

Rethinking U.S. Strategy in Iraq

By Michael Shank, Adjunct Faculty at S-CAR, Director for Foreign Policy at the Friends Committee on National Legislation, michael.john.shank@gmail.com

Iraq continues to pose a conundrum for the international community. Many in the West feel that Iraq is perpetually ungovernable and that its quagmire finds root cause in something inherent to Iraqi culture or sectarianism. What the West fails to realize is that military interventionism has done more to divide this country than anything innate. What must be realized, if Iraq is ever going to be stable, is that the West's interventions in Iraq are the primary problem.

Whether it was President George W. Bush or Barack Obama, America's security modus operandi spawned more insecurity than it eradicated. With

overwhelming reliance on military tools, human security got short-changed. Three months of U.S. defense spending in Iraq, for example, at \$24 billion, dwarfed the reconstruction budget for a country with insufferably unreliable basic services (worsened by devastating Western sanctions). It is no wonder U.S. development and diplomacy

failed to deliver.

The development strategy in Iraq was hogtied by military involvement and its affiliation with U.S. private contractors. Antagonism towards U.S. troops spoiled reconstruction efforts, which quickly became targets for the insurgency. And America's top-down development strategy, as former Special Inspector General Stuart Bowen

discovered, resulted in substantial unaccounted-for contractor spending and prevented local ownership and sustainable economic infrastructure in Iraq.

The diplomacy strategy was hampered by a significant lack of religious, linguistic, and cultural expertise at Defense and State Departments. Washington was initially unable to distinguish between Sunni and Shi'a theology or identify the Islamic sect orientation of al Qaeda or the Taliban. Few U.S. administration officials could master a level-five language proficiency in Arabic, and the religious expertise to understand Salafism, Qutbism, or other, did not exist.

The under-resourcing of development and diplomacy security strategies in Iraq neglected the real security needs of Iraqis. No matter the number of troops, as long the population remained unemployed, uninsured, lacking education, electricity, clean water and sanitation, chances of securing the region were unlikely.

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U.S. Troops on the streets of Baghdad. Photo: Flickr user Zoriah.

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Student Reflections: Learning Ethnographic Field Research in Indonesia

By Jennifer White, S-CAR MS student, jwhite11@gmu.edu

This summer I was able to take the CONF 610 and 727 Research Methods course in Indonesia with Professor Leslie Dwyer. What I found incredible about the research process during this trip was how quickly I learned that research is not a passive exercise. By taking an ethnographic approach to research, I was required to better define my own sense of self and the way I view myself within the broader field of conflict analysis and resolution, all while working to answer my research question. One of the most important aspects of the experience, to me, was learning about the importance of reflexivity in research with the intent to better understand the ethics and positioning of the question I am asking.

I ended up conducting research about some of the interfaith communities in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Knowing that there had been a rise in religious violence in the area,

I wanted to see how members of interfaith organizations made their interfaith experience legible to their own faith communities.

While learning how to define the categories of interfaith and religion within the context of Yogyakarta, Indonesia, I was also learning how I categorized myself. The course was an exercise in pushing against the boundaries of those categories both personally and academically.

Since returning home, I have been asked why I needed to travel to Indonesia to get this kind of research experience. The reality is, of course, that ethnography does not necessitate leaving the country. There are plenty of opportunities for ethnography within even the DC/Metro area. Conducting research in Indonesia, however, allowed me to reconsider the ethics of research through a confrontation with culture.

There was never really a point during the trip where I forgot that I was in a new place with new cultural customs, and I was trying desperately to navigate it. There were times when it felt impossible

to view the experience through any lens other than that of my own “otherness,” from the suspicion that I was being positioned by others (and, on occasion, myself) as a tourist. It felt like an ethnographic curse word, and I spent a large part of the experience trying to shrug it off, rather than recognize the historical, political, and cultural significance of that term in Yogyakarta.

It was, however, the conspicuousness I felt as an “other” that led me to questions about the ethics of my research and the ethics of my interactions. It

led me to question why I was being positioned in a certain way, and what I could do to upset both the frames being placed on me and those I was placing on others. An element of the research that aided me in disrupting these frames came from class readings and discussions on collaboration. I found that research was a process of co-discovery, rather than co-creation, with those I was interviewing and working alongside. By inviting members of the interfaith community in Yogyakarta into the questions I was asking, I felt I was able to gain a clearer understanding not only of how interfaith institutions operate

in Yogyakarta, but also the ways in which I was operating as a researcher. Rather than choosing to be fearful of presenting my research findings to the community I worked with, I attempted to share what I had learned with them and asked for confirmation that these findings seemed accurate to their experience. I found it necessary to remember that I was not the expert. Terms like researcher, subject, interpreter, and friend became muddled in this process, but I found that it invoked a sense of community around the work I was doing.

