

S-CAR News

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SCHOOL FOR
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Rethinking US Strategy on Terrorism

By, Buzz McClain, George Mason University Communications Manager, Strategic Communications Office, bmcclai2@gmu.edu

The first televised debate among Republican presidential candidates gave no indication by the majority of those running that ISIS and other stateless insurgents would be dealt with in anyway except by violence. In fact, the idea of attempting to gain acceptance by citizens locked in place in ISIS strongholds was mocked on the Cleveland arena stage and derided as “Iraqi Medicare.”

David Alpher would beg to differ.



Down With ISIS. Photo: Flickr user Kombizz Kashani.

things interact with each other, and the way they get used together, how well balanced, has a good deal to do with how well they work not just now, but in the future.”

Alpher teaches courses on global conflict and terrorism at Mason’s School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, where he received his master’s degree (’05) and PhD (’11). Beyond his education, his expertise derives from experience - he’s been to conflict zones, including two tours as a field leader in Iraq’s Anbar Province “during the bad

days,” he added, working with an NGO to reduce the involvement of youth in the 2007-8 insurgency and to reintegrate displaced populations in Ramadi. In July he wrote a widely circulated op-ed taking exception to the candidates’ violence-prone tendencies they amplified in the debate on August 6, 2015.

In an interview at Mason’s Arlington Campus, Alpher pointed out that along the spectrum of populations in the ISIS-occupied Middle East there is a tiny sliver of “bad guys.”

Continued on Page 7

Commentary

Inside This Issue...

- 2 Network: #SCARSUMMER Recap
- 3 Initiatives: S-CAR Students Link Theory to Practice by Countering Extremist Rhetoric Online
- 4 Event: 2015 Peace Conference
- 5 Press: Media Appearances
Opinion: What We Learned From the Iran Nuclear Deal
- 6 Spotlight: Cecily Cutshall
Spotlight: Samantha Borders

#SCARSUMMER Recap

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

For many people, the start of summer symbolizes a period when they put on hold all school-related activities so that they can embark on other fun and exciting endeavors. Individuals at the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (S-CAR) are no different, but what tends to set them apart is how they combine the simple pleasures of relaxation with their passion for peacebuilding work. Summer 2015 was no exception, as it was loaded with much activity for the members of the S-CAR community.

The summer kicked off with a number of students accompanying PhD Candidate Alison Castel to Colombia. The field experience trip was designed to enable students to examine the social worlds that emerge in the aftermath of violent conflict in Colombia, especially those that have to do with structural inequality, memory, narrative, gender, trauma, culture, and identity. “I wanted students to pay special attention to the meanings that were being made about violence, peace, and justice in the region,” Alison said. A student on the trip, Asha Noor, also commented: “It was challenging in many ways – emotionally and physically. However, the interactions we had, the people we met, and the experiences we had mitigated all of these challenges. It was the best field experience thus far and I am truly grateful to have been a part of it.”

Another field experience that some students and faculty at S-CAR were part of was the Indonesia-U.S. Youth Leadership Program, which took place in both Indonesia and the U.S. The program, sponsored by the Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, seeks to promote civic engagement and participation between Indonesia and U.S. youth through cross-cultural exchanges and learning while increasing mutual understanding between the two countries. Alex Cromwell, an S-CAR PhD candidate and co-director of the program, said, “I was inspired by the meaningful relationships the participants created and their commitment to becoming leaders in their communities and working towards positive social change as they return home from the program.”

While members of the S-CAR community were engaged in fieldwork experience, others worked on publications. PhD candidate Roi Ben Yehuda wrote an article in the Daily Beast titled *How Trump Gives Negotiation a Bad Name*. In his piece, he called into question Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump’s assertions that his



Students engaged in a conversation with the Tierra Grata community in the Alta Montaña (High Mountain) region on the Caribbean Coast of Colombia.

Photo: Alison Castel.

