our reach and collaborative vision of world peace. As Johan Galtung, often seen as the father of peace studies, once wrote: 'Peace is not an attribute of any one party, but of the relation between parties.'¹ This reality remains the *JTTP*'s guiding light and direction as we release this sweet sixteen issue.

The first article entitled 'Peace Professionalism as Praxis: Between Theory, Practice, and Pedagogy' by Nathan Funk, Philip Onguny, Gordon Breedyk, Evelyn Voigt and Marjan Montazemi represents a perfect example of the transdisciplinary collaboration, or 'a better term is a joint project',² of scholars working in partnership across disciplines. Exploring peace professionalism and the pros and cons of professionalising the Peace and Conflict Studies discipline they document and interrogate the Peace Professionalism Project (PPP) and unearth 'concerns about political and structural conditions that constrain peace practice' as well as the outlining the 'drawbacks in pursuing professional legitimacy' (p.17). This is an article that all those teaching and practising as peacebuilders should read. It raises important questions that have dogged peace practitioners for decades—namely how do we get policy makers and political leaders to understand, and engage, the rich expertise of peacebuilding practitioners? As the authors say in their conclusion: 'Emergent findings from the PPP's large dataset suggests that there is much room for ongoing dialogue about professionalism as well as for further development and experimentation' (p.41). This opening article lends well to the second article's autoethnographic analysis of online community.

In 'From Dialogue to Ripple Effects in Peace: A Transformative Autoethnographic Analysis of Acquaint's Platform' Yehuda Silverman uses 'transformative autoethnography' (p.49) to analyse the effectiveness of an online platform to build dignified and peaceful human interaction in an increasingly

digital world. The article ends with a set of recommendations that outline ‘practical steps that individuals can take to cultivate meaningful intercultural connection and engage in online peacebuilding’ (p.72). This innovative approach to exploring digital relations between parties is overdue in this era of digital communication and AI chat bots.

Next we move to India with an article entitled ‘Improving Maternal and Child Health among Migrant Musahar Brick Kiln Workers in Varanasi, India’ by Lenin Raghuvanshi. ‘Drawing upon mixed-methods field research and intervention data generated through collaborative work undertaken by Jan Mitra Nyas (JMN), People’s Vigilance Committee on Human Rights (PVCHR), and CRY—Child Rights and You between 2022 and 2026, the study investigates how community mobilisation, rights-based advocacy, and institutional engagement contributed to measurable improvements in maternal and child health outcomes among migrant brick kiln workers.’ (p.80). This human rights-based activist-written approach to change highlights the issues of democratic justice necessary to address for development to be effective. This is an article close to my heart, having visited some of the villages these data were collected in personally.

The fourth article by Vipul V Tamhane, entitled ‘Economic Philosophy of Compounding of Terrorism: Understanding the Self-Reinforcing Cycles of Economic Grievance and Violence’ draws on rational choice theory to explore the role of economic deprivation in terrorism and radicalisation. This cross regional comparative study ‘advanced the Compounding Theory of Terrorism (CTT) as a formal, operationalised interdisciplinary framework explaining why terrorism intensifies under militarised responses and how it can be systematically interrupted through economic intervention’ (p.138).

The final article to round out this sixteenth issue develops a critique of the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council’s (NIREC’s) work of interreligious dialogue in Nigeria. In this article entitled: ‘Interreligious Dialogue as Peace Praxis the Peace Infrastructure Paradox and NIREC’s Local Embeddedness in Plateau State, Nigeria’ Adelou Ojedokun returns to many of the themes we see emerge in the first article. ‘The study explores how institutional design, patterns of engagement, and the geography of peacebuilding practice shape local perceptions of institutional presence’ (p.141). By introducing the idea of the Peace Infrastructure Paradox, Ojedokun underscores the gaps that exist in developing infrastructures for peace and the local community-based implementation of this infrastructure. This piece, though single authored, articulates well the relational realities of achieving peace.

Rounding out this issue of the *JTPP* we also present two book reviews for readers to consider. first review is of the book *Without Fear: Black Women and the Making of Human Rights* (W W Norton & Company, 2025) underscores the ways in which black women were sidelined in education, journalism and public policy

in the United States. Keisha N Blain, the reviewer, tells us the book 'is heavily historical and can feel overwhelming if not segmented', but it is 'approachable and easy to read' (p.166).

The second review of *City as the Southern Question: Alternative Histories of Urbanisation After Gramsci* (Routledge, 2025) by Debashree Chakraborty builds on the theme of relationality found in many of this issue's articles. In describing the book, Chakraborty says that it 'builds on the premise of the south as a relation, not as a location' (p.169) and this articulates a spatial awareness that has also been a recurring theme in this journal's sixteenth issue. These reviews offer our readers an opportunity to engage with critical assessments of on the ground realities of building a better society.

The issue, as usual, ends with our regular *Kaleidoscope* section, which engages with current events and prospects for relational peace through increased awareness and understanding of the events of the day. Keeping readers informed of some lesser covered international happenings in our information-saturated world we hope will spark creative approaches to transdisciplinary peace.

We hope readers will enjoy the approach and pieces in this issue. As always, thanks to the Peace and Justice Studies Association (PJSA), a bi-national social justice organisation that supports the work of the *JTPP*. We look forward to the October 2026 Annual Conference in Washington DC! As an affiliated journal of the PJSA, we encourage PJSA membership to reach out and share their work, comments, and ideas. Our always open call for papers can be found at <https://jtpo.uk/call-for-papers>. Please continue to support us beyond the reading of this issue by encouraging your friends and colleagues to subscribe to the *JTPP* (<https://jtpo.uk/subscription-plan>)! PLEASE have your university or local library to subscribe with this form (<https://jtpo.uk/library-recommendation>)!

We look forward to hearing from you and continue to stand in solidarity for effective peace praxis!

With much metta (loving kindness),



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NOTES

- 1 Galtung, Johan & MacQueen, Graeme, *Globalizing God: Religion, Spirituality, and Peace* (Kolofon Press/Transcend University Press, 2008), p.16.
- 2 Galtung & MacQueen, *Globalizing God: Religion, Spirituality, and Peace*, p.17.

Peace Professionalism as Praxis

Between Theory, Practice, and Pedagogy

Nathan Funk, Philip Onguny, Gordon Breedyk,
Evelyn Voigt, & Marjan Montazemi

ABSTRACT

For its proponents, peace professionalism is a dynamic approach to praxis focused on improving the effectiveness of peaceworkers and peace programming within a broad range of applied settings. Although peace professionalism is still at an early stage of development compared to professionalism in other fields, advocates propose that the aspiration towards professional peace praxis can be advanced through a process of active, collaborative inquiry among peace practitioners and scholars, conducted in a manner that supports better alignment and integration across the three domains of peace theory, practice, and pedagogy. This paper introduces the Peace Professionalism Project (PPP) and its contributions to this process, focusing on the initiative's grounding within peace theory, reflective practice, and peace education. Noting that global imbalances profoundly impact everyday peace and conflict experiences as well as the relative influence of different voices, the authors suggest that explorations of peace professionalism should be conducted within a dialogical framework that values diverse global, critical, and applied perspectives, and that welcomes ongoing negotiations between as well as within the three domains of theory, practice, and pedagogy. Emphasising the potential of peace professionalism to support conflict transformation and change rather than the maintenance of dominant paradigms, practices, and pedagogies, the PPP offers a platform for innovative research, critical engagement, reconstructive dialogue, and solidarity across boundaries. Through inquiry and deliberation involving collaborators and partners in many different nations, the PPP gives voice to varied experiences and concerns while spotlighting areas of convergence and commonality among diversely situated peace practitioners.

