IFSH
Institute for Peace Research
and Security Policy
at the University of Hamburg

RESEARCH REPORT
#008

Fostering Constructive Relations: Approaches to Trust-Building in Peacebuilding Interventions

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Abstract

Trust-building between citizens and state security actors is an integral part of post-conflict and peacebuilding interventions. Personal encounters are a frequently applied tool in peacebuilding work that aims to foster trust. Yet survey findings from across the globe suggest that trust in state institutions is eroding. What is more, trust-building initiatives between citizens and state security actors like the police evidently fail at times to contribute to enhancing relations. Focusing on dialogue settings under conditions of power asymmetry between the stakeholders, we conducted an extensive literature review, investigating where underlying rationales of trust-building in these types of interventions are critically challenged. For this purpose, we analysed strands of the peacebuilding and conflict transformation literature and the governance and institutionalism literature, and also drew on insights from criminology as well as organisational and management literature to broaden the evidence base. We then discussed practical challenges of dialogue projects with ten practitioners from different peacebuilding contexts. With the combined insights from academic literature and practitioner interviews, we pinpoint avenues for future research that can help to establish future trust-building initiatives on more evidence-based, risk-sensitive ground. More specifically, we focus on research needs regarding the prerequisites for trust-building, trust dynamics under conditions of power asymmetry, the role of third parties in trust-building initiatives, and alternatives to trust-building for enabling collaboration in contexts that are characterised by widespread distrust.

Keywords: trust, peacebuilding, security sector reform, governance, international interventions

Funding

This research report is the final publication of the “Trust-Building in Security & Rule of Law Partnerships” research project, conducted by the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg (IFSH) and the Berghof Foundation. The project was funded via the Knowledge Management Fund of the Dutch Knowledge Platform Security and the Rule of Law.

Executive Summary

Trust-building between citizens and the state is often an integral part of international peacebuilding and security cooperation projects implemented in societies affected by political instability and violent conflict. However, despite policy commitments to the primacy of user-orientation and context-specific programming, underlying assumptions of how trust is expected to come about are often derived from theories and experience with social contracts and governance institutions originating in European and North American contexts. At the same time, we observe erosion of trust in institutions and fellow citizens in societies across the globe.

Against this backdrop, we draw up a research agenda for diversifying our knowledge base on trust and trust-building in contexts where assumptions of trust-building that have been mainstreamed in peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions are critically challenged. More specifically, we focus our analysis on projects that foster dialogues and personal encounters between individuals in contexts characterised by power asymmetries.

We conducted an extensive literature review in various disciplines, focusing on the workings and dynamics of trust in personal encounters under conditions of power asymmetry. The findings highlight the multidimensional and ambivalent nature of social trust. Starting with peacebuilding and conflict transformation research, we trace the pertinent role of personal encounters and positive experience in fostering trust between individuals and groups, as the most prevalent basis for trust-building approaches in security interventions. Turning to literature from the fields of governance research and institutionalism, we add insights into the foundations of vertical trust relations between citizens and state (security) actors. This literature shows how, in Weberian governance arrangements, citizens' trust in institutions is expected to come about through effective, transparent, and fair governance provision, and to permeate into wider fields of society. Turning to the criminology literature, we add insights into the relationship between citizens and the police as state representatives and key providers of crucial services to the public. This field of research highlights how effective service delivery and fair treatment are expected to increase mutual trust between citizens and state security providers. Finally, we turn to the field of organisation and management literature, which provides insights into opportunities for cooperation between actors in the absence of trust – a

research field that has received limited attention in peacebuilding research and which, we argue, can add a pertinent impetus for peacebuilding and security cooperation projects implemented in societies affected by political instability and violent conflict. We complemented the literature review with empirical evidence shared by practitioners working in dialogue projects that bring together various actors in asymmetric relations, including community members, civil society actors, state authorities, and military and police personnel. The experiences shared by our respondents add practical insights into pitfalls trust-building initiatives are at risk of falling into under conditions of power asymmetry – an almost default condition of state-society trust-building initiatives.

Taken together, our findings reveal the manifold merits of trust in relations between various sets of actors, including vertical relations between citizens and state security actors. At the same time, they highlight that asymmetric power significantly interacts with trust-building dynamics in sometimes unforeseen ways. The literature and expert experience equally suggest that we still know little about how such risks and challenges can be navigated in peacebuilding and security cooperation practice.

Therefore, we suggest that future research should primarily focus on (1) minimum conditions that need to be met for dialogue projects to have a chance of making meaningful contributions to state-society trust, (2) empirical variations in trust and trust-building dynamics across governance systems and cultures, (3) challenges to the often-postulated impartiality of the third party, arising from power asymmetry, and (4) alternatives to trust-building in contexts characterised by widespread distrust. Further insights into these critical issues are needed for researchers and advisors to engage policymakers in discussions on the challenges and opportunities of trust-building endeavours and how to navigate risks arising from power asymmetry.

1 Introduction: Trust-Building in Peacebuilding and Security Cooperation Interventions

Trust is widely considered an integral part of the fabric of society. It connects at the inter-personal level: If citizens trust each other, they will favourably evaluate the benefits of working together even if cooperation may entail risks (Gausdal, 2012 p. 14). People will accept the vulnerability arising from the cooperation because they expect to benefit from interacting with their counterparts in the future (Six, et al., 2017 p. 61; Kostis, et al., 2020 p. 70). Over time, positive cooperation experience leads from 'thin' case-by-case rational risk calculations to 'thicker' forms of trust, where people feel a sense of mutual loyalty and do not expect to be exploited by the other party (Daase, 2022). People's assessment of others' trustworthiness is not necessarily limited to individuals they know personally. As a more abstract category, 'generalised' trust in people pertains to people's generally favourable outlook on members of society (Freitag, et al., 2009). Widespread, generalised trust is seen as key to social cohesion.

The enabling function of trust is not limited to horizontal relations between people but also extends to vertical relations between citizens and the state, represented by its institutions. Therefore, trust constitutes a relevant category when thinking about social cohesion within states and between states as a part of international relations. Constructive relations between citizens and the state are considered pertinent for effective and publicly accepted governance arrangements. As citizens experience arrangements with state actors that are governed by official rules, laws and guidelines, they do not need to make case-by-case risk calculations when interacting with state representatives, because they trust that these rules will guide the individual's behaviour during the interaction (Bachmann, et al., 2007). This institution-based trust pertains to the belief in institutional rules governing the cooperation experience. For the state, trust reduces the costs of protracted surveillance of compliance with agreed rules (Ho, et al., 2005 p. 519).

Especially when it comes to state security institutions, such as the military and the police, trust is seen as vital for constructive interactions and the effective provision of security services (Hough, et al., 2014 p. 244). State security actors

are responsible for providing basic services of physical safety and protection from crime to all members of society, while upholding the state's monopoly of force in ways which are publicly accepted (De Coning, et al., 2015 p. 10). Trust in state security actors, who represent the authority of the state, is closely related to overall state legitimacy (De Coning, et al., 2015 p. 1; Bittner, 1980; Schaap, 2020 p. 305). However, in societies affected by political instability and violent conflict, relations between citizens and the state are often characterised by widespread distrust. State security actors at times caused the relationship's deterioration and the emergence of distrust. Citizens may have had negative experiences with state security actors, in the form of repression, abuse or violence – or simply the absence of service provision. In the literature, examples of dysfunctional relations and distrust between the public and state security personnel abound.

That is why external interventions aimed at (post-conflict) stabilisation, state- and peacebuilding or social cohesion often put special emphasis on (re-) establishing constructive relations between citizens and state security actors, as a crucial aspect of improving state-society relations. These interventions work with various sets of stakeholders, comprising communities, civil society organisations, local authorities, and security personnel at the local, regional and/or national levels. These interventions typically aim to alter bigger societal pictures instead of focusing on individualised progress (Earle, et al., 1995 p. 11). Consequently, different levels of inter-personal, institution-based and generalised trust regularly blend into each other in the context of these interventions. Simultaneously, academic research is often very specialised, making it difficult to directly apply concepts to policy-relevant analysis of peacebuilding contexts on the ground. In this research report, we refer to these interventions collectively as 'peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions'. Next to providing partner governments with technical knowledge and equipment that are considered relevant for improving state security provision and the overall security situation, these interventions regularly work with mainstreamed policy assumptions of how trust between citizens and state security actors is expected to come about and can be fostered through external intervention.

We investigated these mainstreamed policy assumptions in a previous policy brief (Budde, et al., 2021). One trust-building assumption that we found to play a prominent role in policy reasoning on trust-building suggests that, through inter-personal contact, individuals will learn about each other, empathise, develop

better mutual understanding and create positive experiences of cooperation. This assumption is regularly applied to the citizen-state security actor relationship in the form of dialogue initiatives that are aimed at mutual trust-building. In these policies, however, underlying rationales of how trust comes about and why people build trust towards some entities and not to others remains largely implicit (IOB, 2019 p. 13).

At the same time, perception surveys highlight decreasing levels of public trust in societal institutions across the globe (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2021). The Edelman Trust Barometer 2022 detects "a collapse of Trust in democracies", describing distrust as "society's default emotion" (Edelman Trust Barometer, 2022). When it comes to public confidence in the police, the Gallup Global Law and Order Report 2021 documents significant regional variation, with figures showing comparatively low levels of 40–65% confidence expressions in Latin and Central America, Eastern Europe and sub-Saharan Africa (Gallup, 2021). What is more, a recent large-scale assessment of community policing projects in the Global South did not find evidence of community policing interventions building citizens' trust in the police (Blair, et al., 2021). These survey findings suggest that not only is social trust going down on a global scale, but also that conventional measures to remedy these downward dynamics in the critical field of citizen-state security actor relations are not necessarily effective.

Against this backdrop, this research report investigates dynamics of trust and trust-building in peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions. Our objective is to illuminate situations where conventional trust-building approaches of enhancing inter-personal relations are challenged. To this end, we focus on dialogue-based models of trust-building interventions that are set in the context of asymmetric power. We argue that asymmetric relations come with power dynamics that are not foreseen by mainstreamed trust-building approaches, which largely draw on assumptions of positive cooperation experience during encounters between individuals of equal status. We elaborate on the reason for selecting dialogue settings characterised by power asymmetry between the stakeholders in the following chapter.

In this research report, we ask:

1. Which risks and challenges do trust-building interventions face under conditions of asymmetric power?

2. How can these risks and challenges be navigated in the context of peace-building and security cooperation?

To answer these questions, we undertook two steps: First, we conducted a literature review from various academic fields which engage with issues of trust and trust-building. We focused first on the peacebuilding and conflict transformation literatures and added insights from governance research, institutionalism, and criminology, as well as organisational research and management literature. In a second step, we complemented the conceptual insights into dynamics of trust gained from the literature review with practical insights from interviews we conducted with ten dialogue practitioners from the field of peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions. These interviews made plain actual challenges practitioners face during the implementation of projects aimed at building trust. Based on these two steps, we drew up a research agenda, highlighting avenues for future research on risks and opportunities of trust-building. With this research agenda, we aim to contribute to a process leading towards a more evidence-based, risk-sensitive approach to fostering constructive relations between citizens and state security actors in contexts characterised by political contestation and protracted societal conflict.

