

ICAR News

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Conflict Analysis and Resolution

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

Barack Obama: A Conflict Resolution Friendly White House?

By Dennis J.D. Sandole, Ph.D., ICAR Faculty, dsandole@gmu.edu

Since his election and inauguration, it has been clear that Barack Obama, represents many things to many people, not only in the U.S., but worldwide as well. I experienced his global appeal when I was in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and a Muslim Tamil Indian, who considers himself a member of Malaysia's minority population, confided that he was exhilarated by Obama's empowering maxim: "Yes, we can!"



Barack Obama taking the Oath of Office. Photo: Wikimedia.

Another dimension of Mr. Obama's significance derives from the combined influence of his Kenyan Muslim father; his Anglo Christian mother from Kansas; his childhood spent in Hawaii and Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation; and his work as a community organizer

on Chicago's South Side. He has an undergraduate degree from Columbia and a law degree from Harvard, where he served as the first African-American president of the Harvard Law Review. Most notably, after delivering a rousing keynote speech at the Democratic National Convention in 2004, he came out of nowhere to persuade Americans to elect him as the nation's first African-American President!

The significance of Obama's background, which resonates with conflict resolution theorists and practitioners, is that he is sensitive to the observation

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ICAR, ELI Partner for Dialogue

By Leila Peterson, ICAR Adjunct Professor, lpetersh@gmu.edu

The ICAR Undergraduate Program actively seeks ways to reach out across the George Mason community. Last fall, the Undergraduate Program collaborated with the English Language Institute (ELI) to create an experiential learning opportunity in cross-cultural communication and dialogue. CONF 202 Dialogue and Difference combined with ELI 089 Dialogue with Americans to offer a joint course focused on dialogue about the U.S. election and identity politics.

Students from the two classes represented 15 different countries, with the majority of students from Korea, the United States, Sudan, China, Saudi Arabia, and Vietnam. The majors and areas of academic study represented in the class were equally diverse. “The diversity among the students challenged us all to examine our fundamental assumptions about government, politics, and democracy,” said Leila Peterson, ICAR Adjunct Professor.

The course began with a dialogue workshop designed to build trust and develop individual communication skills such as listening, identifying assumptions, and asking questions. The class then moved to a series of eight dialogues on topics relevant to the election, including immigration, the role of religion in government, the relationship of the West and Muslim world, and race, ethnicity, and nationalism. Student groups designed and led each dialogue, giving them the opportunity to experiment with different formats and techniques. Although designed to maximize the time the students spent learning together, the course also allowed opportunities for the two groups of students to reflect on their experiences separately.



Dialogue course participants. Photo: Michael Smith.

ELI has provided English language instruction at GMU since 1981 and also works with students to develop academic skills and cultural awareness. “It was a natural fit. This gave my students the opportunity to interact with GMU students, learn about the U.S. from Americans, and get a sense of what an academic class entails,” said Michael Smith, ELI instructor. “And, the CONF 202 students didn’t just learn about conflict resolution theory – they got to experience it,” added Peterson. Both departments are excited about continuing the partnership between ICAR and ELI.

The students shared their perspectives on the experience during the final class. One student noted, “I could understand other students from other countries. Their thoughts, customs, behaviors; some things were very similar to mine, but others were totally different. We have seen the same event, but our viewpoints were various. I learned that I had to escape from bias when I saw or heard news. I also learned the way to dialogue with another people. Although I have opposite opinion, I have to respect the other people’s opinion. Before speaking, listen.” ■

network

Michael Shank Heads for the Hill

By Julie Shedd, ICAR Ph.D. Candidate and Associate Director for Administration, jshedd@gmu.edu

Michael Shank, ICAR’s Communications Director, bid farewell to the Institute to pursue a new challenge as the Communications Director for U.S. Representative Mike Honda from California. During Michael’s tenure at ICAR the institute made giant leaps forward in media presence and communications savvy. Among his many accomplishments, Michael is responsible for developing the ICAR News Network - ICAR’s online news and analysis portal. Michael designed, developed, and hosted Analyze This - ICAR’s weekly radio and online broadcast. These initiatives have helped expand ICAR’s reach, offering analysis on current conflicts that is accessible around the world. Michael also developed and published the ICAR Newsletter and assisted faculty, students, and staff with writing and publishing Op-Eds and Letters to the Editor in regional, national, and international newspapers. But with all the visible accomplishments in print, on the web, and in video, Michael’s biggest accomplishment was building confidence among ICAR’s faculty, staff, and students in our capability to reach the larger world with ICAR’s message. We wish Michael well with his new undertaking and know he will continue to open doors for the ICAR Community. ■



Michael Shank, ICAR Ph.D. Candidate.
Photo: ICAR.

