GENEVA
GRADUATE
INSTITUTE

INSTITUT DE HAUTES
ÉTUDES INTERNATIONALES
ET DU DÉVELOPPEMENT

GRADUATE INSTITUTE
OF INTERNATIONAL AND
DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

GCSP
Geneva Centre for
Security Policy

NAVIGATING THE DIGITAL BATTLEFIELD:
LEVERAGING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR MEDIATION IN MYANMAR, CENTRAL AMERICA AND TUNISIA

Zoia Suleiman
Snigdha Agarwal Srinivas
Daniel Cross
Manuel Zarate Ospina

JULY 2023

Final Report

TABLE OF CONTENTS

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Myanmar:

- Despite efforts to address hate speech, social media continues to contribute to violence. Its powerful reach and influence exacerbates conflicts by capitalising on emotional grievances and inciting violence. For instance, doxxing, the exposure of private information, has led to real-world consequences for women supporting anti-military groups.
- The military's plan to replace Facebook with a military-run platform raises concerns of further violence and ethnic cleansing. To address this, a decentralised process involving local stakeholders must be pursued, as a national peace process seems unlikely in the current environment. GCSP can promote digital peacebuilding and empower civil society through mobile-centric social media literacy programs.

Central America:

- Traditional mediation approaches face challenges due to the mutating conflict actors and the presence of transnational criminal organisations (TCOs) in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. The TCOs do not aim to overthrow the state but to benefit from its weaknesses, thus, unconventional mediation strategies are needed.

- GCSP can closely monitor the situation in El Salvador and Honduras until the "emergency state" measures are lifted. Once the situation stabilises, GCSP can engage in diplomatic dialogue as an independent organisation without a previous regional footprint, giving the reluctance of the El Salvador and Honduras governments to organisations that previously operated in the region.

Tunisia:

- Existing peace processes in Tunisia lack implementation and inclusivity as well as focus on security instead of the root causes of violence. Hence, GCSP has an opportunity for effective and unique involvement.
- Social media, especially Facebook, plays a crucial role in the conflict by enabling the spread of misinformation about sub-Saharan migrants and normalising anti-Black hate-speech and violence.
- GCSP can leverage social media for mediation and de-escalation efforts by collaborating with CSOs to reshape the narrative on sub-Saharan migrants online, advising relevant stakeholders on a comprehensive long-term strategy through social media analysis, and training mediators in strategic communication through social media to build trust with the population.

Introduction

The connection between the four themes of social media, conflict, migration and diplomacy has not been adequately explored. This report uses case studies of Myanmar, Central America, and Tunisia to propose a relationship. Social media is increasingly being used as a catalyst of conflict; however, it also offers possible solutions as a diplomatic tool. Migration often plays a role in instigating or worsening conflict and social media has become a key tool in driving and facilitating the movement of people.

This report has found that social media can provide GCSP with a novel opportunity to engage in diplomatic dialogue, particularly within conflict-affected contexts and non-traditional mediation processes. In each case study, partnerships with grassroots organisations and the utilisation of local knowledge can be developed to counter conflict linked to social media. This report also proposes initiatives to increase digital literacy and social media based strategic communication to support mediation efforts. GCSP's ability to provide national-level insights and social media analysis can also be utilised to advise key stakeholders and facilitate mediation processes. This report has highlighted several risks of using social media for mediation, including the number of stakeholders present within the digital space and the often complex relationships between them. Some of these stakeholders may be against external involvement meaning a careful approach must be adopted.

This report used grounded theory methodology to develop theories from the collected data. Data was collected from interviews with academic experts, practitioners, and local knowledge producers as well as desk research. Each case study was evaluated through a context and stakeholder analysis. The findings of this report were generated from the theories developed through this analysis.

The first section includes a Literature Review examining the current literature on social media and its ability to act as a catalyst for conflict and a tool for the diplomatic process. The second section focuses on the case studies. It includes a timeline, context and stakeholder analysis and an overview of the current situation. The final section identifies possible entry points for diplomatic dialogue and recommendations for GCSP, including possible challenges and risks that may be encountered.

1. Methodology

This qualitative research project utilised a constructivist approach and a grounded theory based methodology, allowing for the continual reconstruction of theoretical links related between the chosen themes and case studies (Charmaz, 2006). Collected data was analysed qualitatively and processed using grounded theory principles. Subsequent theories that emerged were then formed into a set of key findings that can be acted upon or applied to similar cases in the future.

Desk research was carried out to gain greater theoretical sensitivity and enhance the analysis. A grounded preliminary literature review was produced from research of academic articles, social media sources, and grey literature (Thistoll et al., 2016). This was followed by interviews to examine the various actors and potential diplomatic entry points for each case. Multi-level context analyses addressing the root causes within each case study were conducted as well as a stakeholder analysis. This process also enabled the identification of potential points of contact for future mediation efforts. These analyses identified unexplored avenues for dialogue and de-escalation.

The main source of data collection was in-depth interviews with academic experts, practitioners and local knowledge producers. Given the exploratory nature of this research, both purposive and snowball sampling were used to contact respondents in each region. The following points of reference were used for their selection:

- Primary focus was given to active social media users in Myanmar, Tunisia, and Central America.
- As language is an important criterion for selection, preference was given to respondents who are able to reasonably speak in English, Arabic and Spanish. Although Burmese is the first language in Myanmar, there was no significant language barrier as English is taught as a secondary language in schools.
- Experts in social media, digital and traditional peacebuilding and migration were interviewed enabling a greater understanding of the links between the themes.
- The researchers sought to interview those with expert knowledge of each case study, particularly regarding the role of social media and the current peacebuilding processes.

Interviews were conducted either in-person or online in semi-structured format and were recorded (with interviewee permission) alongside detailed note-taking. An initial content analysis of the notes (thematic and narrative), using line-by-line coding, was conducted to uncover patterns; while, incident-to-incident coding was used to compare any emerging theories.

	Name/ Initials	Profession/ Sector
Experts on social media and peacebuilding	Andreas Hirblinger	Senior Researcher, Geneva Graduate Institute's Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding
	Emma Baumhofer	Digital Peacebuilding Expert, SwissPeace
Myanmar	Rachel Gasser	Senior Advisor, Berghof Foundation
	Julia Palmiano Federer	Head of Research, Ottawa Dialogue
Central America	Elizabeth Kennedy	WOLA (Washington Office on Latin America)
	N/A	Journalist, El Faro (El Salvador newspaper)
	N/A	Journalist, La Nueva Prensa (Guatemala newspaper)
	Claudia Morales	Migrant from El Salvador, (attempted to cross to the US 3 times)
	N/A	Independent external policy advisor/Consultant
Tunisia	N/A	Development sector in Tunisia
	A.M. (initials)	Social media analyst, and civil society officer in Tunisia
	N/A	Academic researcher, specialised in security policy and migration in the Mediterranean.

Figure 1: List of Interviewees

Due the conflict-affected nature of the case studies, the researchers encountered issues when contacting potential interviewees. A number of interviewees declined due to the sensitive nature of the research while others were unable to divulge certain information for privacy and safety reasons. To accommodate these limitations, the researchers adjusted their methods, such as using desk research, to overcome knowledge gaps.

2. Literature Review

i) Social Media's Role in Conflict

There has been much research into the detrimental impact of social media and its ability to act as a catalyst for conflict. Individual actors and organisations are able to harness the power of social media for harmful purposes through disinformation practices . This can weaken the foundations of democratic regimes by increasing polarisation within society, spreading conspiracy theories, and decreasing the population's trust in democratic institutions (Datts, 2020; Schleffer, 2021). Due to its ease of access and wide reach social media may be utilised by populist domestic actors to spread a divisive ideology that fuels instability, particularly in weakened states, and lead to a rise in extremist politics and violence (Schleffer, 202; Simonsen, 2021).

The lack of effective regulation surrounding social media has enabled it to become a breeding ground for hateful rhetoric, where ideas that are considered unacceptable within society can become pervasive (Epstein, 2020). This spread can lead to a shift in social norms, where xenophobic or racist ideas are more widely normalised leading to violence (Ekman, 2019; Müller & Schwarz, 2020). For instance, Facebook and Twitter played key roles in the exodus of thousands of migrant workers from North-East India as they were bombarded with threats of violence on social media (Pathak, 2014). When coupled with other variables, such as a growth in extremist politics, this can lead to an increase in the social acceptability of exclusionary and oppressive government policies.

Domestic and regional migration flows can be influenced as a consequence of disinformation activities. Shifting social norms and the weakening of the state structure due to disinformation can facilitate the implementation of more punitive immigration policies which restrict the movements of migrants (Simonsen, 2021). The high prevalence of anti-migrant rhetoric and

disinformation on social media can force marginalised groups to flee, translating into targeted violence (Boomgaarden & Vliegenthart, 2007). All these factors often compound social and political instability, worsening the situation and making a mediated outcome far less likely.