KEYWORDS

Peace Professionalism, Peace Praxis, Peace Practice, Peace Theories, Peace Values and Competencies, Peace Pedagogy, Peace Professional

INTRODUCTION

The growth of academic programs focused on peace has coincided with an expansion of understanding about what it means to be a peace practitioner. Prior to the establishment of programs in peace studies, conflict studies, and affiliated fields, peacemaking as a specifically professional undertaking was understood to be the exclusive responsibility of diplomatic, military, and political leaders. In contrast, peace studies programs have sought to encourage more inclusive engagement on matters of peace and justice, based on the premise that peace is far too important a matter to be left only to a limited sociopolitical elite or regarded as the purview of a singular academic discipline. As the authors of a recent interdisciplinary work on the subject rightly emphasise, ‘peace is everyone’s business’ and contributions can be made by people working in many different professions and disciplinary areas (Ewert & Frederick, 2021).

Although practical applications of peace research frameworks during the late-Cold War and early post-Cold War periods invited hope that new peace concepts could have transformative macro-level impacts on human relations (Tschirgi, 2020), subsequent trends in international conflict have inclined scholars towards more sober assessments emphasising obstacles to effective peace praxis (Björkdahl, et al., 2025). While few who identify with peace studies would discount ways in which the field has enlarged understanding of whose efforts and ideas are relevant to peace, the preponderance of contemporary academic writing emphasises what can go wrong in peacebuilding as a consequence of traditional *realpolitik*’s continuing influence and problems inherent in top-down, institutionalist approaches (Thiessen, 2011). Contemporary trends in the literature emphasise theoretical tensions and enduring dissensus: between West-centric ‘liberal peace’ and local, emancipatory, or decolonial peacebuilding (Tripathi & Richter, 2025); between statebuilding projects and ‘everyday’ peace (Mac Ginty, 2014); and also among the varied ‘peaces’ that differently situated practitioners understand themselves to be building (Scholten, 2020, 2024). High-level questions about the politics of peace and peacemaking (e.g., which peace, implemented by and for whom, and for what purpose?) are salient.

A generation after the United Nations ‘Agenda for Peace’ (Boutros-Ghali, 1992), important lessons have been learned about how macropolitical forces impinge on peacebuilding practices, yet pressing questions remain—for example, what can peacebuilders themselves teach us about navigating a divided and imbalanced world, and making a constructive impact in areas where one has influence? To what extent do widely distributed peaceworkers agree about bases for effective practice? While practitioners in more settled areas of specialisation, including interpersonal conflict management and alternative dispute resolution, can claim some progress in discussions concerning professional norms, skills,

and competencies (Kastner, 2021), the content of professionalism within an international frame of reference remains unsettled. To be sure, stated practice criteria and guiding ethical principles are present within the landscape of international peace work, and certain principles (e.g., do no harm, sustainability, gender equity, and local ownership or empowerment) are frequently invoked. Nonetheless, a newcomer to the peace field could be forgiven for an impression that bases for ethical and practical coherence remain under-articulated.

Beyond the more obvious challenges at a theoretical or paradigmatic level, where an inclusion-oriented, ‘peace-by-peaceful-means’ model competes with predominant national security politics frameworks for legitimacy, resources, and attention (Ryan 2026), differences among self-identified peace practitioners are manifold (Scholten, 2020, 2024). To the extent that various practical specialisations and applied peace priorities (from conflict-sensitive development, transitional justice, and DDR to work emphasising trauma, gender, ecology, or equity) manifest a common ethos or overlapping skillsets, bases for cohesion or professional coherence are largely unarticulated. In many respects this is understandable. Conflict and peace issues are complex, and distinct practices require attention to non-identical practice criteria. No single training prepares a person for all forms of peace practice in all contexts, so it stands to reason that

there would be differentiated knowledge bases and competencies for different applications. Post-civil war security sector reform and grassroots trauma-healing work, for example, would not be expected to have equivalent selection criteria for prospective program workers.

Yet there are also ways in which greater cohesion in conversations about the nature of peacework would be desirable. In a world of sharpening polarisations and deepening divides, peacemaking as an endeavour is profoundly underresourced. In response to this, there are opportunities for peace advocates to more effectively articulate the value and integrity of skilled peace work. What might the peace field, for all its

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What might the peace field, for all its diffuseness, put forward to underscore its coherence and viability amid political turbulence and technological change? What gives value to a training for peace?

diffuseness, put forward to underscore its coherence and viability amid political turbulence and technological change? What gives value to a training for peace? Is there shared content that can give peaceworkers better guidelines for practice, enhanced preparedness, and greater collective credibility?

Given that peace-related academic programs proliferated after the end of the Cold War and continue to attract significant numbers of students, these questions have important implications for theory, practice, and pedagogy. First, attention to peace professionalism can reinvigorate theoretical explorations both of value-based concerns and of key analytical priorities within peace studies and peace work. Second, developing a stronger peace professionalism framework can support more active and direct engagement with ethical and practical dilemmas practitioners face, ensuring that peace theory remains responsive to practice. Finally, conversations about professionalism can enhance pedagogy, through more explicit theory-practice linkages and explorations of relevant skills. Relating research, study, and training more directly to ethical and practical demands for applied peace work can thereby further the formation and professional renewal of effective peaceworkers.

This paper offers a framework for approaching peace professionalism as a transdisciplinary, research-based dialogue among peace scholars and practitioners about praxis—that is, about the integrative alignment of theory, practice, and pedagogy to improve the effectiveness of peace work. This dialogue should not be parochial, or tied exclusively to practices within a specific geographical, cultural, applied, or disciplinary domain. Because peace work and peaceworkers routinely cross boundaries, deliberations about professional values, ethics, and practice criteria must account for this in a suitable manner, while intentionally confronting power imbalances and the ever-present potential for political and cultural imposition.

Exploring peace professionalism in such a manner is the purpose of the Peace Professionalism Project (PPP), a transnational, partnership-development research project launched by a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) in 2023. As a collaborative undertaking, the PPP is preoccupied not just with conducting extensive research, but also with fostering interaction between scholars and practitioners to generate innovative insights and mobilise knowledge. Having engaged hundreds of practitioners, academicians, and pracademics on six continents during its initial three-year grant period, the PPP has documented substantial interest in a framework for peace professionalism grounded in values and competencies that enable ethical and effective practice.

Even while producing evidence of meaningfully convergent expectations among practitioners in highly varied contexts, the PPP's research process (involving

From Dialogue to Ripple Effects in Peace

A Transformative Autoethnographic Analysis of Acquaint's Platform

Yehuda Silverman

ABSTRACT

As digital interactions increasingly shape everyday life, new paradigms are needed for connecting and collaborating across differences. Acquaint (acquaint.org) is an online platform centred on one-on-one dialogue among volunteers worldwide, offering an alternative model of peacebuilding that often extends beyond the digital encounter itself. By prioritising human connection, personal narrative, and mutual listening, Acquaint functions as a global space for dialogic engagement where online conversations frequently inspire continued reflection, civic engagement, and other positive actions offline. This research examines Acquaint as a peacebuilding intervention that initiates intrapersonal and interpersonal processes capable of shaping attitudes, behaviours, and relationships in participants' lives beyond the screen. Using a transformative autoethnographic methodology, the researcher serves as both staff member and participant–analyst, drawing on reflective engagement with Acquaint's post-dialogue appreciation notes as primary data. These reflections explore how the dialogue sessions and appreciation notes supported the researcher's personal journey of cultivating and transforming both internal and external peace. The autoethnographic analysis highlights how digital encounters can spark shifts in perspective, empathy, and responsibility that continue to develop long after conversations end. Grounded in transformative learning theory, the study traces how dialogue encourages critical reflection on identity and difference, leading to gradual and sometimes sudden reframing of perspectives. This study posits that peace can begin in online dialogue spaces and radiate outward into social relationships, civic life, and physical communities through sustained practice. By addressing essential dimensions of digital engagement, the research offers recommendations to support online peacebuilding in strengthening social cohesion, empathy, and mutual understanding.