ICAR APT Team Off to Morocco

M.S. and Ph.D Students Seek to Apply Theory to Practice

By Kathryn P. Roberts, ICAR M.S. Student, krobertm@gmu.edu

As one of three options for graduation, ICAR M.S. students have the chance to participate in the Applied Practice and Theory (APT) program. Under the guidance and mentorship of a faculty member, this six-credit capstone aims to provide students with real-world application of the theories learned in the classroom.

The Applied Practice and Theory program was developed in 1992 to create an opportunity for students to practice in the Conflict Resolution field with a safety net – a faculty member to counsel and mentor them as they face realistic conflicts in the community they are working in. Over the subsequent 17 years of APT team projects, a need was voiced for a similar program for students interested in comprehensive and long-term research projects.

In an effort to provide different APT opportunities that met the broad range of student interests, Karina Korostelina was asked to mentor a research focused APT team. In the years since, she has worked with groups engaging conflicts in Chiapas, Mexico – a trip made memorable by a meeting with a Zapatista leader in the middle of the rainforest – as well as projects at the International Criminal Court, and justice and peacebuilding for the United Nations.

Led by Korostelina, the current research team, comprised of eight students – 3 Ph.D. students and 5 Master's students – is focusing on the impact of modernization on Islamic Radicalization in Morocco. Unlike most other APTs, the group met once a week in an ICAR classroom in preparation for their trip to Morocco, where they will meet with 20 to 30 international and local NGO leaders, academics and religious leaders. Essentially, they spent the last year developing their research knowledge base in order to conduct these interviews.

All eight students involved in this project had little to no research background when they met for the first time. Korostelina prides herself on teaching her students the basics of research design, which she believes, is fundamental to developing the Conflict Resolution field. In her words, she is “growing a new generation of researchers.” By participating in a research APT program, she believes students will develop the skills necessary for jobs in analytical fields post-graduation.

M.S. student Xanthie Mangum plans to use the tools she has learned in this APT program to work in the Conflict Resolution field after she



Photos: Paul Snodgrass.

earns a Ph.D. – preferably as an overseas investigator for the federal government. She sees this program as a chance to gain research tools, as well as conflict resolution practice and theory in one place.

The research-based APT group provides research tools to each student through practical experience: “Action research is conditional and learned,” said M.S. student and Fulbright grantee Aneela Shamshad. She registered for the APT class in order to internalize research methods and designs through interactions with her fellow group members, and to gain interviewing experience onsite in Morocco this spring.

Jamila Mammadova, also an M.S. student, plans to graduate this spring and is simultaneously writing her thesis on a different topic. The tools she has gained throughout the year have helped her develop her own thesis. The research APT group appealed to her for the travel opportunity, as well as the field application of research.

For the three Ph.D. students in the program, these credits are not required for their curriculum. One of those students, Clement Aapengnuo, wanted the practical experience more than the general credits he is earning toward his doctorate. Ph.D. student Suliman Giddo agrees, “At work, when you make mistakes, you get fired.” In the APT program, mistakes turn into opportunities for learning.

The Morocco APT team is comprised of ICAR students: Clement Aapengnuo, Fatima Hadji, Xanthie Mangum, Jamila Mammadova, Ali Erol, Erica Soren, Suliman Giddo, and Aneela Shamshad. ■



initiatives

Point of View Hosts Georgia, South Ossetia Peacebuilders

By Susan Allen Nan, Ph.D., ICAR Faculty, snan@gmu.edu

EVENTS

George Mason University's Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution hosted South Ossetian and Georgian civil society-based peacebuilders from December 16-19 at Point of View, the University's conflict resolution retreat facility at Mason Neck, VA. Susan Allen Nan, Assistant Professor of Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University, planned the session and facilitated with Dr. Paula Garb and Laura Olsen. The meeting represents one of the first focused track two or citizen diplomacy initiatives since the August war disrupted Georgian-South Ossetian relations.