“ultra aggressive negotiating style” would make him a great president. Roi disagreed with this claim: “This rhetoric assumes that negotiations are inherently a zero-sum game. And, while such an adversarial and power-based approach makes sense within a Machiavellian worldview, it goes against decades of research into the art and science of negotiation.” Roi also had another article published in *The Times of Israel* titled *A Picture of Hope and Courage*. In the article, he comments on a photo depicting two Palestinian men shielding a female Israeli policewoman from a violent confrontation in the

West Bank. The significance of the moment was captured on camera and as Roi noted, “our world has become hyper-saturated with images of carnage and destruction, and most of us have become inured to their power. Yet every once in a while something manages to arrest our attention and penetrate our stoicism.”

David Alpher, PhD alumnus and adjunct professor at S-CAR who teaches a course on global conflict and terrorism, wrote an article in *The Conversation* titled *Why Defeating ISIS with Military Might is Starry Eyed Idealism*. David argues that U.S. strategy of “bombing ISIS out of existence” would fail because “this rhetoric is far too idealistic to work in reality. Getting rid of ISIS and groups like it certainly requires seriousness and a willingness to get hard work done – but that doesn’t just mean preparing to get bloody. It means we need to be realistic and unafraid to say - ‘Our strategy is to build peace.’” David’s thought-provoking piece was included in the Aspen Institute’s Five Best Ideas of the Day on July 14, 2015 and was also featured on *TIME* magazine. The article was then retweeted by the Queen of Jordan. David also wrote another article titled *The ISIS takeover of Ramadi Means Hard Choices Face the Iraqi and U.S. Governments*.

Other publications over written over the summer were Tehama Lopez Bunyasi’s article titled *‘Breaking Bad’ in Black and White: What Ideological Deviance Can Tell Us about Construction of ‘Authentic’ Racial Identities*, and a book chapter titled *Brown Ballots in the Buckeye State*; Arthur Romano’s article titled *Police Should Put Away the Military Gear and Build Connections with Young People*; and Karina Korostelina’s articles titled *Reproduction of Conflict in History Teaching in Ukraine: A social Identity Theory Analysis* and *Crimean Tatars From Mass Deportation to Hardships in Occupied Crimea*. ■

S-CAR Students Link Theory to Practice by Countering Extremist Rhetoric Online

By Amani Mansour, S-CAR MS Student, amansou2@masonlive.gmu.edu

Conflict 310/795: Engaging Violent Narratives was a course designed to give students the opportunity to respond to a real world problem. There was a need for the expertise and creativity of university students to overcome an issue that governments all over the world are struggling to counter - the use of social media by terrorist organizations to spread extremist rhetoric online and recruit foreign fighters. This is a growing problem, with the Islamic State being the most notable terrorist group undertaking these activities.

The problem was brought to the class through EdVenture Partners, an organization that acted on behalf of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. It was a project entitled *P2P: Challenging Extremism*, the project's purpose was to provide students from different universities, in the US and abroad, with the information and funding needed for them to develop and implement a social media experimental campaign to counter extremism online, evaluate that campaign, and report its findings.

S-CAR students developed a social media strategy to promote tolerance, diverse perspectives, and empathy. Our three-part strategy hinged upon complicating the narrative of extremism and intolerance in order to challenge individuals to see the "other" differently and to see the strength in using non-violent methods to promote change. To do this, we used social media to share the stories that do not receive enough attention - the ones that provide insight into the destructive cycles of violence, or that show how peaceful, action-oriented alternatives can drive positive change. We shared what we like to call, and also the name of our campaign, Unheard Stories.