I look forward to the opportunity to do more ethnographic research here in the United States. In the past, I have found that travelling provides a chance to see the community around me with new eyes - I find myself viewing my own research here in the US this way now. In Indonesia, I learned to view research as a more holistic, self-reflexive process. Now that I am back in the U.S., I look forward to continuing to see through that lens in order to further understand myself as a researcher and practitioner. ■



From left to right standing: Jennifer White, Alice Peck, Lauren Ettinger, Katy Hicock, Melissa Smith, Mel Wewyant, Mpak Heru and Ibrahim Al-Hajjri. From left to right sitting: Nina Heru, Ibu Heru, Kate Daugherty and Kate Molski. Photo: Jennifer White.

Conflict Analysis and Methods Capacity Building Workshop

By Daniel Rothbart, Professor of Conflict Analysis and Resolution, drothbar@gmu.edu, and Sudha Rajput, S-CAR Alumna and Adjunct Professor, srajput2@gmu.edu

Two S-CAR faculty members, Daniel Rothbart and Sudha Rajput, traveled to Khartoum, Sudan to facilitate a one-day symposium and five-day workshop entitled “Conflict Analysis Tools and Methods Capacity Building.” Supported by USAID and the international organization, AECOM, the symposium and workshop were hosted by the Centre for Peace and Development at the University of Bahri, Khartoum, and took place at the Grand Holiday Villa, near the banks of the Nile River. These events represent the first academic gathering among faculty from Sudan and South Sudan following the independence of South Sudan in 2011.

The thirty workshop participants came from Khartoum, Omdurman, Darfur, Upper Nile, Al-Fashir, Haifa (Sudan), Juba, and Bahr al Jabal (South Sudan). The participants reflected multi-dimensional diversity of gender, age, and nationality (Sudanese and South Sudanese), with some representing the United Nations Africa Mission in Darfur, IFAD, or other international agencies. Participants also represented varied academic backgrounds—Doctorates, Masters, and PhD candidates—and research interests, including the livelihood issues of marginalized communities, internally displaced persons (IDP)/refugee issues, modernization and indigenous populations, women and conflict, ethnic-based conflicts, human rights, and development.

The Symposium opened with recitations from the Holy Quran, followed by opening remarks by officials from USAID and the University of Bahri. Dr. Rothbart delivered the keynote address, entitled “Conflict Analysis: A Field in Flux.” Dr. Rajput then led a session apprising the audience of the objectives, expectations, and plan for the workshop.

During the five days that followed, Dr. Rothbart and Dr. Rajput addressed the following topics on conflict analysis: conflict theories, research design, data gathering, data analysis,

research-driven programs, and dissemination of findings. Each day’s activities included a challenging exercise designed to enhance the participants’ skills in applying the conceptual information to research. Group discussions and reporting were lively and insightful as the participants applied the lessons to local situations and balanced conceptual information with concrete case studies. For example, Dr. Rothbart and Dr. Rajput’s presentation of research-driven programs included humanitarian relief programs, development through policy reforms, societal reforms, and IDP/refugee programs. Material on “Evaluating Conflict Resolution Intervention” was well received by the participants. The workshop exposed participants to conflict-related topics that called for integration of theory, research, and practice.

The workshop’s final day focused on publishing and networking in the field of conflict analysis. Local professors from the two universities shared stories about the opportunities and challenges associated with publication and presentation of findings. Dr. Rajput shared her blog on IDP issues and offered it as a platform for the participants to brainstorm and discuss issues related to IDPs/refugees.

The participants’ grasp of the material was impressive. Their summaries of group discussions and observations about the conflicts in Sudan/South Sudan showed a commitment to conflict research in the pursuit of their individual topics. The workshop concluded with a graduation ceremony in which each participant was awarded a certificate for successfully completing the workshop. This workshop paved the way for upcoming field research in various parts of the two countries. Dr. Rothbart and Dr. Rajput’s work will continue for another two months, as they supervise the research and reporting of the participants.