The individuals in this track two meeting participated in their own personal capacity. During the meeting, they discussed the implications of the August war in rebuilding peace and security in the region, as well as areas where civil society initiatives could play a constructive part in improving relations. These exploratory discussions generated creative ideas for civil society contributions to the overall peace process. "The participants persevered through difficult conversations and made plans for

working together to identify missing persons, facilitate dialogues between other Georgians and South Ossetians, protect human rights in the conflict zone, and open communication between their societies," said Nan. "I am really grateful for USAID funding the Georgian participants' travel to the dialogue, Planethood Foundation covering workshop expenses, broad university support, and the use of Point of View for these discussions." ■



ICAR professor Susan Allen Nan with participants. Photo: Adrienne Struss.

Upcoming ICAR Community Events

For more info on events, email Erica Soren, esoren@gmu.edu

Thursday, March 26, 2009

Guest Speaker: Sally Engle Merry, NYU
Indicators, Human Rights, and Global Governance

4:00 pm - 6:00 pm, Truland Building, 555

Thursday, March 26, 2009

Guest Speaker: David Shasha
Contested Histories & Disembodied Voices: How to Speak of the Arab Jew

7:00 pm, Truland Building, 555

Friday, March 27, 2009

Civilian Devastation in War Conference
8:00 am - 6:30 pm, Original Building, 329

Saturday, April 4, 2009

Point of View Watershed Cleanup
9:00 am - 2:00 pm, Point of View in Lorton, VA

Thursday, April 16, 2009

Guest Speaker: Randa Slim
Assessing Democratization Efforts in Iraq
4:30 pm - 6:00 pm, Truland Building, 555

<http://icar.gmu.edu/events.htm>

Ambassador Hill Gives CR Lecture

By Susan Allen Nan, Ph.D., ICAR Faculty, snan@gmu.edu

On Monday, February 9, Ambassador William Hill presented a public lecture on "The OSCE and Moldovan-Transdnestrian Conflict Resolution" in the Johnson Center Cinema. This lecture followed a discussion with the class CONF 495 Organizations and Actors in the Conflict Field.

Ambassador Hill is a Wilson Center Public Policy Scholar and served two terms as the Head of the OSCE Mission to Moldova, where he was charged with the negotiation of a political settlement to the Transdnestrian conflict and facilitation of the withdrawal of Russian forces, arms, and ammunition from Moldova. When the war erupted over South Ossetia in August, pitting Georgian, South Ossetian, and Russian military forces against each other in a five-day war, many raised questions about the prospects for settling the similarly structured post-Soviet Transdnestrian conflict. Moldova claims Transdnestria as part of Moldova, but Transdnestria asserts independence. This conflict continues as a frozen conflict today. ■



Ambassador Hill. Photo: Christy Larsen.

Zones of Peace in the South Caucasus

By Susan Allen Nan, ICAR Faculty, Irakli Kakabadze, ICAR M.S. Alumni, Arsen Kharatyan, Jamila Mammadova, ICAR M.S. Student, and Ekaterina Romanova, ICAR Ph.D. Candidate

Published 2/26/09 in *Contact*

At a recent symposium held at George Mason University, peacebuilders based in Baku, Tbilisi, Yerevan, Moscow, and Washington D.C. considered the concept of Zones of Peace.

While Georgian Minister for Reintegration Temuri Yakobashvili's announcement this week of the Georgian initiative to declare Abkhazia a weapon-free zone was met with disdain by Russia and Abkhazia, there is merit to a much broader consideration of Zones of Peace. Beyond simply banning weapons, Zones of Peace are geographic areas where violence is limited and a culture of peace and tolerance is encouraged. Zones of Peace, already successful elsewhere, present promising prospects for the future of the South Caucasus, particularly if structured so as to be attractive to all involved. For example, if the Georgian government were to work towards making all of Georgia – not only Abkhazia-- a weapons-free zone, that idea might find favorable Russian and Abkhaz consideration.

Rather than becoming a battlefield for global power struggles, the Caucasus as a whole could transform into a Zone of Peace, where no military powers would compete and all cultural traditions, religious practices, and languages would be respected. We know transformations are possible; post-World War II European reconciliation giving rise to the E.U. demonstrates radical transformation. Zones of Peace in the South Caucasus are also possible—hopefully without another sixty-year delay.

Zones of Peace have worked to keep villagers in Colombia and the Philippines safe from the violence surrounding their homes, to protect eighty-six communities in a larger Local Zone of Peace in Ecuador, and to safeguard residents along the mountainous Peru-Ecuador border. In an even grander peace initiative, the entire country of Costa Rica relinquished its military forces. Zones of Peace could offer similar benefits in isolated villages, across buffer zones, or regionally throughout the South Caucasus.