Our pilot social media campaign included a short film, a series of video interviews, and a blog that were disseminated through popular social media channels - Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Wordpress, etc. The short fictional film gave insight into the destructive cycle of violence. It showed how two characters on opposite sides of the conflict dynamic had experiences that led to their choosing a violent path, but rather than reaching



Secretary Kerry Participates in the White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism. Photo: Flickr user U.S. Department of State.

any of their desired outcomes, their actions only perpetuated the cycle of violence. The video interviews shared the stories of individuals who had experienced violent conflict and decided to choose a peaceful path. The purpose of these interviews was to spur conversation as to whether violence was justifiable, and to show and inspire non-violent methods. Lastly, the blog posts highlighted individuals who had overcome difficult struggles and how this inspired their positive

work within their communities.

Overall, this three-part social media strategy was intended to provide a diversity of perspectives and encourage thoughtful discussion on the use of violence and alternative solutions in the hopes that it would increase empathy between individuals from different identity groups and empower individuals to be positive agents of change within their communities. By complicating the absolutist narrative of extremists, in which 'everyone else' is your enemy and violence is the only option, we provided a moderate forum within the online space to reduce the susceptibility of vulnerable youth to extremist ideology.

Although this was a pilot project, the work of this class and that of the other universities has the potential to inform the U.S. government's strategy as it works to counter extremist rhetoric online. Equally important, this class provided S-CAR students with some much needed exposure and practice in the development and implementation of counter narratives - a skill we can now add to our peacebuilding tool kit. As S-CAR students, there is always a desire for taking action, that picture in your mind of working in the field and implementing conflict resolution tools, only to find yourself at a desk, probably part of a group circle, reserved to talking about theories. While those discussions are vital to our growth as conflict practitioners, as the different perspectives in the classroom challenge us intellectually, there is still the need for practice - to learn by doing. This is what the course Conflict 310/795: Engaging Violent Narratives provided. It turned the classroom experience into a practice component. We were given a problem and responded as a task force. ■

initiatives

2015 Peace Conference

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

Hosteling International – Washington DC, will hold its annual peace conference under the theme *Connected, but Disconnected: Changing Social Norms* on Saturday, September 12, 2015, from 10:00am to 1:00pm.

The conference, which will be held at the Washington Center for Internships and Academic Seminars, is aimed at raising awareness about women's empowerment and social norms in developing countries, the key role of youth leadership in social change, and police brutality in the United States.

The Peace Conference, which is in its 5th year, will feature experts in human rights activism, social impact, advocacy, conflict resolution, and civil rights activism. Speakers include Teniola Ayoola, George Washington University and Founder of Humans of GWU; Kadiatou Diallo, Board President of The Amadou Diallo Foundation; Hilary Shelton, NAACP Washington Bureau Director and Senior Vice President for Advocacy; and speakers include Kadiatu Turay and Nonhlanhla Dlamini, representatives of President Obama's Young African Leadership Initiative (YALI).



Hodei Sultan. Photo: United States Institute of Peace (USIP).



Jason Miller. Photo: Jason Miller.

Former S-CAR students Hodei Sultan, Program Officer, Center for South and Central Asia at United States Institute of Peace (USIP), and Jason Miller, Director of Campaigns and Development, are also presenting and helping to organize the conference respectively.

The speakers will also lead presentations, Q&A sessions, storytelling, and panel discussions. The conference will also feature an internationally inspired lunch and a raffle. Registration and more information for the 2015 peace conference can be found at: eventbrite.com/e/peace-conference-connected-yet-disconnected-tickets-18214757831