<u>ii) Social Media as a Diplomatic Tool</u>

While social media poses many risks within conflict-affected contexts, there is potential for it to provide a new dimension to the diplomatic process. As a direct counter to the threat posed by disinformation, social media can be used for positive narrative projection—a proactive strategy of spreading positive stories to counter the flow of negative disinformation and protect the image and reputation of actors (Hedling, 2021). This strategy is utilised by the task forces of the European External Action Service to counter disinformation, particularly from Russia, and has become widely internalised within the EU (Hedling, 2021). Another approach is positive framing—the structuring and emphasis of content that is being shared and how this can be used to achieve maximum interaction and reach (Valenzuela et al., 2017). The main frames used within social media are conflict (between individuals or groups to gain attention), economic consequences, human interest and morality (Valenzuela et al., 2017). While the use of the conflict frame can often deter people from interacting, the human interest and morality frames can have a more positive impact, particularly on social media sites, increasing the virality of content (Valenzuela et al., 2017). These methods of framing may be used by actors to improve the effectiveness of disinformation-countering content.

A more practical application of social media as a diplomatic tool is using it to conduct and support analyses of conflicts and peace processes, from daily monitoring through to in-depth stakeholder and perception analyses (SwissPeace & UNDPPA, 2021). Daily monitoring can be used in initial stages of analysis to build a holistic image of the conflict by analysing consistent hashtags and keywords and tracking which actors produce the most impactful content. This technique was utilised in research conducted by the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) in Thailand to identify key actors and track narratives on social media, resulting in the Thai government implementing public information campaigns to counter anti-migrant rhetoric and COVID-19 related disinformation (HD, 2021). Stakeholder analysis can help to categorise and understand connections between actors, as well as "identifying both echo chambers and

influencers that bridge communities" (HD, 2021, p. 3). Mapping the significant actors, may uncover opportunities to engage in mediation or peacebuilding efforts; while those that have been excluded from the dialogue can also be identified (HD, 2021). This form of analysis was utilised in a project on women and the peace process in Yemen. Twitter accounts of key actors and Facebook groups were formed into clusters and then assessed by their connections and influence (HD, 2021). The results helped inform the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary General in Yemen of which actors to consult with, as well as the reliability of information from certain sources (HD, 2021).

Social media can also be integrated into mediation processes to support strategic communication, engaging multiple actors and improve inclusivity. Mediators can utilise social media to disseminate their pro-peace narrative, target messages to influential actors and control information surrounding the process (SwissPeace & United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, 2021). Through strategic communication, mediators can ensure the public has access to trustworthy information to counter this threat (UNDPPA & HD, 2019). During conflict, many people are likely to have more reliable access to social media than traditional media channels, making it a more dependable option for communication. Peace processes involve various actors often covering a large geographical area that may be difficult to travel around. Social media offers a solution to this issue by providing an alternative domain where multiple actors can be engaged (UNDPPA & HD, 2019). In support of peace efforts between Israel and Palestine Facebook groups, which included actors from eleven states, were successfully used to facilitate discussions about grievances and reconciliation (Segal & Keduri, 2022). Furthermore, social media offers the opportunity for the inclusion of those who may have been traditionally marginalised from peace processes like women and the youth (UNDPPA & HD, 2019).

Despite these positive opportunities, social media is a double-edged sword. If solely relied upon, data collected from social media for analysis is far from neutral and can lead to skewed conclusions, due to exclusions based on age, gender and location (Hirblinger et al., 2020; SwissPeace & UNDPPA, 2021). Moreover, with increased openness and transparency, the confidentiality of the peace process may be negatively impacted. As peace processes expand into this new domain, they also become more vulnerable to contention and other threats, such as

disinformation (SwissPeace & United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, 2021). There can often also be a disconnect between actors' online behaviour and their offline activity, diminishing the usefulness of social media sourced data (Hirblinger et al., 2020). The best option for social media as a tool for mediation is for it to be integrated into the traditional process of peace mediation and used as a supporting tool to generate a more holistic picture, enable effective communication, and counter threats to peace efforts.

3. Case Studies

i) Mastering the Art of War: Social Media and the Myanmar Conflict

The Tatmadaw (the Burmese military) holds considerable political power in the Southeast Asian state. Having ruled the country since its independence in 1948 (albeit with sporadic breaks in between), the armed coup of February 2021 appears to have cemented its growing influence, shrinking aspirations for a democratic system.[1] It is considered one of the world's longest periods of uninterrupted military rule (Barany, 2016). The Burmese armed forces controlled the state and its institutions by 1962, effectively ruling unopposed for the next fifty years till the National League for Democracy (NLD) came to power in 2015.

Excessive human rights violations and repressive use of violence have characterised the Tatmadaw's prolonged regime. Viewing themselves as the "embodiment of what it means to be truly Burmese" (BBC News, 2022), the military's doctrine is grounded in the idea of a total people's war i.e. fighting for a "just" cause through mass mobilisation in all societal spheres (Myoe, 2009). This involves protecting the land from "outsiders" i.e. ethnic groups that do not deserve to be part of Myanmar as they could threaten the stability, security, and unity of the country.

As a result, the Tatmadaw is known to fund and support far-right Buddhist nationalist organisations like Ma Ba Tha to legitimise their goal of defending Buddhism (USCIRF, 2022). Those who speak out against their regime have been imprisoned—in August 2022, even texts

---

[1] The origin of the Tatmadaw in Myanmar can be traced back to the Burma Independence Army (BIA) which was founded in December 1941. As militias started to join, the BIA slowly expanded, eventually leading to the creation of the Tatmadaw.

offending the religion, whether in print or online, would be punishable by law. Such an imposition has led to a complex, constant, and almost systemic conflict with the Tatmadaw facing resistance from as many as 250 armed ethnic organisations (EAOs) (Selth, 2022).

A major feature of the Tatmadaw's military strategy is the use of digital technology. The military had started liberalising the telecommunications sector by permitting Telenor and Ooredoo—a Norwegian and Qatari telecom company—to set up local firms. Thus, for instance, a sim card which previously cost around $200 when telecoms were still state-owned, dropped to as little as $2 (BBC News, 2018). Further, mobile phones came pre-built with applications like Facebook. As information was provided in Burmese (the local language), Facebook became extremely popular and was leveraged to avail multiple services, from making travel reservations to online shopping (Victoire, 2020). Thus, by 2014, people had easy access to mobile networks and cyberspace in Myanmar (Asher, 2021).

Figure 2: Map of Myanmar

However, liberalisation also came with a cost, particularly with respect to these social media platforms. The Tatmadaw, EAOs, and nationalist organisations started consistently utilising Facebook for surveillance and mobilisation purposes (p. 5). Little digital literacy and experience

made the masses more vulnerable to propaganda and disinformation campaigns. Content, especially by the incumbent government, increasingly targeted the animosity between the Buddhists and the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar. These included incendiary comments, fake accounts, including the creation of a video re-enacting brutal rapes of women that first sparked the violence in Rakhine; the latter was shared 8,000 times and had over 120,000 views before Facebook deleted it (p. 9).

Despite knowledge of their algorithms increasingly featuring such posts, Facebook didn't properly address the issue until after the 2017 Rohingya genocide which led to the deaths of more than 9000 people with over 1 million forced to flee—prompting the United Nations to label it as the world's fastest growing refugee crisis (Jakes, 2022).

Several reasons can be attributed to this. As Facebook employees were not adequately familiar with Burmese, they found it difficult to interpret content contextually. For instance, the word 'kalar' refers to a chickpea but is used as a racial slur in Myanmar. As a result, according to a report published by Amnesty International, Facebook only took action against 2% of the hate speech published on its platform (Guzman, 2022). Similarly, due to minimal digital literacy skills, users found it hard to report material (BBC News, 2018). Even with issues that were flagged, the lack of an official mechanism to address them hindered progress. In the cases where accounts and pages were removed, users were still able to access the platform through alternate accounts, sometimes even under the same name and display (Victoire, 2020).

Even during the 2021 coup, the Tatmadaw suspended telephone lines and television broadcasts, blocking Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram, and Twitter to maintain 'stability' during the takeover. In fact, many people were able to watch the coup live on Facebook—a platform often equated to the internet in Myanmar (Asher, 2021).