2 The Missing Link: Trust, Asymmetric Relations, and Power

The main subject of our analysis is social trust and how it comes about, since trust constitutes a core desirable component of societies as envisioned by peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions that aim to foster constructive citizen-state relations. Social science definitions of trust are the most common reference in research on peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions. Social trust is widely understood as "a cooperative attitude towards other people based on the optimistic expectation that others are likely to respect one's own interests" (Draude, et al., 2018 p. 354). That means that trust can be understood as a judgement about someone's benevolence, integrity and ability (Evans, et al., 2008 p. 1586) to act in a predictable and favourable manner. To decide whether someone is trustworthy, people evaluate intentions and actions based on the information they have. There are two major angles for assessing trustworthiness: Some conceptualise trust as an attitude, which means that trust derives from people's own deeply ingrained propensities, values and beliefs regarding character traits they find trustworthy (Jackson, et al., 2016; Brashear, et al., 2003; Karim, 2020; Glaeser, et al., 2000). In these cases, individuals will decide favourably on their counterpart's trustworthiness if they perceive them as sufficiently close to their own character traits and beliefs. On the other hand, individuals may emphasise the element of intentional choice in deciding who is considered trustworthy (Li, 2017; Tillmar, 2005; Das, et al., 1998). According to this thinking, individuals decide on a case-by-case manner if the likelihood of betrayal is sufficiently small to take the risk of increased vulnerability that stems from the engagement. While we consider both perspectives valid for the context of peacebuilding and security cooperation, we focus on a trust-as-choice perspective in our analysis, as this perspective suggests that trust dynamics are amenable for social construction and can be influenced by peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions. It is this trust-as-choice perspective that interventions aim to employ and improve when conducting dialogue initiatives for enhancing mutual understanding and cooperation. These insights into individuals' assessments of trustworthiness show the extent to which trust is related to personal experience, in the form of socialisation and decisions.

In peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions, however, we expect different layers of trust to be at play, which are not limited to the level of personal experience. Dialogue projects often aim to bring together individuals, and while interpersonal trust is a relevant layer, those individuals are likely to also be members of societal groups (i.e. professional, religious and ethnic groups). Thus, inter-group trust dynamics are likely to play a role as well in these projects (Kappmeier, et al., 2021 p. 90). Moreover, people can also extend their trust towards governments and institutions at the systems level (Six, et al., 2017 p. 64). While research on trust treats these different layers as distinct phenomena, we suggest that in peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions, layers of trust blend into each other to varying degrees, depending on the situation and the issues at hand. And while much research has been conducted on inter-personal and inter-group trust, significantly less is known about how trust in abstract entities like the state is expected to come about. Overall, although often treated as a monolithic concept in peacebuilding strategies, trust works on various layers and has numerous origins depending on the relationship in question. Therefore, an improved evidence base regarding these layers is key for estimating possible effects that trust-building interventions may develop. Similar limitations and knowledge gaps are at play regarding culture-specific characteristics of trust. When considering the various contexts of application, research found that trust "is understood, interpreted, reinterpreted, exhibited, tested and broken in different ways in different societies" (Gormley-Heenan, et al., 2009 p. 423), but little is known about how this fans out in practice. Consequently, improving the evidence base regarding the different workings of trust depending on context-specific factors is vital to estimate trust-building interventions' effects.

This brings us to the missing link in underlying policy assumptions on trust-building that cut across layers of the individual's experience, group identities and the state as an abstract entity. These relations are not limited to personal experience between individuals with more or less equal status – an often-omitted precondition for inter-personal trust-building that we will discuss in more depth in a subsequent chapter. On the contrary, these interventions usually take place in contexts characterised by stark power asymmetries between stakeholders, including citizens, state security personnel and related public actors. Note that 'asymmetric' does not necessarily mean unjust: In ideal Weberian governance models, citizens symbolically hand over their ability to arrange self-organised justice to state institutions vested with executive powers. In turn, in their appli-

cation of these means of coercion, these executive institutions are then bound by laws enacted by citizens' representatives in legitimate legislative processes. These processes, and the connected electoral institutions, in theory, enable citizens to exercise control and oversight within these voluntary arrangements of asymmetric power. The focus of this form of asymmetric power within the state is thus on its legitimate ability to administer physical means of coercion, or the threat thereof, to ensure the political order's stability (Weber, 1922).

However, as peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions often take place in contexts in which the political order's legitimacy is highly contested and societal groups are entangled in protracted conflicts, we suggest that presumptions of the 'social contract' under the Weberian governance model do not necessarily apply. We will discuss this further in the literature review on governance research (Section 3.2). For our conceptual framework, we suggest that the asymmetry in these relationships may come with specific power dynamics between actors, yet unforeseen, that may be involved in peacebuilding interventions and security cooperation interventions. The questions regarding power asymmetry that we aim to illuminate in this report thus revolve around the topics of applicability and transferability of concepts: After all, if asymmetric power constitutes a likely important variable for trust-building, mainstreamed assumptions on trust-building as currently applied in peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions may need to be revisited.

In the following analysis, we applied a relational understanding of power, in which power defines one actor's (or actor group's) ability to structure, alter and confine another actor's (or actor group's) room for manoeuvre in pursuing their own interests (Barnett, et al., 2005 p. 42). Power asymmetry in the contexts of peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions thus means that the weaker side is less able to change a situation with force or through negotiations with the stronger party, as the stronger side is in control of the relationship's parameters (Aggestam, 2010 p. 69). The weaker side's vulnerability in the relationship is thus not voluntarily accepted, as it is in the case of trust. Instead, the weaker side is limited in its options to exercise autonomy. Under conditions of stark power asymmetry, the weaker side may not even be able to exit a situation or to terminate a relationship, even if trust is violated continuously, as the weaker side depends on essential services provided by the stronger side, like state security actors providing protection to the citizens. We argue that this power asymmetry interacts with trust-building dynamics in ways which

are not sufficiently anticipated and accounted for in peacebuilding and security cooperation practice. Related challenges and risks become evident both in the subsequent literature review and in practitioners' experience with dialogue interventions.

3 Research Perspectives on Trust and Trust-Building

The literature review starts from the field of peacebuilding and conflict transformation research. While this literature is rich in contributions regarding trust and trust-building, we identify certain gaps regarding unequal relationships, for example between citizens and state (security) institutions and the impact of power asymmetry on dialogue processes. Therefore, in the next step, we turn to research in the fields of governance and institutionalism, criminology, as well as organisational research and management to provide complementary insights into relationships characterised by power asymmetries. While these disciplines are not uncharted in the field of peacebuilding and security cooperation research, we argue that intervention designs are often not evaluated in relation to insights derived from other pertinent disciplines. Interventions may have an institution-building focus, thus working with governance or peacebuilding concepts, or they may have a community reconciliation focus, thus drawing on locally oriented conflict transformation approaches. In other cases, they might work on public-police relations, applying concepts derived from criminology, or they might focus on negotiations between conflict parties in security settings, drawing on insights from the organisational and management literature. However, in view of the diverse and often ambivalent trust dynamics in peacebuilding and security cooperation contexts, we suggest that intervention designs should be appraised in light of insights from various disciplines, as they highlight different risks and challenges of trust-building.

3.1 INSIGHTS FROM PEACEBUILDING AND CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION RESEARCH

Much of the conceptual thinking behind peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions is derived from peacebuilding and conflict transformation research. Conflict transformation research is a strand of peace and conflict research that engages with various aspects of conflicts in human societies, drawing on other disciplines, including history, anthropology, communication and social psychology (Dudouet, et al., 2019 p. 139). Conflict transformation research investigates acute conflict situations and transition phases, as well as

peace-making and peacebuilding contexts across the globe. The research field provides a wealth of insights into questions relating to negotiations between warring parties, disarmament of armed groups, rebuilding state institutions, strengthening social cohesion, and dealing with grievances and trauma, to name just a few. Special attention is given to the role of third parties. Against this backdrop, our literature review in this field is particularly selective. We focus on conflict transformation research on interpersonal encounters and trust-building measures. In the following, we discuss some of the mainstreamed ideas and practices and some recent works, with a focus on research contributions which lend themselves to review in light of their implications for asymmetric relations between citizens and state security personnel.

Conflict transformation aims to transform destructive or violent relations between conflict parties towards more constructive, sustainable, peaceful relationships in the longer term (Kriesberg, 2011 p. 50). Adversaries can be individuals or groups, comprising a wide spectrum of political parties, activists, partisan movements, non-state armed groups, civil society organisations and other societal actors involved in social conflicts. According to most conflict transformation approaches, trust is a key ingredient for the formation of constructive relations between adversaries. Kelman states that "(t)rust is a central requirement for the peaceful and effective management of all relationships – between individuals, between groups, and between individuals or groups and the organizations and societies to which they belong" (Kelman, 2005 p. 640).

In view of the crucial role of trust in constructive relations postulated in peacebuilding and conflict transformation research, trust-building is widely considered to take centre stage in conflict transformation and its related processes (Kappmeier, et al., 2019 p. 527). The level of trust in relationships is expected to be influenced by the environment in which a personal encounter takes place, the conflict parties' propensity to trust, and the conflict parties' historical experiences, as Lewicki and Stevenson point out for the case of negotiations (Lewicki, et al., 1997). Research also highlighted that trust and distrust are distinct phenomena in relationships, recommending that conflict transformation practice take steps to foster trust in relationships while also taking measures to decrease distrust between adversaries (Lewicki, et al., 2000). The spectrum of how relations are to be rendered constructive is wide. Conflict transformation can include encouraging reciprocal exchanges between conflict parties, facilitating agreements on issues of mutual benefit, creating shared

institutions, introducing mechanisms to address grievances, and initiating reconciliation processes. The need to address and eliminate the root causes of conflict often takes center stage, for longer-term peaceful relations to emerge.

Conflict transformation approaches often focus on personal encounters between adversaries, to restore cooperative relations (Kriesberg, 2011 p. 54). Facilitated dialogues and negotiations are well-established tools in fostering processes to deal with conflict constructively, with the help of third parties (Breitmaier, et al., 2019). Third parties can be major international actors, non-governmental organisations, mediators, international peacebuilding institutions, or other state or non-state actors external to the conflict setting. Third-party interventions are often conceived as 'repositories of trust', providing a safe space for conflicting parties to convene and find common ground (Kappmeier, et al., 2019 p. 534; Kelman, 2005 p. 645). Moreover, third parties can guarantee the safety of activities and monitor the implementation of agreements, if conflicting parties do not have sufficient trust in each other to accept the vulnerability that would result from extending trust to the other side during the implementation of agreements. An important precondition is that the third party who assumes this role is 'neutral' or 'multi-partial' in the conflict, not biased towards one side of the conflict or pursuing own interests. We will come back to this presumption in the discussion of organisational and management literature in Section 3.4.

When it comes to the stakeholders, dialogue initiatives often include representatives of key influencers of the drivers of conflict. Formats that involve citizens and state security personnel may comprise community safety workshops, local peace committees and security dialogues at the local, regional or national level. The underlying causal assumptions of such dialogues are derived from contact theory, developed by Gordon Allport in 1954. Allport suggested that personal contact can be a viable mechanism for reducing prejudice between members of majority and minority groups, if certain preconditions are met (Allport, 1954): First, the groups involved in the contact process should have equal status, as well as similar backgrounds and characteristics. This is especially the case for group members involved in the personal encounter, who should have similar status within their respective groups. Furthermore, groups should be able to work collaboratively towards common goals. According to Allport, contact will ideally be supported institutionally, for example through laws or social customs that encourage constructive relations between different groups. If these conditions are not in place, according to Allport, group members are

more likely to resort to inter-group stereotypes which endanger the emergence of constructive relations. The positive effects of personal encounter processes have been substantiated in various surveys over the years. The majority of these studies have been carried out in the United States (US) and in European countries on majority groups' prejudice against minority groups, such as African Americans and Muslims (Brown, et al., 2003; Savelkoul, et al., 2011). Several studies find evidence for personal encounter processes having the potential to help decrease inter-group prejudice. The underlying causal assumptions of contact theory are therefore widely considered valid.

Research is more divided over the pertinence of the preconditions put forward by Allport. While one meta-study found that those preconditions are facilitating rather than essential (Pettigrew, 1998), another meta-study highlighted that the significance of these preconditions had not been researched sufficiently across contexts to make evidence-based claims about their relevance for contact that results in constructive relations (Paluck, et al., 2019). Bertrand and Duflo pointed to the possibility that people who are less prejudiced are more likely to engage in contact initiatives (Bertrand, et al., 2017), highlighting a possible selection bias. Moreover, there is a lack of studies on people's attitudes over time, as most evaluations work with self-reported behavioural changes by participants directly after the personal encounter took place. Overall, despite a range of surveys and research conducted in the US and Europe, we know little about how contact plays out during interventions and how it interacts with personal experiences and daily encounters in contexts where peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions are routinely implemented (Dixon, et al., 2005).

