

Indigenous Monitoring and Evaluation: Assessing Local Impacts of Peace Practice

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Abstract

Peace and Conflict Studies (PCS) has experienced substantial growth over the past 70 years. However, some have recently argued that the field has calcified in problematic ways; producing professionalized graduates, restricted perspectives, and standardized techniques that limit its ability to respond to different challenges, and particularly within divergent cultures and contexts. These concerns have found expression in the growth of the “critical peace” literature over the past decade, which has noted the diversity of conflict-affected societies, the lack of “local ownership” of peace practice, and the need for locally grounded tools for evaluating that practice. In addition, this paper will argue that PCS faces additional challenges today that are quite distinct from the challenges it’s primary theoretical and practical approaches were developed to address. These include *demographic shifts* within and between nations, the ongoing intensification of both domestic and global *inequalities*, and *democratic backsliding* in many contexts, which seem collectively to be contributing to polarization at many scales (domestic, international and global). However, while it is clear that PCS must evolve its existing toolset or develop a new toolset to respond to polarization, the challenges of the “critical peace” literature must also be addressed. Whatever theories and practices PCS develops to overcome issues of polarization must be flexible in response to the diversity of conflict-affected societies, they must provide ownership to local actors, and, pivotally, their processes and outcomes must be evaluated with locally grounded tools. While touching on each of these issues, the paper responds most directly to this last challenge and introduces what we will describe as Indigenous Monitoring & Evaluation (IM&E) processes for this purpose. As we will illustrate, IM&E provides a tool capable of understanding the local impacts of PCS practices in a diversity of settings from the perspective of local actors themselves.