The Burmese military also revised its cyber security law, with some comparing its level of digital authoritarianism to China. The 2022 draft seeks to introduce even harsher measures to curb online dissent. For instance, the law criminalises the use of VPNs—it could even be used to prosecute those who teach how to use them. The Tatmadaw also ordered Telenor and Ooredoo to

provide customer data, compelling the former to actually withdraw operations from the country. The telecom firm is now owned by Shwe Byain Phyu, a company with links to the military that has the technology to intercept calls and text messages in real-time (McDermott, 2022).
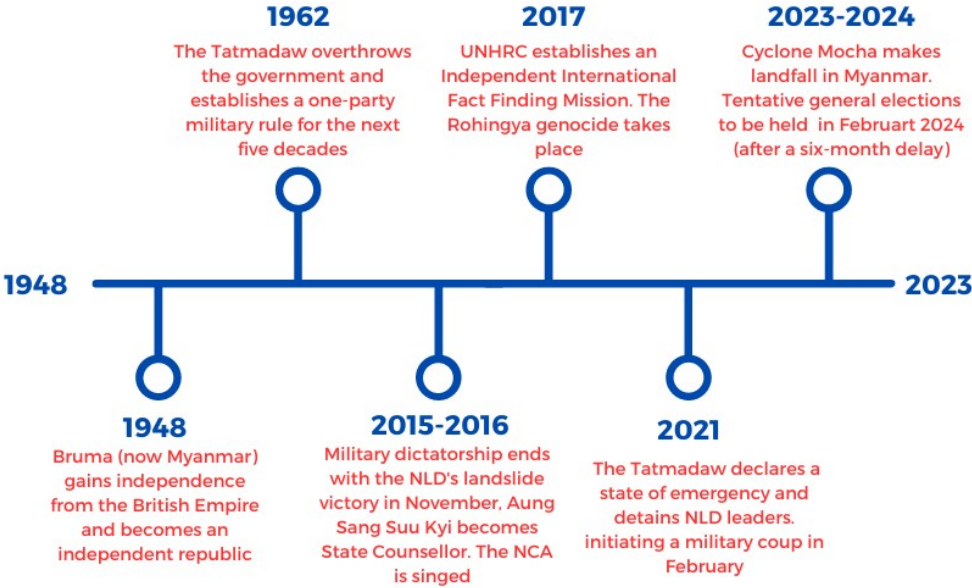
Timeline

1962
The Tatmadaw overthrows the government and establishes a one-party military rule for the next five decades

2017
UNHRC establishes an Independent International Fact Finding Mission. The Rohingya genocide takes place

2023-2024
Cyclone Mocha makes landfall in Myanmar. Tentative general elections to be held in Februart 2024 (after a six-month delay)

1948

2023

1948
Bruma (now Myanmar) gains independence from the British Empire and becomes an independent republic

2015-2016
Military dictatorship ends with the NLD's landslide victory in November, Aung Sang Suu Kyi becomes State Counsellor. The NCA is singed

2021
The Tatmadaw declares a state of emergency and detains NLD leaders. initiating a military coup in February

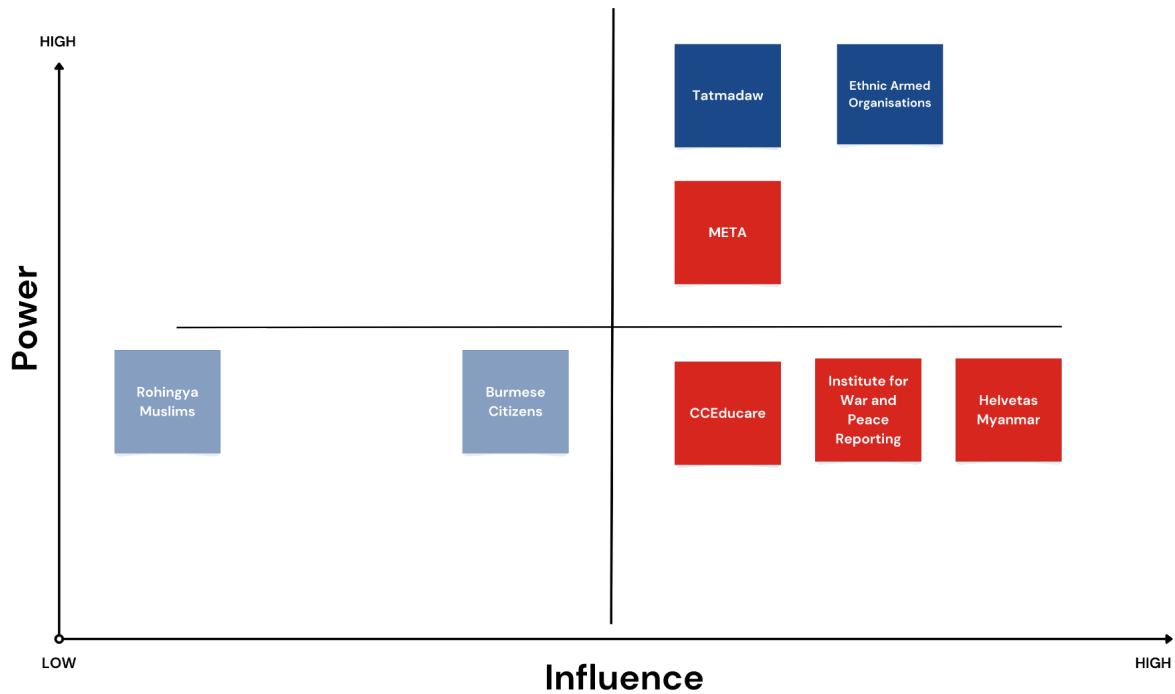*Figure 3: Historical timeline of the conflict in Myanmar*

Figure 4: Myanmar Stakeholder Mapping

ii) Central America (Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador)

Central America has been historically considered a transition region for goods and people between the northern and the southern parts of the Americas. Yet, between the early-1960s and the mid-1990s, two phenomena changed the security landscape of the region—the composition of armed insurgencies and the proliferation of drug trafficking during the 1980s, using Central American countries as midpoints to reach the U.S. drug market. These two parallel issues were especially relevant in the "Northern Triangle" of Central America, composed of Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala (Durán-Martínez, 2017; Kurtenbach, 2010).

Figure 5: Map of Central America highlighting the Northern Triangle countries.

In El Salvador, the government and the guerrilla movement reached a peace agreement in 1992. In Guatemala, a peace agreement was reached in 1996 (Brett, 2013; Bull & Aguilar-Støen, 2019). Yet, during the 1990s the U.S. deported thousands of undocumented nationals from the Northern Triangle who were part of street gangs in Los Angeles. After they arrived in El Salvador, different military and intelligence personnel, and non-demobilized former-guerrilla members joined the gangs and subsequently expanded to Guatemala and Honduras (Martínez d'Aubuisson, 2018; Miguel Cruz, 2010).

Since the 1990s, the region has suffered a degradation in the security landscape, with different belligerent actors involved in multi-crime and illegal economies such as drug trafficking, human trafficking, extortion, and gun smuggling. These groups operate in countries characterised by systemic corruption, weak rule of law, and high levels of inequality and poverty among its population. Central America is currently one of the most violent regions in the world with high levels of wealth inequality. In 2019, El Salvador and Honduras occupied the first two places with the highest murder rate per 100.000 people (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2019).

Moreover, Guatemala and Honduras ranked within the first 20 most unequal countries following the 2022 Gini Index (World Bank Open Data, n.d.).

In the last decade, increasing waves of illegal migration have characterised the humanitarian and security situation in the Northern Triangle. Migrants and asylum seekers from other countries (Haiti, Venezuela, and Colombia, migrants from sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East) have joined efforts through social media platforms to mobilise and embark on a journey from the Northern Triangle to the U.S. (Frank-Vitale, 2023; Torre Cantalapiedra & Mariscal Nava, 2020; Torres-Rivas, 2012). However, they are vulnerable to criminal activity on Facebook and Twitter, where some Transnational Criminal Organisations (TCOs) are actively recruiting new members, extorting, and selling illegal services to cross migrants from Central America to the U.S.-Mexico border (Brewer & Maureen, 2022; Isacson et al., 2023).

The Northern Triangle countries are embedded in a socioeconomic context marked with poverty and inequality reinforced by systemic corruption and the COVID-19 pandemic (Research Specialist, May 2023). Given the lack of rule of law and the strong presence of TCOs, migrants and nationals from the recipient countries are in continuous danger of violence and the likelihood of a humanitarian breakdown is constantly high, like the 2018 Migrant Caravans (Gandini, 2020).

TCOs and drug cartels coming from Mexico hold a strong strategic presence in Guatemala and Honduras, including military units, networks of informants, and infiltrations in security sector institutions, such as police departments and intelligence services (Dalby, 2014; Papadovassilakis, 2022). Consequently, policy measures to counter their activities or engage in mediation processes are unlikely to occur soon.

International actors maintain a permanent presence in Guatemala and Honduras, mostly focused on humanitarian projects that counter the risks associated with mass illegal migration, such as the spread of infections, sexual violence, and extreme hunger in child migrants. International organisations and international NGOs work in cooperation with state agencies as well as local NGOs in border cities. For instance, in Tecun Uman (Guatemala-Mexico border), where most migrants gather before entering Mexico (Research Specialist, May 2023).

The main issue is that non-state armed actors in the three countries are not looking to overthrow the state since they are not motivated by political grievances. Contrarily, they benefit from the weaknesses of state institutions and the rule of law. This creates a challenge to classic approaches to peace mediation and conflict resolution since it is difficult to push these groups to the bargaining table. Yet, social media has been used by governments, civilians, and journalists to challenge the public support that some of these groups hold, cracking their relationship with the civilian population in some of their areas of influence (Journalist, June 2023).

