

# Promoting Reconciliation: Lessons from the Social Psychology of Extremism and Forgiveness

**POLICY BRIEF**

Alexandra Vázquez Botana and Sam Hibbs

March 2026

**Alexandra Vázquez Botana** is Associate Professor in the Department of Social and Organisational Psychology at Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED) in Spain. Her research focuses on intra- and intergroup relations, particularly identity fusion and its role in motivating extreme behaviour. She has led research projects funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science on the antecedents of collective action for social change. She currently collaborates on a project funded by the European Research Council, which aims to prevent and diminish radicalisation leading to violence through innovative, evidence-based strategies.

**Sam Hibbs** is a Project/Research Officer for the XCEPT research programme at King's College London, providing support on project operations, output writing and data analysis. He has previously worked in scientific and global health communications, most recently for Médecins Sans Frontières, as well as in various biomedical research settings. Sam has degrees in biochemistry and global health, social justice, and public policy, from University of Oxford and King's College London.

*This publication is issued by the Cross-Border Conflict Evidence, Policy and Trends (XCEPT) research programme, funded by UK International Development. XCEPT brings together world-leading experts and local researchers to examine conflict-affected borderlands, how conflicts connect across borders, the intersection of climate stresses and conflict, and the drivers of violent and peaceful behaviour, to inform policies and programmes that support peace.*

*The views and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent those of the UK government.*

*This document is issued on the understanding that if any extract is used, the author(s) should be credited, with the date of the publication and reference to XCEPT. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the material in this document, the author(s) will not be liable for any loss or damages incurred through the use of this document.*

## CONTACT DETAILS

For questions and queries, please contact:

Centre for Statecraft and National Security  
King's College London  
Strand  
London WC2R 2LS  
United Kingdom

mail@csns.uk

Like all other CSNS publications, this report can be downloaded free of charge at [www.csns.uk](http://www.csns.uk).

© CSNS 2025

Cover: Armed soldiers among the ruined buildings of Aleppo, Syria (February 15, 2012).

Mehmet Ali Poyraz / Shutterstock.com

# Purpose

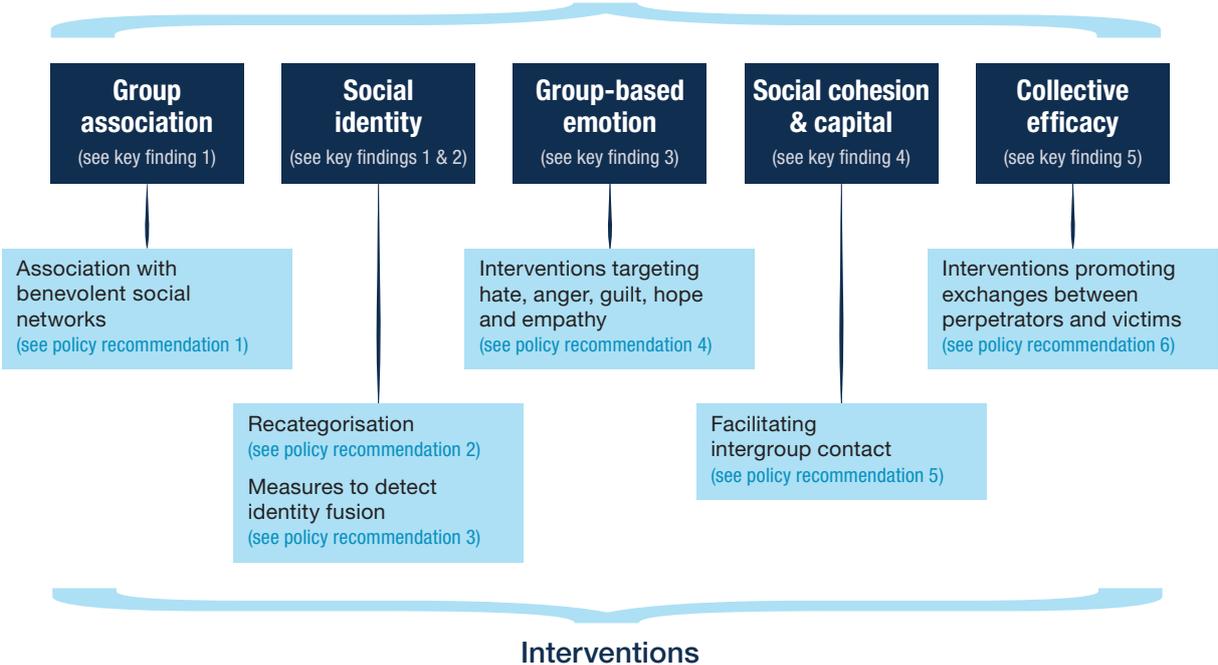
This policy brief highlights policy recommendations to promote reconciliation between antagonistic groups, drawing on a critical literature review which explored a selection of psychosocial factors. These factors influence a variety of behaviours, including extremist actions, propensity to intergroup violence and willingness to reconcile with negatively perceived out-groups.