KEYWORDS

Acquaint, Human Communication, Connection, Global, Intercultural

INTRODUCTION

In the current digital era, the widespread use of social media has often replaced genuine interpersonal exchange with quantifiable metrics that include likes, followers, and clicks, fragmenting authentic relationships. Within this dynamic, the internet functions simultaneously as a mechanism for connection and a barrier to depth.

Once imagined as a tool to bring humanity closer together, the digital world has, in many ways, instead deepened fragmentation and isolation. In the Middle East and North Africa, studies have linked rising social media use to increased rates of depression (Abbouyi et al., 2024). In the United States, suicide mortality among children and young adults aged 10-24 increased by 62% between 2007 and 2021 (Curtin & Garnett, 2023).

Although digital technologies have expanded opportunities for communication, face-to-face interactions continue to provide deeper conditions for attentive listening, dialogue, and transformative storytelling than text-based social media interactions (Fernández et al., 2025). While digital platforms cannot fully replace face-to-face intercultural dialogue necessary for trust-building, there are still possibilities that the internet can support social cohesion to prevent and transform conflicts (UNESCO, 2021).

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (2026), conflicts across the globe continue to intensify with risks of miscalculation and escalation, along with a 9.2% increase of global arms transfers. There has also been an increase of state-based violent conflicts, with the highest number on record of 65 conflicts across 35 nations in 2025. At the same time, many peacebuilding initiatives have been delayed, suspended, or significantly reduced in scope as financial constraints and geopolitical divisions weaken international peacebuilding and conflict prevention efforts (Peace Research Institute Oslo, 2026; Rustad, 2025).

In the midst of these challenges, sustaining dialogue and pursuing opportunities for peace remain essential for the future of humanity. Approximately 89% of active global conflicts occur in contexts with limited intercultural dialogue capacities, affecting more than 1.5 billion people (UNESCO, 2022). Strengthening social cohesion through digital interventions at both local and international levels is therefore vital for cultivating greater possibilities for peace.

The potential exists for technology, when intentionally designed and grounded in principles of empathy, to serve as a platform for deeper understanding and

In the current digital era, the widespread use of social media has often replaced genuine interpersonal exchange with quantifiable metrics that include likes, followers, and clicks, fragmenting authentic relationships.

to restore the human element to modern digital interaction. This study discusses that intentionally designed digital dialogue, specifically through Acquaint's platform, serves as a vital counterpoint to digital polarisation by facilitating transformative intercultural understanding and fostering both personal and global peacebuilding.

Educational approaches centred on conflict transformation have emerged to support these efforts (Silverman & McIntyre, 2024);

however, there remains a need for a truly global digital platform capable of fostering a broader understanding of our shared humanity. Acquaint.org, an online dialogue platform, seeks to fill this gap. During periods of uncertainty and division, Acquaint's mission of recognising that human differences should not prevent collaboration and understanding becomes increasingly significant in strengthening communities and relationships. With participants from more than 110 countries, individuals voluntarily engage in dialogue sessions to share their lived experiences, helping to challenge dominant narratives that are frequently polarising and divisive.

Peace often begins internally, as interpersonal conflicts can emerge from unresolved intrapersonal struggles that have reached critical points (Silverman, 2020). For this reason, intrapersonal frameworks such as self-reflexivity are essential in helping individuals better understand themselves before meaningfully engaging with others, including those they have not yet encountered. Scholars such as Galtung (1969), Freire (1970), and Lederach (1997) emphasised that sustainable peace extends beyond the absence of violence and requires the cultivation of dialogue, empathy, relational trust, and critical consciousness.

Peace education frameworks often focus on developing communication skills, intercultural understanding, non-violent conflict transformation, and the capacity to critically reflect upon social structures and assumptions. Acquaint's dialogue-centred approach aligns with these traditions by creating opportunities for participants to engage across differences through listening, storytelling, and reciprocal communication. The emphasis on authentic encounters also reflects Buber's (1970) concept of the I-Thou relationship, in which individuals recognise one another as whole persons rather than as objects, fostering genuine presence and understanding. Furthermore, Lederach's (1997) conception of peacebuilding as relationship-centred transformation is particularly relevant to Acquaint's emphasis on fostering interpersonal connection and social trust through dialogue.

While many digital communication platforms have been criticised for

Peace often begins internally, as interpersonal conflicts can emerge from unresolved intrapersonal struggles that have reached critical points.

contributing to polarisation, harassment, disinformation, and fragmented public discourse (Munn, 2020), researchers have increasingly explored whether intentionally designed digital environments can instead facilitate constructive engagement and civic participation. Papacharissi (2010) argued that online spaces provide the potential to support new forms of networked citizenship and participatory communication.

Individuals often experience isolation when they become disconnected from themselves, and this disconnection can make meaningful relationships with others more difficult to establish (Chopich & Paul, 1990). Contemporary forms of technological engagement can intensify these disconnections, as many digital interactions fail to cultivate deeper human connection (Fernández et al., 2025). While social media platforms may support surface-level engagement, they do not always satisfy individuals' deeper social and emotional needs and, in some cases, are associated with increased loneliness, social isolation, and unmet psychological needs, potentially creating barriers to empathy, mutual understanding, and social cohesion (Liu, Pradhan, & Wang, 2026).

Through participation in dialogues on Acquaint's digital platform, individuals may engage in processes of self-reflection and internal conflict transformation. While Acquaint provides an optional journal template on their website to use following dialogue sessions, additional reflective modalities may further deepen these processes. In this context, transformative autoethnography (Hernandez, Bilgen, & Chang, 2022) offers a systematic framework for critically examining personal experiences, emotions, identities, and internal conflicts that emerge through dialogue. By moving beyond journaling to critical reflection, meaning-making, and action, individuals may gain greater awareness of underlying needs, recognise shifts in perspective, and intentionally translate these insights into ongoing intrapersonal and interpersonal peacebuilding. This reflective process is examined through the researcher's engagement with appreciation notes received following dialogue sessions.

While appreciation notes are commonly used as expressions of gratitude following dialogue, this study considers them catalysts for reflective inquiry. Through transformative autoethnography, the notes become prompts for examining how messages received from dialogue partners influenced the researcher's understanding of self, relationships, and peacebuilding practice. This research explores how Acquaint shifts the possibilities of peace by emphasising deeper understanding through personal storytelling. Additionally, an analysis of the intrapersonal impacts of dialogue sessions through received appreciation notes and the impacts that emerged after the sessions concluded. While each volunteer will have their own experiences, the following study positions the researcher both as a staff member of Acquaint and a reflective participant in the dialogue sessions.

From Exploitation to Institutional Accountability

Improving Maternal and Child Health among Migrant Musahar Brick Kiln Workers in Varanasi, India

Lenin Raghuvanshi

ABSTRACT

This article examines the transformation of maternal and child healthcare access among migrant Musahar families employed in brick kilns in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, India. Situated within a context of entrenched caste discrimination, labour exploitation, migration-induced precarity, and structural exclusion, Musahar communities experience severe barriers to healthcare, nutrition, immunisation, and social protection during seasonal migration. Drawing upon mixed-methods field research and intervention data generated through collaborative work undertaken by Jan Mitra Nyas (JMN), People's Vigilance Committee on Human Rights (PVCHR), and CRY—Child Rights and You between 2022 and 2026, the study investigates how community mobilisation, rights-based advocacy, and institutional engagement contributed to measurable improvements in maternal and child health outcomes among migrant brick kiln workers.

The article adopts a transdisciplinary peace praxis framework that conceptualises maternal and child health not merely as a biomedical concern but as a question of structural violence, social justice, democratic inclusion, and human rights accountability. Drawing on the work of Galtung (1969), Farmer (2003), Lederach (1997), Freire (1970), and Rinker (2016), the study examines how caste hierarchy, labour precarity, gender inequality, migration-induced administrative invisibility, and institutional neglect interact to shape health outcomes among marginalised populations. The intervention combined Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) mapping, behaviour change communication, psychosocial engagement, linkage of migrant families with public health services, nutrition

The article adopts a transdisciplinary peace praxis framework that conceptualises maternal and child health not merely as a biomedical concern but as a question of structural violence, social justice, democratic inclusion, and human rights accountability.

