

THE CENTER FOR STABILIZATION AND RECONSTRUCTION STUDIES

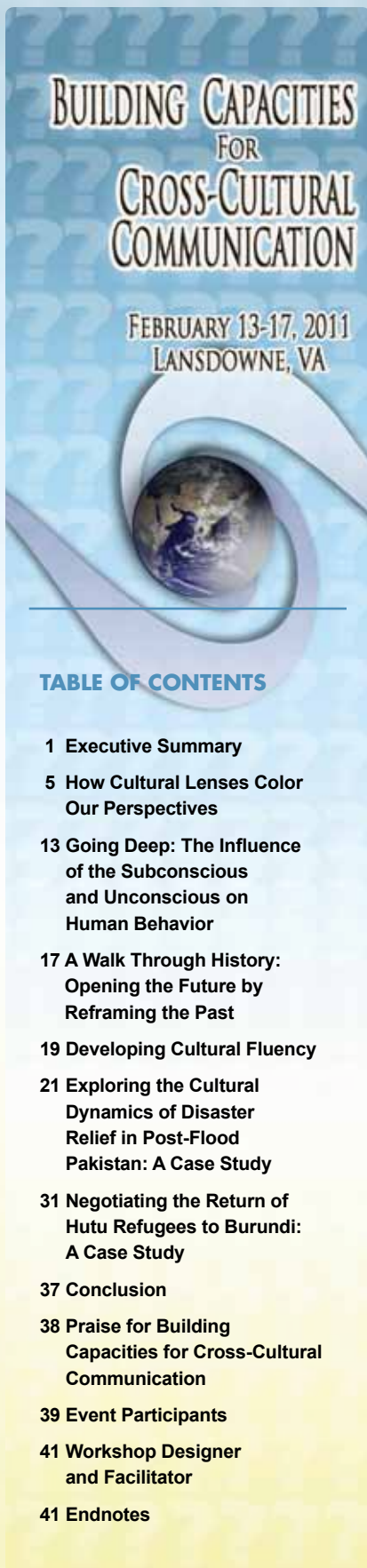


BUILDING CAPACITIES  
FOR  
CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

FEBRUARY 13-17, 2011  
LANSLOWNE, VA

NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL  
MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA





## ABOUT THIS EVENT

The Center for Stabilization and Reconstruction Studies partnered with Dr. Tatsushi Arai of the SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, Vermont, to develop and host *Building Capacities for Cross-Cultural Communication*, which was held in Lansdowne, Virginia, from February 13-17, 2011. The workshop convened 32 representatives from nongovernmental organizations, intergovernmental organizations, government civilian agencies, the armed forces, and academia for an in-depth and interactive analysis of critical cultural concepts and current events. Participants used plenary discussions, exercises, art, and two case studies to explore the relationship between culture and conflict and develop innovative approaches for strengthening cross-cultural communication and addressing seemingly intractable conflicts.



The [Center for Stabilization and Reconstruction Studies \(CSRS\)](http://www.csrns-nps.org) is a teaching institute which develops and hosts educational programs for stabilization and reconstruction practitioners, including representatives from US and international nongovernmental organizations, intergovernmental organizations, government and civilian agencies, and the armed forces. Established by the Naval Postgraduate School in 2004 through the vision and congressional support of Representative Sam Farr (CA-17), CSRS creates a wide array of programs to foster dialogue among practitioners, as well as to help them develop new strategies and refine best practices to improve the effectiveness of their important global work.

Located at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, CSRS also contributes to the university's research and graduate degree programs. For more information about CSRS, its philosophy, and programs, please visit [www.csrns-nps.org](http://www.csrns-nps.org).

Workshop design by Roseann Johnson and Dr. Tatsushi Arai. Workshop facilitation by Dr. Tatsushi Arai. Case study co-facilitation by Mossarat Qadeem. Event photography by Olivia Boinet. Cover design by Jesse Darling. Report writing by Holly Larson. Report layout by Dave Bilotto. Copyright © 2011 Center for Stabilization and Reconstruction Studies. All rights reserved. The opinions, conclusions, and recommendations expressed or implied herein are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Naval Postgraduate School, the US Navy, US Defense Department, or any other agency or organization.

“ Before I came to this workshop, I thought that I could totally control myself. Now I believe that I am mostly controlled by my culture. ”

— International government civilian agency member

## Executive Summary

We enter this world, lying in our mothers’ arms, swaddled in cloth as other infants around the world have been for thousands of years. We then embark on a life that is as redolent in symbols and rituals as it is in experiences. Key milestones in our personal development – birth, education, puberty, marriage, and the start of our own families – will be marked with ceremonies and heralded by those we love. Meanwhile, as members of a particular ethnicity, religion, and nation, we will fluidly navigate our unique cultural context, using cultural carriers, or symbolic ideas

or objects, to help us make sense of the world around us and differentiate ourselves from other groups. Some of these cultural carriers are readily apparent – ethnic idioms, stories, and foods; our nation’s flags, monuments, and public holidays; and religious songs and holy writs – while others affect us at such a deep unconscious and subconscious level that we are not fully aware of their impact. Chief among them: the collective glories or traumas that clearly define the “we” and “they” of culture, whether these events reverberate within a society or across them. Understanding all of these cultural symbols and obeying social norms helps us function successfully within our own culture. However, stabilization and reconstruction (S&R) practitioners have a more



S&R practitioners, including Victor Asiedu, University of York (pictured in background), discussed the challenge of navigating unfamiliar — and politically sensitive — cultural contexts in post-conflict states.

daunting challenge, which is to develop mastery of other cultures. By understanding culture's relationship to conflict, actors can help warring parties articulate the beliefs and meaning-making processes that are motivating the violence. They also can use innovative strategies to help adversaries step outside of intractable conflict patterns, explore shared interests, and co-create a vision of a peaceable future.

To explore culture's role in conflict transformation, the Center for Stabilization and Reconstruction Studies (CSRS) partnered with Dr. Tatsushi Arai of the SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, Vermont, to develop and host *Building Capacities for Cross-Cultural Communication*. The workshop, which was held February 13-17, 2011, at the National Conference Center in Lansdowne, Virginia, convened 32 US and international members of nongovernmental agencies (NGOs), intergovernmental agencies (IGOs), government civilian agencies, the armed forces, and the education community to explore such concepts as cultural lenses, psychoanalysis and deep culture, cultural carriers, and cultural fluency while putting new

## WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

- ① **CULTIVATING SELF-AWARENESS**  
Recognize the invisible cultural influences that frame and guide habitual ways of thinking and behavior.
- ② **UNDERSTANDING DEEP CULTURE**  
Describe how collective identities embedded in shared historical memories manifest themselves and evolve in times of political crisis.
- ③ **BUILDING CULTURAL FLUENCY**  
Learn how to navigate cross-cultural differences and turn them into opportunities for constructive relationship building, especially in volatile post-war contexts.
- ④ **NETWORKING**  
Expand professional networks among diverse practitioner communities engaged in cross-cultural communication.

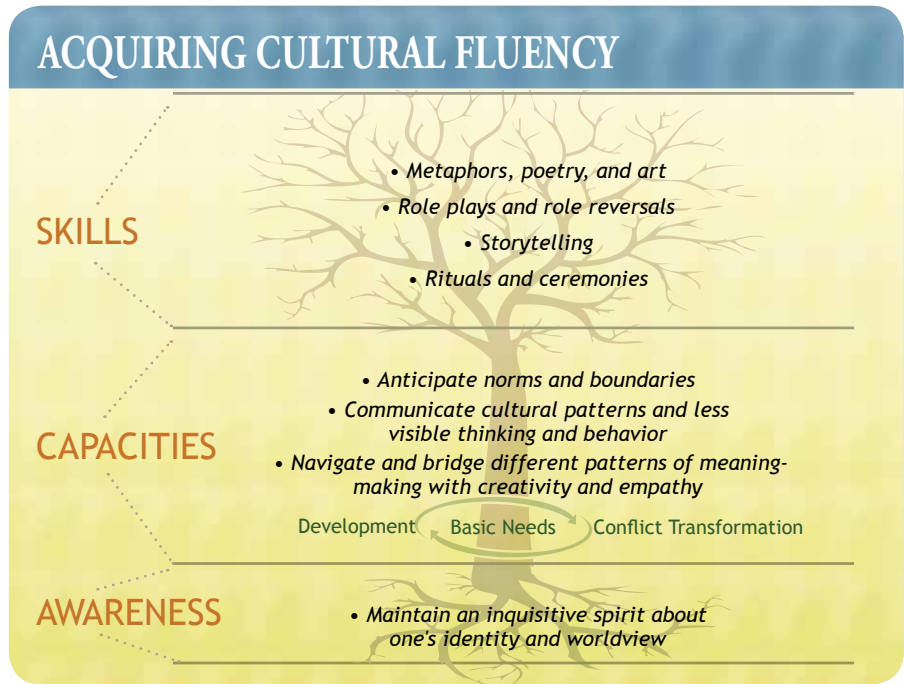
insights to work through exercises and case studies.

Dr. Arai brought his unique personal and professional experiences to bear on course content. Personally, Dr. Arai lives and works in a cross-cultural context: Born in Japan, Dr. Arai is married to a Taiwanese woman, Yu Chun; teaches in the US; and has served as a conflict transformation practitioner in the Middle East, African Great Lakes, South Asia, Asia Pacific, and

North America. Dr. Arai used his experiences to illustrate academic concepts with examples that ranged from the extremely serious, such as his work with genocide victims in Rwanda, to the humorous, such as a marital dispute with his wife that revealed how embedded, unexpressed cultural beliefs can contribute to conflict. Meanwhile, practitioners, who hailed from Australia, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Poland, Nigeria, Pakistan, Somalia, and the United States brought a wealth of perspectives and experiences to share with other participants.



*Building Capacities for Cross-Cultural Communication* featured presentations, plenary discussions, group exercises, and two interactive, in-depth case studies. Dr. Arai and Mossarat Qadeem of PAIMAN Trust co-facilitated a case study on developing a culturally sensitive disaster relief program in flood-affected Pakistan. Qadeem served as a subject matter expert for the Pakistan case study, providing insights into the ideological, religious, and ethno-political factors motivating Talibanization and shaping social behavior in the wake of the 2010 flood that devastated her country. In addition, Qadeem provided an overview of a disaster relief project her NGO conducted after the flood, offering a real-life example of how one organization used a development project to strengthen social cohesion in a fragile state. For the second case study, participants assumed cross-cultural roles as Burundian refugees in Tanzania who held a variety of viewpoints on the prospect of returning to their homeland, as well as the third-party facilitators charged with helping them develop a negotiation platform on this very issue. These traditional workshop



Dr. Arai described the process of acquiring cultural fluency as a learning tree, as S&R practitioners move from acquiring greater awareness of themselves and others to developing new capacities and skills they can use in the field.

components were paired with unexpected elements, such as poetry reading, a cross-cultural talent show, comedic skits and exercises, dramatic storytelling, and even a trip to view some of the United States’ most important monuments and buildings in its capital city (the Lincoln, Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and the

Pentagon among them) to help participants reflect on course concepts, share their cultural perspectives and experiences, and co-design new strategies for approaching peacebuilding and cross-cultural communications.