Without resolution, grievances between groups can breed extremism, and the likelihood of this is multiplied in the absence of basic resources and political stability, such as in the aftermath of severe conflicts. While extremism and reconciliation do not exist on a single spectrum, many factors affecting one also affect the other. Here, we examine social-psychological issues such as group association, identity fusion and group emotions, before considering factors such as social cohesion, social capital and collective efficacy.

Interventions promoting reconciliation between groups can help prevent continued intergroup violence and extremism, but their design needs to be informed by an understanding of these psychosocial factors. Moreover, contextual dynamics are fundamental to their outcomes, and this is taken into account in the discussion of these interventions.

The figure below shows the range of factors affecting extremism and reconciliation explored in this policy brief, noting the appropriate interventions for each. Each is elaborated in the sections that follow.

## Factors Affecting Extremism and Reconciliation





Destroyed city centre of Homs,  
Syria (August 25, 2021).

*Lena Ha / Shutterstock.com*

# Key Findings

---

## Key Finding 1: Group Association Can Drive Violence by Building Barriers between Different Groups

Psychological needs for significance and belonging can shape group affiliation, and, depending on the context, the fulfilment or frustration of these needs can lead to violent behaviour. Experiences of social rejection or personal failure threaten individuals' need for social worth and recognition. To restore self-worth, individuals may turn to radical social networks that encourage violence, particularly in contexts where they reinforce extremist ideologies.<sup>1</sup> The need to form and maintain interpersonal relationships has been highlighted as a powerful motivator in joining these groups, whereas a lack of social belonging is associated with an increased propensity for violence.<sup>2</sup>

Social identity can profoundly influence intergroup conflicts, fostering in-group favouritism and, when coupled with perceived intergroup threats, generating hostility towards out-group members.<sup>3</sup> The potential for identification with a group to lead to violence has been attributed to the fixing of intergroup barriers, the exclusion of specific populations, and the alteration of perception and treatment. This has been seen in ethnic versus civic national identity criteria, which have been linked to differential treatment of minority groups.<sup>4</sup> For example, the German national identity during Nazism specifically excluded Jews and Roma, while in Bulgaria these groups were included. This contributed to contrasting experiences, where Jews and Roma in Bulgaria received help and were not deported to concentration camps in Bulgarian territory.<sup>5</sup>

---

1 A. W. Kruglanski et al., "Significance-Quest Theory," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 17, no. 4 (2022): 1050–1071, <https://doi.org/10.1177/17456916211034825>. See also D. Webber et al., "The Road to Extremism: Field and Experimental Evidence That Significance Loss-Induced Need for Closure Fosters Radicalization," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 114, no. 2 (2018): 270–285, <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspi0000111>.

2 R. F. Baumeister and M. R. Leary, "The Need to Belong: Desire for Interpersonal Attachments as a Fundamental Human Motivation," *Psychological Bulletin* 117, no. 3 (1995): 497–529, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.117.3.497>.