"Capacity Building Workshop on Conflict Analysis Tools and Methods" Workshop Banner. Photo: Daniel Rothbart and Sudha Rajput.

initiatives

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The 4th Annual Peace Conference: Immigration & Cultural Diversity in the U.S.

By Jason Miller, S-CAR MS Alumnus and Director of Campaigns and Development, Franciscan Action Network Jmiller@franciscanaction.org

The debate over comprehensive immigration reform has been raging in Washington and across the country lately. Most recently, after inaction by Congress, the President, after saying that he would take action himself decided that he would delay any executive action on immigration reform. So far during his Presidency, his administration has deported over two million people with no end in sight.

Oftentimes, immigrants are seen as “the other” who are on the margins of society due to their legal status or inability to assimilate. While the rhetoric around comprehensive immigration reform can be heated, nationwide opinion polls indicate that a majority of Americans want Congress to pass some form of immigration reform, But they have yet to do so. Unfortunately, Congress is not doing the will of the people despite being elected to do so.

In my post S-CAR career, I do advocacy work on



Jason Miller, Director of Campaigns and Development, Franciscan Action Network. Photo: Jason Miller.

behalf of Franciscans here in Washington, D.C., including work on comprehensive immigration reform. I often wonder if anyone on Capitol Hill or in the White House hears the millions of Americans who are demanding action. It’s difficult to measure success in my line of work, and it’s clear that we have a lot of work to do to ensure that real change comes about in our government and society.

For anyone who wants to learn more about immigration reform, Hosteling International D.C. hosted an event on Saturday September 20th as part of their 4th Annual Peace Conference. This year’s theme was on “Immigration & Cultural Diversity in the U.S.” I helped to plan it over the last few years and I can promise that it is the best one to date. The

conference offered a human face to the immigration debate and celebrate cultural diversity and our shared humanity. More info: <https://hidc2014peaceconference.eventbrite.com>

The Signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between George Mason University and the University of Ngozi in Burundi.

By Sixte Vigny Nimuraba, S-CAR PhD Student, vnimurab@gmu.edu

On September 5, 2014, the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution hosted the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between George Mason University, represented by Solon Simmons, the Interim Vice President at the Office of Global Strategy and Apollinaire Bangayimbaca, the Provost of the University of Ngozi. The signing was also witnessed by Elavie Ndura, a professor at the college of Education and Human Development, and members of the S-CAR community.



Left to Right: Solon Simmons, Apollinaire Bangayimbaca and Elavie Ndura. Photo: S-CAR.



S-CAR Community at the MoU signing. Photo: S-CAR.

Upcoming Events

Wednesday, September 24, 2014

Film Screening: The Black Highway - An Ethnography film of Post Peace Social Life in Aceh, Indonesia
10:00am - 12:00pm

Friday, September 26, 2014

Resume Clinic
12:00pm - 2:00pm

Friday, September 26, 2014

Raising your Voice Against Sexual Violence: A Panel Discussion and one time only Screening of Invisible Dance
6:00pm - 10:00pm

Thursday, October 2, 2014

Real Conflict Coaching
8:30pm - 4:00pm

Opinion: Exiting Iraq and Entering Ferguson: The Untold Arms Trade

By Nicole Grim, Assistant Program Officer, Center for Global Education, ngrim@masonlive.gmu.edu.

Last month, President Obama delivered the first of what would be a series of remarks on developing events in Ferguson, Mo. and Iraq. At first glance, the police shooting and death of unarmed 18-year-old Michael Brown and execution of US journalist Jim Foley by ISIL would seem like two wholly unrelated events, like two separate worlds. That isn't necessarily the case.

While Obama continues air strikes in Iraq—hesitant to put boots back on the ground after building his legacy on pulling them out—Ferguson is struggling to find a way to deal with its repercussions.

The 1033 Program, coordinated by the Defense Logistics Agency Disposition Services, transfers excess military capability to local law enforcement—almost \$550 million worth in 2013 alone. This agreement between the Defense Department and law enforcement is not new—it was authorized in 1997 through the National Defense Authorization Act. What is new, however, is the surge of troops being withdrawn from Iraq and Afghanistan, and the large amounts of military-owned equipment coming with them.