The most documented and controversial example is the "War on Gangs" policy, launched by El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele in March 2022. Under a "state of emergency", Bukele's government began a national plan for detentions without charge for suspect gang members, lowering the prosecution age to twelve years old (International Crisis Group, 2022). More than 60.000 people have been arrested since March 2022 while Bukele's use of social media helped his government to portray an image of control and security for civilians and migrants in transit. On Twitter's official institutional accounts, the government launched promotional videos showing police raids and thousands of alleged gang members imprisoned in record time. The social media campaign benefited from strong public support not only in El Salvador but in the whole region, despite its questionable implementation regarding the protection of Human Rights (Journalist, May 2023). According to Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, the procedures are not clear and the imprisonment conditions do not follow international standards, creating the conditions for vast human rights violations without necessarily solving the gangs' issue in the long-term (Amnesty International, 2023; Pappier, 2022).
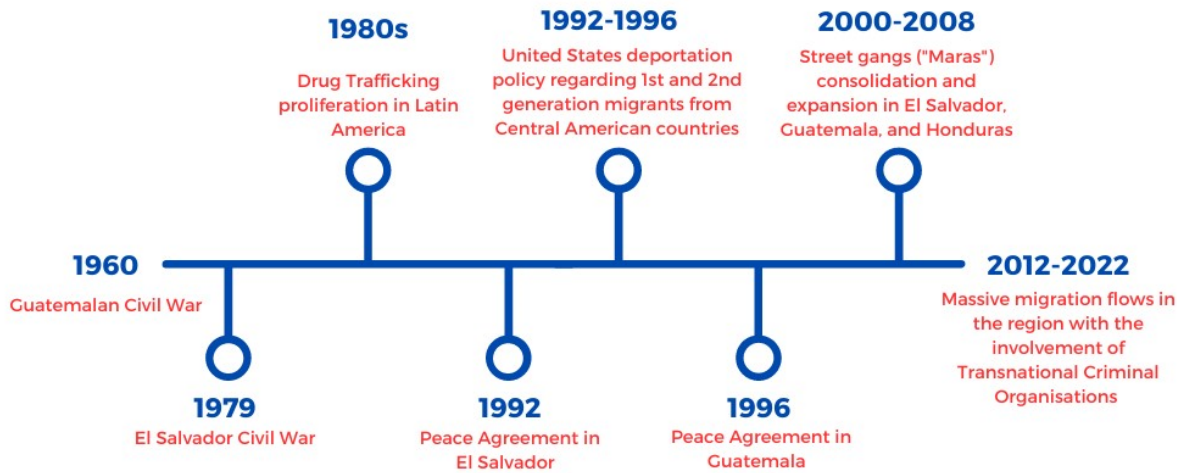
Timeline

1980s

Drug Trafficking proliferation in Latin America

1992-1996

United States deportation policy regarding 1st and 2nd generation migrants from Central American countries

2000-2008

Street gangs ("Maras") consolidation and expansion in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras

1960

Guatemalan Civil War

2012-2022

Massive migration flows in the region with the involvement of Transnational Criminal Organisations

1979

El Salvador Civil War

1992

Peace Agreement in El Salvador

1996

Peace Agreement in Guatemala

Figure 6: Historical timeline of the conflicts in Central America

ACTORS	TERRITORIAL FOCUS	SOICAL MEDIA CAPACITY/USE	ALLIANCES
Guatemalan state	Guatemala	Capacity: High. Use of social media to defend domestic migration policies and confront Mexican local authorities regarding the closing and opening of the border. Use of Twitter accounts to inform migrants regarding emergency camps, documents needed to cross into Mexico, and sanitary emergency measures.	Cooperative relations with the United States. Bilateral migration strategies such as the U.S. Regional Office for Asylum Seekers in Guatemala City. Fluctuating diplomatic relations with Mexico at the national level. Tension over border control.
Honduran state	Honduras	Capacity: Low Use of social media to contest political opposition and promote government policies.	Positive diplomatic relations with El Salvador. Cooperative relations with the United States.
El Salvadorian state	El Salvador	Capacity: High. Use of social media to promote security policies, attack political dissidents (politicians, activists, NGOs, journalists, civil society organisations), and critics from the international community.	Positive diplomatic relations with Honduras.
Mara Salvatrucha 13 (MS13) (Gang)	El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Los Angeles	Capacity: High. Use of social media (Facebook private groups) to threaten state authorities under the "state of emergency" in El Salvador. Use of Facebook and WhatsApp to control civilian population and maintain illegal rent and extorsion systems.	Drug Cartels (*Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generación* and the Gulf Clan) and small street gangs in the region.
Barrio 18 (Gang)	El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Los Angeles	Capacity: Medium. Use of social media to maintain illegal economies and transnational connections. However, its influence decreased with the imprisonment of the maximum leaders.	Drug Cartels (*Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generación*, Fractions of the Sinaloa Cartel, and the Gulf Clan).

Figure 7: Main conflictive actors in the Northern Triangle countries.

iii) Tunisia

Racial discrimination against sub-Saharan migrants and refugees in Tunisia is a complex and longstanding issue rooted in historical, political, social, and economic factors. Tunisia's historical involvement in the Arab slave trade has contributed to a deep-seated history of racism (Geisser, 2023). The period of democratic transition from 2011 to 2021 has catalysed conflicting views on Tunisianness, with both anti-racist and racist sentiments gaining prominence and sparking intense debates (Geisser, 2019). Under the pressure of an economic crisis, Tunisian President Kais Said has resorted to a form of authoritarian identity politics, emphasising the Tunisian identity as White, Arab, and Islamic, and positioning sub-Saharan immigrants as a threat to the Arabic Islamic Umma (Geisser, 2023).

While racial attacks are not new in Tunisia, the president's rhetoric has given civilians a sense of permission to commit acts of racial brutality, including violent assaults, robberies, vandalism,

arbitrary evictions, and terminations of employment (HRW, 2023; Ensari et al., 2023). Despite legislative progress made since 2011, such as the establishment of a new constitution in 2014 guaranteeing the right to political asylum and prohibiting economic exploitation and discrimination against migrants, protection remains largely theoretical and poorly implemented (Geisser, 2019).

Instead of addressing complaints of racial discrimination, security forces in Tunisia engage in racial profiling and arbitrary detention of Black immigrants (Ensari et al., 2023). The Tunisian Nationalist Party, recognized by the state in 2018, has launched a campaign to expel sub-Saharan migrants under the pretext of protecting public order and guarding against a fictional "sub-Saharan colonisation" lacking factual basis (Ben Salah, 2023).

Civil society organisations such as Mnemty and the Tunisian League of Human Rights continue to advocate for the rights of sub-Saharan migrants in response to President Kais Said's rhetoric. However, they face violent attacks on social media, with derogatory comments labelling them as "traitors" to their country (Social Media Analyst, June 2023). President Kais Said condemned these organisations in a video posted on his official Facebook page, accusing them of serving foreign interests and expressing his intention to ban foreign funding for such groups (Présidence Tunisie Ra'asat al-Jumhuriyah al-Tunisiyah, 2023).

The externalisation of migration management policies by France and Italy to Tunisia, coupled with President Said Kais's role as Europe's "guardian of the Mediterranean," has intensified the situation (Social Media Analyst, June 2023). France, Italy, and the IMF have been providing funds to the Tunisian government for migration management during the last decade (Geisser, 2019). However, the recent offer of a $1 billion aid package by the EU, backed by Italy, comes at a critical socio-economic juncture and has the potential to exacerbate the existing violence (Ghiles, 2023).

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, aiming to curb migration flows, seeks to compel Tunisia to accept the IMF's economic reform conditions to unlock a $1.9 billion loan offered by the IMF, —a loan rejected by President Kais for over a year (The Arab Weekly, 2023). However,

implementing these austerity measures proposed by the IMF or providing substantial sums of money through the EU does not offer a long-term solution. Instead, economic cooperation should prioritise lifting Tunisia out of its financial struggles rather than funding a corrupt and ineffective border control system (Development Sector Professional, June 2023).

The tension resulting from the president's speech and the subsequent violence has had a detrimental impact on diplomatic ties between Tunisia and the African Union, which issued a statement condemning the president's remarks (Al Jazeera, 2023). Ivory Coast and Guinea have repatriated their citizens after the violence that followed the president's speech (African News, 2023). Furthermore, civil society organisations in Western African countries have called for a boycott of Tunisian products as a symbolic move to protest (Ornella Modern, 2023).

Social media has played a crucial role in influencing the conflict dynamics. Facebook continues to serve as the primary source of information and platform for discussion (Security Studies Academic Researcher, May 2023). Therefore, it is not surprising that the President's official Facebook page is highly active (Présidence Tunisie Ra'asat al-Jumhuriyah al-Tunisiyah, n.d.). While Facebook played a crucial role in the 2011 uprising and Tunisia's path toward democracy, it also contributes to populist opinions regarding economic and social issues, sometimes in an unfavourable manner (Social Media Analyst, June 2023).