Findings indicate significant improvements in institutional deliveries, immunisation coverage, colostrum feeding, exclusive breastfeeding practices, maternal healthcare utilisation, and reductions in infant and child mortality within intervention areas.

support, collaboration with frontline health workers, legal advocacy, and sustained engagement with district and state authorities.

Findings indicate significant improvements in institutional deliveries, immunisation coverage, colostrum feeding, exclusive breastfeeding practices, maternal healthcare utilisation, and reductions in infant and child mortality within intervention areas. Beyond improvements in health indicators, the study demonstrates

how participatory documentation, community testimonies, and rights-based advocacy transformed previously invisible experiences of maternal neglect and child vulnerability into recognised claims for institutional accountability. Advocacy before the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) generated administrative responses that included immunisation micro-planning, maternal healthcare outreach, interdepartmental coordination, and localised accountability mechanisms targeting migrant populations.

The article argues that sustainable improvements in maternal and child health among migrant labour communities require more than expanded service delivery. The Varanasi experience demonstrates how community agency, testimonial processes, evidence-based advocacy, and responsive governance can contribute to the reduction of structural violence and the expansion of substantive citizenship among historically marginalised populations. By linking public health outcomes to questions of recognition, participation, and institutional transformation, the study contributes to scholarship on structural violence, health equity, migration governance, human rights, and rights-based peacebuilding. Although significant structural vulnerabilities remain within India's informal brick kiln economy, the findings offer an important model for migrant-sensitive, community-centred, and rights-based approaches to maternal and child health.

The Varanasi experience demonstrates how community agency, testimonial processes, evidence-based advocacy, and responsive governance can contribute to the reduction of structural violence and the expansion of substantive citizenship among historically marginalised populations.

KEYWORDS

Brick Kilns; Musahar Community; Maternal Health; Child Rights; Migration; Breastfeeding Rights; Structural Violence; Health Equity; Human Rights Advocacy; Transdisciplinary Peace Praxis; Varanasi.

INTRODUCTION

India's brick kiln industry constitutes one of the largest informal labour sectors in the world, employing millions of seasonal migrant workers under highly precarious and often exploitative conditions. Government estimates indicate that nearly 140,000 registered and unregistered brick kilns operate across the country, making India the world's second-largest producer of bricks. Conservative estimates suggest that between 8.4 and 25 million workers are engaged annually in brick production, with women comprising nearly half of the workforce. The sector is characterised by debt bondage, informal labour arrangements, hazardous working environments, child labour, low wages, and limited regulatory oversight (Bremán, 2016; Government of India, 2023; ILO, 2017).

Seasonal migration forms the structural foundation of this industry. Following the monsoon season, labourers migrate from economically marginalised rural communities to kiln sites, where they remain for six to nine months engaged in labour-intensive brick production. Workers typically reside in temporary settlements adjacent to kiln premises, frequently lacking access to sanitation, safe drinking water, healthcare, electricity, and educational facilities. Recruitment is commonly mediated through labour contractors who provide advance payments to families prior to migration. While these advances serve as an immediate survival mechanism for impoverished households, they also generate cycles of indebtedness and dependency that can bind entire families to exploitative labour relations (Bremán, 2016).

Within this labour regime, women experience particularly acute forms of vulnerability. They shoulder the dual burden of productive labour within brick-making processes and reproductive labour within the household. Pregnant women frequently continue physically demanding work throughout pregnancy and often return to labour shortly after childbirth due to debt obligations and economic insecurity. Children grow up in environments marked by malnutrition, hazardous exposure to dust and heat, dehydration, and exclusion from formal healthcare and educational systems.

Migration further intensifies these vulnerabilities by disrupting access to public welfare services. Although India has significantly expanded maternal and child health programmes over the past two decades, many social protection mechanisms—including antenatal care, immunisation services, nutrition

Seasonal migration, therefore, creates what may be described as a condition of *administrative invisibility*, in which workers become physically present within labour markets but absent from the institutional systems responsible for monitoring and delivering essential services.

supplementation, and childcare support—remain linked to place-based administrative systems. Seasonal migration, therefore, creates what may be described as a condition of *administrative invisibility*, in which workers become physically present within labour markets but absent from the institutional systems responsible for monitoring and delivering essential services (Scott, 1998). Pregnant women, lactating mothers, and young children are particularly affected by this disconnection from healthcare and welfare infrastructures. In this sense, migration produces not only economic precarity but also forms of institutional exclusion that

undermine substantive access to rights and entitlements.

Among the most marginalised populations within this labour structure are Musahar families in eastern Uttar Pradesh. Historically subjected to entrenched caste discrimination, chronic poverty, landlessness, food insecurity, and social exclusion, Musahars remain one of the most disadvantaged Dalit communities in India (Ambedkar, 2014; Shah et al, 2006; Kaushik, 2018). In Varanasi district, large numbers of Musahar families migrate seasonally to brick kilns located across the blocks of Harahua, Badagaon, Pindra, and Arajiline.

Field assessments conducted by Jan Mitra Nyas (JMN) and CRY—Child Rights and You identified more than 335 Musahar families residing and working in these kiln clusters, including over 103 pregnant women and more than 300 children under five years of age. The migration cycle effectively disconnected these families from Anganwadi services, Village Health and Nutrition Days (VHNDs), immunisation programmes, maternal healthcare systems, and nutrition support schemes. Baseline data collected in 2022 revealed alarming maternal and child health conditions, including low institutional delivery rates, limited immunisation coverage, poor breastfeeding practices, and preventable infant and child deaths.

The human consequences of these conditions

Baseline data collected in 2022 revealed alarming maternal and child health conditions, including low institutional delivery rates, limited immunisation coverage, poor breastfeeding practices, and preventable infant and child deaths.

Economic Philosophy of Compounding of Terrorism:

Understanding the Self-Reinforcing Cycles of Economic Grievance and Violence

Vipul V Tamhane

ABSTRACT

This paper advances a formal Compounding Theory of Terrorism (CTT), arguing that unresolved economic grievances generate recursive, self-reinforcing cycles of radicalisation and violence that intensify with each iteration and become progressively more costly to interrupt. Drawing on rational choice theory, Rawlsian distributive justice, and relative deprivation theory, the paper operationalises this dynamic through a ten-stage recursive model and introduces the Terrorism Compounding Index (TCI) as a proposed measurable instrument. Focused case analysis of the Islamic State (2013-2019) and Sahel-region jihadist movements is supplemented by a negative case analysis of Kerala, India, which identifies the conditions under which the compounding cycle fails to materialise. Crucially, the paper argues that deradicalisation efforts remain structurally incomplete when they target ideology without addressing the material conditions, unemployment, inequality, institutional exclusion, that sustain organisational membership as a rational economic choice. A Deradicalisation Economic Audit tool and a proposed programme logic model are offered as practitioner-oriented instruments. Pre-resilience strategies, including early warning systems, rapid economic response teams, and community resilience building, are proposed as the most cost-effective deradicalisation interventions. The paper concludes that sustainable counter-extremism requires a philosophical and institutional shift from reactive militarism to preventive economic justice.

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KEYWORDS

Economic Philosophy, Compounding Effects, Distributive Justice, Radicalisation, Pre-Resilience, Terrorism Compounding Index

INTRODUCTION

Terrorism is conventionally framed as a discrete security threat demanding military containment. This paper challenges that framing by establishing a formal Compounding Theory of Terrorism (CTT): terrorism operates as an economically self-reinforcing phenomenon in which unresolved distributive injustice, economic exclusion, and governance failure generate escalating radicalisation and violence whose costs grow with each cycle. Left unaddressed at their structural root, these dynamics compound, like interest on un-serviced debt, accumulating organisational

The implications for deradicalisation are direct and consequential. Programmes that target ideological symptoms without restructuring the material conditions sustaining organisational membership address the medium of terrorism while

...terrorism operates as an economically self-reinforcing phenomenon in which unresolved distributive injustice, economic exclusion, and governance failure generate escalating radicalisation and violence whose costs grow with each cycle.

leaving its substrate intact. The CTT identifies the precise stages of the cycle where economic intervention yields the highest deradicalisation return, and proposes measurable instruments, the Terrorism Compounding Index (TCI) and the Deradicalisation Economic Audit, to operationalise these interventions for practitioners and policymakers.