3 H. Tajfel, ed., *Differentiation between Social Groups: Studies in the Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations* (Academic Press, 1978). See also H. Tajfel and J. C. Turner, "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict," in *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, eds. W. G. Austin and S. Worchele (Brooks-Cole, 1979), 33–47.

4 J. Meeus et al., "The Role of National Identity Representation in the Relation between In-Group Identification and Out-Group Derogation: Ethnic versus Civic representation," *British Journal of Social Psychology* 49, no. 2 (2010): 305–320, <https://doi.org/10.1348/014466609X451455>. See also S. Pehrson et al., "When Does National Identification Lead to the Rejection of Immigrants? Cross-Sectional and Longitudinal Evidence for the Role of Essentialist In-Group Definitions," *British Journal of Social Psychology* 48, no. 1 (2009): 61–76, <https://doi.org/10.1348/014466608X288827>; J. R. Wakefield et al., "The Impact of Adopting Ethnic or Civic Conceptions of National Belonging for Others' Treatment," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 37, no. 12 (2011): 1599–1610, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167211416131>.

5 S. Reicher et al., "Making a Virtue of Evil: A Five-Step Social Identity Model of the Development of Collective Hate," *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 2, no. 3 (2008): 1313–1344, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9004.2008.00113.x>.

## Key Finding 2: Fusion of Personal and Group Identities Can Increase Likelihood of Extreme Actions

Identity fusion theory proposes that when personal and social identities become blurred, individuals experience a profound connection to their group akin to familial bonds.<sup>6</sup> This fusion can compel individuals to prioritise the welfare of group members even at great personal cost, for example through willingness to fight or die on behalf of the group. An explanation of this is that identity fusion is often accompanied by a powerful sense of personal agency and invulnerability.<sup>7</sup>

Research conducted across five continents has shown that more strongly fused individuals were more willing to suffer pain for their group and help fellow group members in need.<sup>8</sup> In contexts where there is intergroup hostility and a perceived threat, identity fusion has been found to be more predictive than other measures of group identification for disposition to violent behaviour.<sup>9</sup> This has been observed in studies on gun rights and abortion rights groups in the USA,<sup>10</sup> while identity fusion has been assessed through a fusion scale,<sup>11</sup> and willingness to self-sacrifice through a scale proposed by Swann et al.<sup>12</sup> Gomez et al. (2011) found identity fusion to be a stronger predictor of endorsement of extreme behaviour than sacred values or moral convictions, and that threats to fused individuals' views may amplify these extreme behaviours.

## Key Finding 3: Group-Based Emotions Link Social Identity to Violence or Reconciliation

Group-based emotions mean that members assess events and actors in terms of the impact on their group, linking them closely with social identity. When people identify strongly with a group, their emotional responses are more strongly influenced by the implications for their group's welfare. These emotions, in turn, motivate behaviours that are relevant to the group's interests, and they can either encourage or discourage both violence and reconciliation.<sup>13</sup>

- 
- 6 W. B. Swann Jr. et al., "Identity Fusion: The Interplay of Personal and Social Identities in Extreme Group Behaviour," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 96, no. 5 (2009): 995–1011, <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0013668>.
  - 7 W. B. Swann Jr. et al., "When Group Membership Gets Personal: A Theory of Identity Fusion," *Psychological Review* 119, no. 3 (2012): 441–456, <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0028589>.
  - 8 Á. Gómez et al., "On the Nature of Identity Fusion: Insights into the Construct and a New Measure," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 100, no. 5 (2011): 918–933, <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0022642>. See also C. M. Kavanagh et al., "Positive Experiences of High Arousal Martial Arts Rituals Are Linked to Identity Fusion and Costly Pro-Group Actions," *European Journal of Social Psychology* 49, no. 3 (2019): 461–481, <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2514>; Swann Jr. et al., "Identity Fusion."
  - 9 J. Chinchilla et al., "Identity Fusion Predicts Violent Pro-Group Behavior When It Is Morally Justifiable," *The Journal of Social Psychology* 162, no. 6 (2022): 701–715, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00224545.2021.1948813>. See also M. Newson et al., "Brazil's Football Warriors: Social Bonding and Inter-Group Violence," *Evolution and Human Behavior* 39, no. 6 (2018): 675–683, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2018.06.010>; A. Vázquez et al., "Threat Enhances Aggressive Inclinations among Devoted Actors Via Increase in Their Relative Physical Formidability," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 46, no. 10 (2020): 1461–1475, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167220907466>.
  - 10 F. A. Martel et al., "Why True Believers Make the Ultimate Sacrifice: Sacred Values, Moral Convictions, or Identity Fusion?," *Frontiers in Psychology* 12 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.779120>.
  - 11 Gómez et al., "On the Nature of Identity Fusion."
  - 12 Swann Jr. et al., "Identity Fusion."
  - 13 E. R. Smith and D. M. Mackie, "Group-Based Emotions Over Time: Dynamics of Experience and Regulation," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 47, no. 7 (2021): 1135–1151, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167220960557>.