The comments section of the President's xenophobic speech on social media illustrates a divisive public debate between racist and anti-racist sentiments, with only a few comments expressing shame and solidarity with sub-Saharan immigrants, emphasising Tunisia's African identity (Geisser, 2023). An interviewee studying the viewership of this speech found that most viewers only watch the first thirty seconds, indicating a lack of political analysis and a search for reinforcing preexisting racist attitudes without critical reflection (Social Media Analyst, June 2023). Moreover, the Tunisian public is sensitive to European migration management strategies, exemplified by a popular meme comparing President Kais Said to a renowned Tunisian goalkeeper, emphasising his role as the "guardian of the Mediterranean" for European states (Social Media Analyst, June 2023).

Fact-checking on Facebook is challenging due to the complexity of Tunisian dialect, making it difficult to effectively detect hate speech and remove related posts and comments through algorithms (Social Media Analyst, June 2023). As a counter-narrative approach, the suggestion is to focus on producing a large volume of accurate representations of the situation faced by sub-Saharan migrants in Tunisia, prioritising quantity over publication quality (Social Media Analyst, June 2023).
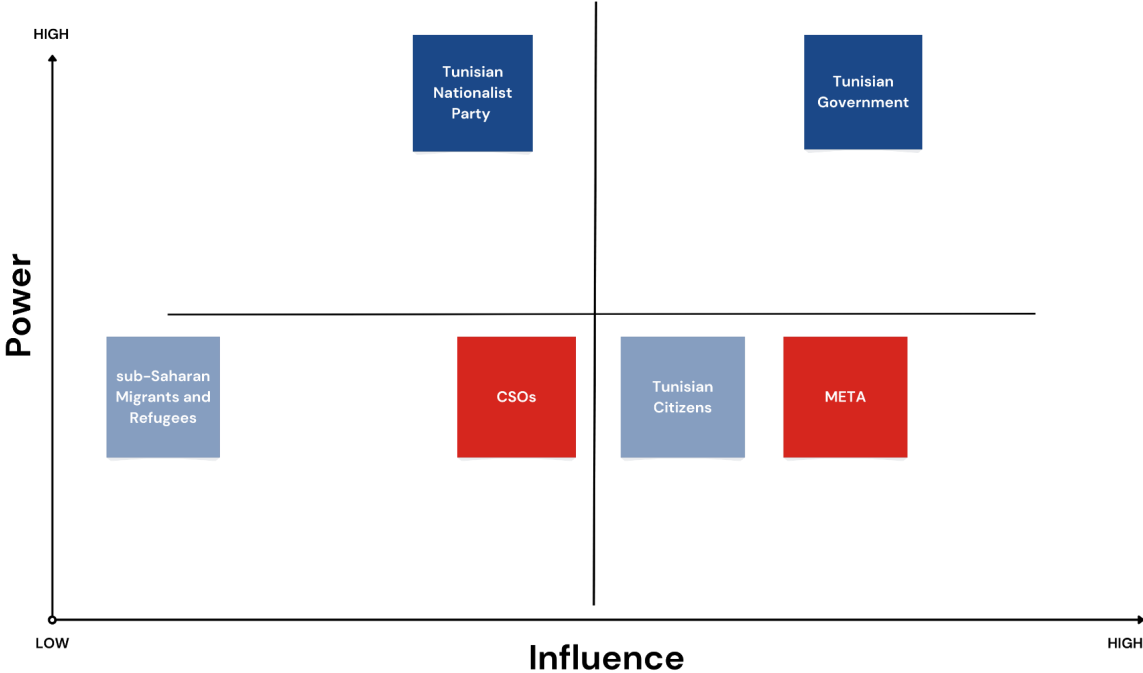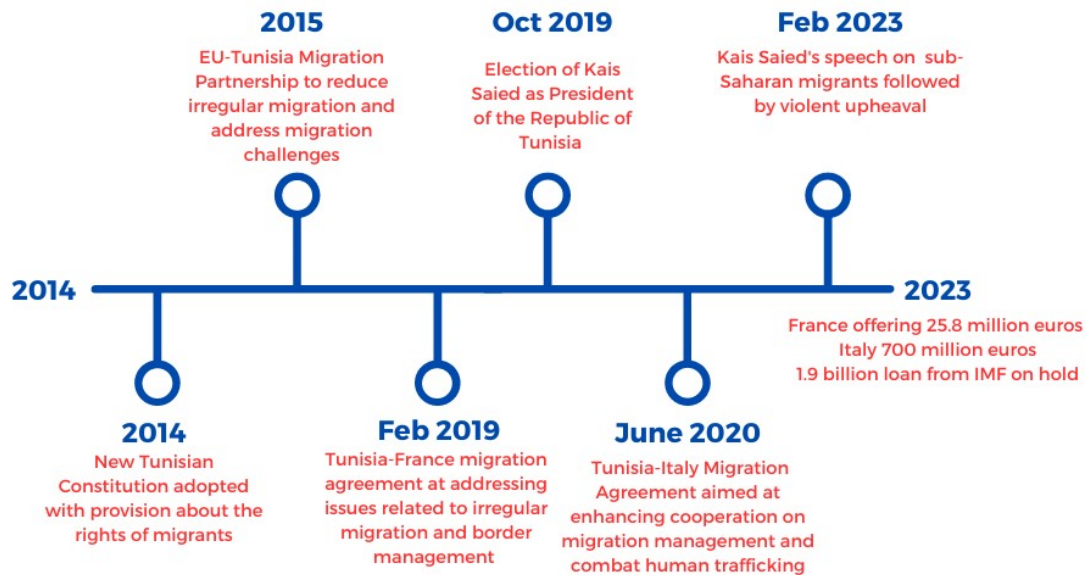

Figure 8: Tunisia Stakeholder Mapping

Figure 9: Timeline of the migration issue in Tunisia since 2014.

4. Assessment of Findings

i) Myanmar

Despite taking steps to tackle hate speech, social media continues to instigate violence in Myanmar. Its unprecedented micro-targeting and macro-outreach capabilities, when combined with low economic costs and real-time output, makes it a powerful tool in conflict-affected areas. The dissemination of information capitalises on the affective dimensions of grievances, converting emotions into violent behavioural responses.

One form of cyber abuse translating into physical violence is doxxing i.e. publicising people's private information (like their contact details). A study involving 1.6 million Telegram posts in Myanmar highlighted how women were targeted for supporting anti-military groups on social media, with almost 1/3rd calling for their punishment in the real-world (Al Jazeera, 2023). However, this analysis is based only on publicly accessible posts—not private ones.

In August 2022, the Tatmadaw announced that they were working towards eliminating Facebook from the country and replacing it with a military-run platform (McDermott, 2022). Like their Chinese counterparts, they can closely surveil online activity, including identifying those using VPNs and their locations. As a result, fears of another ethnic cleansing have surfaced—especially perpetuated by social media. With over 400,000 people internally displaced (a majority of whom reside in Rakhine) and 32,000 having crossed the Thai and Indian border since the coup, there is an urgent need to address the conflict (Griffith & Torelli, 2022).

For a durable and sustainable politico-security framework, the Tatmadaw, the government, and the EAOs will have to be seated at the same table to develop a common vision for the country's future—particularly with respect to the Rohingya Muslims. Unfortunately, in the wake of the 2021 coup, prospects for such a national peace process (like the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement of 2015) are slim, given the blatant antagonism between each party. The Tatmadaw's reluctance to give up power is evident with the postponement of the general elections by six months—the military was legally bound to hold it in February 2023 (France-Presse, 2023).

Furthermore, as a member of ASEAN, Myanmar adheres to the principles of sovereignty and non-interference. As a result, there has been no official third party mediation in the country, though several reconciliatory efforts have been undertaken, particularly by the UN. A lack of trust surrounding international actors is another reason behind this decision.

At this stage of the conflict—given that it has not yet reached the state of a mutually hurting stalemate—it is more useful to think about a decentralised process of conflict resolution with locals in the driver's seat.

Dr. Julia Palmiano Federer, a former consultant for Swisspeace, highlighted how social media became a platform through which to mobilise in Myanmar. It went from being shut down from communication into a hyper-communicative society extremely reliant on the internet. A practitioner and a scholar focusing on the role of nongovernmental mediators in Myanmar (including track 1.5 and 2 negotiations), Federer shared how messaging groups became forums for dialogue, a whatsapp diplomacy of sorts.

Similarly, Rachel Gasser, a senior advisor at the Berghof Foundation who has worked with the UN Special Envoy on Myanmar and Swisspeace (she set up Myanmar program), highlighted the need for multiple tables of conflict resolution. Given the lack of a united front against the Tatmadaw (though relatively more cohesive than before the coup), Gasser claimed that it is currently not possible to facilitate negotiations with all conflict actors. Having WORKED with EAOs, the Tatmadaw, and CSOs, the more likely scenario is one of parallel interventions with multiple agendas for peace.

Digital peacebuilding is one avenue that GCSP can leverage, particularly with respect to digital literacy and capacity building amongst civil society in Myanmar. Social media platforms can be extremely useful in getting voices otherwise not heard when compared with the exclusive and often elite peace negotiations in the country. Further, as indicated by Gasser, there is a generational gap between members of the Tatmadaw, especially regarding their preferred medium of action i.e. cyber versus armed warfare.