Three base assumptions underpin the analysis. First, rational choice theory assumes people pick violence when its expected utility looks higher, than the peaceful options, (Becker, 1968; Crenshaw, 1981). Second, Rawlsian distributive justice suggests that persistent unfairness generates circumstances where violence can become a morally grounded, rationally weighed reaction, to structural failure, which is the central claim (Rawls, 1999). Third, the compounding principle,

...the paper argues that deradicalisation efforts remain structurally incomplete when they target ideology without addressing the material conditions, unemployment, inequality, institutional exclusion, that sustain organisational membership as a rational economic choice.

drawn by analogy from financial economics, holds that unaddressed grievances accumulate: small initial injustices grow through neglect, inadequate institutional response, and recursive recruitment into large-scale, institutionalised violence organisations. The paper proceeds through literature review, theoretical framework, methodology, case and negative case analysis, propositions of the CTT, deradicalisation implications with practitioner tools, policy implications, a future research agenda, and conclusion.

The compounding principle, drawn by analogy from financial economics, holds that unaddressed grievances accumulate: small initial injustices grow through neglect, inadequate institutional response, and recursive recruitment into large-scale, institutionalised violence organisations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The connection between economic conditions and terrorism has spawned a large and contested scholarly literature that continues to be revisited. Some early econometric work by Krueger and Maleckova (2003) found only mixed or limited evidence that poverty directly relates to terrorism at the individual level, concluding that ideology and political context operate largely independently of material deprivation. Piazza (2006), by contrast, found that structural economic factors, social fractures, state failure, and income inequality correlate significantly with terrorism across multiple country regression models, even when absolute poverty does not. In that sense, the CTT is operating at roughly the structural level Piazza is pointing to: it is not merely poverty by itself that starts the whole cycle, rather it is that recursive tangle between structural exclusion, institutional breakdown, and organisational exploitation.

Relative deprivation theory, originating with Gurr (1970), provides the psychological mechanism linking structural inequality to individual radicalisation. People measure their economic situation relative to reference groups, and when the imagined distance between them and 'us' starts to look wider, it tends to lower the psychological barrier to violence. McCauley and Moskalenko (2011) extended this idea with 'grievance entrepreneurship': terrorist groups do not only react to deprivation that already exists; they also manufacture, amplify, and even institutionalise those grievances to sustain their recruitment pipelines over time. This organisational dimension distinguishes the CTT from simple deprivation models.

The economics of terrorist organisations have been analysed by Berman (2009), whose 'economic club' model demonstrated that organisations offering exclusive

social services, healthcare, education, conflict resolution, generate community dependency that sustains loyalty independently of ideology. Roy's (2011) analysis of Hamas in Gaza confirmed that parallel economic governance achieves legitimacy that state institutions cannot easily displace. This organisational economics directly inform the deradicalisation literature: Horgan (2005), Bjorgo (2009), and Doosje et al. (2016) found that programs targeting ideology alone consistently underperform because they fail to replace the material incentive structures, income, identity, protection, belonging, that organisational membership provides.

The Collier and Hoeffler (2004) 'greed versus grievance' debate is directly relevant to the CTT's positioning. Collier and Hoeffler argued that economic opportunity (greed) predicts civil conflict better than political grievance. The CTT partially synthesises this debate: economic grievance creates the recruitment pool; organisational economics (greed for income, status, and security) determines who joins and persists. The two mechanisms are not competing explanations but sequential stages in the same compounding cycle. The macroeconomic literature on terrorism's aggregate costs contextualises the urgency of the framework. Blomberg, Hess, and Weerapana (2004) estimated GDP growth losses of 1-2% annually in the same year relative to counterfactual growth in terrorism-affected countries, with security expenditure crowding out developmental investment. The Institute for Economics and Peace (2023) placed global terrorism costs above USD 100 billion annually. Enders and Sandler (2006) demonstrated that these costs exhibit feedback properties: security spending reduces investment capacity, deepening the grievances sustaining recruitment, the compounding dynamic in macroeconomic form.

Within deradicalisation studies, the economic dimension has been increasingly recognised but rarely operationalised. Horgan (2005) identified that exit from terrorism requires alternative material structures, not merely ideological conversion. Richardson (2006) noted that durable peace agreements uniformly incorporate economic development alongside political settlements. Koehler (2017) argued that deradicalisation programme design must account for the organisational functions, social, economic, identity, that membership fulfils, or risk relapse. The present paper responds to this literature gap by providing a formal model, measurable instruments, and practitioner tools that translate structural economic analysis into actionable deradicalisation programming.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: THE COMPOUNDING THEORY OF TERRORISM

The Compounding Theory of Terrorism (CTT) formalises terrorism as an economically recursive phenomenon. In financial economics, compounding

Interreligious Dialogue as Peace Praxis

The Peace Infrastructure Paradox and NIREC's Local Embeddedness in Plateau State, Nigeria

Adeolu Ojedokun

ABSTRACT

Infrastructures for peace are increasingly promoted as institutional mechanisms for conflict prevention, dialogue, and mediation in divided societies. However, the presence of such institutions does not necessarily translate into effective peacebuilding in conflict-affected communities. This article introduces the concept of the Peace Infrastructure Paradox to explain how national peace institutions may remain institutionally visible while being experienced as locally absent in contexts where violence persists. Drawing on qualitative document analysis of NIREC's constitutional framework, communiqués, and policy reports alongside secondary literature on Plateau State's conflict dynamics, the article examines the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) as a national interreligious peace infrastructure and analyses its engagement with Plateau State, a region marked by recurrent ethnoreligious conflict. The study explores how institutional design, patterns of engagement, and the geography of peacebuilding practice shape local perceptions of institutional presence. The analysis suggests that while NIREC provides an important platform for elite-level dialogue and national norm-setting, its engagement often manifests through episodic convening and symbolic visibility rather than sustained local peace capacity in conflict-affected communities. This institutional-geographic mismatch generates a paradox in which national peace infrastructure appears present at the political centre but remains weakly embedded in local peace practice. The article argues that effective interreligious peacebuilding requires translating national dialogue institutions into locally accessible peace infrastructures through sustained engagement, institutional integration with state peacebuilding bodies, and strengthened community-level facilitation. By conceptualising the Peace Infrastructure Paradox, the article offers a practice-oriented framework for understanding why national peace institutions may appear institutionally present yet remain weakly embedded in local peacebuilding practice.

KEYWORDS

Peace Infrastructure Paradox; Interreligious Dialogue; Infrastructures For

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, scholars and practitioners of peacebuilding have increasingly emphasised the importance of institutional mechanisms designed to prevent violent conflict and facilitate dialogue in divided societies (Lederach, 1997; Paris, 2004; Barnett et al., 2007). Among these mechanisms, infrastructures for peace (I4P) have appeared as a prominent framework for institutionalising peacebuilding at national and local levels (Reychler, 2006; Hopp-Nishanka, 2012; Giessmann, 2016). These infrastructures typically include national peace councils, mediation platforms, early warning systems, and dialogue forums intended to provide sustained institutional capacity for conflict prevention and dispute resolution (Hopp-Nishanka, 2012; Kumar, 2011; Giessmann, 2016). Proponents maintain that such institutional arrangements create structured spaces where political, religious, and community leaders can engage in dialogue, manage tensions, and prevent escalation that could lead to violence (Lederach, 1997; Hopp-Nishanka, 2012; Giessmann, 2016).