As we are exploring relationship dynamics under conditions of asymmetry, we are particularly interested in research on the precondition of equal status. Research contributions have focused on dialogue processes between groups of unequal status. The findings suggest that, in contexts with protracted asymmetric conflict, contact initiatives are likely to favour the position of the majority group and the (asymmetric) status quo. Furthermore, these interventions risk neglecting the minority group's demands for structural changes to improve the situation, thus potentially curbing initiatives for social change (Amir, 1969; Amir, et al., 1980; Maoz, 2011). These studies on potential negative effects of dialogue initiatives for constructive relations have helped to shape thinking within conflict transformation research. As Breitmaier and Schram note:

> "Many dialogue initiatives seem to be based on the simple assumption that just bringing together representatives of conflicting parties will do some good and cannot do harm. This assumption can no longer be justified in light of various cases in which participants were attacked by hardliners from their constituency because of their encounters with the 'enemy'. [...] Another criticism is that dialogues can be harmful in highly asymmetric conflicts if they conceal the inherent inequalities on the ground by creating the formal impression of a 'symmetrical dialogue'. While the more powerful representatives then may glorify their openness to dialogue, on 'difficult' issues, representatives of the less powerful party often perceive these encounters as a waste of time, a fig leaf or, even worse, as reinforcing the unequal status quo" (Breitmaier, et al., 2019 pp. 83–84).

Against this backdrop, the authors assume that dialogues cannot substitute for addressing structural causes of conflict or account for power-political aspects in relationships. Along similar lines, Fisher argued earlier that in negotiations, trust should not be 'overloaded':

> "Other things being equal, the less that an agreement depends on trust, the more likely it is to be implemented. That it is convenient to trust someone is no reason to do so. Behaving in a way that makes oneself worthy of trust is highly useful and likely to be rewarded. But the more one trusts the other side, the greater the incentive one provides for behaviour that will prove such trust to have been misplaced" (Fisher, 1985).

In light of these risks, conflict transformation research has engaged with alternatives and complementary measures to dialogue support. For example, nonviolent resistance has been identified as a viable strategy to redress structural asymmetry (Dudouet, 2008). This research suggests that third parties can, amongst others, empower groups suffering injustice and provide trainings for nonviolent movements. In these research contributions, the ambivalent relationship between elements of social change, justice and conflict resolution in peacebuilding comes to the fore, especially regarding the citizen-state relationship. In contexts where state actors abuse their power against the population, third parties may see themselves confronted with the need to engage in empowerment and mobilisation strategies and efforts to alter the status quo. Therefore, they have to balance facilitation and advocacy roles, which is a tall order for many external actors. As Michelle Parlevliet notes, "we are far from clear about how structural change might be achieved and how it

can best be supported. Nor is there any clarity on the scope for and limitations of external involvement in such change processes" (Parlevliet, 2010 p. 400). In any case, these research contributions highlight the need for peacebuilders to carefully account for issues of power in conflict analyses.

At the level of practical peacebuilding work, dialogues and trust-building have become the instruments of choice, also in contexts where trust levels between conflicting parties are very low and parties might also see no reason to develop trust in each other. Even under such challenging conditions, many contributions in conflict transformation would suggest that parties needed to collaborate in order to transform relations in a constructive manner. Under these conditions, conflict transformation initiatives often suggest incremental approaches to trust-building and the formation of constructive relations. One prominent example is Osgood's 'Graduated Reciprocation in Tension Reduction (GRIT)' from 1962, which was designed to overcome deadlock in negotiations between conflicting parties. The model suggests that if one side provides a unilateral, moderate concession, the other side is likely to engage in a reciprocal act, resulting in a mutual dynamic of making concessions that will eventually provide impetus for the negotiation process (Osgood, 1962).

A similar logic is applied in confidence-building measures (CBMs), on which a vast literature exists. CBMs are intended to send initial signals of positive intentions and commitment to build a 'working trust' that enables conflict parties to engage with root causes of a conflict, or to consolidate confidence of wider constituencies during the implementation of an agreement (Mason, et al., 2013). CBMs are a pertinent means in the security sector to avoid escalations, for example in the form of no-fly zones or sharing information on troop movements. Drawing on psychological perspectives, Kappmeier et al. recently introduced an 'Inter-Group Trust Model', which reflects a more nuanced view on trustworthiness and inter-group relations in reconciliation processes. The model comprises the dimension of competence-based trust, which pertains to perceptions of the other parties' skills and capacities, and integrity-based trust, pertaining to the perceived predispositions and intentions of the other party (Kappmeier, et al., 2021). To a certain extent, this distinction reflects the trust dimensions of effectiveness and procedural fairness that are widely applied in criminology (see Section 4.3). Next to these two dimensions, Kappmeier et al. suggest that compassion (expected level of care), compatibility (opportunities for common ground) and security (the perceived risks of harm from the other party) are

pertinent and inter-related dimensions of trust that need to be considered in reconciliation processes. Importantly, the authors suggest that trust deficits in different psychological dimensions can be addressed individually if they are properly assessed. If trust is, however, not assessed in this multidimensional manner, they suggest that trust-building interventions are likely to struggle with addressing the specific dynamics involved or might even be at risk of failing, as they neglect the parties' relational needs (Kappmeier, et al., 2021). Another pertinent distinction introduced by Kappmeier et al. lies between relational factors sustaining a conflict (i.e. perceptions of interests, fears, level of contact) and structural factors sustaining the conflict (i.e. corruption, political leadership style, historical narratives of conflict, propaganda). Both types of factors can result in trust deficits between parties and may require different conflict transformation approaches. In view of this distinction, it appears that inter-personal encounters are more suited to address relational factors, on the person-to-person level, than to tackle structural factors, like systemic corruption in the security sector. We will come back to this distinction and its pertinence for the field of peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions in Chapter 4.

Most approaches discussed so far operate on the assumption that regardless of how challenging the circumstances may be, the relationship between conflict parties lends itself to trust-building, whatever the conflict's historical development and roots. An additional perspective on collaboration for situations that are characterised by an absence of trust might be worthy of consideration: Kahane suggested that even in the absence of trust, collaboration can be effective and potentially constructive, but under circumstances that differ from conventional collaboration setups (Kahane, 2017). Kahane diverts from widely shared perspectives from peacebuilding and conflict transformation research, which by and large conceptualise trust as the key foundation of relationships and collaborative effectiveness. He suggests that parties do not need to agree on a shared problem analysis and way forward, neither do they need to discuss and agree on principles. Rather, they only need to agree that a situation has to change; subsequent agreements can then be supported by the parties for different reasons. While Kahane's approach suggests that collaboration between conflict parties can be fostered even in contexts that are characterised by widespread distrust, we would argue that his suggestions are not fully applicable in situations characterised by stark power asymmetries, in which the stronger side can assert its power in the relationship, while the weaker side might not even be able to change the situation by exiting the relationship.

Taking insights from peacebuilding and conflict transformation research as the starting point of our review, we take note of the highly diversified and contextualised perspectives on trust and trust-building, which highlight the need for third parties to undertake nuanced assessments of power dynamics and trust-building needs in specific contexts. For the most part, conflict is presented in the literature as a positive agent of social change. However, we also note a trend towards favouring dialogues and trust-building in the pursuit of constructive relations and social cohesion, as those measures are less likely to further intensify conflicts. The result is a certain ambivalence between objectives of social change, justice and conflict transformation in intervention designs. We also find that most research is conducted on the inter-personal and inter-group levels. Much less is known in this research field about how trust in specific individuals is expected to transcend to more abstract entities like state institutions, or to wider levels of society – assumptions that regularly underpin peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions. Moreover, potentially negative consequences of power asymmetries that may unfold between stakeholders in dialogue initiatives are not always spelled out, as trust is by and large treated as a desirable attribute regardless of the circumstances. We therefore extend our analysis to research fields that put stronger emphasis on institutional workings and dynamics of trust, citizen-state relations and the role that state security personnel play in this relationship.

3.2 INSIGHTS FROM GOVERNANCE RESEARCH AND INSTITUTIONALISM

In the following sections, we engage with political science literature and related fields that provide insights into the workings and dynamics of trust in citizen-state relations. We start with the governance literature, which provides us with concepts of citizens' trust in governments and assumed ways for governments to attain citizens' trust. In the second section, we engage with the field of institutionalism, which focuses on one of the primary means of peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions: institution-building (McCann, 2020). As public institutions such as interior ministries, police departments and military agencies are vital for delivering public services, their performance takes centre stage in considerations of citizens' trust in the state.

3.2.1 GOVERNANCE RESEARCH

For this analysis, governance is thought of as "the sum of regulations brought about by actors, processes as well as structures and justified with reference to a public problem" (Zürn, et al., 2010 p. 2). In addition to formalised regulations, governing entails the process of actors providing and enforcing sets of rules that are suited for collective social coordination (Draude, et al., 2012 p. 6). Security provision, as part of the state's fundamental functions, is not only at the core of domestic governance initiatives, but also features prominently in international support to conflict-affected states (Berg, 2012 p. 12).

Within governance research, trust features on many levels. Horizontal trust among citizens is thought to improve cooperation on mundane issues, while citizens' vertical trust in public officials, politicians and government institutions, and in their ability to design reasonable legislation and enforce it proportionately, is expected to increase citizens' compliance with these rules on the basis of relational trust (Levi, et al., 2000 p. 476). It is assumed that if government institutions are met with trust, their governance will encounter less criticism or open opposition. Citizens' trust in governments is expected to derive, firstly, from expectations regarding prolonged reliability, and, secondly, from confidence in future cooperation, which the government and its institutions induce by effectively sanctioning behaviour that deviates from the social contract between citizens and the state (Draude, et al., 2018 p. 359). However, the emphasis is not only on state institutions' capacity to enforce legislation, but also on citizens' perceptions of their being in the position to do so legitimately. That citizens perceive these institutions as legitimate in their exercise of authority is a primary precondition for compliance. The perception of appropriateness with regard to both the institution's ability and its measured approach to the use of force is fundamental here (Jackson, et al., 2016 p. 2): In the literature, state institutions are considered trustworthy when they are capable of fulfilling their tasks, and when they are seen as using appropriate measures for this purpose.

Consequently, projects that aim to increase the legitimacy and capacity of national governing institutions have become a staple in peacebuilding and security cooperation (Schroeder, et al., 2012 p. 43). Security sector reform, a policy tool that aims to make public security provision more effective and rule-based, has become a standard instrument within crisis prevention and stabilisation (Sedra, 2010a). Underneath this internationally widespread pref-

erence lies the assumption of a virtuous cycle (Schmelzle, et al., 2018 p. 459), a mutually reinforcing connection between legitimacy and effectiveness. In sum, interventions aim to increase institutions' capacities because donors assume that increased capacity heightens these institutions' legitimacy in the eyes of local populations. This increased legitimacy should then lead to more cooperation from citizens, which allows institutions to provide even better services. The overall improvement in the situation is attributed to the governing institution and additionally turned into a generalised positive assumption that this effective provision will continue in future. Subsequently, the increased perceptions of legitimacy are rewarded with continuous compliance by citizens (Schmelzle, et al., 2018 p. 459).

The global purview of this virtuous cycle regarding capacity and government legitimacy has been questioned, especially in areas of governance with limited statehood. The way in which people perceive governance and the expectations they have in terms of service provision are closely connected to local and historically evolved experiences of colonialism and oppression (Nalla, et al., 2021), fairness (Mcloughlin, 2018) and foreign interventions and the local partners receiving funding (Baldwin, et al., 2020), for example, as well as to the general amount of development aid within the economy and the question whether the intervention's design originated with the partner government or the donor organisation (Barma, et al., 2020).