Upcoming S-CAR Community Events

Wednesday, September 9, 2015

Criminal Justice Development in Northern Uganda and Sierra Leone

12:30pm-2:00pm

Thursday, September 10, 2015

Colombian Women and Local Peacebuilding Initiatives

12:00pm-2:00pm

Thursday, September 10, 2015

Film Screening: Enemies of the People

7:15pm-9:30pm

Wednesday, September 16, 2015

Identity and History in South Korea and Japan: From Conflict to Reconciliation

12:00pm-2:00pm

Friday, September 18, 2015

Resume Review Workshop

10:00am-12:00pm

Saturday, September 19, 2015

S-CAR Annual Welcome Picnic - Lubber Run Park

2:00pm-4:00pm

Tuesday, September 23, 2015

The Confederate Flag and the Legacy of Slavery

12:30pm-2:00pm

Wednesday, September 24, 2015

Real Conflict Coaching Fundamentals Workshop

9:00am-5:00pm

For more, visit scar.gmu.edu/events-roster

EVENTS

Student Opinion: What We Learned From the Iran Nuclear Deal

By Sahar Namazikhah, S-CAR PhD Candidate, snamazik@masonlive.gmu.edu

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action - also called the Iran Deal - signed between Iran, the P5+1 (the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council - China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, United States, plus Germany), and the European Union on July 14, 2015, has become a landmark agreement in the field of conflict resolution. Considering that there were thirty-five years of a great deal of mistrust between the two main actors - Iran and the US - an agreement could not be reached without years of strategic preparation and trust-building through dialogue, before official negotiations could begin. In retrospect, policy analysts and experts have lauded the twenty months of negotiations and the carefully planned stages that managed to survive even when the negotiating countries and their allies were confronted with numerous political crises.

Many observers have heaped praise on the strategy, harmony, and professionalism of the Iranian and the US negotiating teams and also the Presidents of both countries who stood firm to reach this breakthrough deal. The selection of John Kerry and Javad Zarif - two anti-war chiefs of the nuclear team who were deeply aware of the negative result of the failure of the nuclear talks - is reported to have exuded "absolute confidence" in both teams. Another noted strength of the negotiation process was Iran's acceptance of John Kerry over Hillary Clinton to lead the talks, which has been analyzed as having helped to accelerate the process. This agreement, though, did not happen within the two years of formal negotiations that the public witnessed. Rather, several stages of elite dialogue, secret talks between diplomats, and backchannels contributed to this.

2002: Dialogue before Negotiation

In 2002, The Iran Project based in New York City was founded to initiate a U.S.-Iran informal dialogue. With \$870 million from the Rockefeller Brother Fund, the project began to bridge and set up the first meetings between Iranian and American elites in early 2002. Dialogue between the two sides continued for more than a decade with well-placed participants from the two countries, including Javad Zarif, Tehran's then chief nuclear negotiator. Later on, but running parallel to this project, the publication of numerous articles and analyses pertaining to Iran, were strategically added from a group of journalists and former high-ranking diplomats.

Recent S-CAR Media Appearances

Donald Trump and the Politics of Personality: To understand Trumpism, Look Ahead

Rich Rubenstein, S-CAR Faculty
Rich Rubenstein's Blog rich-rubenstein.com/2015/08/donald-trump-and-the-politics-of-personality/ 8/21/15

US Navy Seals Plan to Accept Women after Female Soldiers Graduate as Rangers

Ellen Haring, S-CAR PhD Candidate
The Guardian 8/19/15

Yemen: Ripe for a Solution?

Ibrahim Sharqieh, S-CAR PhD Alumnus
Al Jazeera, 8/15/15

Conflict Analysts from S-CAR have appeared on 61 occasions since the last newsletter. These 3 represent a sample of those publications. For a complete list, visit: <http://scar.gmu.edu/media>



Under Secretary Sherman Laid Down a Poster-Board Sheet That Outlined the Remaining Items to be Negotiated. Photo: Flickr User U.S. Department of State.

NEWS

Continued on Page 8

Cecily Cutshall, S-CAR Alumna

By Jackie Finch, Career and Academic Advisor, jfinch4@gmu.edu

I recently had the wonderful opportunity to meet an S-CAR MS alumna, Cecily Cutshall, at her “office” which turned out to be a local coffee shop in Arlington. Cecily graduated in May 2012 and has been working for ICF International for the past two and a half years.