Despite the growing emphasis on infrastructures for peace, the presence of such institutions does not always translate into effective peacebuilding in communities experiencing recurrent conflict. In many contexts, national peace institutions are formally established, widely recognised, and actively engaged in dialogue at the political centre, yet conflict-affected localities continue to experience persistent violence and limited institutional engagement (Mac Ginty, 2014; Richmond, 2011; Giessmann, 2016). This raises an important puzzle in peacebuilding practice: why do national peace institutions sometimes appear visible and active at the national level while remaining weakly embedded in the local communities most affected by conflict?

Existing scholarship on infrastructures for peace has largely focused on institutional design, national dialogue mechanisms, and the role of peace councils in conflict prevention

While this literature recognises the importance of local ownership and community engagement, less attention has been paid to how national peace institutions may remain highly visible at the political centre while being experienced as locally absent in communities where violence persists. As a result, the field lacks a clear conceptual framework for explaining why formally established peace infrastructures may fail to translate into sustained local peacebuilding practice.

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This article addresses this puzzle through the concept of the Peace Infrastructure Paradox, defined as a situation in which national peace institutions are institutionally visible through formal structures, elite convening, and public discourse, yet remain locally absent or weakly embedded in communities experiencing ongoing violence. The paradox captures the tension between the symbolic presence of peace institutions at the national level and their limited experiential presence within conflict-affected communities. While infrastructures for peace are often designed to bridge national and local levels of conflict management (Hopp-Nishanka, 2012; Kumar, 2011; Reychler, 2006; Giessmann, 2016), institutional design and patterns of engagement may instead concentrate peacebuilding activities at political centers, leaving local communities with limited access to sustained dialogue platforms.

To explore this paradox empirically, the article examines the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) as a national interreligious peace infrastructure and analyses its engagement with Plateau State, a region that has experienced recurrent ethnoreligious conflict since the late 1990s. Established in 1999, NIREC brings together prominent Christian and Muslim leaders with the aim of promoting interreligious dialogue, reducing sectarian tensions, and strengthening peaceful coexistence across Nigeria's religiously diverse society (Marshall, 2009; Kukah, 2011; Omotosho, 2013). At the national level, NIREC has played an important role in facilitating dialogue between religious communities and issuing joint statements aimed at reducing tensions during moments of crisis (Omotosho, 2013; Kukah, 2011; Marshall, 2009). However, Plateau State continues to experience cycles of violence and deep communal distrust (Higazi, 2011; Ostien, 2009; Krause, 2011; Best, 2007), raising questions about how national interreligious dialogue institutions translate into local peacebuilding practice.

Drawing on qualitative document analysis of NIREC's constitutional framework, communiqués, and policy documents alongside secondary literature on Plateau State's conflict dynamics, this article examines how institutional design, patterns of engagement, and the geography of peacebuilding practice shape local perceptions of institutional presence. The analysis suggests that NIREC's activities frequently operate through episodic dialogue initiatives and elite-level convening rather than sustained local peace infrastructure in conflict-affected communities. As a result, national peace institutions may remain symbolically present through

national visibility while appearing substantively absent within local peacebuilding practice.

This article contributes to peacebuilding scholarship in three ways. First, it introduces the concept of the Peace Infrastructure Paradox as a conceptual framework for understanding the gap between institutional visibility and local peacebuilding presence. Second, it provides an empirical examination of interreligious peace infrastructure through the case of NIREC's engagement with Plateau State. Third, it translates these findings into practice-oriented insights for strengthening the local embeddedness of national peace institutions in divided societies.

This article contributes to peacebuilding scholarship in three ways. First, it introduces the concept of the Peace Infrastructure Paradox as a conceptual framework for understanding the gap between institutional visibility and local peacebuilding presence. Second, it provides an empirical examination of interreligious peace infrastructure through the case of NIREC's engagement with Plateau State. Third, it translates these findings into practice-oriented insights for strengthening the local embeddedness of national peace institutions in divided societies.

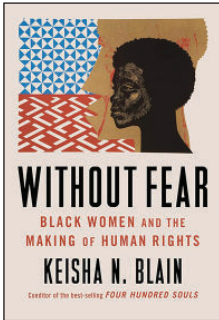
LITERATURE REVIEW

Infrastructures for Peace, Interreligious Dialogue, and the Local Embeddedness Problem

Over the past three decades, peacebuilding scholarship has increasingly turned toward institutional approaches to conflict prevention (Lederach, 1997; UNDP, 2013; van Tongeren, 2011; Kumar & De la Haye, 2012). Rather than viewing peacebuilding as a sequence of discrete interventions such as negotiations, peace agreements, or externally mediated settlements, scholars and practitioners have emphasised the need for durable institutional mechanisms capable of sustaining dialogue and managing conflict over time (Lederach, 1997; Mac Ginty, 2011; Ojedokun, 2025; UNDP, 2013; van Tongeren, 2011). Within this broader shift, the concept of infrastructures for peace (I4P) has emerged as a prominent framework for institutionalising peacebuilding within national governance systems (van Tongeren, 2011; UNDP, 2013). At the same time, a growing body of literature highlights the role of religious actors and interreligious dialogue in mediating communal conflict in societies marked by deep identity divisions (Appleby, 2000; Abu-Nimer, 2001; Gopin, 2002). Parallel debates within the

Book Review

Without Fear: Black Women and the Making of Human Rights



By KEISHA N BLAIN

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Reviewed by
AJANET S ROUNTREE

In *Black Feminist Thought*, Patricia Hill Collins writes, ‘...in the absence of studies that examine US Black women in a global context, such work can foster the assumption that US *foreign* policy is not important for African-American women. Stopping analysis at the U.S. border thus functions to contain U.S. Black feminist thought [...] Shifting to a global analysis...illuminates how a transnational matrix of domination presents certain challenges for women of African descent’ (Hill Collins 2009: 231). With this statement, Hill Collins confronts several positioning surrounding Black women in the public, political sphere. African American women have been excluded from global studies, which fosters an assumption about their interest (or perceived lack of interest) in foreign affairs. Their exclusion from participating in or contributing to research studies reinforces the regulation of their thoughts concerning global Black feminist issues that US foreign policies potentially neglect. Thus, African American women’s confinement to US national borders and erasure from international affairs suggests a detrimental purposefulness that exists outside their control. This is a subjugation aimed at reducing a transnational coalition of Black women elucidating their collective constraints, confronting the governments responsible for maintaining the interlocking systems of oppression, and advocating for changes that bring about freedom and liberation. Recognising the suppression tactic for what it is, Black women organised themselves from the margins, ushering in a formidable swell of domestic and foreign policy, focused on human rights activism for more than two centuries. It is here that Keisha Blain’s *Without Fear: Black Women and the Making of Human Rights* enters the discourse.

Without Fear complements and extends Blain’s *To Turn the Whole World Over: Black Women and Internationalism*, an anthology on Black women’s internationalism. As such, *Without Fear* builds on historical transnationalism

and globalisation, as well as on the Black feminist transdisciplinary foundations of scholars, such as Patricia Hill Collins and Robin D G Kelley. Blain explores and recovers the historical and contemporary legacies of Black women and their pursuit of domestic and international human rights in *Without Fear*. The title is taken from a 1944 National Council of Negro Women workshop lecture by HBCU founder Mary McLeod Bethune (Historically Black Colleges and Universities; 1, 3, 90). By highlighting this phrase, historian and professor of African American Studies, the African Diaspora, and Women and Gender Studies, Blain offers a methodically detailed and archivally rich examination of the focused undertaking to advance human rights from a Black, gynocentric intersectional existence. The key to *Without Fear*'s success is Blain's decision to begin with 19th-century activists. This decision directly counters any other offering that maintains the 20th-century emergence of human rights occurred in a Eurocentric, androcentric vacuum.