There is a history in the Caucasus of markets serving as informal Zones of Peace in the towns of Egret and Sadakhlo, and at the Red Bridge market. While local people from across conflict lines have bought and sold produce, they have also kept communication open between their communities. More of these micro Zones of Peace could facilitate necessary local trade, while simultaneously keeping grassroots communication open between the societies separated by conflict. Legalizing and supporting markets in Zugdidi near the Inguri, near Sadakhlo, the Red Bridge area, and Ergneti would minimize the threat of heroin trade or other illicit activities by allowing appropriate regulation of market

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Recent ICAR Articles, Op-Eds and Letters to the Editor

Washington Also Needs to Change the Way it Engages

By Susan Allen Nan, ICAR Professor
Financial Times, 2/26/09

Why Hamas Wants to Marginalize the PLO

By Rawhi Afaghani, ICAR Ph.D. Candidate
Al Arabiya News Channel, 2/25/09

From Open Door to No-Go: Interpreting Iran's Policy Toward Afghan Refugees

By Carrie Chomuik, ICAR M.S. Student
Think Tank, Stimson, 2/23/09

The Ripe Moment for Peace is Over

By Rawhi Afaghani, ICAR Ph.D. Candidate
Arab Writers Group Syndicate, 1/29/09

Obama, Change South Asia Policy

By Saira Yamin, ICAR Ph.D. Candidate
The Nation, 1/26/09

Time for a New Start on Afghanistan Policy

By Neamat Nojumi, ICAR Ph.D. Candidate
Journal Sentinel, 1/24/09

20th Anniversary of UN GA Resolution 43/189: Specific Measures in Favour of Island Developing Countries

By Alfred Farrugia, ICAR Ph.D. Candidate
The Malta Independent, 12/20/08

Boost to Small Island Developing States

By Alfred Farrugia, ICAR Ph.D. Candidate
Times of Malta, 12/20/08

Media Silent as Indian Muslims Forego Holiday

By Marc Gopin, ICAR Professor
Media For Freedom, 12/17/08

G20 Momentum Could Spur Collective Climate Action

By Dennis Sandole, ICAR Professor
Financial Times, 12/16/08

Fierce Blame Game in Georgia

By Susan Allen Nan, ICAR Professor
The Wall Street Journal, 12/08/08

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In Memoriam

Henry C. Barringer: A Personal Reflection

By Dennis J.D. Sandole, Ph.D., ICAR Faculty, dsandole@gmu.edu



Henry Barringer with Dennis Sandole and Bryant Wedge. Photo: Mason Gazette Archive.

It is with great sadness that we at ICAR report that Henry C. Barringer, co-creator with the late Dr. Bryant Wedge of the “Center for Conflict Resolution,” which eventually became the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, passed away on January 14, 2009, at 88 years of age.

Henry, a retired U.S. Foreign Service Officer, was a delightful, generous individual with great vision for how the United States could be a force for positive peace in the world.

It was this vision that enabled him and Bryant Wedge to work for the creation of a U.S. National Peace Academy in the 1970s and early 1980s, which eventually led to, in addition to the U.S. Institute of Peace, the establishment of CCR/ICAR in 1981.

I am honored to have been associated with Henry and Bryant, as the very first faculty hire of CCR/ICAR in August 1981. In those halcyon days, CCR was located in Fenwick Library on the Fairfax Campus as a part-time operation: Henry and Bryant were co-directors, Mary Lynn Boland was secretary, and I was split between CCR and the Department of Public Affairs, where I taught courses in International Relations. In the background as constant pillars of support were Professors Tom Williams, then Dean of the Graduate School, and Joseph Scimecca, then Chair of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology (who eventually succeeded Henry and Bryant as CCR director).

During that time, Henry was indefatigable in his efforts to sustain CCR, including locating well-placed individuals in the community to comprise ICAR’s Advisory Board, providing financial and other support. One member of the Board, Ed Lynch, together with his wife Helen and son Bill, have been very generous to ICAR over the years, including leaving us their beautiful property at Point of View along the Potomac River. It was at Point of View, in fact, where I saw Henry for the last time during an unveiling last year of a portrait of our colleague

Dr. John Burton, with whom I had worked at University College London in England. Henry was instrumental in bringing John to ICAR in the mid-1980s. Henry looked fit and lively and was as charming and sharp as ever!