A range of emotions has been identified in intergroup conflicts.

Hatred and anger tend to perpetuate conflict, while guilt, empathy and hope offer pathways to reconciliation. While hatred and anger are similar, an important distinction is that hatred is based on the belief that enemies have unchangeable negative characteristics, whereas anger stems from beliefs that group situations are unfair and can be changed.<sup>14</sup> Though the consequences of each can be alike, hatred incites violence for the sake of harming or eliminating the opposition, while anger stimulates action against perceived injustice and so can be utilised in conflict resolution.

Guilt can motivate actions to repair harm and support reparation policies, depending on whether recognition of in-group wrongdoing is met with denial or acceptance.<sup>15</sup> Intergroup empathy facilitates mutual understanding and has been linked to support for prosocial actions and forgiveness.<sup>16</sup> Finally, hope is characterised by positive expectations for the future, and from this can inspire efforts towards conflict resolution.<sup>17</sup>

#### **Key Finding 4: Social Cohesion and Capital Can Aid Reconciliation**

Social cohesion and social capital are closely related and are vital for reconciliation efforts in post-conflict societies. Social cohesion refers to the strength of relationships and solidarity among different social groups living in close proximity,<sup>18</sup> while social capital relates to the shared resources between groups for cooperation and collective action.<sup>19</sup> These two factors reinforce each other in situations where high levels of social cohesion involve frequent, positive social interaction between groups, which in turn leads to the development of shared resources and the building of social capital between groups.

---

14 S. Cohen-Chen and E. Halperin, "Emotional Processes in Intractable Conflicts: Integrating Descriptive and Interventionist Approaches," *PsyArXiv* (2021), [https://osf.io/preprints/psyarxiv/eyw64\\_v1](https://osf.io/preprints/psyarxiv/eyw64_v1).

15 N. R. Branscombe, B. Doosje, and C. McGarty, "Antecedents and Consequences of Collective Guilt," in *From Prejudice to Intergroup Emotions: Differentiated Reactions to Social Groups*, eds. D. M. Mackie and E. R. Smith (Psychology Press, 2002).

16 J. M. Levine and M. A. Hogg, *Encyclopedia of Group Processes and Intergroup Relations* (Sage Publications, 2009). See also S. L. Moeschberger et al., "Forgiveness in Northern Ireland: Model for Peace in the Midst of the 'Troubles'," *Peace and Conflict* 1, no. 2 (2005): 199–214, [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327949pac1102\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327949pac1102_5).

17 S. Cohen-Chen et al., "Hope in the Middle East: Malleability Beliefs, Hope, and the Willingness to Compromise for Peace," *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 5, no. 1 (2014): 67–75, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550613484499>. See also B. S. Hasler et al., "Young Generations' Hopelessness Perpetuates Long-Term Conflicts," *Scientific Reports* 13, no. 1 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-023-31667-9>.

18 S. Mousa, "Building Social Cohesion between Christians and Muslims Through Soccer in Post-ISIS Iraq," *Science*, August 14 2020, 866–870, <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.abb3153>.