Since 2005, CSRS, an education center based in Monterey, California, has held interactive workshops for actors on a wide array of topics, such as security sector reform, economic recovery, and agriculture revitalization, helping practitioners increase their cognitive understanding of critical topics, develop and strengthen vital skills, and expand cross-community networks. Annually, more than 400 S&R practitioners participate in CSRS programs, sharing insights, best practices, and case studies all can leverage in their work around the globe. ●●

“ I’ve been a student of culture for much of my career. I want to improve my cultural sensitivity and develop a flexible view of my own competence, so that I’m not rushing to make decisions based on what I think I understand. ”

— Workshop participant

## EXPRESSING CULTURAL CONCERNS

To help participants improve their self-awareness, a critical first step in gaining mastery in cross-cultural communication, Dr. Arai asked them to share concerns they had about their work. (Similar responses have been grouped to reduce redundancy.) Participant responses included:

### Deepening Understanding

- Working through the preconceived notions of other societies I have absorbed through my education or the media that could hinder my efforts to address cross-cultural problems (*government civilian agency member*).
- Differentiating myself from the common biases and stereotypes that are associated with my cultural background (*armed forces member*).
- Fearing that my lack of understanding of others' cultural concerns and priorities will lead to substandard results in my professional work (*armed forces and government civilian agency members*).
- Understanding how the basic human needs of all parties involved affect relationships on both a personal and collective scale, influencing individual interactions, international politics, and post-conflict development programming (*two government civilian agency members*).
- Being keenly self-conscious of my culture as I work in the US for the first time, even though I have lived overseas before (*international graduate student*).

### Addressing Conflict and Security Issues

- Promoting cross-cultural communication and understanding to reduce the possibility of conflict (*international graduate student*).
- Being attentive to the ways in which people's cultural patterns shift during conflict (*educator*).
- Matching the needs of innocent migrants to available resources, while ensuring the safety and security of both refugees and aid workers (*IGO member*).
- Implementing a peace agreement in a cross-culturally sensitive way that avoids violence, promotes social cohesion, and transforms conflict dynamics (*cross-community peace builder*).
- Appreciating aspects of other cultures that I perceive as negative or potentially dangerous (*international graduate student*).
- Worrying that my cultural tone-deafness might cause loss of life (*government civilian agency member*).
- Fearing that the situation in my home country of Pakistan may become worse if we don't turn our ethnic diversity into a strength, rather than something that divides us (*international NGO member*).

### Navigating Other Cultures

- Understanding the nuances of words, facial expressions, and body language, which are used differently in the US than my home country (*NGO member*).
- Working to understand and be understood by others despite our ethnic, religious, linguistic, cultural, and many other differences (*armed forces civilian*).
- Making sure that I and other women are heard within our own cultures where we are often voiceless because of religious or cultural beliefs, as well as in other cultures where we are stereotyped because of our skin color or dress code (*international government civilian agency member*).
- Correcting others' misconceptions about my culture around the globe (*international NGO member*).
- Realizing that I do not stay overseas in any place long enough to understand its deep culture, improve my cross-cultural communication, and develop meaningful ties with cultural others (*three armed forces members*).
- Accurately understanding the behaviors, beliefs, and experiences of other ethnic groups that could inhibit positive change (*government civilian agency member*).
- Learning about other cultures as quickly as possible so that I can work successfully in a wide range of conflict, disaster, and post-conflict situations as an active member of the US Department of State's Civilian Response Corps (*government civilian agency member*).
- Preparing US Air Force officers to interact and communicate with their counterparts in the Iraqi and Afghan air forces effectively (*armed force member*).
- Engaging and promoting dialogue with culturally diverse participants on soft and hard security issues and creating a broader conflict resolution network (*educator*).
- Leveraging interpreters appropriately, to unearth the cultural assumptions behind people's fixed positions, communicate effectively in a wide variety of contexts, and convey messages that can help navigate the divide in a negotiation (*armed forces member and government civilian agency member*).
- Supporting US policy objectives overseas in a way that is respectful of host nation perspectives and priorities (*government civilian agency member*).

“ All of us have grown up with stereotypes of other cultures. It is very difficult to erase them. How can you overcome them when you encounter them all the time? ”

— International graduate student

# How Cultural Lenses Color Our Perspectives

Dr. Arai kicked off the event with a deceptively simple question, asking participants what color his shirt was. While the shirt appeared to be the standard mid-blue oxford worn by professional men the world over, participants offered an array of answers, including blue, green, and purple. Similarly, participants said that a whiteboard in the classroom was white, pinkish red, and yellow. Dr. Arai asked why these

answers varied so dramatically. Two practitioners said that it was possible the participants offering unexpected answers might define colors differently or have a biological condition that could account for the variability. While these were good explanations, Dr. Arai acknowledged that he had played a trick on the group, asking two of the respondents to pretend that they were wearing yellow or red lenses. As a consequence, these participants necessarily saw objects as possessing different hues. “We all wear lenses; let’s accept that fact,” said Dr. Arai. “If we learn what types of lenses others are wearing, we can identify opportunities for creating value, rather than having destructive interactions.”



Dr. Arai interspersed teaching sessions with interactive exercises to keep participants engaged and enable them to practice new concepts.

The theme of cultural lenses deeply influenced participants, who engaged in reflection about their own worldviews and the primacy and “rightness” of these beliefs throughout the duration of the course. Said an international NGO member: “Every culture is ethnocentric in some way. Every group believes that it is unique, special, and has something to offer.” As a Middle Eastern Muslim, he understood his fellow countrymen’s antipathy to US intervention in the region, while as a practitioner, he was able to step outside his culture and realize that the US was driven not only by its foreign interests, but also by a sense of morality in promoting democracy around the world. Meanwhile, an American armed forces member struggled to make a similar leap on the issue of gender relations in the Middle East. Reacting negatively to a photo of Pakistani women clad in burkas who had crowded into a small room to learn livelihood skills, he asked why such women would accept a status he viewed as second-class in their society. However, an international graduate student counseled him to remember that issues such as this one were rooted in a centuries-old



As representatives of different cultures, religions, and ethnicities, S&R practitioners were able to practice cross-cultural communication right in the classroom.

historical and cultural context, that societies continually evolved, and that even his own country had taken more than a century to give women the vote.

As they reflected on their own culture, many Americans became quite self-critical. Several said that although their country is a melting pot of races, colors, and creeds, the majority of their countrymen are so consumed with their own lives that they don’t even notice the

diversity around them. And when they do, it is often in a superficial way, said an armed forces member: “America is culture-lite; It is Epcot Center. It is a place where you can eat German and Thai food on the same street, without really thinking about the cultures behind the food.” Participants discussed the fact that many Americans, who are just a few generations away from the immigration of their forbearers, don’t even view themselves as cultural beings. Said an armed forces member: “Coming into this class, I didn’t picture myself as having a cultural lens. But



I am an American, a Midwesterner, and a member of the military. This workshop has helped me see the lenses that I wear and need to take off.” The Americans’ lack of self-awareness was surprising to the international participants, who had assumed that America’s multiculturalism would necessarily inform their worldview.

Dr. Arai also used a narrative poem he had written to show how different groups’ unexamined cultural lenses can contribute to conflict. The poem describes four sets of weary, thirsty travelers who have arrived simultaneously at a desert oasis seeking water. The Northerners claim exclusive rights to the meager supply of water, while the Southerners say it should be shared equally. The Westerners advocate holding pre-negotiations with each side to determine the different groups’ needs and then voting democratically to determine whose request should be met. And finally, the Easterners say that the beauty of the oasis has given them the strength to continue their journey without needing refreshment.

As they debate how to use the site’s inadequate resources, the travelers



Pictured from left to right: Christy Ojajuni, Ondo State Community and Social Development Agency (Nigeria); Lieutenant Colonel John Hytten, US Army; and Ali Saleem, George Mason University.

erupt in anger. The Westerners and Southerners unite against the Northerners, threatening violence, while the Easterners seek to reduce the crowd’s tensions. However, when a Northerner fires an arrow and kills a small Southern boy, all hope for a peaceable solution seems lost. As the heartbroken mother calls for vengeance, a spring of water gushes forth. Although the water served as the genesis for the conflict, the fact that there are adequate resources

for all is now largely irrelevant. The opposing groups watch each other carefully, waiting for the battle to begin. Just then, a second crisis, the labor of a pregnant Northern woman interrupts these plans, and the leader of the Northerners is forced to return to his wife’s side and beg for assistance. Whereas moments before he was ready to initiate a battle and kill the others, now the Northerner desperately seeks help from his adversaries. A Western doctor steps into the middle, and this peace offering allows the group to rally around the woman, helping her to deliver her baby.

“Coming into this class, I didn’t picture myself as having a cultural lens. But I am an American, a Midwesterner, and a member of the military. This workshop has helped me see the lenses that I wear and need to take off.”

— *Armed forces member*

Dr. Arai asked participants what they thought of this poem. An armed forces member cited the poem’s opening, saying that the groups of travelers all had different needs, but that they were all legitimate. Meanwhile, a government civilian agency representative said, “Oftentimes with conflict, once the blood starts flowing, the violence overshadows the resources that are being fought for.” Dr. Arai agreed, stating, “To counteract

the impulse for revenge, you have to offer something stronger and deeper: something that lifts people's awareness to another level. That can often come from some of the simplest, most basic experiences in life: birth, death, sickness, and aging."

### Cultural Beliefs Unite - and Divide

To explore the issue of cultural beliefs and social conditioning, Dr. Arai posed a series of simple but provocative questions, asking participants to move to three areas of the room where signs "yes," "somewhat" and "no" were posted. An overview follows:

► ***"I speak English when I dream."***

About two-thirds of the group answered "somewhat." Since many were multilingual, they dreamed in different languages. Said an NGO member: "I dream in Polish and Spanish, but never in English." However, an international graduate student

said that she sometimes dreamed in languages like Chinese and Japanese which she didn't even speak.

► ***"My vision for my career was shaped before I was 10 years old, somewhere between age 10 and 18, or after age 18."***

About three-fourths of the participants said they developed a rudimentary career goal between the ages of 10 and 18, a

time, said Dr. Arai, when children are absorbing influences from the world around them. "Your answers," stated Dr. Arai, "are present-day reflections of the past, but more than 20 years of experiences have occurred since then. Your memories may not be an accurate representation of what once was."

► ***"I believe that human destiny is predetermined."***

While a small minority agreed with this statement, believing that faith or genetics are key



Pictured from left to right: Anne Moisan, National Defense University and Dan Vernon, US Department of State.



factors in shaping one’s future, the vast majority disagreed, citing man’s free will or his indomitable spirit as the genesis for independent decision making and action. Said a government civilian agency member who shared this viewpoint: “Destiny is a poker game. You get some cards and have to keep them, while others you can give away, hold, or bluff with.”

► **“I would like to have my body cremated after I die.”**

While one participant mentioned his Muslim faith as the reason for desiring a burial, other respondents offered an array of unexpected opinions. Those who said no stated that they wanted to donate individual organs or their bodies for medical or scientific purposes, while those who said yes asserted that cremation was the most ecologically sound option or would protect their remains from being potentially desecrated in public cemeteries. One jokester, an armed forces civilian, had a different rationale, quipping: “My wife hasn’t told me what she wants to do with me yet.”

Participants were intrigued by the fact that although they represented



Most participants said that they believed man had free will, despite the fact that they represented a wide range of ethnicities and faiths.

a wide array of cultures and faiths, some of them held similar viewpoints, although not always for the same reasons. Said an educator: “I am impressed by the fact that we can find common ground on universal questions despite people’s cultural differences.”