On a more personal note, Henry’s generosity extended to giving me a lift to and from campus, since I was without a car during my first year at George Mason University. During those drives, Henry would talk about his time as a young U.S. Army officer at Bletchley Park, England, during World War II, working on cracking the German Enigma code and

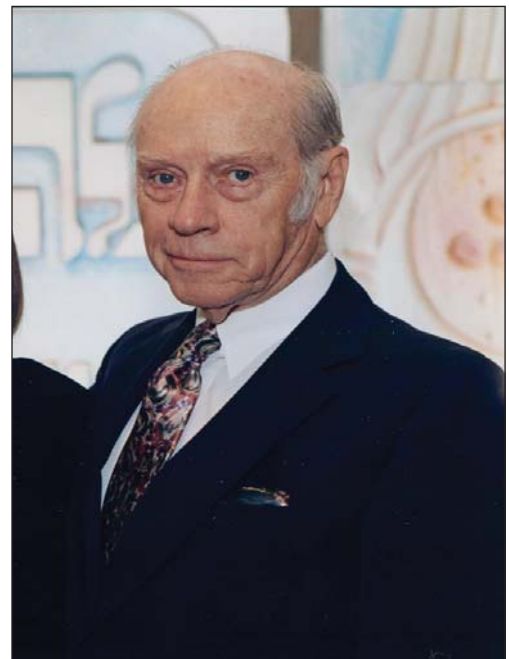
“Henry was a delightful, generous individual with great vision...”

—DENNIS SANDOLE

later interviewing German prisoners-of-war, and his experiences as a multilingual American diplomat during the Cold War in Burundi, Columbia, Congo, Denmark, Germany, and Greece.

Although Henry passed away shortly before the inauguration of President Barack Obama, I am convinced that he would have been pleased that, finally, we had a president who would embody what CCR/ICAR -- thanks to Henry and Bryant’s salutary efforts -- was trying to create: new generations of peacemakers.

Henry, we will miss you very much! ■

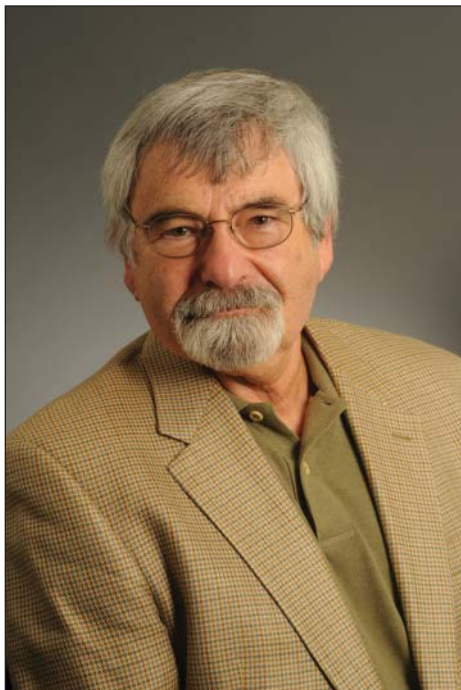


Henry Barringer.

Photo courtesy of William Barringer.

Obama: A Conflict Resolution-Minded Commander in Chief

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Dennis Sandole is a professor of Conflict Resolution at ICAR. Photo: ICAR.

that different people of different backgrounds bring different perspectives. As a community organizer – and now global community organizer par excellence – Mr. Obama has indicated as one of his strengths: “put me in a room with a lot of different people, and by the end of the day, we will have consensus!” Given the perilous state of the world that he has inherited, nothing could be more important.

Chief among his talents is listening respectfully to people who are not accustomed to being listened to: those who have been marginalized, oppressed, and worse – part of the genesis of post-9/11 terrorism. This is evidenced by his inaugural address, and most recently, by his appearance on Al Arabiya, where he made a broad appeal to the Arab and Muslim worlds as someone who has Muslims in his own family. His message is that the United States is ready to work with them, including Iran. Former Senator George J. Mitchell, Obama’s personal emissary to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, has been dispatched to the region with the

charge to listen to all of the parties (with the exception of Hamas).

President Obama’s readiness to work with others at complex problem solving was demonstrated in his article, “Renewing American Leadership,” in the July/Aug 2007 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, and in his first foreign policy speech, “Obama’s Remarks on Iraq and Afghanistan,” (*New York Times* 7/15/08). His core theme has been bringing people together to achieve consensus in order to solve complex global problems. His calls for appropriate changes of mindset plus the demonstration of effective U.S. leadership within multilateral settings represent significant departures from Washington’s ideologically driven policies of the last eight years.