More than 8,000 agencies participate in this program, and shortly after President Obama's remarks on August 14, USA Today confirmed that the Ferguson Police Department is among them. What we see unfolding in 'small-town, USA' Ferguson is a byproduct of our projected \$6 trillion worth of war in Iraq and Afghanistan being funneled into the hands

of police and SWAT teams around the country. Ferguson's armored vehicles, rifles, and pistols you've been seeing in the news may very well have once been held by combat troops in Iraq. While Iraq's troubled past has long been amongst religions and tribal affiliations, the conversation surrounding Ferguson is fueled by its own set of racial divisions.

Before Brown, we saw the video of Eric Garner, who was put in a fatal chokehold by police. Before Garner, it was Trayvon Martin. And, let's not forget

Alex Landau where it took 45 stitches to close his facial lacerations after being beaten by Denver police officers in 2009.

In the growing number of communities where police forces are a lot whiter than the populations they protect, local social norms and stereotypes surrounding race and racism are meeting head-on with the changing connotations of power arriving alongside the 1033 Program's guns and armored vehicles. Underlying fundamental shifts in organizational culture accompany the absorption of military equipment, and those changes have to be addressed if we want to prevent another Ferguson.

Ryan Reilly, a Huffington Post reporter arrested during the protests in Ferguson, later said that the police resembled soldiers more than officers and treated those surround-

Recent S-CAR Articles, Op-Eds, Letters to the Editor, and Media Appearances

September 11 - Complexities and Contradictions about Embroil US in Syria and Iraq; Why Americans Choose War; The other 9/11

Richard Rubenstein, S-CAR Faculty Background Briefing with Ian Masters 9/11/14

Man-to-Man Chat can Avert Disaster

Dennis Sandole, S-CAR faculty Financial Times 9/10/14

Senate Homeland Security Hearing on Militarization of US Police

Michael Shank, S-CAR Alumna KPFA Radio 9/9/14

Conflict Analysts from S-CAR have appeared on 21 occasions since the last newsletter. These 3 represent the latest at time of publication. For a complete list please visit: <http://scar.gmu.edu/media>



American Military or Police? The Line is Blurred. Photo: Flickr User Uncle Sams Misguided Children.

organizations to be effective, decisive, and 'heroic,' but also create unique definitions of power, authority, and control.

ing him as "enemy combatants." The Huffington Post statement remarked: "Police militarization has been among the most consequential and unnoticed developments of our time," and they're right.

In many aspects, our law enforcement and military are similar. Intensive training, reliance on hierarchy, hyper-masculinity -- these components drive

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press

Annabella B. Johnson, S-CAR MS Student

By Kwaw de Graft-Johnson, S-CAR PhD Student and Newsletter Editor, kdegraft@gmu.edu

Annabella Busawule Johnson is part of the 2014 MS cohort, joining the S-CAR community this fall. Originally from Uganda, she has been living in Vienna, Austria, for the last few years for her work with the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO). CTBTO is an international organization affiliated with the United Nations that works to ban nuclear explosions on the earth's surface, in the atmosphere, underground, and underwater. Annabella's work entailed "software configuration management of the applications developed to enable the detection, monitoring and analyzing of data collected from the monitoring stations across the world so that no nuclear explosion goes undetected."

Although most of her professional experience has been as a software engineer, Annabella started to shift her focus to the field of conflict analysis and resolution after she wanted to use her skills in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to enhance humanitarian response to crises. Her initial research into this subfield led her to the work that the organization ICT4 Peace was doing. As she described it, "it was a exciting



Annabella Johnson. Photo: Annabella Johnson.

moment as I realized that there was a way to use my ICT skills in a programmatic way to be an enabler and source of empowerment that would allow individuals and organizations to resolve complex conflicts across the globe."

Annabella's decision to attend S-CAR at George Mason University was inspired by the University's vision of "innovation, diversity and accessibility" that fit her career interest and approach. As she said, "once I have merged my ICT skills with practical knowledge in conflict resolution, I hope to diversify my career portfolio to continue with my professional participation and contribution to the shared global mission of the United Nations and its affiliated agencies to promote peace, security, and stability on a global scale."