The applicability of social media can be personalised according to user objectives. For instance, while Cyclone Mocha temporarily diverted attention from the conflict, social media platforms were still being leveraged to "score political points" (Theresa, 2023). Addressing this gap—especially by targeting the younger Burnese generation—could be beneficial.

The following points discuss how GCSP can adopt a mobile-centric social media literacy approach to address the conflict.

i) Digital Literacy

GCSP can conduct digital literacy programs and equip citizens with the technical skills i.e., understanding algorithms, misinformation, and disinformation, customising feeds, blocking content, and strengthening privacy. The objective is to digitally empower people to navigate platforms safely and securely.

In rural Myanmar, for instance, mobile sellers set up Facebook accounts for people as they don't know how to create them. A study conducted by Myanmar ICT for Development Organisation (MIDO) found how content was sent via Bluetooth without the user knowing where it came from (Einzenberger, 2016). Facebook newsfeeds are also printed and sold as newspapers, blurring the lines between fiction and fact.

Moreover, the Tatmadaw were among the first to adopt Facebook as a communication platform. In fact, they launched a course on social media as a part of the Defense Service Academy Information Warfare, even creating specialised social media units (with over 700 officers) to monitor and produce content (Victoire, 2020). Armed organisations like the Ma Ba Tha are also known to provide Facebook training.

ii) Partnerships to Leverage Local Expertise

Interventions by GCSP must be guided by consultations with the communities on ground—local experts, IDPs, CBOs, academic scholars, and citizens from all ethnicities.

CCEducare: Edtech companies have started focusing on digital education in Myanmar, with CCEducare's work recognised by the US Mission to ASEAN. They have built a network of 51 organisations across Myanmar and the ASEAN region.

Helvetas Myanmar: Based in Switzerland, Helvetas tackles global challenges from governance to gender equity. In Myanmar, Helevatas has a project on education and vocational skills. GCSP could introduce digital literacy as a part of this.

META: Given the primacy of Facebook in Myanmar, it would be beneficial to collaborate with the local office to gain first-hand exposure to the conflict.

Institute for War and Peace Reporting: IWPR works towards providing credible sources of information and strengthening local digital capacities in conflict-affected areas, especially where hate speech and disinformation are rampant.

iii) Internal Capacity Building

To better understand the applicabilities of social media in conflict settings, GCSP can expand their current network to include experts in the field.

iv) Challenges and Risks

The major challenge is access. The situation in Myanmar is precarious, and given its history of no third-party mediation, initiating conflict resolution mechanisms is difficult. Though, Gasser indicated that the Tatmadaw are opposed to international interventions, while EAOs seem open to negotiation with mediators leaving scope for dialogue. Further, the Burmese military is known to crack down on CSOs that deal with political issues more than those that are service-oriented. Thus, GCSP would have to creatively manoeuvre its way. Finally, while Myanmar has increased the use of digital technology to build a "closed digital environment" (Gordon, 2021), it still falls far behind countries like China and Israel which could be a chink in its armour.

ii) Central America

At the current stage of the conflict, it is difficult to engage in traditional bilateral or multilateral mediation processes due to the constant mutation of conflictive actors as well as the degree of violent engagement. The main obstacle is that the three countries—Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador—face TCOs that do not seek to overthrow the state, rather, they benefit from the weaknesses of state institutions and systemic corruption. Hence, non-traditional mediation strategies will be needed once the opportunity window for mediation opens.

The proliferating use of social media and the complex international context directly impacts the security landscape and migration flows in the region (Journalist, June 2023). The situation must

be comprehended with a holistic and regional approach since political shifts in one country directly impacts the other two. In February 2023, the foreign ministers of Mexico and Norway in companionship with HD organised the first Oslo Forum conference in Latin America, gathering international and local experts to discuss the security challenges in the hemisphere including the issue of the Northern Triangle (HD, 2023). Yet, currently, there are no active mediation processes led by international organisations in the region. Talks between TCOs and international actors are limited to humanitarian reliefs and mobility permits in contested areas (Policy Advisor, June 2023).

The volatile political situation signifies a major challenge for diplomatic efforts to establish the conditions for a plausible mediation process. El Salvador's government is reluctant to any international actors, especially if it is coming from the U.S. or Europe. Bukele's administration has rejected the previous work of international organisations in the country. Under its "War on Gangs" policy, the government directly criticised multilateral efforts, including the United Nations (International Crisis Group, 2022).

Guatemala holds a positive relationship with El Salvador and the Biden administration. As Elizabeth Kennedy from the Washington Office on Latin America highlighted, they play a pivotal role between the U.S. and the Northern Triangle countries regarding migration and security policies. Yet, Guatemala is under a polarised electoral process where different forces have aimed to dismiss the electoral results of the first round of the presidential elections (The Guardian, 2023). The aftermath of the electoral process will influence the security landscape as well as the relationship between Guatemala's government and Washington.

Honduras is implementing a similar security approach as El Salvador. Looking to improve popularity rates and security perception among the population, the government announced a "state of emergency" giving more faculties to the executive power and security forces (Journalist, May 2023).

GCSP can closely monitor the political and security trends in the region, which are likely to change in the mid-term. It is not clear that the security measures adopted by El Salvador and Honduras will improve the security situation in the long term. Contrarily, after mass incarceration and plausible human rights violations, political tension between parties in dispute

and between citizens and the government, will require a mediation process. While it is difficult to find entry points due to the volatile political situation in Guatemala, and the reluctance toward western international actors in El Salvador and Honduras, the situation can rapidly change. It can open a window of opportunity for GCSP as an independent organisation without a previous record of mediating conflicts in the region. GCSP can leverage its position of not being previously involved by bringing expertise from other conflict settings. Before engaging in any diplomatic or mediation effort, social media monitoring and digital peacebuilding campaigns with actors on the ground can be a first print step in Central America until the electoral and political situation further develops.

iii) Tunisia

In general, there appears to be an appetite for diplomatic dialogue and mediation with regards to the conflict.[2] The Tunisian president himself expressed the need for international dialogue (Al-Arabiya News, 2023). Moreover, the deals offered by the EU and European states demonstrate that they are urgently looking to resolve the issue of immigration, which by extension, means they need to resolve the issue of racism against sub-Saharan immigrants in Tunisia as it is exacerbating the level of migration (Security Studies Academic Researcher, May 2023). Existing mediation efforts such as the Rabat process (Euro-African Dialogue on Migration and Development)—a political framework and intergovernmental process aimed at facilitating dialogue regarding migration issues between European and African countries—is lacking implementation and follow-up, including, failing to be inclusive of non-governmental actors (Development Sector Professional, June 2023). Similarly, bilateral talks also suffer from this issue and have a security-oriented approach that fails to address the root cause of the violence (Security Studies Academic Researcher, May 2023).

i) Diffusing Tensions: A Short-Term Strategy

Collaborating with CSOs, GCSP can devise a short-term strategy to reshape the population's narrative online through supporting the production of a large quantity of posts to counteract the

---

[2] This assessment needs further exploration as those who were interviewed are not directly involved in bilateral talks or governmental conflict parties.

misinformation about sub-Saharan refugees and migrants. Furthermore, GCSP can engage with the Tunisian diaspora who have expertise in the local dialect.

ii) Advising Governmental Stakeholders: A Long-Term Strategy

GCSP can utilise local knowledge to discern key developments in the population's narrative about sub-Saharan immigrants. By conducting in-depth analyses of social media conversations, sentiment trends, and stakeholder networks, GCSP can provide valuable insights into the underlying causes of the conflict and its impact on migration instability.

These analyses can inform GCSP's advice to governmental stakeholders on a long-term strategy to counter violence and address the root causes. By shifting the perspective from a security narrative to a humanitarian one, GCSP can contribute to a more inclusive and constructive dialogue between European states and Tunisia.

iii) Mediators Training on Strategic Communication Through Social Media

Given the sensitivity of the Tunisian public to foreign involvement, GCSP can play a vital role in providing mediators with training on strategic communication in the context of social media. Mediators, as key actors in peace processes, can benefit from acquiring the skills and knowledge necessary to understand how to communicate their aims effectively on social media to garner support from the Tunisian population and limit distrust.

iv) Strategic Partnerships

Tunisian Diaspora for Democracy and Human Rights (TDDHR): TDDHR is a Tunisian diaspora organisation dedicated to promoting democracy and human rights in Tunisia. They can be useful to GCSP by providing expertise in the local dialect, and firsthand accounts, helping to create authentic and resonant content.

Tunisian League of Human Rights (CSO): It is a prominent civil society organisation advocating for human rights in Tunisia. Their partnership can be valuable for GCSP in developing content that challenges stereotypes, promotes inclusivity, and highlights the shared values of Tunisian society.

Mourakiboun (CSO): It focuses on democratic processes and electoral monitoring. Their expertise can be useful to GCSP in analysing social media conversations, stakeholder networks, and public sentiment trends, providing insights for long-term strategy development.