The primary “outlier” in this otherwise “CR-friendly” portrait of the President is his stated position on the war in Afghanistan, where his draw down of U.S. troops in Iraq correlates to an increase in troop strength in Afghanistan, to deal with the resurrected Taliban insurgency. Associated with this concern is the recent attack on suspected Taliban targets in Pakistan, launched during Mr. Obama’s first week in office, which caused a number of casualties, possibly including children.

These concerns are valid, but if we examine President Obama’s Afghan policy in a larger framework, they may be put to rest. This larger framework is compatible with a conceptual device that I call the “three levels of conflict reality”: (1) Conflict as symptoms; (2) Conflict as underlying fractured relationships that give rise to symptoms; and (3) Conflict as underlying deep-rooted causes and conditions of the fractured relationships that give rise to symptoms.

Mr. Obama’s framework for Afghanistan, which corresponds to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s “three legs to the stool of American foreign policy” -- defense, diplomacy,

and development -- includes (1) more troops (defense) to deal with conflict as symptoms; (2) more diplomacy to deal with fractured relationships which give rise to the symptoms; and (3) more

development to deal with the underlying deep-rooted causes and conditions of the fractured relationships.

This reorientation of U.S. policy reflects the sentiments of General

Petraeus, whose CENTCOM responsibilities include Afghanistan and Iraq and who co-wrote the U.S. military’s new guidelines on counterinsurgency.

Mr. Obama’s defense-based “surge” into Afghanistan (symptoms) must occur within a more comprehensive framework inclusive of diplomacy (relationships) and development (deep-rooted causes). The balance of the shifting investments and prioritization across these three interrelated components of his foreign policy “stool” will determine whether Mr. Obama’s conflict resolution promise remains intact or comes under significant challenge. ■

“Chief among his talents is listening to people who are not accustomed to being listened to.”

—DENNIS SANDOLE

Recent ICAR Articles, Op-Eds and Letters to the Editor

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There is Hope for India and Pakistan

By Saira Yamin, ICAR Ph.D. Candidate
The Christian Science Monitor, 12/04/08

Pakistan's Fragile State

By Saira Yamin, ICAR Ph.D. Candidate
International Herald Tribune, 12/04/08

Obama Shouldn't Transfer Bush's Iraq Policy to Afghanistan

By Michael Shank, ICAR Ph.D. Candidate and Shukria Dellawar, ICAR M.S. Student
The Guardian, 12/03/08

16th OSCE Ministerial Council Needs to Look at Cyprus

By Alfred Farrugia, ICAR Ph.D. Candidate
Journal Sentinel, 12/01/08

Student Opinion

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activities.

Larger buffer zones already established along the lines of conflict could also become Zones of Peace. Instead of resounding with daily sniper fire, these spaces could become truly demilitarized zones. Unarmed military observers or others invited by the local community could patrol such security zones to prevent illegal activities and protect their demilitarized character.

An even more ambitious regional Zone of Peace would remove military forces from the whole South Caucasus, allowing economic interests to flourish and a culture of peace to develop. With local police curbing crime, the people in the zone would stop allocating precious resources to fight debilitating wars, and development would surge with more open market access. In the absence of the threat of war, travel between the conflict zones would be restored, and a longer-term conversation on settling political differences without the use of force could develop. Only a stable Zone of Peace, and much time, will make real reconciliation possible.

The peace within the European Union was not built overnight. It emerged from the ashes of World War II when a few individuals envisioned the possibility of cooperation.

They started with coal and steel, and grew into more multifaceted cooperation.

The South Caucasus, too, could be dramatically different in time. Zones of Peace could start small with markets along the conflict lines, then build towards whole buffer zones, and eventually include broader regional arrangements. Gradually building Zones of Peace will steer the Caucasus away from a future of ongoing geopolitical struggle and violent conflict, and instead toward one of interethnic and interreligious coexistence.

The Georgian initiative for a weapons-free Abkhazia is only one version of a Zone of Peace. In this tense post-war period, other structures including parallel demilitarization on all sides would be more widely attractive to all parties. Both small and large Zones of Peace can only be built cooperatively, when all parties willingly giving up the option of resorting to violence. The radical transformation from a war-torn region to a beacon of peace will require courageous risks. Are we willing to take risks today so that, in two or three generations, coexistence in the Caucasus will be as obvious as the E.U.'s post-World War II integration is today? ■



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