Later in the workshop, several participants, who had attended an evening session on interactive storytelling, shared a skit with the entire group. In the short play, a young African girl asks her grandfather why the Madonna

and baby Jesus are white when she and her family are black. The grandfather tells the young child that God began painting all the people of the world the color black, painting the Africans a rich dark hue before beginning to run out of paint. With insufficient paint supplies, God was forced to paint Middle Easterners a lighter shade of black, just daub the hair of Asians, and abandon the project altogether when he turned to Europeans, promising to return later to finish the job when he had more supplies. The point of the story was to affirm the young girl’s ethnicity and faith, while providing her with an alternate lens for how she viewed the color of people’s skin. While many of the participants laughed or found the skit charming, one said it was deeply disturbing, as it challenged sacred tenets of his faith. The man, an African Muslim, said that he viewed it as extremely sacrilegious to attribute human characteristics to God. However, he was able to step outside of his worldview and see the others’ perspective: “From this very good workshop, I see how

“ I am impressed by the fact that we can find common ground on universal questions despite people’s cultural differences. ”

— Educator

people are different and how to tolerate it. Rather than get angry, I put myself in the shoes of a black person who is a Christian to grasp this concept.” Participants validated his response and discussed how theater can help viewers think about threatening topics in an accessible way. However, theater needs to be contextualized to the culture, said an NGO member. “Theater is a highly sensitive way of defining a culture’s worldview. It takes the audience into a jungle of symbols.” A practitioner described her organization’s work to help create a common framework for developing theater pieces that deal with conflict to provoke positive change. In Peru, a theater group used an evocative image – a red sash – that male actors wearing military garb pulled off beautiful actresses’ white dresses to signify the mass rape that had occurred in that country. “This was a very difficult topic,” said the NGO member. “We didn’t want to retraumatize the women who had been raped or demonize the military. When the viewers see the piece, everyone understands what is happening. As a result, many members of the military are now taking the problem seriously.” Similarly, Dr. Arai said that he had used theater to facilitate self-reflection and dialogue among Rwandans seeking ways to process their experiences with the country’s devastating genocide.

### Metaphorically Speaking: Using Comparisons to Illuminate Culture’s Properties

Before moving to the academic portion of the workshop, Dr. Arai asked participants to brainstorm metaphors for culture. Respondents,

## METAPHORS FOR CULTURE

### Culture is like:

- A fever, because a society’s sentiments can wax hot and cold (*academic*).
- A shirt or something that you wear. You don’t even question its presence because it is so much a part of your life (*armed forces civilian*).
- A mirror, because it reflects who you are, what you like, and where you go (*host nation government civilian agency member*).
- The wind, because it can be both calm and violent, transcends boundaries, can be manipulated, and has no color (*international graduate student*).
- A glacier, because it is slow-moving, but always changing (*armed forces representative*).
- A tumbleweed, because it is continually blowing across the earth and has no roots (*armed forces member*).
- An avalanche, because it collects items in its wake, but also destroys them (*armed forces member*).
- A computer operating system, because it determines how you process information and interface with the rest of the world (*armed forces civilian*).
- A woman, because it is always changing, much like a woman changes roles throughout her life (*international NGO member*).
- A tree, with one’s ancestors serving as roots and special interests as the branches; these different parts of the tree compete for water, sunlight, and nutrients and attempt to steer its growth in different directions (*government civilian agency member*).

who said that culture was “ever-changing,” “invisible,” and both “creative and destructive,” activated their literary sensibilities to offer an array of poetic comparisons. (Please see graphic above.)

Why are metaphors important? Dr. Arai said that they not only transcend culture, creating a collective image all can access, but also trigger the experiential part of our brains. “When we use terms like wind, fever, and avalanche, we activate our senses,” he said. That can be

especially helpful in post-conflict societies. “How many of you work in communities that are illiterate or have little formal education?” asked Dr. Arai. “Intellectual discourse doesn’t matter there, but people everywhere understand what the wind is like.”

Participants discussed whether acquiring linguistic fluency was essential to navigating another culture successfully. An armed forces member took Americans to task for their monolingual tendencies, when citizens of other nations often speak several languages. However, several others said that it was simply not

possible for S&R practitioners to learn all of the local languages and dialects they encounter in post-conflict societies. “I speak three or four languages, not 120,” said a government civilian agency member. “If we think that we have to learn every local language, then we are wasting our time here.” However, members of the group said that it was essential to understand the function of a language in a culture even if they had to rely on translators.

### Defining Culture

According to Dr. Arai, culture is the lens that individuals and societies use to make sense of the world around them. A society’s culture establishes a collective framework for its members, providing perspectives and patterns for interpreting social and natural phenomena. As such, it helps its adherents determine what is both normative and non-normative. However, it is constantly changing. Internally, culture is influenced by a society’s structures, institutions, and norms, while externally, it interacts with other cultures. Dr. Arai offered nine different elements that characterize culture generally. (See graphic at right.)

Participants discussed how experiences, stories, and customs shape culture. One group member said that the Great Depression impacted an entire generation’s attitudes towards money, encouraging frugality, which was viewed as a virtue. More recently, multiple cultures have reshaped their historical narratives because of the searing impact of 9/11 and other terrorist acts. An international graduate student and an NGO member said certain customs, such as possessing weapons or paying

## COMMON ELEMENTS OF ALL CULTURES

### *Culture is:*

- 1 Shared
- 2 Embedded in the conscious, subconscious, and even unconscious
- 3 Iterative and patterned
- 4 A systematic, and thus pervasive part of community life
- 5 A guide for a group’s behavior and determines what is both normative and illegitimate in that context
- 6 Symbolic
- 7 Cumulative, developing across a group’s history
- 8 Typically passed across generations
- 9 Transmitted socially, rather than biologically

bride prices, were critical to their cultures’ identity, and that their fellow citizens demanded social conformity on these issues. While many individuals work hard to preserve their culture, maintaining customs even in the face of adversity or isolation, technology is accelerating the rate of change, said the student. Tools such as television, Facebook, Twitter, and SMS are rapidly reshaping culture, challenging the efforts of fundamentalists to maintain the purity of their cultural groups.

So how do a society’s members share culture, both with each other and future generations? Dr. Arai said that cultural carriers, or concrete objects and abstract ideas that are imbued with symbolic meaning, help transmit culture over both time and space. Some cultural carriers are highly

visible, such as stories, music, dance, art, and public monuments. However, abstract ideas can be just as powerful in shaping culture, although their influence may be less apparent. Dr. Arai led a group exercise where he asked both American and international participants to share their first names. While some Americans had family or Biblical names such as John, David, or Martha, many said that they had no idea why they received their names. Meanwhile, the international participants were given highly descriptive names that represented their faiths, social status, exemplary qualities, or significant events. For example, Abdillahi meant slave of Allah, while Adonijah meant royal family. Mossarat signified happiness, and Wajahat meant beautiful. And finally an international graduate student said that her last name meant “born in the season when

the locusts invaded.” The point, said Dr. Arai, is that names have incredible cultural significance, communicating a family’s cultural beliefs and values.

Dr. Arai repeated the exercise, this time asking participants for the names of the streets on which they resided. Both US and international participants cited street names that used numbers, historical figures, or geographical features to indicate a particular place. However, some cultures deviated from these naming conventions. Dr. Arai mentioned Taiwan, where many of the street names are drawn from Confucian traditions, resulting in such names as Virtuous Road or Just Society Road. While small children may not readily realize the significance of such geographic markers, they will absorb the impact of these cultural carriers as they develop. Said Dr. Arai: “Something as simple as a person’s name or street name can take on deeper significance in times of crisis.” Participants agreed, citing the citizens of Cincinnati’s decision to change German street names after World War I and the work of formerly colonized nations around the world to rename city names and other



At a cross-cultural talent show, participants share customs, stories, and beliefs from different cultures. Here, Polly Walker of the Peace and Conflict Studies Institute in Australia (pictured at right) recounts a Cherokee peacemaking story with help from Martha Hudson, US Department of Health and Human Services; and Jennifer Laasko and Tom LeaMond, both from the US Agency for International Development.

geographic markers after winning their independence.

Given that cultural carriers are so significant, what would happen if actors sought to harness them for positive change? Dr. Arai shared the example of Mozambique, where religious groups sought to use the weapons of war, such as guns and grenades, in a transformative way that signified the country’s newfound commitment to peace. After the end of a devastating 16-year civil war, the Christian Council of Mozambique’s Department of

Justice, Peace, and Reconciliation sponsored a project, “Transforming Arms into Ploughshares.” The program collected weapons and employed local artists to create artwork, monuments, and musical instruments from these instruments of destruction, transforming cultural carriers in a very powerful and obvious way. Obviously, such work is extremely sensitive and requires the political will of the country to effect. However, programs such as this one can serve as a model for post-conflict states seeking to make a highly visible statement to their citizens that they are committed to pursuing peace. ●●



“ In peacetime, our assumptions about culture go unchallenged, but during conflict, these beliefs are totally exposed. ”  
— Dr. Tatsushi Arai, SIT Graduate Institute

# Going Deep: The Influence of the Subconscious and Unconscious on Human Behavior

To influence culture, it is critical to understand how it affects us at a subconscious or unconscious level. Dr. Arai compared this phenomena to an iceberg, stating that everyone can see the tip of this natural phenomenon, and that an experienced sailor may even be able to investigate the submerged edges of the mass. However, no one can explore the base of the iceberg, as it is buried thousands of feet below sea level. As an example of

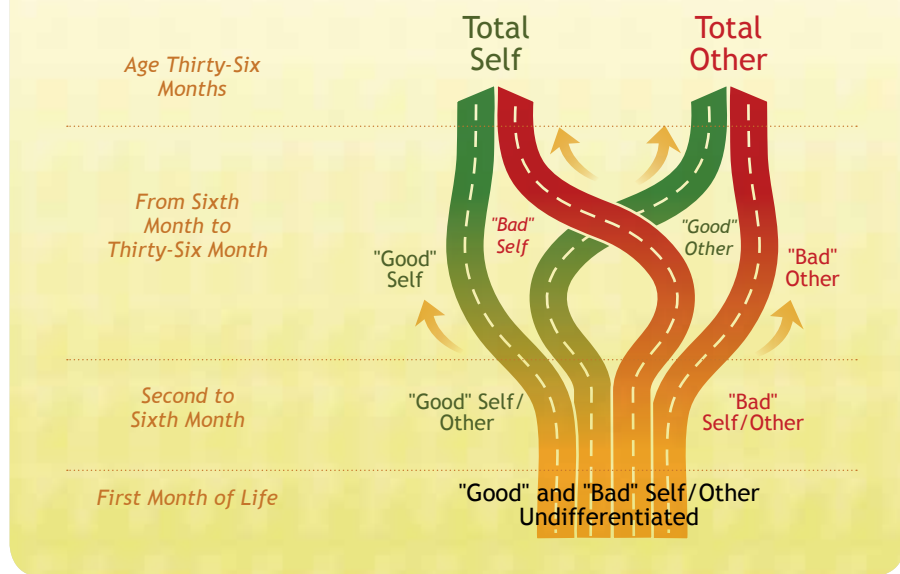
how the subconscious can manifest itself in sometimes chilling ways, Dr. Arai shared a story about a small orphaned Hutu boy in post-genocide Rwanda who drew pictures of Tutsis as anatomically correct skeletons a few years after the genocide. It was likely, said Dr. Arai, that the boy had seen decomposing bodies in the field around his village in the aftermath of the genocide. How might this experience affect the child as he grew up? Participants discussed the process of child development and how it gets disrupted during wartime. In peacetime, the infant of attentive parents gradually learns to differentiate himself from the world around him and tailor his behavior to what is deemed acceptable by his parents. While his parents may disappoint him at times by failing



Pictured from left to right: Commander Tom Walcott and Tim Gustafson, both of the US Navy.

to meet his needs, the child will view them as predominately good. Thus, he learns to synthesize his experiences of his parents (and himself) of being “bad” and “good” into a unified whole. During wartime, however, children often experience serial traumas, such as fleeing from their homes, suffering hunger and starvation, and witnessing the rape and murder of their family members. As a consequence, the normal process of developing a personal identity is profoundly disrupted for children of war. In the example of the Rwandan boy, participants said that it was likely that he would repress his negative emotions about the genocide because as an orphan, he had no caretaker to comfort him or help him process his trauma. As a consequence, they would expect that he would repress these negative emotions and grow up dehumanizing and mistrusting others. “These types of experiences get deposited like sediment in one’s subconscious,” said Dr. Arai, “and can cause regression as an adult on both a personal and collective basis.” Regression occurs when individuals feel threatened and unconsciously exhibit immature or childlike behaviors to protect themselves. For example, war victims may cringe at the sound of planes overhead in peacetime because the

## IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IN CHILDHOOD



Graphic adapted from Vamik Volkan, "The Seven Threads of Large-Group Identity," *Blind Trust: Large Groups and Their Leaders in Times of Crisis and Terror* (Charlottesville, Virginia: Pitchstone Publishing) 2004, 35.

noise evokes memories of being strafed during the conflict.