Despite these research-based findings that call the global purview of the virtuous cycle between capacity and legitimacy into question, international peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions still tend to work with this causal assumption (Rubenstein, 2018 p. 585). This is puzzling, considering that research findings suggest that capacity-building and trust-building are not interlinked as directly as their interconnectedness in policy-making might suggest. This is not to say that capacity-building does not lead to increased levels of trust. It does, however, point out that more research on the foundations of trust in security sectors is needed before vast resources are invested in capacity-building, provided that citizen-state trust is an envisaged goal of these interventions.

The principal institutions that receive support via peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions are state institutions which aim to create a monopoly on the use of force in a Weberian sense (Schroeder, et al., 2012 p. 37). The

Western-inspired postulation that state institutions are by default the most legitimate targets for cooperation is at risk of leaving out local context-specific sources of service provision, especially regarding security (Ansorg, 2017 p. 132). This approach to governance promotion may not only build unnecessary parallel structures; it is also at risk of falling into what is called the "sovereignty trap" (Hutchful, 2020 p. 24): Following the Western premise of legitimate statehood, foreign interventions cooperate primarily with state institutions, despite their often having a central role in past or present conflicts (Hutchful, 2020 p. 25). Despite its assumed positive influence on internal stability, state authority may at times contradict citizens' safety, depending on the level of elite involvement in state institutions and the conflict's root causes (Richmond, et al., 2011 p. 454).

A further problem identified by researchers regarding donors' focus on state institution-building as a vehicle for improving vertical trust relations is that the institutional design that is introduced refers more to its contexts of origin than to host societies' needs (Denney, et al., 2015 p. 39). Rather than analysing citizens' perceptions of what must change for local institutions to become more trustworthy, donors tend to alter host societies' institutions in ways which align them more closely with the institutional architecture in donor countries. This isomorphic bias (Walter-Drop, et al., 2018), where donors focus on what they perceive to be appropriate institutional design rather than considering functional alternatives that may find more local acceptance, stands in the way of locally informed intervention goals. For almost a decade now, researchers have been calling for a local turn (Mac Ginty, et al., 2013) in international peacebuilding and governance promotion that puts context-specific considerations of desirable intervention outputs and outcomes at the centre instead of adapting programmes to ever-changing local contexts. Hybridity, i.e. the presence of non-state actors in areas of governance that in a Weberian-style power system would usually be filled by state institutions, is one of the core concerns of these alternative approaches to governance (Hutchful, 2020 p. 37). Acknowledging the pertinent roles of customary governance institutions that may lack an adequate counterpart in donor states may be one of the most important paradigm changes required in the field of international peacebuilding and security cooperation. This required shift, however, must not lead to the new trap of over-romanticising (Hutchful, 2020 p. 38) these institutions, since they may wield power without accountability or are in other ways considered to be in conflict with the international liberal paradigm (Mac Ginty, et al., 2012 p. 6). However, it opens pathways for policy-relevant research on specific contexts of

interventions and possible alternative, locally informed avenues to trust-building, or on reasons for the failure of institution-based trust-building approaches and the exact problems with the blueprints applied.

To sum up, governance literature calls into question many policy assumptions regarding trust-building in relationships characterised by asymmetric power. Looking at the virtuous cycle argument, we found that citizens' legitimacy perceptions and state capacity may be less closely connected than policies imply. Local context-specific factors, such as historical experiences with colonialism, the presence of non-state actors, the perception of foreign donors and their interventions, and the like feature prominently in perceptions of trustworthiness. Research findings depict related project designs as based less on local assumptions regarding what features trustworthy institutions should display; instead, they are found to be based to a larger extent on donor societies' customary institutional architecture. Governance research also pointed out the inherent state focus of peacebuilding and security interventions, often failing to pay sufficient attention to the role played by state actors in past or ongoing misconduct against the population. The so-called sovereignty trap may lead to increased support being given to state actors that are not trustworthy in the eyes of citizens, while citizens have few options to oppose these types of cooperation. Long-term effects on trust in societies that witnessed these types of cooperation are hard to fathom and need more research to be thoroughly understood.

3.2.2 INSTITUTIONALISM

Institutionalism provides us with a more specific focus on the role of institutions as governing instruments within peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions. Closely connected to the governance literature, since institutions and institution-building are one of the major vehicles in international security cooperation, we devoted more attention to this aspect in order to analyse its specific contributions to trust in relationships characterised by asymmetric power. Institutionalism as a discipline focuses less on utilitarian or individualistic reasons for actions, as commonly found in rational choice thinking (Peters, 2019 p. 1), and more on collective actions that guide individual choice (Diermeier, et al., 2003 p. 125).

Institutions are therefore inseparably connected to questions of legitimacy and power, which makes them an ideal starting point when discussing the role of trust in horizontal citizen-state relationships. State justice institutions, for example, are not only situated at the interface between citizens and the state; they are also thought to be somewhat dependent on citizens' compliance even if justice institutions have to act at times in ways which frustrate citizens' interests (Jackson, et al., 2016 p. 1). For justice institutions to function according to their intended purpose, it is considered vital that citizens perceive these institutions as legitimately applying their coercive power. Ideally, citizens perceive both the compliance with instructions and the institutional structure these instructions originate from as just and appropriate (Jackson, et al., 2016 p. 2). Trust then reflects the individual expectations that citizens formulate about the likelihood of individual officials' obeying the institution's own rules that dictate measured and appropriate approaches in the use of force (Jackson, et al., 2016 p. 3). This is closely connected to citizens' perception of shared moral values between them and the justice institution in question: If citizens perceive that the police, for example, act on the basis of shared moral values, citizens might be more likely to report crimes, since they can expect officers to deal with the case in accordance with a common understanding of appropriate action (Jackson, et al., 2016 p. 4). This shows that trust in justice institutions is dependent not only on the institution's capacity to act, but also on the set of shared values, which means perceptions of fairness. Frequently, perceptions of procedural fairness work as a much more reliable proxy for generalised trust than perceptions of effectiveness (Hamm, et al., 2016 p. 7). We look more closely at questions of procedural fairness in the generation of citizens' trust in security and justice institutions in the section on criminology (4.3).

Institutions influence governance outcomes in that they guide individual behaviour (Diermeier, et al., 2003 p. 126). Controlling an institution's design means controlling the context in which decisions are made at a later stage, which in turn translates into the power of relatively limiting, or opening, actors' room for manoeuvre (Baldwin, 2013 p. 275). Within institutionalism, powerful actors' assumed main goal when setting up institutions is to create a governance scheme (Hinings, et al., 2017 p. 163) that benefits their preferences (Donnelly, 2018 p. 21) and hence to manage interdependence and provide order to other actors' leverage (Donnelly, 2018 p. 22). When setting up institutions, state actors attach preference to relative gains and to securing their access to instruments of power; they therefore design institutions to meet their interests

(Donnelly, 2018 p. 27). Since interests of structural access to power are at stake, institutions change only slowly and over longer periods of time (Donnelly, 2018 p. 29). They are built over longer historical periods and require vast amounts of resources (Donnelly, 2018 p. 21). Institutions provide advantaged actors with the ability to set the agenda (Pierson, 2016 p. 126). In theory, whoever is capable of steering an institution decides what is considered relevant, professional, thinkable or desirable regarding its actions (Pierson, 2016 p. 128) and thus possesses distinct leverage over competitors' complaints about the system as a whole. An actor that finds itself in a position of structural power is, in the context of institutions, often rewarded with political authority (Pierson, 2016 p. 131), which over time can be turned into legitimacy. Being perceived as legitimately setting the rules of the game leads to other actors' voluntary obedience to these rules, since they accept either its source, or the process by which the rule was created, as normatively binding (Hurd, 1999 p. 381). Over time, the characteristics that classify an institution as distinct are legitimised through repetitive action (Pierson, 2016 p. 132); such institutions become unquestionable by individual actors in that their logics are self-evident (Hodgson, 2006 p. 8).

In peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions, there seems to be a widespread assumption that institutional trust, the trust in institutions, and individual trust in institutional representatives can be treated interchangeably and that increasing trust on the individual level would lead to an increase in trust on a general level (Freitag, et al., 2009 p. 782). In contrast, research on trust and institutions suggests that this relationship is far more complicated and that spatial difference between actors and institutions seems to play a role: The closer the users are to their institutions, the more the trust levels increase (Campos-Castillo, et al., 2016 p. 102). This is, however, not to say that increased trust in an individual institution leads to more trust at a general level in the form of spill-over effects (Gössling, 2004). This would mean that increased contact between justice officials and citizens would lead to more trust between these individuals, but it is not to say that citizens therefore trust state institutions in general, not to speak of the role of the state. Effects seem to remain limited to specific court districts, specific police stations and the like, but are not generalised to 'the justice system' or 'the executive'. Research points out that citizens also develop opinions about institutions that are detached from the individuals they are composed of, because these institutions are comparatively stable over time and individual relations are not (Campos-Castillo, et al., 2016 p. 102). It is, simultaneously, entirely possible for citizens to develop understandings of

these remote and abstract institutions, such as 'the state', or 'the government', which are detached from their perceptions of individual representatives of these institutions (Campos-Castillo, et al., 2016 p. 103). For example, people can think of the police as corrupt despite their local police liaison taking no bribes. Citizens can therefore have differentiating levels of trust in the institution and its representatives. This finding seems to be especially true for institutions representing the executive branch of government (Campos-Castillo, et al., 2016 p. 104) where we would locate the institutions of interest for this analysis. The research analysed for this section is, again, strongly rooted in research on institutions in Weberian-style systems, i.e. state bureaucracies. While these findings may still be indicative of the indirect workings of trust in institutions, the limited insight into trust dynamics in other institutional setups is a major setback for evidence-based discussions on trust-building as a mechanism in peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions.

To increase trust in institutions, findings informed by institutionalism suggest that programmes aimed at institution-building should focus on three aspects (Bahdi, et al., 2020 p. 190; Evans, et al., 2008 p. 1586): On the institution's integrity, namely the aforementioned common set of moral values on which citizens and state institutions base their actions, on benevolence as a foundation of the institution's actions in that an idea of public service should be mainstreamed, and on the institution's ability through increased competencies and capacities to deliver on its institutional purpose. In line with findings from governance research, researchers focusing on the role of institutions question the importance of state capacity for its increased legitimacy (Mcloughlin, 2015 p. 342). Simultaneously, researchers have pointed out the prevalent state-centricity of programmes that aim to increase trust in post-conflict societies, despite the widespread absence of state institutions in citizens' lives. Mainstreamed approaches to institution-building in peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions have led to a mismatch between what donors consider worth funding and what actual local sources of legitimacy within institutions are (Mac Ginty, et al., 2013). Consequently, following thorough analysis (Podder, 2014; Meagher, 2012), the involvement of non-state justice and security institutions in donor programming and international relations has been demanded (Hofmann, et al., 2011; Bagayoko, 2012; Börzel, et al., 2010; Börzel, et al., 2016; Schroeder, et al., 2014; Schroeder & Chappuis, 2014) the call for more reflection on hybridity in security-related institution-building has become widespread.

To sum up, institutions are inseparably linked to citizens' trust in the state, especially in contexts with asymmetric power where structural factors mean that institutions' users have only a limited say regarding their functions and design. The design of institutions is in turn the result of power struggles among actors who are trying to secure their access to the means of power. Security and justice institutions in particular seem to have a strong need for citizens' trust to achieve compliance. Citizens, on the other hand, may endow these institutions with trust, depending on their perceptions of both the institutions' capacities to fulfil their duties and the level of shared values with its representatives. The policy assumption that increased inter-personal contact between citizens and state security actors leads to increased trust in these actors, then increased trust in state institutions and after that to more generalised trust is, in its overarching interpretation, not backed by research findings grounded in institutionalism. Relations may improve through increased contact (although this is dependent on the context), but whether individuals' perception of the institution's trustworthiness changes depends on a variety of factors. Citizens can trust individual representatives of institutions but still distrust the institution itself, since perceptions of individuals are not necessarily linked to generalised expectations of institutional action. Against this backdrop, the need to understand more about institutional foundations of trust in different peacebuilding contexts becomes apparent.