Kelley submits that Black thought toward internationalism and globalisation arises from an examination of the 'hyphen between the places of "origin" and America', which allows scholars to employ the diaspora as an analytical frame (Kelley 1999: 1045). Diasporic framing permits Black people to carve out a sense of belonging amid the domestic hostilities of racism, including second-class citizenship and double-consciousness, with the hope of identifying an imagined community (1999: 1051-52; see also Benedict Anderson). In doing so, the relationship with Africa becomes integral rather than tangential to the recovery of African American history, as it showcases the globality of the Black liberation struggle from colonisation and the colonising countries whose values include democracy and equality (1999: 1076-77). Black women's engagement in the human rights struggle began long before activists Opal Tomei, Patrisse Cullors, and Alicia Garza launched the *Black Lives Matter* movement in 2014 following the police shooting of Michael Brown, Jr, in Ferguson, Missouri (217). For Black women, human rights became a labouring praxis from the margins, requiring an 'esoteric concept' move into 'an organizing principle that fuelled local, national, and global activism... to redefine the rights and dignity of all people' by individuals who themselves were not recognised as full human beings (3, 5). Although Blain's focus is on African American women activists and intellectuals, she capitalises on the transnational narrowing of human rights into three core elements that Black women globally applied. This narrowing caused a shift in the implications that White supremacy has on Black lives from their national citizenship quest and into a global acknowledgment of the necessity of natural (inherent to all), universal (applicable to all), and equal (the same for all) rights as a prerequisite to contextualising the structural violence while cultivating the collaborative efforts to dismantle it (2-4). Blain names names, gives dates, and fully foregrounds the

singular interest of well-known and lesser-known women who did not always get it correct, but would never be found wanting in their efforts.

With this book, Blain exposes the elective nature of education, which discounts and sidelines Black contributions to American life as minor or an afterthought; thereby leaving readers saying, 'Wow, I was not taught that in school'. Each chapter delves into the life and legacy of a key figure, providing a thorough contextualisation of their place in the United States' historical narrative and the broader global human rights and dignity framework. *Without Fear* touches on every major United States event from abolition and the Vietnam War to World War I and police violence, extensively describing the involvement of Black women. The specificity of their involvement has been deliberately omitted from much of the domestic political discourse in the United States. Yet, as Blain delineates each life, she introduces additional Black contributors throughout the African diaspora, who position themselves alongside journalists, civil rights leaders, politicians, artists, and mothers—all of whom 'functioned as human rights couriers' (10). Collectively, these couriers sought to agitate the status quo by framing 'racism and inequality not solely as national problems, but global ones' (11). These women pointed out contradictions that the concepts of Thomas Paine's 'rights of man' and the United States Constitution's 'inalienable rights' applied to some, but not all (13-15). Not only that, in instances involving the continent of Africa, Blain situates Black women shape shifters in the global political space, since foreign dignitaries and leaders accept their invitations, rely on them to better understand racial and gender inequalities during their visits to the United States, and request their presence to speak at the UN General Assembly (40, 85, 111, 165, 217). Non-Black collaborators were (and are) essential to the global articulation of the human rights struggle, and Blain recognises these interracial partnerships and the interpersonal and organisational changes that affected the advocacy over time (See also Hill Collins 2009). In each reference to humanity or human brotherhood, Black women positioned Black people as human beings and concluded that the universality of human rights eclipsed national boundary lines (20-21, 31, 32-57).

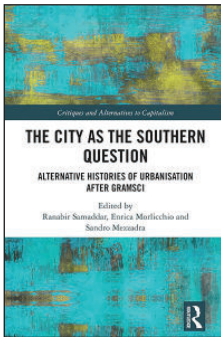
While *Without Fear* is approachable and easy to read, it is heavily historical and can feel overwhelming if not segmented. Blain provides the facts and the connecting thread among the women and chapters but furnishes little analysis of her own. Analysis often supplies a reprieve from a factual onslaught, and this choice may dissatisfy some unfamiliar readers. Like a professor, the author Blain dispenses a cache of information about Black women and their transnational work, compelling readers to become lifelong learners by quietly challenging them to identify the sticky points, draw conclusions through independent research, and expound on the women's lives and legacies with more in-depth analyses. As such, *Without Fear* will add to any course and library. Disciplines and fields such as

journalism and communication might use it to further explore the Black press and its perspectives on issues facing Black people, including war and liberation. It can serve as a foundational text for many courses because it applies to everyone, particularly those who recognise gaps in the fields where Black voices are often omitted as though US and global history took place in a Eurocentric vacuum.

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City as the Southern Question: Alternative Histories of Urbanisation After Gramsci



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\$200

Reviewed by DEBASHREE CHAKRABORTY

Drawing from the historical origins of the 'urban turn', the book *The City as the Southern Question: Alternative Histories of Urbanisation After Gramsci* locates the presence of the 'south' in the global order of capitalism. Through the framework of Antonio Gramsci's *Some Aspects of the Southern Question*, the book focusses on the deep-seated structural anomalies and economic fissures that make southern cities. The book also contends that the 'south' is not a spatial fixity that can only be found in the global South. It is rather a fluid space and can be produced anywhere if the conditions of the 'southern question' are met. Contemporary southern cities are not products of any sudden economic sprout either. They have their own backstories and their present can be understood and read only in cohesion with their past.

The chapters deal with southern cities across Asia, Europe, South America and Africa and focus on localised issues offering a theoretical glimpse into how life unfolds in such cities. The 'Introduction' by Ranabir Samaddar sets the research question outright by finding out the gaps that exist in contemporary scholarship on urban studies. Samaddar notes that cities are 'living monsters that suck anything and everything, including humans' (2). The book explores how southern cities manage to do this. The chapters situate select southern cities in the present while calibrating their past thus creating a contiguous engagement which helps the reader to understand not just the issues a particular chapter has dealt with but also the fissures that created them at the first place.

Even though the introduction claims that the book does not follow any cold order except, probably the order of geography, there emerges still a nuanced aspect of historical continuity in terms of how southern questions get framed in the 'southern cities'. The book opens with the chapter of land and rent question by focusing on 'movement', 'ownership', 'land acquisition' which are factors that have shaped the frameworks of 'space' and 'place', 'rights', 'belonging' and 'unbelonging' cardinal to urban studies. The book ends with a proposal of formulating a new framework of urban studies that would displace the Euro-American gaze on southern cities and evolve into a discourse from the 'within'. In between, remain the rest of the chapters that toy with a multiplicity of ideas as to how neo-liberal forces together in action with colonial and postcolonial contestations are constantly framing and reframing the southern question in the southern cities. The order of the book is thus the order of the southern chaos. The book builds on the premise of how southern cities behave, perform, and interact with elements and entities that form cities. It explores the aspects of 'how a city should emerge?' 'how a city should look like?' 'who should have the best in the city?' 'who should be on the fringes?' etc.

Fragmented into four sections, chapters in each section deal with issues that can function as pathological conditions. While corresponding to one city, these issues can be mirrored unto any other southern city should the relevant conditions arise. Section 1 brings out the question of urban space and how it is formed under Lefebvrein conditions. The chapters delve into how southern cities become maximum cities and the costs that residents have to incur. The cities discussed in this section are post-colonial spaces and also fragile ecological zones. The chapters offer anecdotal references to how certain southern cities perform inherent inequalities by introducing practices which under the garb of being correctional, exacerbate such inequalities by hammering the existing social conditions. The section particularly highlights the paradox of the southern metropolis—of being and not being southern, metropolitan, industrialised and infrastructuralised at the same time.

Section 2 focuses on the aspects of belonging and unbelonging to cities which are expanding against all sorts of odds like war, racial and religious gentrification and fanciful ideas of beauty and aesthetics. Section 3 continues the thread of belonging and unbelonging but also calibrates the role and position of migrants and refugees in southern cities some of which are situated within the geography of the industrialised west or the global north.