In addition, extended conflict can trap individuals and societies in emotional stasis. During protracted conflict, war victims are often unable to process their grief over their extensive losses for years or even decades, as all of their energy is focused on survival. This state of grieving can

continue even after the conflict. Dr. Arai cited mourners in Croatia, who still wear black more than a decade after the cessation of the conflict because their missing relatives' bones have not been found and likely never will be. As a consequence, they stay connected with groups of fellow victims and use storytelling and rituals to reinforce their identities as victims. Author Vamik Volkan defines such chosen traumas as the “collective mental representation of an



event that has caused a large group to face drastic common losses, to feel helpless and victimized by another group, and to share a humiliating injury.”<sup>1</sup> Participants said that examples of these events included the Native Americans’ journey on the Trail of Tears, the Holocaust, Hiroshima, and 9/11. Meanwhile, the opposite is also true: Societies can also rally around experiences that are viewed as glorious successes and triumphs, such as the Boston Tea Party, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of apartheid in South Africa, and Pakistan’s World Cup victory, said group members. According to Volkan, collective mental representations of these events are “passed from generation to generation through caretaker-child interactions and by participation in ceremonies that recall the past success.”<sup>2</sup> Not surprisingly, one group’s triumph is usually another’s loss. Saddam Hussein’s execution, a chosen glory for the West, was viewed by some of the former Ba’athists as a devastating loss.

Dr. Arai stated that chosen traumas can harm political relationships between countries, sowing seeds of discord, and setting the stage

## THE CONNECTION BETWEEN CULTURE AND CONFLICT

### CULTURE

*influences conflict by:*

- Framing the possibilities for conflict behaviors.
- Telling us which kinds of behaviors are preferable in a given context and why.
- Defining who “we” and “they” are in a dispute.
- Connecting past, present, and future together.
- Using shared symbols to spread conflict across a society.

### CONFLICT

*influences culture by:*

- Changing the cultural carriers that are used to deliver meaning.
- Fueling the creation of collective traumas and glories when violence is widespread.
- Motivating refugees to idealize their view of home.
- Inspiring the creation of new symbols when different cultural groups merge.
- Accelerating the sharing and perpetuation of social ideologies and symbols.

Source: Dr. Tatsushi Arai, course materials.

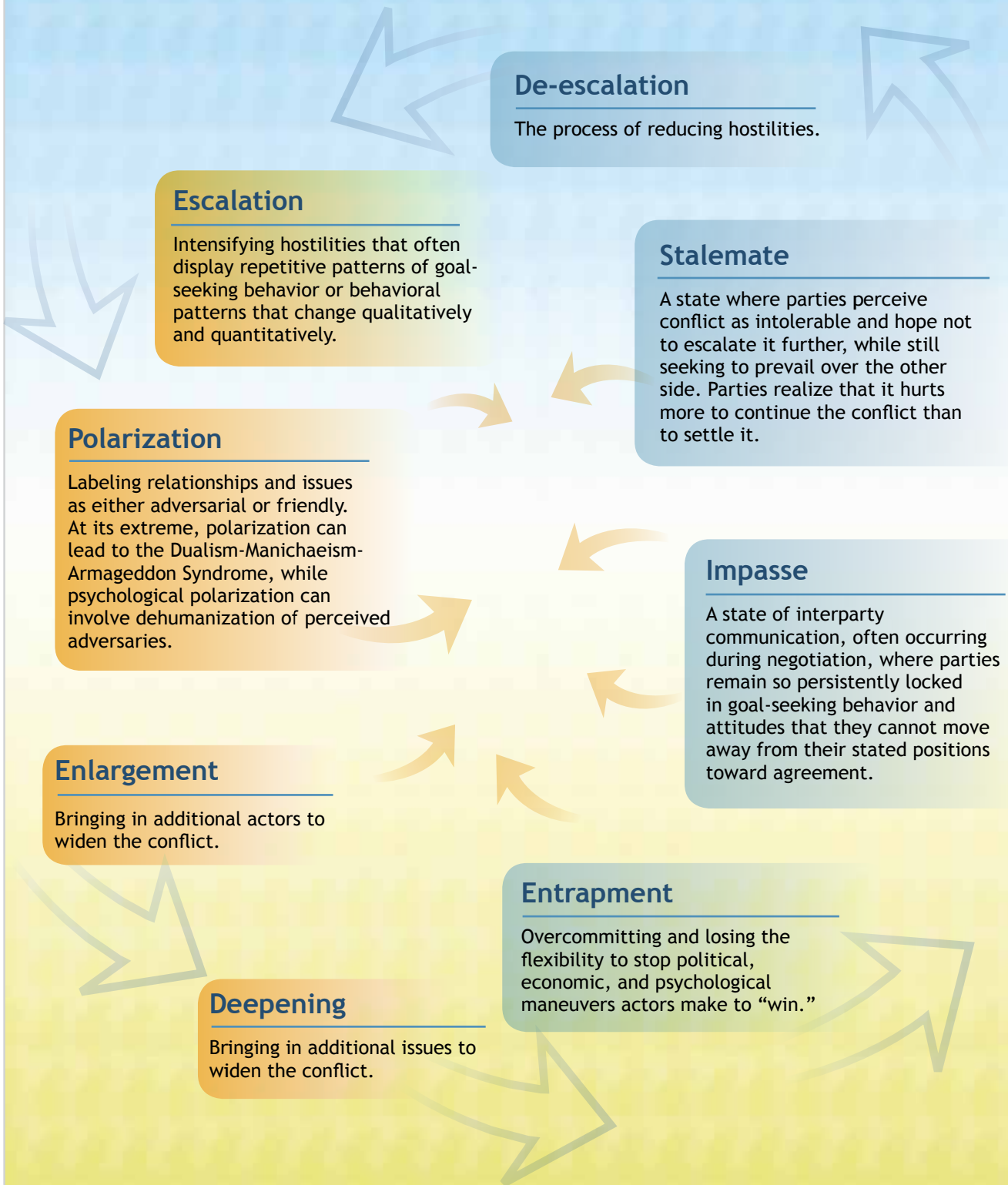
for future conflict. As an example, he provided a short case study on Japan’s Yasukuni Shrine, which honors those who died serving Japan in wars between 1867 to 1951. At this Shinto shrine in Tokyo, a Book of Souls lists nearly 2.5 million war dead, including more than 1,000 who were convicted

of war crimes by an international military tribunal.<sup>3</sup> Public ceremonies, which have been attended by Japanese prime ministers, reinforce Shinto worshippers’ beliefs that the souls of these dead are merging with gods and that Japanese’s conflict history is solely one of self-defense, not aggression. Dignitaries from neighboring countries, including China, Korea, and Taiwan, have spoken out against the shrine and accused the Japanese government of promoting a revisionist history, particularly about its actions in World War II.<sup>4</sup> As a counter-example, an NGO member cited Lech Walesa and the Solidarity movement: While Walesa could have had his day in court, fighting the Polish Government, he decided that legal action would divide his country further. ●●

“ Participants discussed how events such as 9/11, which is viewed by one group as a collective trauma, or shared loss and humiliation, can be viewed by other cultures as a collective glory, or cultural triumph. ”

## CONFLICT DYNAMICS

Protracted conflict can go through repeated cycles that include such phases as:



“ I was slightly surprised to see the fall of the shah included in the American timeline. I had never thought of it being important. I find it very interesting that we have one way of looking at events and you have another way. ”

— International NGO member

## A Walk Through History: Opening the Future by Reframing the Past

One way to help warring parties break seemingly intractable conflict patterns is to help them understand the other side’s perspectives on the events fueling the conflict. In his work as a practitioner, Dr. Arai often uses a tool called “A Walk Through History,” an experiential method of performing a conflict analysis developed by former US diplomat Joseph Montville. To adapt this technique to his dialogues, Dr. Arai asks disputing parties to select

eight seminal events that shape the nature of the conflict between them. The participants write the events on sheets of paper and lay them down on the floor in two chronologically ordered columns, then slowly walk the length of the timeline as they review each event. Afterwards, they discuss each event and why they chose it as part of the conflict history. Dr. Arai used this exercise to good effect while facilitating a dialogue between Chinese and Taiwanese delegates over the Taiwanese Strait. While the Taiwanese identified the Japanese takeover of Taiwan in 1895 as the start of the conflict, the Chinese started their timeline with the unification of China in 221 BC. Such discoveries can prove

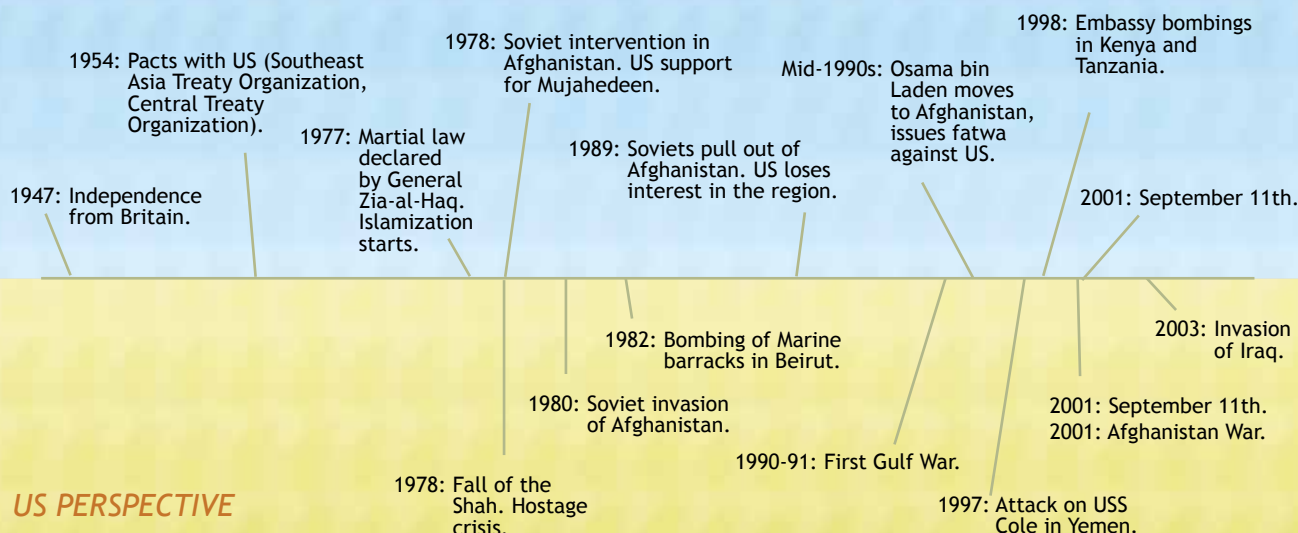


Group members participated in "A Walk through History," looking at US and Pakistani participants' perspectives on the seminal events influencing their nations' relationship.

## GROUP EXERCISE: A WALK THROUGH HISTORY

### TIMELINE OF US-PAKISTAN RELATIONS

#### PAKISTAN PERSPECTIVE



truly illuminating to the other side, creating opportunities for deeper dialogue and understanding cultural others' perspectives. At the workshop, Dr. Arai asked US and Pakistani participants to do the same, choosing several events that contributed to 9/11 and then identifying major milestones in the countries' tense relationship since. While the relationships between participants at the workshop were obviously cordial and open, the exercise was still insightful, providing a window into the differences in cultural perspectives.