European Union: The EU is actively involved in the migration conflict between Europe and Tunisia. GCSP could be the link between the local expertise and the EU to create joint initiatives to address the root causes of the conflict.

European External Action Service (EEAS): GCSP's existing relationship with the EEAS—a diplomatic service—can be leveraged to collaborate on initiatives related to strategic communication, conflict prevention, and migration management, ensuring coordination between European actors and Tunisian stakeholders.

Democratic Reporting International (Tunisia Division): It is an organisation dedicated to promoting democratic processes and human rights. Their Tunisia division can be a valuable partner for GCSP in analysing media landscapes, monitoring disinformation, and supporting the training of mediators on strategic communication in the context of social media.

Due to increasing crackdowns on CSOs with foreign involvement by civilians and the Tunisian government, collaboration with such organisations needs to be delicate and confidential. Furthermore, GCSP needs to navigate the delicate task of balancing support from the Tunisian government while avoiding the risk of inadvertently bolstering an increasingly autocratic regime. This requires a nuanced approach that involves engaging with various stakeholders, including civil society organisations, grassroots movements, and the Tunisian public as a whole.

Conclusion

The examination of three case studies—Tunisia, Central America, and Myanmar—reveals the intricate relationship between social media, conflict dynamics, and the potential for mediation efforts. In each context, social media has emerged as a powerful force that shapes public opinion, fuels divisive sentiments, and contributes to the escalation of violence. However, it also presents opportunities for leveraging its influence to facilitate peacebuilding and mediation processes.

Across the case studies, common themes emerge regarding the role of social media in conflict. Firstly, social media platforms, particularly Facebook, have become primary sources of information for the population, enabling the dissemination of narratives that amplify existing grievances and incite violence. The reach and accessibility of social media, coupled with its ability to evoke emotions, have transformed it into a catalyst for mobilisation and the conversion of affective dimensions of grievances into violent behaviours.

Secondly, the findings highlight the need for tailored and context-specific approaches to social media and mediation. The unique characteristics of each case study, such as the political landscape, regional dynamics, and existing power structures, necessitate nuanced strategies. It is crucial to adapt mediation processes to the local context, involve local actors, and leverage their expertise in navigating social media landscapes effectively.

Thirdly, the intersections between the case studies demonstrate the importance of adopting a holistic and regional approach to understanding the impact of social media on conflict and mediation. The influence of social media extends beyond national boundaries, with political shifts in one country directly impacting others. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of regional dynamics and diplomatic efforts is essential for addressing the complex challenges associated with social media and conflict resolution.

In conclusion, the findings emphasise the need for a multidimensional approach that combines digital peacebuilding, social media analysis, and strategic communication in mediation processes. By collaborating with civil society organisations, leveraging local expertise, and building digital literacy, organisations like GCSP can play a significant role in reshaping narratives, countering hate speech, and fostering inclusive dialogue. While social media poses challenges, it also presents opportunities for innovative and context-specific mediation strategies, ultimately contributing to sustainable peace and conflict resolution.

5.   REFERENCES

AfricaNews. (2023, March 2). Ivory Coast, Guinea to fly back citizens in Tunisia after outcry. Africanews. https://www.africanews.com/2023/03/02/ivory-coast-guinea-to-fly-back-citizens-in-tunisia-after-outcry//

Al Arabiya. (2023, June 7). Italy's Meloni pledges Tunisia $750 mln aid, support for crucial IMF bailout. Al Arabiya English. https://english.alarabiya.net/News/north-africa/2023/06/07/Italy-s-Meloni-pledges-Tunisia-750-mln-aid-support-for-crucial-IMF-bailout

Al Jazeera. (2023, February 25). African Union condemns Tunisia's "hate speech" against migrants. Racism News | Al Jazeera. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/2/25/african-union-condemns-tunisias-hate-speech-against-migrants

Al Jazeera. (2023, January 26). Myanmar women target of online abuse by pro-military social media. Al Jazeera. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/1/26/myanmar-women-target-of-online-abuse-by-pro-military-social-media

Amnesty International. (2023). *Amnesty International Report 2022/2023*. Amnesty International. https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/americas/central-america-and-the-caribbean/el-salvador/report-el-salvador/

Andreas Hirbliger (Senior Researcher), Interview, Online, Based in Geneva, Switzerland, 18th May 2023.

Asher, B. S. (2021, February 4). Myanmar coup: How Facebook became the "digital tea shop." BBC News. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-55929654

Barany, Z. (2016). Armed Forces and Democratization in Myanmar: Why the U.S. Military Should Engage the Tatmadaw. In Centre for Strategic and International Studies. https://www.csis.org/analysis/armed-forces-and-democratization-myanmar-why-us-military-

should-engage-tatmadaw

BBC News. (2018, September 12). The country where Facebook posts whipped up hate. BBC News. https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-45449938

BBC News. (2022, February 2). Tatmadaw: Myanmar's notoriously brutal military. BBC News. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-56660483

Ben Salah , N. (2023, March 4). Tunisian Nationalist Party: Government-authorized racism. Nawaat. https://nawaat.org/2023/03/04/tunisian-nationalist-party-government-authorized-racism/

Boomgaarden, H. G., & Vliegenthart, R. (2007). Explaining the rise of anti-immigrant parties: The role of news media content. *Electoral Studies*, 26(2), 404–417. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2006.10.018

Brett, R. (2013). Peace stillborn? Guatemala's liberal peace and the indigenous movement. *Peacebuilding*, 1(2), 222–238. https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2013.783255

Brewer, S., & Maureen, M. (2022). *Struggling to Survive: Plight of Asylum Seekers at Mexico's Southern Border Highlights Need for Regional Action*. Washington Office on Latin America.

Bull, B., & Aguilar-Støen, M. (2019). Peace-building and business elites in Guatemala and El Salvador: Explaining the discursive 'institutional turn.' *Conflict, Security & Development*, 19(1), 121–141. https://doi.org/10.1080/14678802.2019.1561635

Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue. (2023, April 4). *Impulsar la mediación e iniciativas de paz: El primer retiro de Oslo Forum en Latinoamérica y el Caribe*. HD Centre. https://hdcentre.org/news/impulsar-la-mediacion-e-iniciativas-de-paz-el-primer-retiro-de-oslo-forum-en-latinoamerica-y-el-caribe/

Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue. (2021, November 30). *A social media analysis toolkit for mediators and peacebuilders*. HD. https://hdcentre.org/insights/social-media-analysis-toolkit/

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing Grounded Theory*. SAGE Publications.

Claudia Morales (Migrant), Interview, Online, Based in Mexico, 16th May 2023.

Dahmani, F. (2023, March 2). En tunisie, Le Quotidien de plus en plus dur des subsahariens – jeune afrique. JeuneAfrique.com. https://www.jeuneafrique.com/1422937/politique/en-tunisie-le-quotidien-de-plus-en-plus-dur-des-subsahariens/

Dalby, S. (2014). Rethinking Geopolitics: Climate Security in the Anthropocene. *Global Policy*, 5(1), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1111/1758-5899.12074M

Datts, M. (2020). Social Media, Populism, and Migration. *Media and Communication*, 8(4), 73–83.

Development Sector Professional, Interview, Online, Based in Tunisia, 16th June 2023.

Durán-Martínez, A. (2017). Drug Trafficking and Drug Policies in the Americas: Change, Continuity, and Challenges. *Latin American Politics and Society*, 59(2), 145–153.

Einzenberger, R. (2016). "If it's on the Internet it must be right": An interview on the use of Internet and social media in Myanmar with Myanmar ICT for Development Organisation. ASEAS – *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, 9(2), 301-310

Ekman, M. (2019). Anti-immigration and racist discourse in social media. *European Journal of Communication*, 34(6), 606–618. https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323119886151

El Faro Journalist, Interview, Online, Based in Guatemala City, Guatemala, 10th June, 2023.

Elizabeth Kennedy (Specialist Researcher WOLA), Interview, Online, Based in Guatemala City, Guatemala, 31st May 2023.

Emma Baumhofer (Digital Peacebuilidng Expert for SwissPeace), Interview, Online, Based in Geneva, Switzerland, 1st June 2023.

Ensari, P., Kasavan, C. and Thenot, E. (2023) Migration-relevant policies in Tunisia. MIGNEX Background Paper (v2). Oslo: Peace Research Institute Oslo. Available at www.mignex.org/tun

Epstein, B. (2020). Why It Is So Difficult to Regulate Disinformation Online. In S. Livingston & W. L. Bennett (Eds.), The Disinformation Age (pp. 190–210). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108914628.008

France-Presse, A. (2023, February 2). Myanmar junta extends state of emergency, delaying promised elections. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/feb/02/myanmar-junta-extends-state-of-emergency-delaying-promised-elections

Frank-Vitale, A. (2023). Coyotes, caravans, and the Central American migrant smuggling continuum. *Trends in Organized Crime*, 26(1), 64–79. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12117-022-09480-z

Gandini, L. (2020). Caravanas migrantes: De respuestas institucionales diferenciadas a la reorientación de la política migratoria. *REMHU: Revista Interdisciplinar da Mobilidade Humana*, 28(60), 51–69. https://doi.org/10.1590/1980-85852503880006004

Gasser, Rachel, Interview, Online, Based in Geneva, Switzerland, 26th May 2023.