3.3 INSIGHTS FROM CRIMINOLOGY

Like peacebuilding and conflict transformation research, criminology is a field that draws on various disciplines, including social sciences, psychology and law. While conflict transformation research provides insights into relationship-building between various sets of actors in conflict situations, the criminological literature is more specific in terms of which conflicts are of interest. Criminologists investigate various social phenomena around crime and crime response. The literature is vast and comprises various highly specialised subfields. We are particularly interested in insights from the field pertaining to the relationship between citizens and law enforcement agencies. More specifically, we are interested in trust-building strategies that are conducted under the umbrella term of 'community policing', as inter-personal trust and trust-building are at the heart of this research field. Community policing comprises programmes

that aim to promote relationship-building between police officers and their communities, for the sake of crime prevention and the creation of trust and confidence between the police and the general public, as the police are expected to be able to do their work more effectively and efficiently if they enjoy public trust (Cossyleon, 2019). Community policing models vary significantly across contexts, as do policing cultures and strategies across countries.

Two dimensions of inter-personal trust are prevalent in criminological studies on citizens' perceptions of the trustworthiness of the police. One concerns the effectiveness of policing, which is more output-focused, while the other is about the level of procedural fairness in policing. The dimension of effectiveness focuses on the personal added value that citizens see in surrendering their freedom of action to the police, in exchange for the service of protection from crime. This results in one perspective on trust-building that suggests that citizens will trust the police if police officers effectively control crime; this is also termed an instrumental perspective on police legitimacy (Hough, et al., 2010 p. 204). If services are provided effectively, according to this thinking, citizens will perceive the police as trustworthy. In turn, citizens will feel that police authorities are entitled to command, respect their commands as legitimate and thus obey orders (Tyler, 1990). There is thus a direct link between citizens' trust in the police and the level of police authority and institutional legitimacy (Hough, et al., 2010 p. 203). This thinking on trust is closely related to the 'virtuous cycle' argument that identifies a close connection between public institutions' effectiveness and legitimacy in the eyes of the citizens, which we discussed in the governance section (4.1).

In turn, mistrust is seen to limit the effectiveness of police work, as noted in a recent report on community policing in Central Asia:

> "Many of those affected by conflict or crime prefer to resolve their problems informally, without filing police reports, for fear of making matters worse. Because of this widespread mistrust, even in cases where police actively seek to resolve or prevent crimes, they are unable to do their jobs effectively due to non-cooperation or disengagement from the public" (Jones, 2021 p. 1).

From this instrumental perspective, risks and challenges – mainly in the form of ineffective policing and performance issues such as a lack of technical competence – are considered an obstacle to citizens' trust in public institutions

and recognition of the police as legitimate authorities. At the same time, this literature is not blind to aspects of procedural justice. For example, the report on community policing in Central Asia identified excessive use of force, discrimination, police non-responsiveness to complaints and routine experiences of police corruption as major obstacles to public trust and cooperation (Jones, 2021). Similar issues are identified in various other reports from community policing initiatives in various contexts. There are differences in the emphasis placed on what needs to change: Should the main aim be to increase the effectiveness of police work through training and equipment, or are more profound transformations of the policing system needed that also touch on its normative underpinnings?

The latter is more prominent in the second dimension of inter-personal public-police trust. According to this thinking, fair and respectful inter-personal treatment is pertinent to shaping social identity and self-esteem (Tyler, et al., 2003). The closely related procedural justice theory suggests that fair treatment is particularly important in inter-personal encounters with the police, who are seen as representatives of the moral standards of society and who will be trusted by citizens if they feel that the police deliver their services in accordance with the community's shared values and priorities (Hecker, et al., 2017 p. 227). In the past, research has noted a tendency in security policies to prioritise effectiveness over other elements of police behaviour: As Jackson and Bradford note for the UK, "the demonstration of effectiveness in the fight against crime should be sufficient to generate public approval and support for the police. Yet it is the procedural fairness of the police and a sense of motive-based trust that are consistently found to be most important to people" (Jackson, et al., 2010 p. 247). Similar findings have been reported for the US by Sunshine and Tyler, who argue "that there is a strong normative basis of public support for the police that is distinct from police performance. More generally, ethical judgments about obligation and responsibility are an important element of public support for the police" (Sunshine, et al., 2003 p. 534). According to this study, it is crucial for the police to exercise authority fairly to induce public cooperation with law enforcement agencies and the wider rule of law in society.

This approach comes with risks and challenges related to power relations in inter-personal contacts. Studies drawing on conflict theory have underlined early on that the police are more likely to protect the interests of dominant segments of society, while socio-economically disadvantaged members of society are

more likely to become targets of police action. This results in lower levels of trust in the police among members of minority groups (on the issue of racial profiling in the US, see (Weitzer, et al., 2002)). While few studies in criminology currently draw on critical conflict theory, this perspective is related to research findings in peace and conflict studies, described above (Section 3.1), especially on the risk of contact-based projects serving the interests of majority groups and curbing social action towards change that favours minority group interests.

Not least due to the Black Lives Matter movement, elements of procedural fairness, such as police bias in inter-personal encounters with members of the community and experiences of unfair treatment and exclusion, started to receive increased consideration as risks and challenges for the establishment of trust and confidence between the public and the police. Power factors can play a significant role, as is evident from police officers using force in a discriminatory or predatory manner. Based on racial, religious, gender or ethnic prejudice, police officers then work to the detriment of marginalised members of the community, instead of displaying behaviours based on wider moral authority.

Evidence regarding the workings and effectiveness of community policing initiatives is by and large derived from studies conducted in the US, EU, Canada and Australia. In these contexts, public trust in law enforcement authorities, including the police, is comparatively high and large sections of society believe in the legitimate authority of the police (Gallup, 2021). Despite their distinct policing models and traditions, they share comparable concepts of the social contract on which mainstreamed community policing models rest. Against this backdrop, existing studies are largely limited in scope and generalisability. Yet community policing is a mechanism widely applied in the field of peacebuilding and security cooperation across the globe (Saferworld, 2021; GIZ, 2020; DCAF, 2020). While projects have different setups and operate in different contexts and under different conditions, their common feature is that they seek to contribute to improving relations between members of communities and state security actors as part of a wider endeavour to build constructive relationships between citizens and the state.

Research on such relationship-building approaches is scant when it comes to the Global South. One very recent noteworthy exception is a large-scale assessment of community policing projects in Brazil, Colombia, Liberia, Pakistan, the Philippines and Uganda (Blair, et al., 2021). The study found that

the community policing strategies investigated did not improve trust between citizens and the police, nor did they increase levels of cooperation. While the survey findings are quantitative and do not go into detail about factors that could have produced these results, the study concludes that "[c]ommunity policing does not, at least immediately and on its own, lead to major improvements in citizen-police relations or reductions in crime. Structural reforms to the police may be needed to successfully reduce crime while building greater police accountability to citizens" (Blair, et al., 2021 p. 1). Other surveys on community policing efforts and citizens' trust in the police in countries in the Global South have been conducted as well. Studies on people's trust in the police underline the importance of both police effectiveness and procedural fairness for public perceptions of police legitimacy in Ghana (Boateng, 2012; Tankebe, 2009). Similar survey results have been obtained in India, although the authors also underline the strong significance of procedural fairness in controlling for negative effects of citizens' perceptions arising from other aspects of police work, including perceptions of government corruption (Nalla, et al., 2021). Importantly, this study also pointed to decreased levels of trust in the police for people who had extended contact with the police in India, further highlighting the importance of positive experience of police fairness in citizens' assessment of police trustworthiness. The authors conclude that "[w]ord of mouth of 'decent behaviour' of police reflecting procedural fairness can spread to the larger community and can enhance trust in police and reduce the global perceptions of police corruption in general" (Nalla, et al., 2021 p. 733). A recent study on relations between various societal stakeholders and the police in Iraq also underlined the pertinence of respectful treatment by the police for constructive police-public relations, as well as emphasising the hazards arising from predatory police behaviour (Watkins, et al., 2021).

From our point of view, the few studies available on policing in the Global South do not provide sufficient evidence to generalise the hypothesis of procedural fairness categorically trumping police effectiveness in citizens' perceptions of police trustworthiness that surveys conducted in societies in the Global North indicate. Moreover, the weighting of police effectiveness and procedural justice in citizens' assessments of police legitimacy is far from agreed on in the literature on societies in the Global North as well. It appears that both police effectiveness and fair treatment feature prominently in people's perceptions, with variance in the weighting across different contexts and several factors being underexplored. Overall, research remains divided about the impact of (positive and negative)

experience of contact between citizens and the police, and the consequences of such contact for people's perceptions of police legitimacy. Coming back to the field of peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions, what also remains largely unclear is how far citizen-state relations can and should be improved if there is widespread distrust in state security actors like the police, for example due to abusive behaviour. Is citizens' cooperative behaviour towards more powerful state security actors desirable, if state security personnel continue to behave in a manner that is widely considered untrustworthy, for the sake of (likely short-lived) social cohesion? Criminology research does not provide many insights into situations in which the legitimacy of state security institutions is critically challenged. We therefore conclude from the review of this literature that experiences of fair treatment by state security personnel are of utmost importance for citizens' trust in state institutions across societies. Therefore, fair treatment should be considered as a precondition for trust-building initiatives, as citizens rarely have reasons for trusting state institutions otherwise (for further details, see Section 5.1). In many cases, this will require a behavioural change prior to a trust-building initiative. Otherwise, citizens' trust may not only be misplaced; it may also be abused by more powerful stakeholders involved in the trust-building exercise.

3.4 INSIGHTS FROM ORGANISATIONAL RESEARCH AND MANAGEMENT LITERATURE

Peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions often take place in contexts characterised by widespread distrust between different sets of stakeholders, including citizens and state security personnel. Questions of if and how constructive cooperation should be actively fostered by third parties, and to what end, largely remain unanswered by the literature we reviewed so far. We therefore turn to a research field that is referenced less often in peacebuilding research: Organisational research and management literature also deals with mechanisms of trust and distrust, risk-taking and cooperation. Here, the contexts are unsurprisingly somewhat different from those covered in the literatures reviewed above. Management literature deals largely with trust in the context of contracting parties, or companies that are trying to develop new bases for investment with unknown or otherwise untrustworthy partners. The focus in these literatures is less on asymmetric power and more on mechanisms that

can help craft reliable agreements in the absence of trust or avenues towards trust-building in business settings, where resources, especially time and money, are considered scarce. Due to these parallels with the settings normally analysed in peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions, organisational and management literature will be considered here and analysed for its alternative pathways towards cooperation in settings where trust is unfathomable.

In organisational literature, trust is considered a major control mechanism (Creed, et al., 1996 p. 17; Bachmann, 2001). It is regarded as serving a bridging function in transactions that are considered risky by the parties involved: Under conditions of trust, parties are more likely to engage in risky behaviour that they would otherwise have avoided to limit losses (Creed, et al., 1996 p. 17). Trust is therefore thought of as a desirable mechanism governing transactions. The need for organisational research to learn about the workings of trust thus lies in potential cost reduction attempts that parties might otherwise engage in. Because trust is believed to have long-term integrative effects, it is worthwhile studying it from an investment angle: In cases with probable future cooperation opportunities beyond those currently at stake, organisational research found that individuals are not only more likely to cooperate in the first place but also tend to avoid dynamics that might endanger future cooperation (Powell, 1996 p. 52; Jones, et al., 1998). Therefore, trust-building is considered a long-term risk-mitigating strategy that has clear positive effects in the present and future. Parties that engage in trusting relations tend to come up with mutually beneficial problem-solving strategies that become stronger over time (Koeszegi, 2004 p. 649) and even increase when stakes are amplified (Ho, et al., 2005 p. 519). In short, the more there is to gain, the more eager people seem to be to establish trustworthy relationships in the business world. Targeted trust-building approaches are considered capable of accelerating the development of trust in relationships, which makes trust and trust-building a prominent topic in organisational literature (Gausdal, 2012 p. 27).