ICF International has implemented more than 2000 organizational development, assessment, and human resources projects for more than two dozen Federal agencies, as well as nonprofit and private sector organizations over the last 20 years. ICF helps clients anticipate organizational and workforce trends, shape and execute a customer-driven business strategy, identify and address human capital issues and objectives, and enhance workforce performance and productivity.

Cecily works as a junior-level consultant

within this large organization but has already gained a lot of hands-on experience as well as had the opportunity to utilize the skillset that she learned from her studies at S-CAR. She is heavily involved with the teaching, training, research, and leadership sector of the company, which she said also aligns with her interests and strengths.

Cecily’s excellent and natural ability to communicate makes her successful as a consultant that provides a vast array of services to multiple agencies and organizations. You can learn more about ICF International at icfi.com ■



Cecily Cutshall.
Photo: Cecily Cutshall.

Samantha Borders, S-CAR PhD Student

By Kwaw de Graft-Johnson, S-CAR PhD Candidate and Newsletter Editor, kdegraff@masonlive.gmu.edu

Samantha Borders is an incoming 2015 doctoral student who has spent time working in Israel-Palestine as a development officer at Project Hope Nablus. Samantha returned to the U.S. in 2014 and established

an online religious magazine called PourOver that focuses primarily on faith narratives for the subaltern. Following a year of teaching and participation in grassroots initiatives in southeast Georgia, Samantha chose to go back to school to enhance her understanding of religion’s relation to conflict. “I chose this period to further my education at S-CAR because the program was a better fit for my research

needs. I am very research-oriented and I want to use that to create new knowledge that can effect positive change and make it accessible to everyone. The best place it seems to do that is at Mason with its proximity to Washington D.C. - the hub of policy making” she said.

Samantha is a graduate of the University of Exeter, where she received a Master of

Arts (MA) in Palestine Studies. After graduating with distinction in the program, she moved to Israel-Palestine. “I wanted to have hands on experience regarding the realities of Israel-Palestine so I spent time working with a grassroots NGO that was geared towards providing educational opportunities to children affected by the Second Intifada in Nablus. In addition to her work, Samantha also worked as a freelance journalist where she wrote about grassroots activism and religious minorities issues in the region.

Samantha is currently looking to pursue research that primarily focuses on the construction of historical narratives in relation to Christianity’s connection with the modern Middle East. She wants to promote conflict resolution through deeper understanding of the religious subaltern voices at play and their integral position in the peacemaking process. According to Samantha, “Because of my deep understanding of the Church and Zionism, I felt compelled to research about Palestinian Christians- a subject seldom discussed in Western discourse.

Outside of academics, Samantha writes and performs poetry. “I love poetry because it gives me the space to express emotions that prose cannot.” ■



Samantha Borders. Photo: Samantha Borders

Rethinking US Strategy on Terrorism

Continued from page 1

Our entire policy toward terrorism is to take out this percentage. And at the other end is a tiny percentage of total peaceniks who won't pick up a weapon ever. "The middle, the main population, can swing one way or another." That's the ideal target for action," he said.

ISIS members integrate into the surrounding community and offer protection and a nationalistic identity to non-members. Eventually, outsiders are considered the enemy and ISIS's ranks grow. And the cycle is endless.

"You can't bomb the causes of ISIS," he said. "It doesn't recognize what they need to survive. All you're going to do with bombing is create ISIS 2.0 and 3.0. ISIS is already Al Qaeda 2.0. We smashed Al Qaeda with a hammer and the scattered pieces fell in that fertile ground that no one got around to fixing."

"Fixing" would mean stabilizing the society,



David Alpher. Photo: David Alpher.

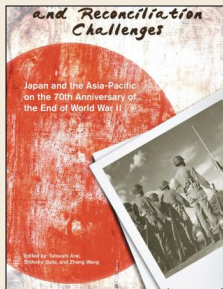
something allied forces have not spent a good deal of time or effort attempting. But once the local culture is stabilized, "it will have the effect of marginalizing that one percent of bad guys and making them easier to deal with."