Geisser, V. (2019). Tunisie, des migrants subsahariens toujours exclus du rêve démocratique. *Migrations Société*, N°177(3). https://doi.org/10.3917/migra.177.0003

Geisser, V. (2023). Tunisie, « la chasse aux migrants subsahariens est ouverte ». *Migrations Société*, N° 191(1), 7–20. https://doi.org/10.3917/migra.191.0007

Ghiles, F. (2023, June). Relations between Europe and Tunisia turn into a game of Liar's poker. CIDOB. https://www.cidob.org/en/publications/publication_series/opinion/2023/relations_between_europe_and_tunisia_turn_into_a_game_of_liar_s_poker

Gordon, S. (2021, October 19). Using Technology to Preserve Military Loyalty: The Tatmadaw in Myanmar - Issues on the Frontlines of Technology and Politics. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Griffith, E., & Torelli, C. (2022). Myanmar Conflict Briefing. In Action on Armed Violence. https://aoav.org.uk/2022/myanmar-briefing-report/

Guzman, C. (2022, September 29). Meta's Facebook Algorithms 'Proactively' Promoted Violence Against the Rohingya, New Amnesty International Report Asserts. Time. https://time.com/6217730/myanmar-meta-rohingya-facebook/

Hedling, E. (2021). Transforming practices of diplomacy: The European External Action Service and digital disinformation. *International Affairs*, 97(3), 841–859. https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiab035

Hirblinger, A. T., Morrison, M., & Larrauri, H. P. (2020). Digital Analysis: Peacemaking Potential and Promise. Accord, 29.

HRW. (2023, March 10). Tunisia: Racist violence targets black migrants, refugees. Human Rights Watch. https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/03/10/tunisia-racist-violence-targets-black-migrants-refuges

International Crisis Group. (2022). *A Remedy for El Salvador's Prison Fever* (No. 96; Latin America and Caribbean). International Crisis Group. https://www.crisisgroup.org/latin-america-caribbean/central-america/el-salvador/96-remedy-el-salvadors-prison-fever

International Organization for Migration. (2022). *Migration Governance Indicators Second Profile 2022* – Republic of Guatemala. International Organization for Migration.

International Organization for Migration. (2023). *Migration Trends in the Americas*. International Organization for Migration. https://rosanjose.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl1446/files/documents/2023-03/Migration%20Trends%20in%20the%20Americas%20EN%20Feb%202023%20%281%29.pdf

Isacson, A., Verduzco, A. L., & Maureen, M. (2023). *Halfway to the U.S.: A Report from Honduras on Migration*. Washington Office on Latin America. https://www.wola.org/analysis/halfway-to-us-report-honduras-migration/

Jakes, L. (2022, March 21). Myanmar's Military Committed Genocide Against Rohingya, U.S. Says. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/21/us/politics/myanmar-genocide-biden.html

Kurtenbach, S. (2010). Why is Liberal Peacebuilding so Difficult? Some Lessons from Central America. *Revista Europea de Estudios Latinoamericanos y Del Caribe / European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, 88, 95–110.

La Nueva Prensa Journalist, Interview, Online, Based in Guatemala City, Guatemala, 22nd May 2023.

Martínez d'Aubuisson, J. J. (2018). La transformation des maras salvadoriennes. Construire le pouvoir depuis ses marges. *Cultures & conflits*, 110–111, 141–156. https://doi.org/10.4000/conflits.20357

McDermott, G. (2022, October 21). Myanmar Is the Leading Edge of Digital Authoritarianism in Southeast Asia. The Diplomat. https://thediplomat.com/2022/10/myanmar-is-the-leading-edge-of-digital-authoritarianism-in-southeast-asia/

Miguel Cruz, J. (2010). Central American *maras*: From youth street gangs to transnational protection rackets. *Global Crime*, 11(4), 379–398. https://doi.org/10.1080/17440572.2010.519518

Müller, K., & Schwarz, C. (2020). From Hashtag to Hate Crime: Twitter and Anti-Minority Sentiment (SSRN Scholarly Paper No. 3149103). https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3149103

Myoe, M. A. (2009). Building the Tatmadaw: Myanmar Armed Forces Since 1948. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Palmiano Federer, Julia, Interview, In-Person, Based in Geneva, Switzerland, 4th May 2023.

Papadovassilakis, A. (2022, May 18). The Jalisco Cartel's Quiet Expansion in Guatemala. *InSight Crime.*

Pappier, J. (2022). *"We Can Arrest Anyone We Want."* Human Rights Watch. https://www.hrw.org/report/2022/12/07/we-can-arrest-anyone-we-want/widespread-human-rights-violations-under-el

Pathak, J. (2014). Role of social media in reference to North-East ethnic violence (2012).

International Organization of Scientific Research Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS), 19, 59–66. https://doi.org/10.9790/0837-19455966

Policy Advisor, Interview, Online, Based in the United States, 16th June 2023.

Présidence Tunisie رئاسة الجمهورية التونسية (n.d.). Facebook. Retrieved June 20, 2023, from https://www.facebook.com/Presidence.tn

إشراف رئيس الجمهورية قيس سعيد على اجتماع ,(2023, March, 09)a,رئاسة الجمهورية التونسية Présidence Tunisie مجلس الوزراء, Facebook, https://www.facebook.com/Presidence.tn/videos/1372028020280877

Schleffer, G. (2021, July 1). The Political Effects of Social Media Platforms on Different Regime Types. Texas National Security Review. https://tnsr.org/2021/07/the-political-effects-of-social-media-platforms-on-different-regime-types/

Security Studies Academic Researcher, Interview, Online, Based in Geneva, Switzerland, 22nd May 2023.

Segal, A., & Keduri, Y. (2022). Going Hybrid: Using Facebook Groups for People-to-People Dialogue. In J. K. Jameson & M. F. Hannah (Eds.), Contemporary Trends in Conflict and Communication, Technology and Social Media. De Gruyter.

Selth, A. (2022, February 17). Myanmar's Military Numbers. Lowy Institute. https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/myanmar-s-military-numbers

Simonsen, K. B. (2021). The Democratic Consequences of Anti-immigrant Political Rhetoric: A Mixed Methods Study of Immigrants' Political Belonging. *Political Behavior*, 43(1), 143–174. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-019-09549-6

Social Media Analyst, Interview, Online, Based in Tunisia, 22nd June, 2023

SwissPeace, & United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. (2021). *Social Media in Peace Mediation: A Practical Framework*. United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. https://reliefweb.int/report/world/social-media-peace-mediation-practical-framework

The Arab Weekly. (2023, June 6). Italian PM hopes trip to Tunisia may unblock IMF loan, stem illegal migration:. AW. https://thearabweekly.com/italian-pm-hopes-trip-tunisia-may-unblock-imf-loan-stem-illegal-migration

The Guardian. (2023, July 3). US warns against efforts to interfere with Guatemala election result. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jul/03/us-warning-guatemala-election-result

Theresa, N. (2023, June 15). Cyclone Mocha in Myanmar: Mayhem and Maneuvering. The Diplomat. https://thediplomat.com/2023/06/cyclone-mocha-in-myanmar-mayhem-and-maneuvering/

Thistoll, T., Hooper, V., & Pauleen, D. J. (2016). Acquiring and developing theoretical sensitivity through undertaking a grounded preliminary literature review. *Quality & Quantity*, *50*(2), 619–636. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-015-0167-3

Torre Cantalapiedra, E., & Mariscal Nava, D. M. (2020). Batallando con fronteras: Estrategias migratorias en tránsito de participantes en caravanas de migrantes. *Estudios Fronterizos*, 21. https://doi.org/10.21670/ref.2005047

United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs & Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue. (2019). *Digital Technologies and Mediation in Armed Conflict*. United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2019). *Global Study on Homicide* (Policy Analysis and Public Affairs). United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/gsh/Booklet1.pdf

USCIRF. (2022). Policy Update: Burman. In United States Commission on International Religious Freedom. https://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/2022-12/2022%20Burma%20Policy%20Update_0.pdf

Valenzuela, S., Piña, M., & Ramírez, J. (2017). Behavioral Effects of Framing on Social Media

Users: How Conflict, Economic, Human Interest, and Morality Frames Drive News Sharing. *Journal of Communication*, 67(5), 803–826. https://doi.org/10.1111/jcom.12325

Victoire, R. (2020). *The Role of Social Media in Fomenting Violence: Myanmar*. Toda Peace Institute. https://toda.org/assets/files/resources/policy-briefs/t-pb-78_victoire-rio_role-of-social-media -in-fomenting-violence-myanmar.pdf

World Bank Open Data. (n.d.). Gini Index 2022. World Bank. https://data.worldbank.org