Most approaches to trust-building in management literature share the assumption that trust is not built solely through contact between negotiating individuals. This aspect differentiates it from many peacebuilding and security cooperation policies, where people are expected to build trust through increased contact. Brashear et al., for example, point out that the quality of interaction may even surpass the importance of contact frequency between negotiating parties (Brashear, et al., 2003 p. 195). In their extensive study on trust in sales relations,

they found that trust is commonly based on shared values and not so much on cost-benefit evaluations that were primarily considered to be a vital basis of trust (Brashear, et al., 2003 p. 196).

Zucker (1986) developed a widely used distinction between mechanisms producing trust in organisational settings. She differentiated between process-based trust that is rooted in repeated personal and positive exchanges over time, characteristic-based trust that is rooted in perceptions of similarity between individuals, such as similar feelings of belonging towards certain groups, and institution-based trust that is rooted in externally guaranteed sources of trust, such as certification and established third-party involvement. Applied to citizen-state relations, increasing process-based trust would seem the most practicable target for externally-led trust-building interventions, since they can be initiated cognitively. By contrast, different socio-economic backgrounds, which are considered an element of characteristic-based trust, are principally immutable characteristics and can hardly be established by an intervention. Institution-based trust may be situated between these forms of trust, since its accessibility depends strongly on the external parties' entry points and understanding of these institutions that serve as sources of trust. Attempts to improve cooperation within security sectors, however, often work with types of institution-based trust mechanisms; one example is the provision of standardised training with internationally recognised training bodies, where certificates of excellence or participation are provided to attest to the holder's skills. Bachmann and Inkpen (2007 p. 9) find four conditions especially favourable for institution-based trust mechanisms to work: First, during the initial stages of relationship-building, since institutionalised operating procedures may reduce the perception of risk in cooperating with an unknown partner; second, when institutions are considered strong by all parties; and third, when agreements have to be made quickly. As a fourth point, they highlight that atypical situations can also promote institution-based trust since parties cannot fall back on established routines and conventional knowledge here but have the freedom to create new avenues of action. Since institution-building and working with state institutions play such a central role in international trust-building interventions, the validity of these aspects outside the management sphere should be analysed in more depth, especially since the foundations for institutional trust-building based on interpersonal spill-over effects in current peacebuilding and security cooperation programmes seem to lack analytical foundations.

The body of literature is comparatively rich in practical recommendations relating to the navigation of potentially risky environments and the establishment of trust. For vertical relationships, especially principal-agent relationships (Creed, et al., 1996 pp. 24–26), the literature identifies the following strategies: First, strict top-down approaches with little room for agents' discretion, which are extremely resource-intensive but do not require high levels of trust. Second, short-term delegation of discretion to specialised agents while the overall process is still hierarchically planned. This allows for more absorption of agents' expertise and fewer resources due to reduced oversight. Third, the subdivision of competences among agents that are only confronted with set goals but can, for example, choose processes according to their own preferences and capacities. Oversight is reduced to regular check-ins regarding the achievement of previously communicated goals, which requires higher levels of trust from the principal, but may endow agents with enough ownership to excel. Fourth, a network approach that requires as little hierarchical steering as possible since individuals are expected to act on behalf of the network they are a part of. Trust in these last constellations is a definite prerequisite before individuals can access the network in order to avoid self-serving behaviour that may eventually endanger the network as a whole. These forms of trust endow their actors with a maximum of ownership that may serve as a vehicle for enhanced buy-in in the process. And while these approaches have been designed to facilitate cooperation within companies during risky and complex negotiations, their graded vision of independence and control as important mechanisms of trust-building may serve as inspiration for how different sets of actors can negotiate agreements and cooperation mechanisms in security settings. While negotiating questions of security, parties to the conflict may face principal-agent problems among their own ranks and also have to overcome their apprehension about other conflict parties' trustworthiness. Therefore, questions about how to negotiate internal problems of agency, trust-building and ownership seem vital to both peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions and organisational literature, which makes a parallel analysis of the two approaches profitable.

Generally speaking, organisational literature does not seem to linger on the requirement of trust during negotiations. Its approach is at times closer to a pragmatic assessment of how to deal with situations where trust simply cannot be established. Accordingly, organisational literature has pointed to the advantages of 'co-opetition' in partnerships, suggesting that a combination of competition and cooperation can be conducive to long-term partnerships

(Kostis, et al., 2020) even in the absence of trust. This is in line with Robert Axelrod's famous Prisoner's Dilemma (Axelrod, 1980), which showed that co-operation between parties is generally a more rewarding approach in the long term than betrayal, even when trust between the parties is absent at the start of the interaction (Getha-Taylor, et al., 2019). Here, organisational literature treats integrated cooperation as a model-type desirability but not as a precondition for mutually beneficial agreements. On the contrary, distrust between parties is considered a viable feature in these relations. Moreover, distrust is treated as a mechanism that is distinct from trust. That means that distrust can be earned as much as trust in a relationship and may, especially under conditions of co-opetition, serve as a fruitful mechanism to protect parties against extreme losses (Kostis, et al., 2020 p. 85). Parties that find it economically preferable to cooperate are in fact described as overlooking distrust of another party if the outcome is desirable enough (Tillmar, 2005 p. 69).

In cases where trust between parties cannot be established, organisational literature suggests the introduction of external third-party guarantors (Coleman, 1990) who are trusted by both parties. The third party is expected to facilitate negotiations on behalf of all parties since it is interested in the process's success and not in one party surpassing the other – an approach that is also applied in conflict transformation and mediation practices (Section 4.2). The introduction of a third party is not so much a trust-building mechanism between the conflicting parties; on the contrary, the presence of a third party may impede the creation of direct trust relations as it signals that the two parties do not consider each other trustworthy (Koeszegi, 2004 p. 651). Only a fundamental change in at least one party's approach to the relationship may be able to alter this mutual perception, but, as desirable as it may seem, changing established communication practices will likely come at a high cost to this party: Attempts to better the relationship will have to be credible, extend over long periods of time and be upheld even in cases of continued non-compliance by the other party (Pruitt, et al., 1993).

This pragmatic approach towards alternatives to trust that still allows for feasible negotiations is a perspective that may be adaptable to peacebuilding research on this topic. Different sources of trustworthiness are, of course, still of vital interest in understanding how to negotiate 'constructive' cooperation in security settings, but whether trust constitutes a necessity in these negotiations is a question which should figure more prominently in assessments prior to

trust-building approaches in the realm of peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions. What may constitute alternatives to trust or, conversely, trust-enhancing factors and conditions are likely to vary between contexts (King, et al., 2018) and thus require substantial empirical and highly specific analysis but are worthwhile since even established assumptions about the workings of trust may prove to be based in part on guesswork.

Overall, organisational literature considers trust to be a vital mechanism governing negotiations in risky environments. Approaches that aim to increase trust seem especially fruitful when processes and institutions are directly targeted in a manner tailored to the context. Institution-based trust is considered helpful early on in risky negotiations, when institutions are thought of as powerful by all negotiating parties, when agreements have to be made swiftly or when the terrain is new to all negotiating parties, since it allows them to deviate from established patterns. The importance of trust is also reflected in the internal workings of corporations, where principal-agent problems might impede functional cooperation and different approaches on how to deal with hierarchy were presented. Lastly, it must be noted that organisational literature acknowledges distrust as a feature distinct from trust, and the absence of trust in these readings does not necessarily impede effective negotiations from unfolding. Parties are depicted as cooperating even when relations are characterised by distrust – provided that they perceive economic gains as decidedly profitable. The involvement of external third parties that act as moderators between conflicting parties is one option to increase trust in the process itself; however, it does not seem to necessarily work as a relationship-building tool in itself. Considering these findings, especially regarding agreements and cooperation in the absence of trust, seems worthwhile due to their parallels with peacebuilding and conflict transformation literature. The intensive focus on trust as a prerequisite for constructive relations and the comparative neglect of distrust as a distinct mechanism that has to be addressed in the latter literature could profit from the additional angle provided in organisational literature. Dealing with the root causes of distrust on the ground, no matter how normatively displeasing they may seem, may require a more pragmatic approach than quasi-automatically falling back on trust-building approaches. Such approaches are costly, carry risks and require efforts to integrate not only the conflict parties but also the intervening actor, who may shy away from the long-term investment and commitment to social and political change needed to actually introduce the levels of trust aspired to. Therefore, alternatives to trust

as a governing mechanism should be further researched further (Section 5.4), while organisational literature may offer a somewhat out-of-the-box angle on peacebuilding and security cooperation intervention designs.

3.5 BRINGING INSIGHTS FROM THE LITERATURE TOGETHER

Our review of different strands of literature shows that research in the peacebuilding field can benefit from complementary perspectives from other research disciplines that engage with trust and trust-building, including more distant fields such as organisational research and management. Research across disciplines highlights the pertinent role of trust in establishing constructive relations between different sets of actors for effective conflict resolution and negotiations in otherwise risky environments. Accordingly, trust-building is singled out as a desirable and effective means to foster constructive relations and cooperative action. The review also highlighted that research on personal encounter processes in the context of peacebuilding and conflict transformation interventions has, by and large, focused on horizontal (inter-personal and inter-group) contact, which means relations among citizens. The literature is sketchy on trust dynamics in vertical relations, such as between citizens and state representatives, as well as on the interplay of different types of trust, such as the relationship between trust in individual representatives of the state and trust in the institution behind these individuals. Touching on sensitive questions of state authority, empirical insights into such processes and initiatives are much rarer in the literature than conceptual contributions.

Regarding our research questions, the literature review revealed numerous risks and challenges that peacebuilding and security cooperation are likely to face when they bring together stakeholders for trust-building purposes under conditions of power asymmetry. The peacebuilding and conflict transformation literature highlights the risks of third parties favouring the more powerful side in dialogue processes, at the expense of demands for political and societal change from the weaker side. Dialogue projects also risk fuelling exclusionary effects of group trust instead of strengthening inter-personal trust between individuals. When it comes to citizens' trust in state institutions, the governance and institutionalism literatures suggest that the virtuous cycle assumption

regarding the reinforcing effects of increased state capacity and its legitimacy are not as clear as sometimes postulated in intervention designs aimed at fostering constructive state-society relations. In addition, the inherent focus on state actors in peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions may not reflect historical experiences and logics of accountability, legitimacy and trust on the ground. Projects focusing on state institutions as service providers may be driven by donor-specific preferences for institutional setups rather than by locally envisioned institutional designs. When it comes to the public-police relationship, we found that criminology research remains divided over the weighting of effective service delivery and procedural fairness in strengthening public-police relations, while leaving questions of the desirability of citizen-state cooperation under conditions of power abuse largely unanswered. Taken together, the literature review reveals that risks and challenges arising from power asymmetries in trust-building interventions are manifold. It also reveals that, regardless of the strand of literature, insights into how to navigate these risks and challenges, let alone direct guidance for practitioners, are significantly scarcer.

4 Practitioners' Perspectives on Navigating Risks and Challenges of Trust-Building

To move towards a more comprehensive understanding of the practical challenges that trust-building projects face, we complemented the literature review with practitioners' insights into their everyday experiences with relationship-building in asymmetric contexts and their mechanisms for coping with risks and challenges. We used the interviews as an exploratory instrument (Bogner, et al., 2009 p. 46) to broaden our understanding of the actual dilemmas practitioners face during project implementation. Respondents were selected according to the following criteria (Kelle, et al., 2010 p. 50): They had to have 1) suitable career paths, meaning they had been engaged directly with the facilitation of dialogues and inter-personal contact projects; 2) the targeted relationships were set within asymmetric relationships, meaning they were of a vertical nature, where one side could employ significantly fewer resources than the other in order to achieve its goals; 3) suitable language skills, meaning the respondent was fluent in at least one party's language. This last requirement ensured that the interviewed practitioners had had prior in-depth interaction with the context setting. Several of the respondents were part of the communities in which they helped to facilitate dialogues, which gave them additional insights into the workings of distrust, trust and trust-building mechanisms that may have been overlooked by practitioners operating on a fly-in-fly-out basis. Between December 2021 and January 2022, we spoke to ten practitioners from Aceh/Indonesia, Colombia, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nigeria, Tajikistan, Somaliland, Syria, Uganda and Ukraine to reflect the various types of conflict contexts in which peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions take place. The respondents comprised faith-based mediators, dialogue facilitators, security sector advisors, and managers of community policing projects. The interviews lasted between 45 and 75 minutes and were conducted online via videoconferencing systems.