19 K. Lochner et al., "Social Capital: A Guide to Its Measurement," *Health & Place* 5, no. 4 (1999): 259–270, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1353-8292\(99\)00016-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1353-8292(99)00016-7). See also R. D. Putnam, "The Prosperous Community: Social Capital and Public Life," *American Prospect* 4 (1993): 35–42.

## Key Finding 5: Collective Efficacy Can Motivate Cooperation between Groups

Collective efficacy refers to an individual's perception of agency arising from identity fusion with their group, which can motivate cooperation with out-group members to achieve shared goals.<sup>20</sup> Research has found that collective efficacy was associated with reduced violence, in contrast with neighbourhoods living in conflict-affected areas which perceived lower levels of collective efficacy.<sup>21</sup>

- 
- 20 M. Agostini and M. van Zomeren, "Toward a Comprehensive and Potentially Cross-Cultural Model of Why People Engage in Collective Action: A Quantitative Research Synthesis of Four Motivations and Structural Constraints," *Psychological Bulletin* 147, no. 7 (2021): 667–700, <https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000256>. See also M. J. Hornsey et al., "Why Do People Engage in Collective Action? Revisiting the Role of Perceived Effectiveness," *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 36, no. 7 (2006): 1701–1722, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0021-9029.2006.00077.x>.
- 21 D. T. O'Brien et al., "Ecometrics in the Age of Big Data: Measuring and Assessing 'Broken Windows' Using Large-Scale Administrative Records," *Sociological Methodology* 45, no. 1 (2015): 101–147, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0081175015576601>. See also M. L. Ohmer et al., "Preventing Violence in Disadvantaged Communities: Strategies for Building Collective Efficacy and Improving Community Health," *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* 26, nos. 7–8 (2016): 608–621, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10911359.2016.1238804>; R. J. Sampson et al., "Neighborhoods and Violent Crime: A Multilevel Study of Collective Efficacy," *Science* 277 (1997): 918–924, <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.277.5328.918>.

# Policy Recommendations

---

## **Policy Recommendation 1: Association with Benevolent Social Networks Should Be Promoted to Encourage Individuals to Detach from Radical Groups and Violence**

The consequences of group association and identity fusion are contingent on the nature of the group. While the fusion of an individual with a violent extremist group can escalate intergroup hostility, fusion with benevolent groups may foster social harmony, serving as a foundation for trusting relationships and positive intergroup attitudes in non-threatening contexts.<sup>22</sup>

Therefore, rather than simply encouraging individuals to reject the radical group they are part of, alternative identity fusion with benevolent groups should be promoted to help disengage individuals from extremist beliefs. An example of this was implemented in Spanish prisons, where active involvement of families and friends showed promise in the process of disengaging inmates convicted of extremist crimes.<sup>23</sup>

## **Policy Recommendation 2: Recategorisation should be promoted to reduce intergroup barriers**

If narrowing group definitions can exclude populations, expanding them can improve inclusivity. Efforts to mitigate intergroup conflict often involve redefining these group boundaries, termed recategorisation. Recategorisation strategies aim to promote a shared, stronger identity comprising both the in- and out-groups as a way to diminish the importance of intergroup differences driving conflict. This is exemplified in post-conflict Rwanda's emphasis on a common Rwandan identity, attempting to overcome animosity between Hutus and Tutsis.<sup>24</sup>

In cases where a singular, shared identity proves elusive, for example when there is resistance from groups preserving their distinct identity, embracing dual identities can offer an alternative, recognising both broader and narrower affiliations. This is supported by research suggesting that individuals identifying with both their national and ethnic group are more supportive of policies benefiting