Practitioners discussed the two timelines. Two obvious takeaways included the facts that US and Pakistani participants chose different events that reflected their cultural

lenses and interpretations of each nation's history, and the Pakistani timeline started 40 years before the US one. In addition, the Americans said that their timeline focused on events that really captured the attention of average citizens (hence, the exclusion of Osama bin Laden's fatwa, which occurred before 9/11) and revealed a preoccupation with military operations. Meanwhile, they stated that the Pakistani timeline was regionally focused and religiously motivated. Dr. Arai agreed with the first assertion, stating that the Pakistani participants selected events that occurred in their country or had direct, immediate consequences for their country (such as the 1978 Soviet intervention of Afghanistan), while the US chronology was geographically broader-based. This pattern of "high-low power dynamics is often present in conflicting parties' chronologies,"

he said, citing the ongoing disputes between Taiwan and Mainland China and Palestine and Israel as two other examples. In such instances, the low-power party focuses narrowly on its bilateral relationship with its adversary, while the high-power entity views its low-power counterpart as just one of many political actors that populate the landscape.

Two international participants offered their own perceptions of the two timelines. One of the creators of the Pakistani chronology said, "This is not an Islamic perspective, but a Pakistani one. The timeline is a history of the US-Pakistani relationship, in which we have experienced many betrayals." Similarly, an IGO member said that the US timeline evinced a history of ever-evolving self-interests: "When the US no longer has an interest in a country, it leaves." ●●

“ By attending this workshop, I have realized that one of the biggest needs is for us to ask each other questions. By so doing, we develop a deeper understanding of each other. ”

— International graduate student

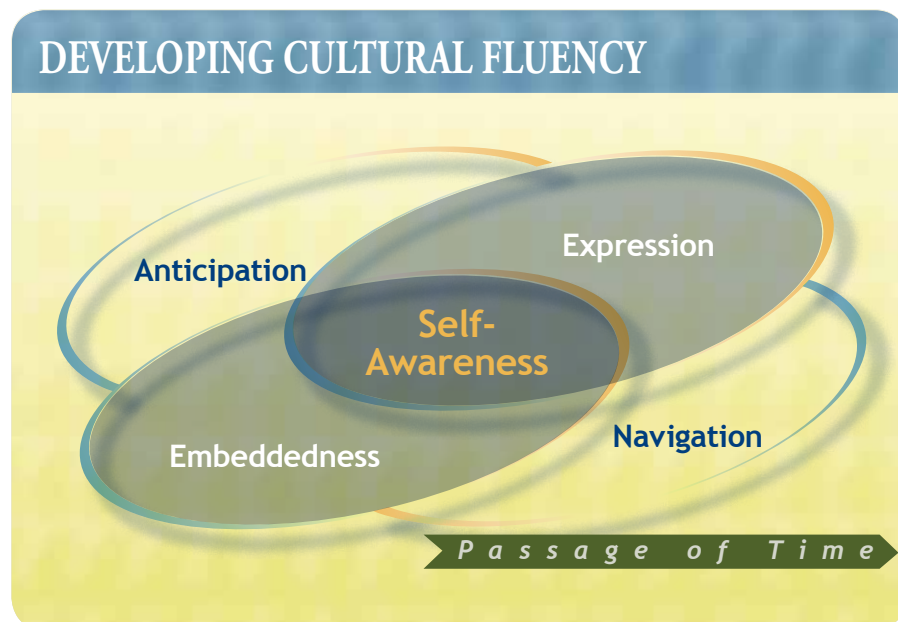
# Developing Cultural Fluency

Individuals steeped in their own cultures can easily navigate them, using preconditioned social frameworks to interpret and make sense of the world around them. To function successfully in another cultural context, however, these individuals will need to develop four critical capacities.

These capacities are:

### Anticipation

- Observing behavioral patterns of cultural others, considering not only their words, but also their beliefs and values
- Articulating others’ patterns of meaning making, while understanding that they are continually evolving
- Reflecting on one’s own cultural beliefs and values, considering how they have evolved and shaped us
- Exploring how these different patterns interact on an ongoing basis



S&R practitioners can develop cultural fluency by practicing the skills of anticipation, expression, embeddedness, and navigation when working across cultures.

- Incorporating new insights about one’s self and others into personal belief systems

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### Embeddedness

- Acknowledging that deep-seated assumptions affect us unconsciously and subconsciously
- Challenging our feelings of unfamiliarity with cultural others
- Dialoguing with cultural others about the assumptions we make
- Reflecting on how key experiences have shaped us throughout our lives
- Considering the way cultural others have developed their own assumptions

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### Expression

- Explaining our beliefs and values and their embedded meanings
- Encouraging cultural others to articulate their meaning-making processes
- Suspending value judgments of other cultures
- Empathically exploring each other’s assumptions as deeply and broadly as possible

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### Navigation

- Recognizing how cultural expectations and patterns affect us in any given social context
- Pragmatically envisioning how to co-create a future of cross-cultural interdependence, leveraging both differences and commonalities
- Taking joint action toward achieving the vision, adjusting as necessary

To illustrate how cultural fluency works, Dr. Arai used a simple cultural idiom: “I can not only read, but....” English speakers would most likely expect the next word to be “write,” but would probably accept a range of other related options such as “speak,” “understand,” or “translate.” However, when Dr. Arai sought to finish the statement by using the words “sleep” or “bungee jump,” participants started laughing. Why? His response did not fit their cultural or linguistic expectations, as it was so far out of the norm.

“Our effort to build cultural fluency,” said Dr. Arai, “starts within, as we engage ourselves in critical self-reflection about the cultural boundaries that separate familiar patterns of meaning-making from unfamiliar ones.”

Building on the idiom exercise, Dr. Arai went on to explore how people in conflict-affected societies develop capacities to cross cultural boundaries,

knowingly or unknowingly, as they demonstrate resilience in the face of traumatizing experiences. During his tenure as a university lecturer in post-genocide Rwanda, Dr. Arai witnessed two of his female pupils sobbing uncontrollably in his classroom. The girls were twin Rwandan sisters of Tutsi descent, born and raised in Uganda, who had settled in their parents’ homeland soon after the genocide. That morning, the twins had received word that their brother, a soldier assigned to a volatile rural area of Rwanda, had been ambushed and brutally killed by militia fighters who had suddenly emerged from a forest. Dr. Arai excused these two students from midterm exams, fully expecting that they would take weeks to grieve their loss with their family and regain emotional strength before returning to school. A few days later, however, he was surprised by a knock on his door: The twins had returned and wanted to take their midterm exams. After talking with them, Dr. Arai realized that their emotional composure was due, in some part, to their cultural fluency. “As foreign-born Rwandans,” observed Dr. Arai, “they were trying to adapt themselves to the fragility of life – the fact that the person you have tea with today may die tomorrow.” “Because life is so fragile during times of conflict,” he continued, “time with loved ones feels especially intimate and precious.” Dr. Arai learned that the twins had found a way to channel their grief through cultural ceremonies and family gatherings. In addition, both had decided to become journalists to help transform the deep-seated culture of violence in Rwanda. ●●

“ Pushing the traditional case study concept, participants used newly acquired cultural concepts and tools to design a disaster relief development project for Pakistan that accomplished critical social objectives. ”

## Exploring the Cultural Dynamics of Disaster Relief in Post-Flood Pakistan: A Case Study

Much of the group's time was spent on an in-depth case study on disaster relief in Pakistan. Participants were placed in several breakout groups and assigned roles as international members of a well-established Pakistani NGO. The NGO, which had been operating in the country for many years, had built successful working relationships with a wide array of stakeholders, including government, political, religious, and tribal leaders, and had conducted peacebuilding and community empowerment programs, including cross-community dialogues, vocational training, and income generation programs, as well as public awareness campaigns on women's roles and minority rights. In addition, the group had practical experience implementing disaster relief programs. (Mossarat Qadeem's PAIMAN Trust served as the model for this fictional NGO.)

In the scenario, international practitioners would be working closely with their host nation colleagues to design a one-year

project that would restore essential infrastructures in communities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, located in northwest Pakistan, that had been affected by the devastating flood of 2010. Key infrastructures for consideration included farmlands, water channels, roads, bridges, and other systems that would regitalize agricultural production and connect communities to marketplaces and critical institutions such as schools, places of employment, and health facilities. The project was slated to begin in February 2011, target 40,000 individuals living in five Union Councils (similar to villages), and fit within a budget of \$500,000 USD. However, the program was not to focus on reconstruction for its own sake, but instead should leverage such programs to promote social cohesion, prevent violent conflict, and forestall the spread of militancy in the region.

While designing context-appropriate frameworks was important, Dr. Arai and other case study facilitators, who included Mossarat Qadeem, PAIMAN Trust; Wajahat Ali, Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies; and Ali Saleem, George Mason University, were more interested in how group members implemented the cultural concepts they had learned throughout the workshop. Participants were instructed to work through the following four steps while creating their project:

- Examine the cultural lenses they used to interact with the multicultural design team and local stakeholders, who included flood victims, militants, and government officials, among others
- Brainstorm the social effects of the flood on communities, examining such issues as feudal landlord-tenant relationships, internally displaced persons, and growing militancy in the region
- Evaluate cultural considerations, such as gender, religion, ethnicity, tribal relations, and community expectations about age and seniority, which could affect project implementation
- Use cultural carriers, such as symbols, rituals, and storytelling, in the design and implementation of the project

Before beginning their work, participants watched several videos. The first video was a five-year-old marketing piece that depicted Pakistan as a progressive country, where images of scientists, fashion models, corporate workers, and affluent residents at play populated an urban landscape. Those images contrasted sharply with the next piece: a PBS documentary, *Children of the Taliban*, narrated by Pakistani reporter Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy, which took place in a war-torn landscape of destroyed buildings. The 30-minute documentary featured interviews with a girl who had lost relatives to an American mortar attack; two girls whose school in the



With a simple non-verbal skit, Dr. Arai and other participants demonstrated the challenge of "putting yourself in someone else's shoes."

Swat Valley had been destroyed by the Taliban; and madrasa students, who announced their desire to become suicide bombers. In the documentary, the course concepts of chosen traumas and regression played out quite visibly. Participants said that for the Taliban, chosen glories included the spread of Sharia law, martyrdom, and the ability to kill Pakistani Army soldiers, who they view as apostates to their faith. Meanwhile, their chosen traumas included Talib deaths due to Pakistani and American aggression and Western influences on their religion and culture. Sermons on oppression and rallies and relief activities after NATO and US drone attacks strengthened the Pakistani people's feeling of victimhood, while cultural carriers such as songs and videos glorifying suicide bombers' martyrdom made the case for jihad. For people in this region, regression was occurring on both a personal and collective scale. "Radicalized Pakistani militants

have a simplified worldview of 'we' and 'they,' God and Satan, with no middle ground in between. Children's lives are viewed as disposable, and martyrdom becomes a religious purification ritual," said Dr. Arai.

Recognizing that exploring the deep culture of militant groups would be challenging for many, Dr. Arai asked for volunteers for a simple, non-verbal exercise. Five participants, who represented different genders and ethnicities, stood barefoot behind their shoes. One woman put on a man's sneakers and kept them on, while a man tried on a pair of high heels, only to kick them away. Another woman put on a pair of men's dress shoes and strutted around, clearly impressed with her new footwear. Finally, a man held another man's shoes to his nose, sniffed it, and then slipped on the loafers. Dr. Arai said that the point of the skit, which visualized the American cliché "to put yourself in someone else's shoes," was supposed to demonstrate the importance of having deep empathy for others.