Section 2 and 3, if clubbed under an affective framework can augment the understanding of subaltern subjectivities and their position in a southern city. The need for an affective framework, in fact, has been suggested by Jair Coronado Rosales and Julie-Anne-Boudreau in their chapter on Mexico in which they have quoted Veronica Gago's observation '...capitalist hegemony can be subverted from below through incorporating a framework of affect'. These sections together probe the intersections of reception architectures for migrants and refugees built around religious and cultural hegemonic practices, modernisation practices around techno-feudal regimes and the role of bureaucracy in shaping the visage of the city by implementing legal instruments and how all of these in tandem create situations under which the subaltern manages to find rights and identity.

Section 4 discusses how capitalist hegemonic orders continue to dictate economic regimes in southern cities henceforth creating ripe conditions for sustained economic and social inequalities. This section also summarises the ideas discussed in the previous sections.

Since the overarching theme of the book is Gramsci's the *Southern Question*, the sections and the chapters touch on the ideas of 'conjuncture' and 'rupture' intermittently. But mostly, the book is about 'conjunctures' which, in the southern cities are built by bureaucratic regimes and are fueled by growth dynamics and further achieved through demographic transformation through migration, zoning practices, documentation etc, in a way that old social conditions get replicated in new forms. However, the book also leaves room to think about 'ruptures'. The ideas of 'popular economies', 'resisting insurgent urbanities', 'defying gentilities', 'juxtaposition of chaos and disorder to show the incompleteness of hegemonic projects', 'solidarity projects' are loaded with the possibility of what Ranabir Samaddar terms as 'biopolitics from below' which is a pre-condition of 'rupture'.

Moving beyond the chosen axes of urban theory focused on various practices of space making and architectural planning characterised by state policies and programmes of urbanisation, emerging forms of labour, legal and administrative frameworks etc, this volume delves into the making and unmaking of cities to show that they are dynamic spaces with their constituent entities constantly in motion. It nudges the readers to engage in a 'pluralistic dialogue that brings planetary urbanization into conversation with postcolonial critique.'

The book builds on the premise of the south as a relation, not as a location.

Southern cities thus become palimpsests of space and time creating different conditions of survival or different classes of people that draw their organisational structure from labour and capital but at the same time continue to replicate old social conditions in new form thus turning these cities into more volatile systems of structural repression. By locating migrants at the heart of such repressive structures, the chapters in the book explore legal regimes around immigration practices, solidarity networks and channels of belonging and unbelonging.

The overarching thematic concern of the book pivots around the spatial south, wherever it might be located in, to argue that southern spaces are not absolute. They are constantly in the process of making and unmaking and there is no conclusive way of defining the modes through which they function. But there are always moments through which such cities can be defined. These moments are characterised by who or which group(s) of people the city is conferring rights to, who are standing in solidarity or in resistance in times of upheaval, who sits at the heart of extraction practices and so on thus making the southern city both a unfinished and evolving project spread across time and space. So, one can find southernness situated in buildings, across the streets and in a park or in eighteenth and nineteenth century fights between Turkish and Italian migrants in European cities, in a posh stadium set to host the 2026 FIFA men's football world cup in South America, and also in a war-torn city in Asia. These myriad locations of enquiry across the chapters reaffirm the theoretical assertion of the south as a relation.

The book, even though moderately voluminous, hardly leaves any room for boredom which is crucial while reading something as theory heavy as urban studies. Since the chapters are mostly case studies from across southern cities, it would have been better had there been more visual content. Considering the target readership of the book to be spread across the globe, more visual content like photographs of the cities or places mentioned in the chapters would have provided the readers a sense of the place they are reading about. The concluding chapter, while summing up the theoretical premise of the book, talks at length about the relations between colonial conditions and their postcolonial ramifications in southern cities and also takes into account contemporary economic and labour regimes in the making of such cities. However, many of the chapters, despite mulling on these issues, do not face them frontally. This aspect slightly diminishes the broader scope of the book to engage in urban studies through a decolonial approach. The book is also academic in its aim and therefore would cater to a niche circle of academics, urban practitioners, journalists.

Kaleidoscope

Tens of thousands of people marched through central London for the annual LGBT+ Pride parade

Sadiq Khan, the mayor of London, joined the crowd as they proceeded through the capital on Saturday afternoon.

The event's organisers said that more than 35,000 marchers from about 600 groups made their way from Hyde Park Corner to Whitehall via Piccadilly, many carrying rainbow flags.

Read more at:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2026/jul/04/tens-of-thousands-march-in-london-for-annual-pride-parade>

Warsaw recognises same-sex marriage from other EU countries for the first time

Officials in Warsaw announced on Thursday, May 14, that they had formally recognized a same-sex marriage from another EU country for the first time in the mostly Catholic nation's history. Poland's Supreme Administrative Court ruled in March that same-sex marriages contracted in other EU states must be recognized in Poland, incorporating a 2025 EU ruling in a case brought by Jakub Cupriak-Trojan and Mateusz Trojan.

Read more at:

https://www.lemonde.fr/en/lgbtq/article/2026/05/14/warsaw-recognizes-same-sex-marriage-from-other-eu-countries-for-the-first-time_6753462_211.html

Millions who rely on US-funded HIV/AIDS programmes face uncertainty as financial cliff looms

Millions of HIV/AIDS patients, many of them in Africa, face an uncertain future as a financial cliff-edge for US-funded global programmes fast approaches. In September, 120 funding awards for HIV/AIDS work carried out by the US

Centres for Disease Control are set to expire, with no concrete replacement system in place.

Read more at:

<https://edition.cnn.com/2026/07/10/africa/cdc-pepfar-hiv-aids-program-cliff-intl>

More than 300 children killed or injured in Sudan war in 6 months, says UNICEF

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) today said that over 300 children have been killed or injured in the last six months in the war in Sudan, mostly from drone strikes.

Sudan has been mired in a war between the Sudanese military and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) since April 2023. The war is now concentrated in the Kordofan, Darfur and Blue Niles states, with drone warfare causing 60 per cent of casualties.

Read more at:

<https://newsonair.gov.in/more-than-300-children-killed-or-injured-in-sudan-war-in-6-months-says-unicef/>

Five years on, hundreds of Cuban protesters still behind bars

Five years ago, on July 11, 2021, Cuba experienced its largest nationwide demonstrations since the 1959 Revolution, as thousands took to the streets amid severe shortages and calls for greater rights and freedoms. The government responded with a wave of repression, deepening decades of restrictions on dissent. Rights groups Justicia 11J and Prisoners Defenders estimate that about 800 political prisoners remain behind bars, nearly half in connection with those demonstrations.

Read more at:

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2026/07/10/five-years-on-hundreds-of-cuban-protesters-still-behind-bars>

How men with female surnames are standing up to ridicule in Kenya

Many children in Kenya traditionally inherit their father's first name as their surname, but there are an increasing number of people who are taking their mother's instead.

This is particularly the case amongst the country's largest ethnic group, the Kikuyu—and has become a subject of debate and in some cases ridicule for the men with female surnames.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c75ygy71wdgo>

Passenger window on Ryanair flight dislodges, partially sucking out passenger

A passenger window on a Ryanair flight dislodged shortly after takeoff from Thessaloniki, Greece, partially sucking out a passenger on Friday.

A 61-year-old male passenger in the window seat was partially sucked out, according to a Greek doctor who treated the passenger on the tarmac once the plane safely landed.

Read more at:

<https://abcnews.com/US/passenger-window-ryanair-flight-dislodges-partially-sucking-passenger/story?id=134652591>

Why India has spent years blocking one movie's release

The film features one of India's biggest stars. It took about a year to make but almost another four trying to get past censors.

Starring Diljit Dosanjh in the lead role, 'Satluj' focuses on police abuses in the 1980s and '90s, one of the most violent periods of independent India when an insurgency was roiling Punjab State. As the country's Central Board of Film Certification presented an ever-growing list of demands for cuts and changes, the makers went to court. When that proved futile, they gave up on a theatrical release and put the film online last Friday, which does not require the board's approval.

Read more at:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2026/07/09/world/asia/india-film-censorship-satluj-diljit.html>

Curated by Abhijit Mazumder



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