---

22 J. W. Klein and B. Bastian, "The Fusion-Secure Base Hypothesis," *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 27, no. 2 (2023): 107–127, <https://doi.org/10.1177/10888683221100883>. See also A. Vázquez et al., "Can Identity Fusion Foster Social Harmony? Strongly Fused Individuals Embrace Familiar Outgroup Members unless Threatened," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 107 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2023.104462>.  
23 Á. Gómez et al., "Willingness to Sacrifice among Convicted Islamist Terrorists versus Violent Gang Members and Other Criminals," *Scientific Reports* 12, no. 1 (2022): 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-022-06590-0>.  
24 E. Staub, "The Challenging Road to Reconciliation in Rwanda: Societal Processes, Interventions and their Evaluation," *Journal of Social and Political Psychology* 2, no. 1 (2014): 505–517, <https://doi.org/10.5964/jssp.v2i1.294>.

minorities.<sup>25</sup> However, the success of dual-identity initiatives depends on compatibility between the two identities: when perceived as incompatible, they can exacerbate tensions.

### Policy Recommendation 3: Identity Fusion Measures Should Be Used to Predict Violent Inclinations

To predict personally costly intentions, measures have been developed to detect identity fusion. These measures could be used to help predict violent intergroup behaviour when in-group members perceive other groups as threatening.

### Policy Recommendation 4: Interventions Should Target Group Emotions to Promote Reconciliation

Addressing group emotions in the reconciliation process depends on dynamic perceptions of the conflict and the willingness to challenge entrenched beliefs about its resolution.<sup>26</sup> Five intervention strategies have been proposed by academics to leverage this understanding:

1. In dealing with intergroup **hatred**, ideas of variability – in people perceived to be both good and bad in all groups, and the capacity for all individuals to change – should be promoted. In practice, this could involve exposing in-group members to out-group members criticising their own group or out-group moral exemplars.<sup>27</sup>
2. Intergroup **anger** can be reduced through the offering of apologies or reparations between groups.
3. **Hope** can be inspired through challenging beliefs that the intergroup conflict is unsolvable, for example by sharing stories of other conflicts that have been resolved.
4. Group-based **guilt** can be used to promote acknowledgement of in-group responsibility in the conflict, such as through encouraging quality intergroup contact and enhancing individual self-esteem by affirming positive aspects of the self.<sup>28</sup>
5. Intergroup **empathy** can be induced through recategorisation (as mentioned in policy recommendation 3), creating a larger, shared identity between groups.

---

25 Y. J. Huo et al., "Superordinate Identification, Subgroup Identification, and Justice Concerns: Is Separatism the Problem? Is Assimilation the Answer?," *Psychological Science* 7, no. 1 (1996): 40–45, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.1996.tb00664.x>.

26 Hasler et al., "Young Generations."

27 S. Čehajić-Clancy and M. Bilewicz, "Moral-Exemplar Intervention: A New Paradigm for Conflict Resolution and Intergroup Reconciliation," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 30, no. 4 (2021): 335–342.

28 S. Čehajić-Clancy et al., "Affirmation, Acknowledgment of In-Group Responsibility, Group-Based Guilt, and Support for Reparative Measures," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 101, no. 2 (2011): 256–270, <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0023936>.

### Policy Recommendation 5: Interventions Facilitating Intergroup Contact Should Be Implemented with Care

Various studies have shown that contact-based interventions can increase favourable attitudes towards out-group members, as well as reconciliatory beliefs.<sup>29</sup> However, it should be noted that these favourable attitudes do not necessarily extend beyond the members involved in the interaction to the rest of the out-group, and that building social cohesion and capital requires a systemic effort to facilitate frequent contact in everyday situations.<sup>30</sup>

Further, while frequent, positive interaction between groups can promote reconciliation, intergroup contact is not always positive, and some evidence suggests that negative contact may even strengthen prejudice.<sup>31</sup>

Finally, in certain cases, attention must be paid to potential adverse psychological effects of intergroup contact. For example, in an intervention in Sierra Leone bringing together war victims and perpetrators to discuss grievances, subsequent increases in incidences of depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress were observed.<sup>32</sup>

### Policy Recommendation 6: Interventions to Restore Collective Efficacy Can Aid Reconciliation but Must Be Driven by the Conflict Context