## Practicing Deep Empathy for Cultural Others

So how could participants show deep empathy for members of the Taliban? Co-facilitators Dr. Arai and Mossarat Qadeem asked practitioners to imagine that they were Talib fighters and answer a series of questions, such as “What was your dream as a child?” and “What motivated you to join the Taliban?” When some participants said that their dream was to carry a gun and win glory as a fighter, Qadeem asked incredulously, “As a child?” Her point? Pakistani children have the same hopes as other children, such as dreaming of becoming a doctor or pilot, winning international fame, or being loved and cherished by those around them. Said Qadeem: “The children I am trying to deradicalize are as innocent as any other child around the world. They may experience poverty, but that is never the main reason they join the Taliban. They are usually dragged into it.”

Dr. Arai pushed the idea of deep empathy further, telling a story about his cross-cultural marriage to a Taiwanese woman. Early in their marriage, Dr. Arai and his wife, Yu Chun, had a discussion about the correct way to sweep their tiny apartment in Osaka. Yu



Participants discussed the difficulty of practicing deep empathy for cultural others, such as members of the Taliban, whose worldviews promote violence.

Chun was sweeping the dust from the entrance into the middle of the room, which horrified Dr. Arai, as the pile abutted their bedding and clean laundry. When he challenged her, the discussion quickly escalated into an argument and expanded to other issues, such as borrowing a bicycle without permission and turning the bathroom faucets off too tightly. What cross-cultural concepts could have helped the two, asked Dr. Arai. Participants missed the thread, offering prototypically sound

marriage advice, such as taking turns with chores, acknowledging the worth of the other’s position, and apologizing. After listening to all their input, Dr. Arai said that the problem wasn’t so much a marital dispute, but a cross-cultural miscommunication. In the Taiwanese family in which his wife grew up, sweeping the dust out the door was considered bad luck, as a couple’s good fortune disappeared with it. “After hearing my wife’s story, I accepted her position because of the good fortune theory,” said Dr. Arai. “In the meantime, I got a job and bought a vacuum with my first paycheck, and that was the end of the issue.” Although the story was lighthearted, Dr. Arai sought to underscore the importance of displaying deep empathy towards cultural others and asking the question “why?” to understand their decision making rationales before rushing to negotiation or exacerbating a conflict. “Our worldview frames what solutions we think are possible,” said Dr. Arai. Agreed an NGO worker: “It’s easy to say: ‘This is the way we’ve always

“ My experience in the field – with guerilla fighting forces, the military, and the mafia – has taught me that the best strategy for survival is to get into the culture and develop personal relationships. Otherwise you won’t get anywhere. ”

– NGO member

done something, and not move beyond that position.’”

The Pakistan case study helped workshop participants understand how to use this concept with others they might view as adversaries. A Pakistani practitioner shared how the workshop had helped him use his emotional intelligence to explore issues he previously only had intellectualized.

*Before I came to the workshop, I was quite familiar with the issue of Talibanization and the politics of it. I was under the impression that I would not learn much from this exercise, because I have written about these issues for years. There were two concepts I learned here – the chosen glory and chosen trauma – that helped me quite a bit. I asked myself what my chosen trauma would be if I were a teenager living in Pakistan. It would be American aggression. I would question why my own army was working with the Americans and pursuing their interests in our region. So what would be my course of action? I would join a militant group and fight against the international forces or resist army action in tribal areas. Or if I were very lucky, I would go to an urban area, wear a suicide vest, and blow myself up. I see the*



Participants discussed the fact that natural disasters create not just physical, but also social and cultural losses, disrupting critical relationships, norms, and customs.

*perspectives of the people that we are fighting against, and why a young boy would choose a life as a suicide bomber. When you look at the cultural dimensions of conflict, you understand the conflict so much better.*

### **Designing a Culturally Sensitive Development Project**

To help participants prepare for their case study work, Mossarat Qadeem of PAIMAN Trust offered an overview of the 2010 Pakistan flood. According to Qadeem, more than 50,000 kilometers of land, or one-fifth of the country’s total land mass was submerged, resulting in the loss of 2.2 million hectares of

crops, the death of 2,000 individuals, and the displacement of 20 million people from their homes. Not only was farmland damaged, but water channels, roadways, and vital infrastructures were spoiled or destroyed. In agrarian areas such as Charsadda where agriculture accounted for more than half of community revenues, losses were particularly acute, with a majority of the population losing most or all of their income. In addition to the significant physical losses they sustained, Pakistani communities also experienced social and cultural losses due to the natural disaster.

Qadeem described the work of national and provincial disaster management authorities, which joined with international actors, including the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, IGOs, and NGOs to provide aid, using the cluster system to synchronize efforts. While civilian government agencies were ostensibly in charge, they did an ineffectual job of responding to the crisis: Food

relief was slow to arrive, leading to incidents of looting from aid convoys. As a consequence, both the Pakistani Army and militant groups stepped in to provide relief. Qadeem’s group witnessed religious groups distribute food to 40,000 people in three districts, provide healthcare services in camps, and give 7,000 rupees to affected families to help them recover from the flood.

Participants discussed some of the cultural lenses that they brought to the proposed project. As external actors, they said that their biases might include:

- Promoting external priorities that did not align with local needs
- Presuming that tribal and religious groups were the most important stakeholders in the area
- Demonstrating a reluctance or an aversion to working with militants, who were handing out food and other aid
- Viewing the local government, a key stakeholder, as corrupt and ineffective
- Believing that they were being brought in to help host nation



Mossarat Qadeem of PAIMAN Trust served as a subject matter expert for the Pakistan disaster relief case study.

actors because they couldn’t help themselves

- Pushing for tangible, development-focused metrics to placate donors, at the expense of social programming, the supposed primary focus of the project, which would yield “soft” results

There was an interesting exchange between participants on the complexities of working with host nation actors and ensuring

local ownership. Discussing the tension that often exists between international and host nation actors, a member of the armed forces said: “One of our cultural assumptions as Americans is that we’re here to save you, and you have to listen to us. However, on this project any work that we do will be attributed to the local population.” Another member of the military took exception with that statement, saying, “It’s very interesting that even when we try to separate ourselves from our cultural lenses, we still have trouble doing it. The statement that ‘Anything we do, we attribute to them,’ is not empowering. That is very different from helping facilitate something.” Meanwhile, a host nation representative challenged the group that acknowledged that they were biased towards the local government: “How do you feel about working with a group that you have already identified as corrupt?” That provocative challenge goes to the heart of the relationship between internal and external actors in many post-conflict societies. Entering relationships with unexamined

“Two participants discussed the difficulties with ensuring local ownership. Even when external actors are well-intentioned, they can still unconsciously seek to dominate the development agenda in disaster relief or post-conflict environments.”

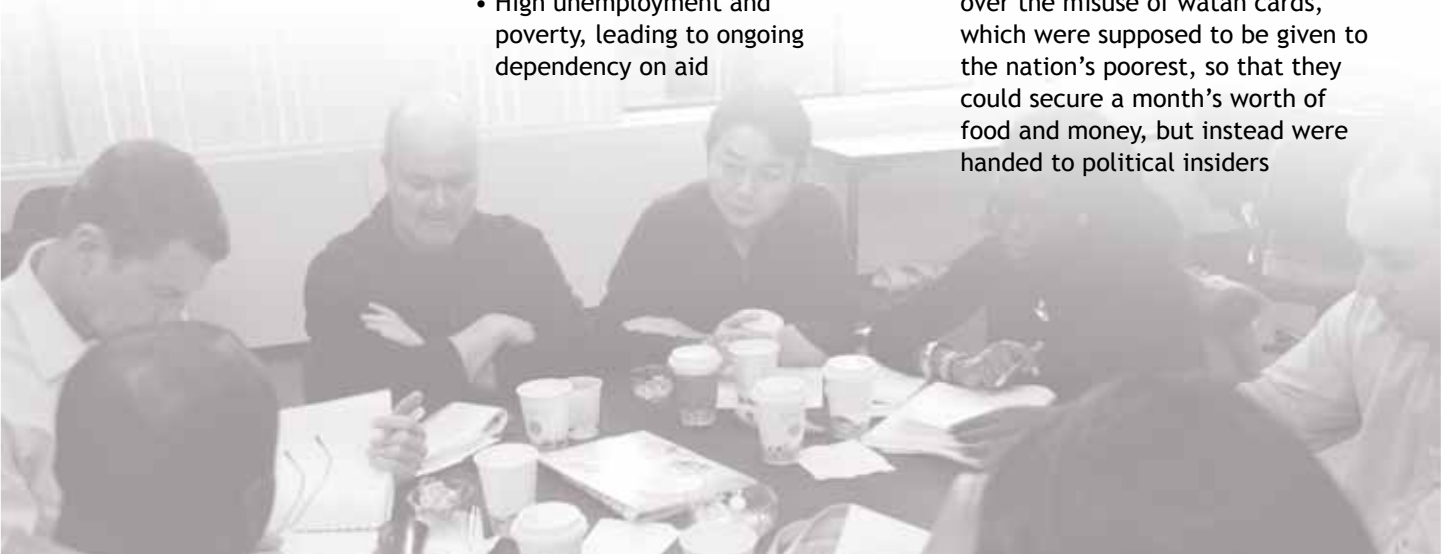
prejudices not only can antagonize others, but often doom the success of projects. However, the hard reality is that corruption is often rampant in post-conflict societies. Witness the ongoing scandal at Kabul Bank, where losses near \$1 billion and corruption charges will likely ensnare dozens of government officials. Thus, finding stakeholders who are viewed as legitimate by citizens and will work for the betterment of all rather than the enrichment of political elites, is one of the preeminent challenges in post-conflict states.

### Participants said that the social impacts of the flood included:

- Psychological factors, such as depression, hopelessness, a loss of trust, and a fear of the future
- A disruption of the social fabric, including established relationships, norms, and customs
- A loss of homes, farmlands and crops, clean water, sanitation systems, food, and employment opportunities
- The displacement of entire communities, including families and vulnerable groups
- Personal identity concerns regarding role, employment, and gender
- Security concerns, as individuals, particularly women, were now exposed and living in open-air camps
- High unemployment and poverty, leading to ongoing dependency on aid
- Religious issues, with Pakistanis abandoning the principle of zakat, or alms, distribution to the poorest
- Food shortages and price hikes, with inequity and discrimination in aid distribution
- A loss of healthcare facilities, which adversely impacted the sick, elderly, and pregnant
- Media coverage and public anger over the misuse of watan cards, which were supposed to be given to the nation's poorest, so that they could secure a month's worth of food and money, but instead were handed to political insiders



Case study facilitators Ali Saleem, George Mason University; Mossarat Qadeem, PAIMAN Trust; and Wajahat Ali, Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies enacted a short drama depicting the pervasive inequities with watan card distribution.



- A shift from a collectivist mentality to a focus on individualism and survival
- Strained relationships between landlords and farmer tenants, who were now unemployed and displaced
- An antipathy towards the government, which seemed ineffectual in its response to the crisis

Practitioners' project recommendations included:



Pictured: Jennifer Laasko, US Agency for International Development and Abdillahi Bashir, International Organization for Migration (Somalia).