As the U.S. associate of Saferworld, an international organization working to prevent violent conflict, Alpher takes his ideas and those of like-minded others to Congress and the State Department in the hopes of changing

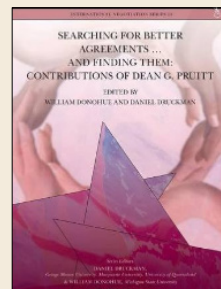
policy. Are those who establish policy listening?

"They are," he said with a sigh, "but they say 'we get it, but we're not the problem.' The problem is the U.S. population and Capitol Hill. The Hill says 'attack, attack, attack' and is creating fear. And they say this because the population is telling them to say it, and you can't get reelected without agreeing." ■

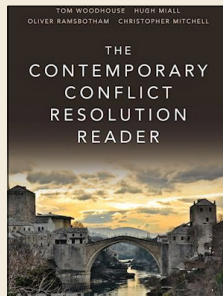
Latest S-CAR Books



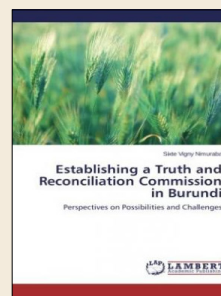
Contested Memories and Reconciliation Challenges: Japan and the Asia-Pacific on the 70th Anniversary of the End of World War II
Shihoko Goto,
Zheng Wang, and
Tatsushi Arai



Searching for Better Agreements ... and Finding Them: Contributions of Dean G. Pruitt
William Donohue, and
Daniel Druckman



The Contemporary Conflict Resolution Reader
Tom Woodhouse, ed.
Hugh Miall, ed.
Oliver Ramsbotham, ed. and
Christopher Mitchell ed.



Establishing a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Burundi: Perspectives on Possibilities and Challenges
Sixte Vigny Nimuraba

What We Learned From the Iran Nuclear Deal

Continued from page 5

Ergo, these behind-the-scenes dialogues helped to reduce any apprehension that either side felt, then pave the way for formal talks to begin.

2008: Five Years To Create Context

From 2008, after the US and Iran became convinced about the importance of direct engagement, acknowledging a mutual relationship, and admitted that the dispute was amenable to negotiation, official meetings between the two governments started. Ambassador William Burns was selected - based on his knowledge of Iranian diplomacy and culture - and dispatched to meet with his Iranian counterparts; joining envoys from Britain, China, France, Germany, and Russia. Between 2008 and 2013, several secret meetings took place in Oman and other locations to discuss what was negotiable, and what norms and standards would govern the process of negotiation. In addition, negotiations also examined the proper way to handle thirty five years of a non-sustained diplomatic contact, filled with mutual suspicion and grievance between the U.S. and Iran.

The Agreement

After eleven years of consistent dialogues, the negotiating parties sat at the same table in public on July 14, 2015,



Secretary Kerry Taking a Walk with Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif During Nuclear Program Talks. Photo: Flickr User U.S. Department of State.

and reached the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action or "Iran Deal." The strong efforts that the two American and Iranian Presidents' administrations put in during the last two years to reach this peace agreement to prevent war has opened a new chapter in negotiation techniques in the field of conflict resolution.

After the deal was signed, "the invisible man" - John Kerry's deputy, Ambassador Burns - appeared in public and in op-eds and interviews and discussed how difficult the entire process was. "It was really an unknown territory. And, you know, I was skeptical that we could make much progress. And I think it's fair to say that our Iranian counterparts were also skeptical given the history of this issue."

This agreement will no doubt go down in the annals of history as a pivotal period in US-Iran relations. Currently though, the next challenge would be for both presidents to do some more work in making this deal acceptable to everyone. President Obama must convince Congress to place the Iran Deal into effect - the congressional review period ends in mid-September - while President Rouhani of Iran is still educating domestic hardliners on the benefits of global peace and "win-win" agreement for all parties. ■



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