Restoring collective efficacy can have varying effects on the reconciliation process, depending on the context. In post-conflict settings, interventions have attempted to restore collective efficacy among victimised groups by promoting exchanges between perpetrators and victims. Evidence has shown that messages of empowerment from perpetrator to victim, as well as forgiveness from victim to perpetrator, increase willingness to reconcile on both sides.<sup>33</sup> Whereas in contexts with continuing violence, experiments have found that interventions promoting collective efficacy can instead lead to increased negative intergroup attitudes, hampering reconciliation.<sup>34</sup>

- 
- 29 S. Cehajic et al., "Forgive and Forget? Antecedents and Consequences of Intergroup Forgiveness in Bosnia and Herzegovina," *Political Psychology* 29, no. 3 (2008): 351–367, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2008.00634.x>. See also M. Hewstone et al., "Intergroup Contact, Forgiveness, and Experience of 'The Troubles' in Northern Ireland," *Journal of Social Issues* 62, no. 1 (2006): 99–120, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.2006.00441.x>; T. Tam et al., "Intergroup Trust in Northern Ireland," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 35, no. 1 (2009): 45–59, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167208325004>; S. Cehajic-Clancy and M. Bilewicz, "Fostering Reconciliation Through Historical Moral Exemplars in a Postconflict Society," *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 23, no. 3 (2017): 288–296, <https://doi.org/10.1037/pac0000210>.
- 30 J. Dixon et al., "Parallel Lives: Intergroup Contact, Threat, and the Segregation of Everyday Activity Spaces," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 118, no. 3 (2020): 457–480, <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspi0000191>. See also Mousa, "Building Social Cohesion."
- 31 F. K. Barlow et al., "The Contact Caveat: Negative Contact Predicts Increased Prejudice More Than Positive Contact Predicts Reduced Prejudice," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 38, no. 12 (2012): 1629–1643, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167212457953>. See also S. Paolini et al., "Negative Intergroup Contact Makes Group Memberships Salient: Explaining Why Intergroup Conflict Endures," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 36, no. 12 (2010): 1723–1738, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167210388667>.
- 32 J. Cilliers et al., "Reconciling After Civil Conflict Increases Social Capital but Decreases Individual Well-Being," *Science* 352 (2016): 787–794, <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aad9682>.
- 33 N. Shnabel et al., "Promoting Reconciliation Through the Satisfaction of the Emotional Needs of Victimized and Perpetrating Group Members: The Needs-Based Model of Reconciliation," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 35, no. 8 (2009): 1021–1030, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167209336610>.
- 34 R. Bilali and E. Staub, "Interventions in Real-World Settings: Using Media to Overcome Prejudice and Promote Intergroup Reconciliation in Central Africa," in *The Cambridge Handbook of the Psychology of Prejudice*, eds. C. G. Sibley and F. K. Barlow (Cambridge University Press, 2017), 607–631, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316161579.027>.

**Policy Recommendation 7:  
Context Should Be Considered and Continually  
Reassessed in the Implementation of  
Reconciliation Interventions**

As the previous sections have highlighted, psychosocial factors, and efforts to influence them, can aid or inadvertently hinder reconciliation processes depending on the social, political, economic and historical context. For example, social identities can either encourage conflict through exclusive group definitions or promote reconciliation when made more inclusive. Similarly, collective efficacy can either encourage cooperation with other groups or inspire conflict between them. The design and application of interventions must contend with the particularities of individual contexts and continually reassess effectiveness as the context evolves.



# CENTRE FOR STATECRAFT & NATIONAL SECURITY

KING'S COLLEGE LONDON

## CONTACT DETAILS

For questions and queries, please contact:

Centre for Statecraft and National Security  
King's College London  
Strand  
London WC2R 2LS  
United Kingdom

[mail@csns.uk](mailto:mail@csns.uk)

Like all other CSNS publications, this report can be downloaded free of charge at [www.csns.uk](http://www.csns.uk).

© CSNS 2025