### Mobilizing Communities

- Consulting with cultural advisors, especially members of the partner NGO, to develop a sound understanding of the local population's religious and cultural concerns
- Conducting geographic and needs assessments to identify which communities and infrastructures were hardest hit, while mapping

existing capacity and the work of other organizations to discover potential entry points

- Holding town halls and other meetings with key stakeholders, including tribal and cultural leaders, elected officials, civil society groups, women's

organizations, and others to determine critical priorities and obtain buy-in for the project

### Designing and Implementing Projects

- Establishing a local ownership committee to provide project supervision, make decisions, and help mobilize communities
- Creating sub-committees to give specific populations, including men, women, youth, and people with disabilities, a say in project design
- Providing a menu of options for stakeholders to choose amongst, while designing a mechanism to measure the competing interests that would surely arise
- Using project funds to offer grants of \$10,000 and \$20,000 USD to community organizations and training on financial management and monitoring

“ When you are working in communities that are hard-hit by disaster, it doesn't matter if you are American, African, or Pakistani, if you are delivering aid. When Americans distributed food after the 2010 flood, the Pakistanis put the US flag on their doors. ”

— International NGO member

- Ensuring that the project design was both Muslim- and gender-sensitive
- Using local workforces to rebuild infrastructures to promote social harmony and provide employment, while maximizing project resources
- Focusing cash for work or cash for seed programs on rebuilding farmlands, bridges, roads, and waterways
- Restoring water channels to provide fresh drinking water and irrigation capabilities



Pictured from left to right: Neil Horn, US Department of State and Martha Hudson, US Department of Health and Human Services.

### Building Capacity and Ensuring Sustainability

- Working through existing government structures to ensure sustainability and facilitate a project hand-off
- Providing mentoring and coaching to local community development groups to build capacity

### Promoting Social Cohesion

- Beginning each day's work with a ceremonial tea with village elders to review that day's activities

- Leveraging social rituals, such as ritualized storytelling, not only to help people process grief and trauma, but also to celebrate key accomplishments, such as the clearing of a debris-filled field
- Respecting landlord-tenant relationships, as they are the social norm in the region
- Providing mental health services to help affected populations process their trauma
- Using female leaders to reach other women in the community, using visual arts and storytelling, to include their perspectives

In many of the groups, participants focused on critical infrastructure tasks, paying more limited attention to the project directive of promoting social cohesion. Said Dr. Arai to one group: "If this were a disaster relief project, then you would get an A+. But it is about culture." Facilitators told participants that they had not thought carefully enough about how to address existing social challenges, such as rectifying inequitable food distribution or encouraging women's participation in the project. The latter issue may have been due to actors' concerns about observing social norms in how they approached women. Nor did the different groups fully leverage the capacities and relationships of their partner, the Pakistani NGO. Said an NGO member



to one group: “You don’t have to identify the stakeholders: Your NGO already knows them. You sound like a foreign NGO trying to find its way in a new environment.”

In addition, Qadeem pointed out several misconceptions. Among them, that external actors assumed they would be working in a tribal society: “There is no issue of tribalization in this particular Pashtun community,” she said. Similarly, Ali stated that many of the groups assumed that the flood had caused a wholesale loss of community identity. “The Pashtun community has been through a lot,” he said. “We have never lost our identity.”

Another cultural bias participants had was their belief that there was limited to no capacity on the ground, and that they would need to create complex structures to obtain community buy-in and implement the project. Qadeem pointed out that Pakistan has both national and provincial disaster management authorities, and that offering grants or creating multiple committees to give different populations a stake in project decisions would be too unwieldy. “Create a simple system with a mixed group of people,” she



Participants discussed strategies for ensuring local ownership and leveraging local groups' knowledge, established relationships, and capabilities to their full extent.

urged, “and involve them fully in visioning, planning, and monitoring the project.” Concluded Ali: “Don’t forget that you are working with a well-established NGO that is fully aware of community needs. At this point, the NGO is probably planning the project and seeking feedback, rather than getting the community’s input on initial ideas.”

Meanwhile, Ali asked another group, which focused on social processes

almost exclusively, how they would demonstrate and measure the tangible results that donors most certainly would ask for. However, Qadeem applauded that group for incorporating storytelling into its strategy for promoting social cohesion and helping citizens process their concerns. An NGO member agreed with the group’s decision to use art and ritual to promote healing, citing his experience in Haiti and the Philippines. “We had so many traumatized people in Haiti after the earthquake. We couldn’t wake up local capacity. Storytelling and spiritual and psychological counseling are critical in emergency response.”

To provide real-life context to the case study, Qadeem profiled a similar project her organization, PAIMAN Trust, had executed in the aftermath of the 2010 flood. The NGO, which operates 20 offices around Pakistan, provided emergency aid and early recovery support to vulnerable groups, such as poverty-stricken and women-headed households, in seven flood-affected districts. Despite the

“ We had so many traumatized people in Haiti after the earthquake. We couldn’t wake up local capacity. Storytelling and spiritual and psychological counseling are critical in emergency response. ”

—NGO member

fact that the NGO did not receive any funds from international donors, it was able to raise enough monies from Pakistani contributors to provide shelter for 4,000 people and rebuild 220 houses in two districts.

As one of the breakout groups had recommended, the NGO conducted both damage and needs assessments, evaluating and prioritizing infrastructure projects that would restore community mobility and services and enable livelihood and trade opportunities. To ensure that projects met real needs and would be sustainable, the NGO built the capacity of more than 500 individuals in the affected communities: Stakeholder committees managed project planning, implementation, and monitoring. Next, the NGO provided cash for work projects that employed both men and women. While men participated in infrastructure redevelopment projects, women received life skills, negotiation, and vocational training in such occupations as quilting, brick making, gardening, beekeeping, and



Participants brainstormed different approaches to developing a culturally sensitive development project that would not only meet beneficiary needs, but also promote social harmony in post-flood Pakistan. Pictured in background from left to right: Ali Saleem, George Mason University and Alice Wairimu Nderitu, National Cohesion and Integration Commission (Kenya).

shoemaking, among others. PAIMAN Trust also purchased some of the goods, helping to galvanize the local economy. “We bought quilts and distributed them to the affected communities,” said Qadeem. “And we purchased bricks to rebuild houses.”

According to Qadeem, PAIMAN Trust, which means “promise” in Urdu, models its values of empowering the

marginalized and promoting social harmony. Sixteen of the NGO’s offices around Pakistan are run by women, and the group’s logo, “Let’s Live in Peace,” is embroidered on the caps and chadors worn by men and women in the community. The NGO hosts weekly community gatherings and convenes women every two weeks for storytelling and singing sessions. “By reciting their life sufferings, they find healing,” says Qadeem, adding that she encourages participants to tackle difficult topics, such as polygamy, by sharing her own family’s experience with such issues. ●●



“ Factors such as ethnic or political divisions, civil war, and displacement, can turn community members and neighbors into ‘cultural others.’ ”

# Negotiating the Return of Hutu Refugees to Burundi: A Case Study

Cultural studies often focus on the relationship between societies. However, other factors, such as ethnic or political divisions, civil war, or displacement, can cause profound schisms within a country, turning community members and neighbors into “cultural others.” States ethnographer Liisa Malkki, “Displacement and deterritorialization – conditions

which are ‘normal’ for increasingly large numbers of people today – may shape the social construction of ‘nationness’ and history, identity and enmity.”<sup>5</sup> These issues obviously have enormous repercussions for the work that actors do as they seek to help fractured nations reconstitute themselves, not only by rebuilding institutions and services, but also by promoting a peace vision of inclusiveness and unity for ex-combatants and war victims, both those who stayed and those who escaped the conflict.

To explore these themes, Dr. Arai facilitated a role play where participants assumed roles as Hutu refugees who fled their native



Through a role play, participants explored the motivations of two different groups of Burundian refugees who had settled in Tanzania.

Burundi after the 1972 massacre of 150,000 Hutus, which was conducted by Tutsis as an attempt to repress a Hutu uprising. “The highly politicized distinction between Tutsi and Hutu identities was intentionally built and externally imposed,” emphasized Dr. Arai. In the early twentieth century, Belgian colonialists used the physical features of the local population, the number of cows they possessed, and other markers of social stratification to create and institutionalize the identity difference as part of their divide-and-rule policy. “Over the years,” Dr. Arai explained, “the socio-economic divides in the local population that preceded the colonial conquest have become entrenched through externally imposed racial profiles, which in turn have assumed a life of their own.”

The case study focused on two groups of Hutu refugees who settled in Tanzania during their country’s civil war. One group moved to Kigoma, a bustling town located near the border of Burundi on Lake Tanganyika, while another occupied the physically isolated, rural refugee community of Mishamo. After nearly 30 years and several coups and assassinations, the opposing groups began peace talks in 1998, finally signing an agreement



Pictured in foreground: Juliana Amal Obonyo, University of Bradford (United Kingdom).

in October 2001 that included a transition to a power-sharing model over a three-year period. In January 2002, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) began overseeing the voluntary repatriation of Burundian refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Tanzania. Tanzania also offered citizenship to Burundian refugees.

Refugees who settled in Kigoma after the 1972 massacre quickly integrated into this transient, multi-ethnic community: marrying Tanzanians;

adopting occupations that combined fishing or farming with petty trade; and minimizing their ethnicity, religion, and nationality to blend in with cultural others. Meanwhile, Burundians who lived in the Mishamo camp had fewer options. Dependent on aid and subsistence agriculture for their survival, the refugees lived in makeshift shelters that were closely placed to each other and interacted with few outsiders other than aid workers since the camp was physically remote. Mishamo was surrounded by forests and accessible only by a dirt road that was damaged each year by heavy seasonal rains. Perhaps not surprisingly, these refugees had no vision for their lives in Tanzania, remaining preoccupied



with their future return to their homeland. Using faith and ritualized storytelling to make sense of their life in the camps, the Mishamo residents told each other and their children narratives that stressed their cultural purity and posited suffering as a strategy for preparing themselves morally for their return to Burundi. Since Burundians only live an average of 48 or 49 years, said Dr. Arai, the adults at Mishamo would have spent the majority of their life as refugees.

Participants took turns playing roles as both Kigoma and Mishamo residents. The Mishamo refugees spoke proudly about their Hutu heritage, their desire to return to their homeland, and their wilderness journey in Tanzania, waiting for the return to their promised land. They branded their fellow Hutus in Kigoma as “traitors” for marrying Tanzanians and said they were “hiding” in their adopted country. Meanwhile, the Kigoma residents cited their many ties with their community, the fact that they had lived in the town for nearly three decades, and the uncertain prospects that awaited them in Burundi as their rationales for acclimating to their new home. The Mishamo Hutus, they said, were “living in the past.”



Participants discussed the many ways conflict can fracture cultural identity. Pictured in background from left to right: Lieutenant Colonel John Hytten, US Army and Doyen Idowu, Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy.

When the two groups faced each other, participants asked each other questions to learn more about their cultures. The Kigoma group asked the Mishamo residents about their ancestors, their cultural traditions, and what stories they would tell their children if they were about to die. However, the Mishamo group was far from placated and interrogated the Kigoma dwellers with accusing questions about why they had abandoned their faiths, cultural customs, and fellow refugees. When

the groups switched roles, the questions continued in much the same vein. Said a government civilian agency member masquerading as a Mishamo resident: “How can you turn your back on your fathers and mothers? Back in Burundi, they are in the ground. That is where their spirits are. You practice a faith and customs that are not yours. Your fathers are crying in shame now.” Meanwhile, an IGO member and Kigoma dweller retorted: “Our identity is in our hearts. Our fathers are already in their graves. We cannot do anything for them. Living in Tanzania, we are able to have luxury cars and go to social clubs.” The two groups displayed many of the characteristics of protracted conflict including:

- **Escalation** – Intensifying hostilities by displaying repetitive patterns of goal-seeking behavior or behavioral questions.
- **Polarization** – Positioning relationships and issues in a very adversarial light.
- **Deepening** – Bringing in additional issues to widen the conflict. (Since

“Participants easily adopted the identities and prejudices of the Mishamo and Kigoma refugees, exhibiting many of the patterns of protracted conflict as they interacted with fellow citizens who were now ‘cultural others.’”

the dispute was between just two parties, the conflict did not exhibit widening, or the addition of other actors.)