Outside of her work, Annabella likes to travel and read. One of her favorite authors is Chinua Achebe, whom she describes as "a very well respected and inspirational African writer who has contributed to the preservation of African culture through his educational writing that has served the diverse readership globally." As she noted, "without literary leaders like him, our children and their children may never learn of their culture. He has educated the world about African culture in a way that we can be proud of." ■

Minhee Noh, S-CAR MS Student

By Asaka Ishiguro, S-CAR MS Student, aishiguro@gmu.edu

Minhee Noh is currently enrolled in the Master's program at S-CAR. Prior to joining the program, she worked for a non-profit organization, called Japan Association for Refugees. Through her work, she met with Kurdish refugees from Turkey, and through interactions with them, was shocked by their predicament. She said, "I gained an interest in refugee issues, especially those that result from social and cultural tensions, from those interactions."

Her encounter with refugees reminded her of her own experience. Born and raised in South Korea, Minhee has been struggling with the conflict between Japan and her country. According to her, "I started to learn Japanese at the age of twelve, which was not always understood by my family and friends. [South] Koreans' reaction to Japan was sometimes very aggressive. Some do not even acknowledge the Japanese people." Having lived in Japan as well, she experienced the "other" perspective of the conflict. She said, "while political relations sometimes



Minhee Noh. Photo: Minhee Noh.

harden the attitudes of both states, cultural exchange and interpersonal interactions have been definitely changing Japanese peoples' views, especially young generation, toward Korea." This experience led her to believe that a cultural understanding can be used to rebuild good relations that can resolve conflicts. According to her, "perhaps if Turkish society had been more tolerant towards Kurdish minorities and attempted to understand them, there would not be this level of conflict there".

At S-CAR, she is exploring cultural analysis in conflict. "My school offers many classes in cultural and identity issues, and this has provided me with a lot of theories that can help me find possible solutions to my own conflict" says Minhee.

In the future, she has a strong ambition to work as a facilitator to promote understanding between culturally different ethnic groups. She said, "people ideally know the importance of understanding, but on the ground, it is extremely difficult to take the first step." Despite the challenges she may face, Minhee is full of hope of becoming a "cultural liaison" to help people resolve conflicts. ■

Rethinking U.S. Strategy in Iraq

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Moreover, the notion that successful U.S. intervention was feasible via unilateral, military mechanisms that were socially, culturally and religiously ill-equipped to navigate the ground post-invasion backfired.

Yet this is exactly how America responded this year to security threats in Iraq, as fighters from the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) seized cities across Iraq. After more than ten years of American warfare in Iraq, to no avail, more of the same won't work. Whether it is the overlooked political reconciliation, lack of accountability in Iraq's security forces or missteps in regional cooperation, Iraq will continue to witness instability unless these points are addressed.

The U.S. government's focus on military has given little space to address political reconciliation. Post-invasion, the U.S. fueled sectarian tensions by accentuating Sunni-Shiite differences when it created an Iraqi governing council based on sectarian lines. This was the first time in Iraq's contemporary history that leaders were selected based on their identification with a particular sect (before the U.S. invasion, Shiites, Sunnis, and Kurds lived in mixed communities throughout Iraq).

After Iraq's demographics concentrated along sectarian lines in the late 2000s, Sunni leadership became concerned that political representation, whether in the security forces

or the government in Baghdad, was being curtailed. And while Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki exacerbated these fears by pushing out Sunnis from positions of power, the U.S. failed to prioritize this, keen to keep Sunnis fighting in Anbar province with little regard to their reintegration in Baghdad.

All of this helps explain why, in 2014, Sunni hardliners ably seized control of cities with little pushback from Sunni moderates who were also frustrated with political and economic marginalization. Given years of exclusion, many Sunnis felt like there was



Michael Shank, Adjunct faculty at S-CAR, Director for Foreign Policy at the Friends Committee on National Legislation. Photo: Michael Shank

little recourse but to seek violent methods of regaining power. Now, ensuring that Sunnis are given proper political, economic, and security participation in the government is critical. Inclusionary policies for the Sunni population and its tribal leaders are paramount to the stability of the country.

Adding to this, U.S. efforts to "stand up" an Iraqi security force were mismanaged. After spending \$20 billion in training, these security forces operated as another sectarian militia. Weapons trafficked freely, with insurgents brandishing the very weapons the West funneled into Iraq and Syria. The same Iraqi security forces who received U.S. training abandoned their posts, losing control of the cities. This allowed ISIS to control major cities in the north, with its wealth of water and oil resources, leaving few government security forces to control the violence or protect innocent civilians.