During the interviews, we focused on process knowledge (Bogner, et al., 2009 p. 52). We aimed to unravel the experts' experience-based knowledge of trust and power dynamics and their interaction in the context of dialogue processes. We therefore focused not on the original intentions that are the foundations of peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions but on the resources

mobilised by implementers to reach these ends (Morin, et al., 2018 p. 26). Implementers and especially dialogue practitioners are at the very foundation of these mobilisation processes and therefore serve as viable sources of information. Including these practitioners' perspectives in the analysis helped us investigate the practical struggles that trust-building approaches face during implementation and how practitioners navigate risks and challenges.

We applied an open structure for our guiding questions (Helfferich, 2019 p. 676), allowing the interviewees to point out interesting facts that came to mind but were not part of the immediate questions posed. We followed up with additional questions that touched upon issues not addressed by the interviewee. These questions were posed spontaneously, resulting from the prior interview process or drawn from a catalogue of fixed follow-up questions. This procedure allowed us to be open, concise and close to a conversational style of interviewing (Helfferich, 2019 p. 677). We documented the interviews through comprehensive notetaking and avoided audio recordings for reasons of confidentiality.

Based on the experience shared by the practitioners and the literature review, we distilled the following 'areas of attention' for trust-building initiatives in the context of peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions, highlighting risks and challenges as well as opportunities for navigating them.

4.1 ASYMMETRY AS AN OBSTACLE TO TRUST

Our first area of attention pertains to the preconditions for trust and trust-building in asymmetric relationships. Several research studies suggest that trust-building activities are likely to have a positive impact on relationships in contexts where both sides are at the point where 'constructive' relations envisage them to be: In a balanced or eye-level relationship with equal distribution of the means of power, or effective checks and balances in place that counteract power imbalances. The most prominent example of this precondition is the contact hypothesis, which we discussed in Section 3.1. However, citizen-state relations in peacebuilding and security cooperation contexts regularly comprise elements of contestation and requests for transformation. Also, societal and institutional checks and balances may not be functional or may work in unexpected ways, as discussed in the governance and institutionalism section (3.2). In contexts

characterised by protracted societal conflict, we expect contestations to be particularly pronounced, and the legitimacy of political order might be highly disputed.

Under these conditions, dialogue practitioners highlighted the manifold ways in which citizens may have had negative experiences with representatives of security institutions in the past or present. For example, state security actors may be instrumentalised by the government or political elites to protect their political power and to oppress the political opposition and other demographic groups (Peacebuilding practitioner from Uganda, 2022; Peacebuilding practitioner from Central Asia, 2021). In situations of violent conflict, state security actors may be involved in atrocities against some population groups and accused of human rights violations, while being protected from prosecution (Peacebuilding practitioner (faith-based) from Colombia, 2021). In other contexts, members of the state security forces may be involved in organised crime, or non-responsive to complaints by certain members of the population, or use force against minority groups, for example in cases of gender-based violence (Peacebuilding practitioner from Syria, 2021). In other cases, public officeholders may embezzle taxes that should be used for the public good.

These are just a few examples from a long list of reasons why citizens may have little or no reason to trust state security actors – a dilemma we also discussed in Section 3.3 on public-police relations. Our interviews underline that peacebuilding and security cooperation programmes are very familiar with settings in which one or several of these factors are at play: We are not talking about a marginal phenomenon or outlier cases. At the implementation level, practitioners were often faced with these dilemmas. Several projects aimed to bring together actors on an equal footing (for example, on the basis of one representative per party, regardless of the size of the party in parliament or its role in government or opposition). Even so, respondents were acutely aware of how power dynamics between the stakeholders would creep into the dialogue setting, impacting the extent to which stakeholders were willing to trust the other side. Perceptions of untrustworthy behaviour, injustice and power asymmetry outside the conflict setting were by no means cancelled out by technical measures to create a climate of equality in the dialogue setting. The findings beg the question at which point preconditions for meaningful trust-building are simply not in place, or if trust-building is always a desirable objective, regardless of the challenging circumstances, for the sake of citizen-state cooperation. Minimum conditions

and thresholds of meaningful dialogue remain underexplored, although they are core elements of a risk-sensitive approach to deal with risks and challenges arising during trust-building interventions.

4.2 THE LIMITS OF THE CONTACT HYPOTHESIS

This brings us to our second area of attention, which pertains to the dynamics and mechanisms of trust-building in asymmetric relationships. In view of the structural obstacles to trust discussed above, we suggest that (dis)trust itself is rarely a conflict driver but rather the manifestation of conflict, which can arise from power asymmetry. To avoid trust-building for the sake of short-term social cohesion, the root causes of conflict need to be to be addressed. Contributions in the field of peacebuilding and conflict transformation research already suggest that relationship-building initiatives, in many cases, should include a transformative element that addresses power dynamics, structural injustice and root causes of conflict. Assumptions of positive cooperation experience derived from the contact hypothesis might have limited impact in these settings. Under conditions of power asymmetry, research has highlighted the risk of dialogue projects contributing to the perpetuation of relations that are not constructive from the weaker parties' perspective (Section 3.1).

Related risks affecting relationship-building initiatives were also highlighted in our interviews: Several respondents working with state authorities and state security personnel emphasised that relationship-building initiatives between citizens and the state require buy-in from the more powerful sides. A respondent working on citizen-state relations in Uganda pointed out that very little can be done by dialogue projects if the ruling party is not on board in contexts with extreme power asymmetry. Under these conditions, it would not be possible to hold the stronger party accountable for commitments made (Peacebuilding practitioner from Uganda, 2022). Respondents working on community policing in Central Asia highlighted that state authorities could shut down project initiatives if they did not approve of the approach taken or had suspicions about the civil society actors involved (Peacebuilding practitioner from Central Asia, 2021). A respondent reported that dialogue projects implemented under these conditions would generally be unable to empower the weaker side, in most cases civil society actors, without the more powerful actor getting something in return

for engaging in dialogues (Peacebuilding practitioner (community policing) from Somaliland, 2021; Peacebuilding practitioner from Syria, 2021). Against this backdrop, we suggest that trust-building through contact can be problematic as an isolated measure under conditions of power asymmetry. Dialogue initiatives risk being used by the stronger side to obtain resources from the third party and information from the dialogue participants – and perhaps even a certain level of validation for their actions, through the official platform provided, whereas the third party and the participating weaker parties remain, to a certain extent, at the whim of the stronger party in terms of what it is possible to discuss and how far the dialogue can proceed. Insights from the interviews into measures that could remedy these risks and challenges arising from power asymmetry during the dialogue were strikingly limited, mirroring the limited guidance available in the literature. While third parties could empower the weaker side, help to create opportunities to raise their voice and form alliances and networks, the stronger side's power to determine the parameters of personal encounters appeared to remain paramount most of the time.

Our respondents brought up anecdotes about state-society relations that called into question conventional assumptions of power asymmetry being skewed in favour of state security actors. A respondent working in Somalia reported that communities have regularly and successfully opposed arrests of members of their communities by police forces, especially in rural areas (Peacebuilding practitioner (community policing) from Somaliland, 2021). Communities thus seemed to be able to effectively prevent security forces from performing their mandate – or from abusing it. A respondent from Nigeria reported several instances of community members donating equipment to public institutions, building offices and procuring vehicles for the police and the military (Peacebuilding and SSR Advisor from Nigeria, 2021). Moreover, the respondent emphasised that citizens had the opportunity to opt out of state security services easily, provided that they had the resources, by ensuring their personal security through commercial security providers, which reflects insights gained from the hybridity literature discussed in Section 3.2. These examples illustrate how assumed power relations may at times be turned on their head in specific situations. In turn, we can speculate that such settings are likely to impact the dynamics of personal encounters between the actors, as well as the opportunities for trust-building, in unforeseen ways. Such 'outlier' cases have received very little research attention to date, although they may be closer to the lived reality of many citizens across the globe.

Overall, the insights into experiences with personal encounters between citizens and the state shared by our respondents suggest that power asymmetries between actors significantly impact relationship dynamics. Peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions therefore need to engage with the question of what is 'constructive' about a specific asymmetric relationship, from whose perspective, and if a higher level of trust would likely be the factor that improves those relations. Research in the field of criminology highlighting the pertinence of procedural fairness in public-police relations suggests that certain behavioural changes, most likely on the part of the more powerful security actors, may need to be pursued in parallel or even before initiatives that focus on fostering cooperation-oriented interactions between the parties, if they are to contribute to constructive citizen-state relations.

4.3 CHALLENGES TO THIRD-PARTY NEUTRALITY

Our third area of attention pertains to the role of the third party in fostering trust-building under conditions of power asymmetry. While power analysis in local stakeholder settings is becoming more popular in peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions, the role of the third party in the power equation among the actors involved remains under-researched. Literature in the field of peacebuilding and conflict transformation, but also most of the practitioners whom we interviewed, conceptualise the third party as neutral, impartial or multi-partial in its facilitation and mediation roles, as this was considered necessary to ensure the participation of all stakeholders.

However, practitioners also report several instances in which third parties have advocated for specific agendas. For example, one interviewee reported that, drawing on the widely accepted moral authority of the Catholic Church, the respondent as facilitator had ensured that the voices of victims of violence committed by all parties in the conflict were brought to the conflicting parties' attention (Peacebuilding practitioner (faith-based) from Colombia, 2021). A respondent involved in peace negotiations in Indonesia reported that international mediators, including the EU and its member states, brought aspects of democratisation and human rights obligations into the negotiations between the conflicting parties, while also supporting the process through large-scale development funding commitments (Peacebuilding practitioner from Uganda,

2022). The conflicting parties themselves were not likely to introduce these aspects, at least not at an early stage of the process. Another case of third-party influence was reported from Liberia, where a peacebuilding NGO connected dialogue activities with accountability measures: If government representatives were unresponsive to citizens' demands or did not stick to commitments made, this would be reported through media channels that were also supported by the third party. The combination of these measures was seen to ensure compliance on the government's side (Peacebuilding practitioner from Liberia, 2022). The respondent emphasised, however, that such an approach was only possible in countries that tolerate civil society scrutiny of government actions.

Overall, the interviews suggest that third parties can weigh into conflict settings with considerable resources on behalf of one of the conflict parties or in support of international principles. The consequence of wielding this influence is insufficiently reflected in peacebuilding and security cooperation intervention designs and related analysis in local settings. Insights from management literature (Section 3.4) shed some light on the different roles that can be assumed by a third party in a negotiation context. However, as the paradigm of third-party impartiality is deeply ingrained in peacebuilding practice, limited insights are available regarding the practical risks and challenges arising from third parties weighing in with their power and resources on one or the other conflict party's side – despite the fact that practitioners' perspectives suggest that weighing in is likely to happen, voluntarily or involuntarily, perceived or real, at times in a dialogue process.

4.4 COLLABORATION IN THE ABSENCE OF TRUST

Our fourth and final area of attention pertains to alternatives to trust-building in asymmetric relations. Most of the peacebuilding and conflict transformation literature sees trust as a key ingredient of relationships that makes cooperation possible. Constructive relations are expected to comprise a normative qualification that goes beyond 'getting something done together'. In contrast, practitioners reported on their experiences with dialogues in project contexts where trust was clearly absent. For example, trust between state security and civil society actors in some regions of Syria was described as next to impossible, as these security actors focused mainly on power and security and had no

incentive to engage with civil society (Peacebuilding practitioner from Syria, 2021). In other contexts, distrust between parties might be actively reinforced by external parties aiming to derail or sabotage collaboration processes, for example dialogue efforts between communities and representatives of the state that were not appreciated by extremist groups active in some regions (Peacebuilding practitioner (community policing) from Somaliland, 2021). Under these conditions, and in the absence of initiatives for structural, societal and political changes, we can hardly expect the preconditions for meaningful trust-building between citizens and the state to be in place.