Participants understood the purpose of the exercise, which was to explore the psychology of the two different refugee groups and the cultural ideologies and narratives motivating their behavior. However, two group members took issue with the back-and-forth exchange, stating that it was divorced from reality. Said an international graduate student from Africa: “The dialogue we had would never happen in an African context. Participants would ask others where they came from and establish a relationship first. The conversation about inferiority would never have happened.”

Agreed another practitioner: “We romanticized the Kigoma Hutus as being removed from their culture. That is not possible. The collective consciousness of these people is really deep and so ingrained. Even in the US, Hutus are very connected to what is happening on the ground.” Similarly, the student said that the group stereotyped the Mishamo residents. “We assume that they are naïve and parochial, but UNHCR does a terrific job of helping refugees to understand their rights. They also have essential services, such as schools and healthcare, right in the camp.”

Along those lines, an armed forces civilian noted that during the course



Pictured from left to right: John Connolly, US Department of State and Tadeusz Mich, World Vision International.

of the role play, practitioners used words like “modern” and “enlightened” to describe the town residents and “insular” and “inflexible” to describe the camp dwellers. Similarly, they adopted Mishamo residents’ preoccupation with purity and used the words “pure” and “impure” to distinguish camp and town residents. In the first instance, practitioners unconsciously brought their own cultural biases into the exercise, while in the second, they easily adopted the prejudices of their new identities.

The participants then broke into small groups for the next part of the role play. They were instructed to serve as members of an IGO or international NGO, charged with facilitating an internal negotiation

among these two groups of Hutu refugees in Tanzania over voluntary repatriation to Burundi. The timeframe was the year 1998, when peace talks between Burundian Tutsis and Hutus had just commenced. Reporting back in the plenary session, these mediators said that they had made the following assumptions:

- Several groups said that negotiation would be conducted with all refugees, while others targeted only the refugees who wished to return to Burundi. Returnees would likely include all of the Mishamo Hutus and a subset of the Kigoma Hutus. Mediators would hold individual meetings with each refugee group before bringing them together for joint sessions. These discussions should occur on an ongoing basis to promote social unity and unearth common goals.



- The mediators would serve in a consultative role, creating a safe haven to share narratives, focusing the two groups on dialoguing constructively rather than perpetuating an ideology based on hate and victimhood. The dialogue would use multiple non-traditional strategies to help refugees explore shared interests rather than continually articulate intractable positions.
- None of the groups specifically targeted gender issues, but said that they would use the arts to create opportunities for women to express their concerns. The lack of gender focus was a concern for Dr. Arai, who saw outreach to community women as vital to the success of the negotiation.
- The refugees would have different goals, with the Kigoma residents focusing on quality of life and the Mishamo dwellers focusing on cultural identity. The Kigoma Hutus would be more adaptable, independent, better educated, and more future-focused, while the Mishamo Hutus would be more insular, communal, dependent, traditional, and inflexible.
- Participants were divided on how they thought Mishamo residents might handle some



Dr. Arai carefully chose the Burundi case study to explore themes of “cultural otherness.”

of the issues that would arise during the negotiation: security, transitional justice, land rights, and reintegration programs among them. Some thought that the Mishamo, with their obsession with cultural purity, would fight for leadership roles in both the negotiation and Burundian politics, while others felt that their sense of urgency about returning might motivate some significant political compromises on power sharing and land rights. Mediators

could use such tools as music, dance, and poetry; role plays; storytelling about their cultural customs, collective traumas and repatriation goals; and A Walk Through History to help the two groups of refugees explore their shared history, envision a future together, and align around a common negotiation platform. They also could use cultural rituals such as harvest dinners to foster unity between the two groups and create a natural forum for storytelling.

Participants discussed the cultural lenses they used to approach the negotiation. Many participants reflexively assumed that all refugees would want to return to Burundi, when it was likely that most of the Kigoma Hutus would prefer to remain anonymous and remain in Tanzania. According to Dr. Arai, the Kigoma refugees would represent a wide array of highly personalized viewpoints, while the Mishamo group, with its collectivist focus, would more easily form a unified negotiation platform.

“ Participants brought their own cultural biases to the role play, using words like ‘modern’ and ‘enlightened’ and ‘insular’ and ‘inflexible’ to describe the Kigoma and Mishamo groups, respectively. ”

In point of fact, refugees were given an inflexible “either or” option, said Dr. Arai – either stay in Tanzania or return to Burundi within an 18-month period, beginning in March 2008, to obtain a UNHCR aid package comprised of a \$100 stipend and the free transportation of 100 kilos of personal possessions. Some 162,000 refugees chose to accept Tanzania’s offer of citizenship while only 53,500 returned, he said. And while Mishamo residents mythologized their return to their homeland, the reality is that many of them struggled with poverty, hunger, and land and property disputes after their return. Dr. Arai showed a brief video that depicted the hard choices of two women: one who had to resort to prostitution to obtain money to feed her children, and the other, who paid a bribe to be shortlisted for a house, only to walk away with nothing. Participants discussed the challenges of repatriation: While UNHCR can provide the most vulnerable refugees with special packages, the reality is that such support is temporary, and returnees will need to find sustainable livelihoods to provide for themselves. For those who have been dependent on aid for years or even decades, the transition can be brutal.

An international NGO member applauded the use of the case study as a tool for discussing issues such as deep culture and cultural carriers. “This case study was carefully selected because Burundi is a country that most people don’t really know very much about,” she said. She



Pictured from left to right: Lieutenant Commander John Brooks, US Army and Major Kellie Williams, US Air Force.

added that the cultural narratives of the refugees are incredibly powerful and have hampered the country’s ability to move forward. Two well-respected leaders, Julius Nyerere, the ex-president of Tanzania and South African President Nelson Mandela, provided significant moral and political support to convene and facilitate negotiations between the Tutsis and Hutus. However, in the end, Hutu refugees had to be persuaded by external actors to return peaceably and share power, she said.

Participants discussed the importance of storytelling during conflict and crisis: as a means for shaping identity, exploring cultural beliefs, and creating an alternate space for dispute resolution and healing. While all cultures use narrative, some are more comfortable than

others with the continual reshaping of the stories that happens in their retelling. Said a military officer, “When I hear the word story, I hear things that are made up.” Said Dr. Arai: “We have this notion about what’s true and empirically accurate. With storytelling, what matters is authenticity. These two things are not the same.” Because it is so deeply embedded in culture, storytelling often provides a means for effecting cultural reconciliation that court battles cannot. A student said that in Northern Uganda ex-combatants share their personal conflict stories, confessing their crimes to seek community restoration and avoid the bad luck that would befall them and their clan if they hid the truth. Then the ex-fighters take part in a welcoming ceremony called *mato oput*, where they step on an egg to signify that they have left the past behind and reentered the community as new people. ●●



“ S&R practitioners learned critical concepts and valuable tools they can put to work to help warring parties share the cultural beliefs motivating conflict, find common ground, and pursue peace. ”

## Conclusion

The scenario: A radical religious leader, whose controversial actions and words have led to violent protests, resulting in the deaths of 24 individuals and an international incident.<sup>6</sup>

An imam in Pakistan? No, this incident comes courtesy of the US, where the decision of a previously obscure religious sect leader in Florida, Terry Jones, to burn the Koran angered three prominent Afghan mullahs and President Hamid Karzai, leading to protests and deadly reprisals against UN officials and others in Afghanistan.<sup>7</sup>

This international crisis, with its tragic consequences, clearly demonstrates the link between culture and conflict, as well as the symbolic and powerful role that cultural carriers such as the Koran play in defining cultures and polarizing cross-cultural relationships.

S&R practitioners who work in highly charged political environments are well aware that their actions, while undoubtedly far more measured than Jones' conduct, can instigate or exacerbate conflict in fragile states. As a consequence, they

seek to acquire cultural fluency in unfamiliar contexts, gaining the insights into a society's psyche, symbols, and rituals that will help them form successful professional relationships and work to transform conflict patterns. While external actors are typically culture-savvy, CSRS's interactive workshop, *Building Capacities for Cross-Cultural Communication*, was designed to give them additional tools they could leverage, which is especially critical when traditional mechanisms of resolving disputes fall short with intractable conflict. Participants learned how to explore deep culture, express radical empathy, and navigate unfamiliar cultural contexts. In addition, they used non-traditional tools such as poetry, storytelling, and A Walk Through History to create an alternate space that could encourage cross-cultural others to share their perspectives and version of the conflict history in a fresh way. In such a scenario, culture no longer serves as a catalyst for conflict, but as a conduit for creating constructive interactions and aligning formerly warring parties in pursuing a vision of a shared future together. ●●

## PRAISE FOR *BUILDING CAPACITIES FOR CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION*

"I appreciated hearing from our African partners and friends, because I will work there exclusively for the next three years. It was helpful to hear their perspectives firsthand."

- *Armed forces civilian*

"This was a wonderful workshop with a terrific mix of personalities from around the world. I learned a lot and want to thank the facilitators and organizers for all their hard work."

- *Armed forces member*

"Dr. Arai was really great. I'm still thinking of a metaphor to describe him. I believe that by now that we should all be able to view the world differently and be mindful of our cultural lenses. Above all else, we should always stop and think 'How does it feel to be in someone else's shoes?'"

- *International government civilian agency representative*

"Thanks for organizing an excellent course. Tats and Mossarat really drove home the point about cultural lenses and biases. I have corrected myself many times during the last four days and tried to understand other people's points of view."

- *International graduate student*

"The high levels of participant engagement, with everyone giving their respective views, really helped me learn a lot. I enjoyed hearing from our American colleagues and meeting everyone one-on-one. The view we have from the outside is that every American thinks this or that. It was interesting to hear such diverse perspectives and realize that we can all appreciate each person's otherness."

- *International graduate student*

"We had a learned and vocal crowd which made the course really stimulating. I want to thank my colleagues and the CSRS team for selecting participants from such diverse backgrounds."

- *International graduate student*

"One of the most fascinating things about this workshop was the role of deep culture. Most of the time we focus only on the conscious aspects of culture. We think that is where the problem is. The reality is that we need to solve the problems below the surface."

- *International graduate student*

"The insight that I found most profound was the concept of how culture is implanted in us at a very young age and that cultural carriers define the way we see the world. It is really the children that we need to focus on, because they are the future of the conflict."

- *Government civilian agency member*



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Tatsushi (Tats) Arai, Ph.D., is Associate Professor of Conflict Transformation at the SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, Vermont. Before joining SIT in 2006, he taught at George Mason University in Virginia and the National University of Rwanda. Tats's commitment to peace building has evolved from his first encounter with victims of radiation sickness in Hiroshima when he was fifteen. His journey in conflict work has taken him from post-genocide Rwanda as a university lecturer of international relations and as a humanitarian NGO representative; to the Japanese branch of an international corporation as a personnel specialist responsible for managing cross-cultural industrial disputes; and to diverse settings of multi-track peacemaking in the Middle East, the African Great Lakes, South Asia, the Asia-Pacific region, and North America. As a trainer, mediator, and dialogue facilitator, he has led a number of peacebuilding

workshops for government officials, representatives of international organizations, and civil society leaders around the world.

Tats is a research fellow at the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research, an international advisory board member of Global Majority: Building Peace Through Dialogue, and a member of TRANSCEND: An International Peace and Development Network. His recent publications include *Creativity and Conflict Resolution: Alternative Pathways to Peace* (2009, Routledge) and chapters in *Conflict Across Cultures* (2006, Intercultural Press). Tats holds a BA in Law from Waseda University in Tokyo, Japan; an MA in International Policy Studies from the Monterey Institute of International Studies in Monterey, California; and a Ph.D. in conflict analysis and resolution from George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia. A Japanese citizen, Tats is married to Yu Chun from Taiwan. They have a son, Justice.

## ENDNOTES

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