If America wanted to help Iraq's security situation, it would work with Saudi Arabia, Iran, and others to issue an embargo on weapons trafficking and arms exports into Iraq and Syria. This would directly implicate the U.S. due to its weapons shipments to fractious Syrian rebels and unconditional military aid to Iraq. The West must also work with Iraq's security forces to stop rampant human rights abuses, which are fueling Sunni resistance.

Any further U.S. policy in the Middle East requires a new set of principles. No more business as usual, no more go-it-alone. Regional cooperation between Iraq and Gulf States is imperative to bringing lasting stability. Otherwise the opportunity for violent spillover expands exponentially.

As the West responds to the humanitarian crisis in Iraq, made worse by years of sanctions and intervention, or responds to an insurgent group, the U.S. should prioritize regional cooperation and development initiatives that will deliver shared security for all Iraqis. By engaging regional leaders, including Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, and even tribal leaders within Iraq, the U.S. can support Iraq in alleviating the turmoil. Encouraging regional cooperation can also help reduce the barriers that impede cooperation in other sectors, such as Iran's nuclear technologies.

The U.S. can avoid repeating past mistakes by de-emphasizing its military focus. Airstrikes and drone strikes won't work. A strategy focused on political reconciliation, regional cooperation, arms embargoes and humanitarian aid that meets the basic needs of a war-ravaged nation can bring lasting security and political stability. This is how America can help Iraq. Anything else is merely a repeat of the past. ■

Recent S-CAR Awards

Pamina Firchow, Assistant Professor of Conflict Resolution, was awarded a \$20,000 grant from the Rotary Foundation to support her work on the edited volume "Peacebuilding in Theory and Practice".

Recent S-CAR Books

9/11 and Collective Memory in US Classrooms: Teaching About Terror by **Cheryl Duckworth**, PhD Alumna. Routledge Press (2014)

Political Insults: How Offenses Escalate Conflict by **Karina Korostelina**. Oxford University Press (2014).

Exiting Iraq and Entering Ferguson

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There is one stark difference, however. The military utilizes a very polarized concept of good and evil. Their mission is to confront and kill a defined enemy. In contrast law enforcement is comprised of ‘peace officers’—they have no enemies. Their only mission is to uphold the law and to protect and defend their citizens. If those citizens are suspected of committing a crime, well, that’s for the courts to decide.

But when law enforcement is given equipment that makes them look and act more and more like soldiers, what power looks and feels and thinks like shifts right along with them. This is only amplified by a lack of training—it’s offered (not required) by the DLA, but training on these capabilities for and by law enforcement isn’t regularly tracked.

In a guest blog for the International Association of the Chiefs of Police, the Los Angeles Police Department wrote “The primary responsibility of local law enforcement when adopting and employing these [military] capabilities is to protect against embracing the core military culture and mission that was behind its original development.”

The militarization of police is not likely to slow down or stop anytime soon -- not with the Defense Department’s eagerness to “save the American taxpayer’s investment,” according to the DLA website. Unless we do something, what we will continue to see from these trends is a growing intensity of structural violence that prevents communities from achieving their basic needs. In Ferguson’s case, the civilians’ basic human needs will be their perceptions of trust and access to fair and honest protection. ■



School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution

3351 N. Fairfax Drive, MS 4D3, Arlington, VA 22201

Conflict Analysis and Methods Capacity Building Workshop

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Throughout the week’s events, the need for flexibility became quite apparent. Despite having developed a meticulous design for the workshop activities, Dr. Rothbart and Dr. Rajput were asked to modify their plans each day, sometimes requiring them to add information in expanded sessions and other times calling for a reduction of the content to quicken the pace. Yet this all went very well, in large measure because of the easy collaboration with the workshop’s architects from the University of Bahri.

During the week, the head of the USAID mission in Sudan hosted a social gathering at his home, attended by the US ambassador to Sudan. Additionally, the Vice Chancellor of the Bahri University graciously invited Dr. Rothbart and Dr. Rajput to his office for tea and a delightful dinner at a Sudanese restaurant situated on the Omdurman-side of the Nile River. Dr. Rajput’s highlight of the visit was a trip to the Pyramids, a trip that required both a 2.5 hour drive and a special permit from the Ministry of Tourism. These pyramids are located in the villages called Bagrawiyah, and in June 2011, this site was listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. A short camel ride took Dr. Rajput close to the pyramids. On the way back, the participants took her to a Sufi festival that was held on mosque premises. This day was an incredible way to experience the Sudanese culture. ■

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