While the peacebuilding and conflict transformation literature provides evidence for trust being a core ingredient of constructive relations, and alternatives to trust are not presented as the most desirable approach in any other literature, we suggest that more attention should be given to negotiations in the absence of trust. For example, a dialogue practitioner from Ukraine highlighted the practical value of working with set negotiation principles in dialogue projects (including mutual benefit orientation and interest-based process) to create situation-specific working relations between state security actors and citizens living in regions where military operations took place. Information-sharing and agreements were possible, in the absence of trust, as both sides had an interest in making movement safer for civilians, albeit for different reasons (Peacebuilding practitioner from Ukraine, 2022). As suggested by management research (Section 3.4), applying mainstreamed negotiation principles to the interaction can be understood as a third-party mechanism to mitigate potential risks: Both sides will know what to expect from the other side during the interaction, even if a party's outlook on the other party's trustworthiness is negative. While research in the peacebuilding and conflict transformation field has given much attention to negotiations in conflict settings, the focus in most cases remains on trust- and confidence-building between conflict parties, less on negotiation settings that are likely to remain characterised by widespread distrust.

As an example of such setting, a respondent from Indonesia reported that the supposedly weaker side in a negotiation process aimed to create eye-level relations with the government by proving they possessed means of power that could significantly harm the government's interests, for example by organising widespread strikes. The respondent considered this a necessary step before parties had incentives to put faith in each other's commitment to a lasting agreement (Peacebuilding practitioner from Aceh, 2021). That means that at

the outset of the negotiation process, steps were taken by the supposedly weaker side to put situational eye-level relations in place, at a time when there was very little upfront trust. According to the respondent, cooperation emerged incrementally and levels of trust between the conflict parties remained very low, requiring third-party assurances until the end of the negotiation process. In this regard, our respondent highlighted how trust was a choice that both sides made throughout the process and could easily be eroded if the other side did not live up to commitments. The setting described suggests that in the absence of trust, parties tended to put their faith in the process and the third party, and less in the other party.

The relationship dynamics described by the respondent suggest that peacebuilding and conflict transformation research should further explore dynamics of distrust and their interaction with trust-building dynamics – an insight that is also derived from the organisation and management literature (Section 3.4). The examples illustrate how widespread distrust and willingness to cooperate on specific issues can be at play at the same time. Distrust in these situations may even be seen as a vital component of loss-reducing behaviour in risky environments and therefore as a sensible protection mechanism when negotiations are unavoidable.

Overall, practitioners' experiences suggest that collaboration can be based on clarified mutual expectations and a shared feeling that certain things need to improve, even in cases of widespread distrust, provided that all parties feel they have additional tools at hand for the protection of their interests and safety. A positive outlook on the possible future of the relationship may not always be required. However, such collaboration is most likely for undisputed topics of mutual interest, such as road safety, and less likely for highly contested topics, such as human rights violations, which was also confirmed by our respondents. Practitioners frequently highlighted the limited prospects of spill-over effects of low-level cooperation in fields where the powerful party has critical interests at stake (Peacebuilding practitioner from Central Asia, 2021; Peacebuilding practitioner from Liberia, 2022). Against this backdrop, we suggest that research is required on situations in which parties have no reason to trust each other but still need to collaborate to achieve change and address issues of mutual concern.

5 Concluding Remarks and Avenues for Future Research

In this research report, we investigated questions of trust and trust-building in the context of peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions. In view of the global decline of trust in institutions, we asked which risks and challenges trust-building interventions face under conditions of asymmetric power, and how these risks and challenges can be navigated. To this end, we reviewed research contributions on trust and trust-building from different disciplines that are of direct relevance and potential inspiration for policymakers, practitioners and researchers working on constructive state-society relations. The literature covered peacebuilding and conflict transformation, institutionalism and governance, criminology, and organisational and management research. The literature review did not aim to provide a comprehensive account of the entire body of research in these fields but focuses on selected issue areas related to our research questions.

The review highlighted the manifold merits of trust in relations between various sets of actors, including vertical relations between citizens and state security actors. It also examined various risks and challenges arising from power asymmetry, including risks of cementing a status quo that is perceived as unfair, fostering exclusionary group dynamics and providing powerful actors with additional resources and means of validation (for a summary, see Section 3.5). Most crucially, power asymmetries seem to challenge the mainstreamed contact hypothesis, because citizens and state security personnel are not in equal, eye-level relationships to each other. Moreover, power asymmetries challenge the impartiality of the third party, despite its prominence as a fundamental principle of many organisations working as third parties in conflict settings.

By complementing the insights from the literature review with interviews with dialogue practitioners, we added insights into the practical challenges that trust-building initiatives face in contexts characterised by political instability and violent conflict (Chapter 4). Our findings confirm that asymmetric power significantly interacts with trust-building dynamics in these relationships, while we still know fairly little about practical approaches to remedy negative consequences of power imbalances in dialogue settings. Therefore, future research is needed to anticipate possible outcomes of trust-building approaches set in asymmetric

contexts, and to devise alternative approaches to establishing working relations in the context of peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions that are less prone to unintended consequences and harm. In particular, case studies are needed that add empirical depth to the predominantly conceptual literature. In view of the areas of attention we identified in the previous chapter, we suggest that future research on trust and trust-building that seeks to inform peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions should primarily pursue the following avenues of investigation:

5.1 THE PREREQUISITES FOR TRUST-BUILDING

In this research report, we focused on patterns of trust and trust-building in asymmetric relations in different contexts, at the expense of more in-depth empirical insights into trust dynamics in specific peacebuilding contexts. Research from the fields of conflict transformation and governance sheds light on how local origins of trust and perceptions of trustworthiness very much depend on historical factors and experiences with, for example, colonialism and oppression, the (un)fair treatment of citizens when dealing with state institutions, the design of foreign interventions and extent to which they penetrate the local governance sphere, and other highly context-specific factors. These literatures highlighted the importance of understanding the origins of trust and perceptions of trustworthiness in the contexts of project implementation in order to guard against unintended effects of the external intervention. More fine-grained empirical research can make pertinent contributions to this endeavour.

Against this backdrop, our pattern-oriented findings can provide future research with inspiration for more in-depth, context-specific investigations of the preconditions for trust-building in situations of political instability and violent conflict. We see particular value in research on contexts where trust between citizens and state security actors is particularly low. These are contexts where state security institutions are perceived as abusive, biased or non-responsive by large sections of society. Research to date has not established minimum conditions and critical thresholds for meaningful trust-building initiatives. In this regard, distinguishing between relational and structural factors hampering trust between citizens and state institutions would have great value for peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions, as dialogue initiatives are likely to be

able to improve relations between specific individuals, but struggle to address structural causes. Therefore, future analyses could set out to determine if conflicts in specific contexts arise and are sustained by relational factors (lack of rapport, lack of knowledge about each other's responsibilities, prejudices, etc.) or by structural factors (corruption, abuse of state power, restriction of civic rights, etc.). These are critical determinants of the preconditions for trust-building, which in turn are crucial to inform the design of peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions.

5.2 THE DYNAMICS OF TRUST-BUILDING

We currently observe widespread erosion of citizens' trust in institutions, fellow citizens and the media across the globe. Research in the field of criminology reveals blind spots regarding what we know about the dynamics of trust between citizens and the police and how citizens evaluate the trustworthiness of state security institutions in different societies. These findings suggest that future research should pay close attention to dynamics of trust in social relations, both in terms of how trust develops and how it is lost. The field of peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions is just one sector in which such investigations will be increasingly critical to ensure effective programming. The governance literature highlights that several entrenched assumptions about the workings of trust in citizen-state relations need more thorough grounding in context-specific research. When it comes to the security sector, future research could pick up on the recent quantitative survey on the failure of various community policing interventions to deliver on trust-building objectives (Blair, et al., 2021). Future analysis could qualitatively explore dynamics of trust in interventions that are based on personal encounters between the public and police in asymmetric relations. Evidence derived from long-term research designs would have particular value, since trust may be destroyed in an instant but takes time to build.

Furthermore, wider dimensions of citizen-state relations beyond the security sector should be investigated, as they are likely to interact with the trust-building assumptions applied in peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions. For example, the digital space, in which citizens acquire public services from their local administration and interact directly with government officials on social

media, remain under-researched as a space in which citizen-state relations increasingly unfold. To encompass these trends, peacebuilding research should engage with insights derived from more novel fields of scholarly inquiry, such as data science and neuroscience, which also deal with trust and trust-building.

5.3 THE ROLE OF THE THIRD PARTY

Further research is needed regarding the role of the third party in specific conflict settings in order to shed light on the relationship between a third party's power resources and their level of neutrality or impartiality as perceived by conflict parties and the general public. The unintended effects of third-party bias, either evident or perceived, in dialogue processes may be substantial and we have very limited empirical evidence in this field. Next to empirical contributions, we suggest that research can also inform a normative debate on this topic at the policy level. Peacebuilding and security cooperation interventions may wish to engage with the question whether and under which conditions it is desirable that third parties strive for neutrality or weigh in on behalf of weaker parties or certain overarching principles, such as human rights and democratic processes. Research can help donors, implementers and host communities to engage in informed discussions of which third-party characteristics they desire in dialogue processes and to identify deviations from this desirable model.

5.4 ALTERNATIVES TO TRUST-BUILDING

While peacebuilding and conflict transformation research have engaged with negotiations and confidence-building measures between conflict parties in the absence of trust, our interviews highlighted that implementing insights from this research in the context of dialogue projects remains a practical challenge. Practitioners were acutely aware of the limitations of dialogue initiatives in the absence of trust, while they saw limited options for implementing measures that did not, eventually, aim at trust-building, as the focus on trust was deeply ingrained into project designs. Research insights into complex negotiations under adverse conditions from the management literature may provide impetus for designing peacebuilding projects under conditions of widespread distrust.

Insights from these literatures show that individuals cooperate even if they consider their counterparts to be untrustworthy, provided that economic gains suggest that it is worth the risk. The management literature also identified various pathways showing how to create trust in processes, not partners, such as the above-mentioned involvement of third parties or different hierarchical setups for complex negotiations.

These insights are neither new to the peacebuilding field, nor can they be directly translated into security cooperation settings. While the management literature deals with business contexts and usually defines a risk as potential loss of economic capital, the latter deals with secession, physical insecurity, and lastly death, as potential risks. Furthermore, actors have very different understandings of their room for manoeuvre in private enterprises and national security dialogue settings, which also limits the applicability of findings from these fields of research to security cooperation. Even so, our findings suggest that the strong focus on dialogues and trust-building in the peacebuilding and security cooperation field may have resulted in a neglect for alternative approaches that are part and parcel of conflict transformation work as well, like measures in the pursuit of social change and justice. Perspectives from the management field can constitute fruitful steppingstones for interdisciplinary research endeavours in this regard. Open and exploratory research designs are needed that look beyond mainstreamed assumptions about trust-building and focus on diverse actors' strategies for navigating cooperation in contexts characterised by distrust.

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Peacebuilding practitioner from Aceh, Indonsia, NGO. Interview conducted on 22 December 2021.

Peacebuilding practitioner from Central Asia, NGO. Interview conducted on 21 December 2021.

Peacebuilding practitioner from Liberia, NGO. Interview conducted on 21 January 2022.

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ABOUT THE PROJECT

The "Trust-Building in Security and Rule of Law Partnerships" research project analysed policy assumptions and knowledge gaps regarding trust in peacebuilding interventions. It was carried out as a collaborative project between the IFSH and the Berghof Foundation and funded by the Dutch Knowledge Management Fund (KMF) at the Knowledge Platform Security and Rule of Law (KPSRL).

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE

The Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy (IFSH) researches the conditions for peace and security in Germany, Europe and beyond. The IFSH conducts its research independently. It is funded by the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg.

Funded by:

Hamburg | Ministry of Science, Research, Equalities and Districts

Knowledge Management Fund | Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law

Berghof Foundation

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