



UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE

## **ENGAGING WITH IDENTITY-BASED DIFFERENCES**

SEPTEMBER 22-25, 2009

9:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Course Facilitator:  
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In today's complex peacebuilding missions, civilian personnel and soldiers are routinely required to work with religious, ethnic, tribal, and minority communities. Participants in the course will learn how to engage these communities in effective and sustainable ways. Identity-based conflicts rooted in ethnic or religious differences pose distinctive challenges for third-party mediators and other advisors. Parties to such conflicts often fear the annihilation of their group or their way of life, making them resistant to compromise or interest-based negotiations. The course will outline strategies for addressing these challenges, including countering hate speech and exclusionary policies, engaging religious and tribal leaders in peacebuilding efforts, establishing trust through intergroup dialogues, promoting educational reforms, and other measures. An important aim of the course is to convey that ethnic or religious conflict is neither "natural" nor inevitable and that applied conflict resolution is highly compatible with both religious peacebuilding and traditional reconciliation practices.

**Objectives:** By the end of this course, participants will be better able to:

- Understand characteristics of conflicts involving ethnic, religious, and tribal identities
- Recognize how "conflict entrepreneurs" manipulate identities in order to advance their own agendas
- Be mindful of and navigate how different religious traditions promote peacebuilding
- Make use of ritual and symbol
- Utilize indigenous or traditional reconciliation measures

## Teaching Methodology and Structure

The course takes a two-fold approach to teaching. It is largely *elicitive* in nature, meant to draw out and utilize each participant's professional experience. The class also has a *prescriptive* component: new concepts and analytical tools are introduced, but with the aim for each student to identify and articulate how these ideas can be *directly applied* to their work.

A number of *interactive exercises* will also be used as learning tools: case studies, role-playing, simulations, guided discussions, etc.

## Course Requirements

Students are asked to attend every session and to participate in all activities and discussions/debriefs. (Related readings can be found on the CD provided in the course packet.)

### September 22: Grasping Identity and the Challenge of “Conflict Entrepreneurs”

#### 1) Exercise: *Personal and Professional Experiences in the Field*

The purpose of the exercise will be for the course participants to 1) map out the wealth of knowledge and experience that is available to them through their colleagues; 2) start to build meaningful relationships; and 3) clarify expectations from the course.

#### 2) Guided Discussion and Exercise: *Dealing with the Blurred Boundaries between Ethnicity and Religion*

Course participants will be divided into small groups to explore the relationship between two different kinds of development projects and related preconceptions about ethnic and religious conflict.

#### 3) Guided Discussion and Exercise: *Collective Traumas and “Identity Politics”*

Frameworks are presented to approach the main groups involved in protracted international conflicts: 1) an understanding of collective traumas; and 2) a view on the “localization” of identity. These ideas form the basis of skill sets needed to address the problem of “conflict entrepreneurs,” or demagogues who enflame ethnic and religious identities as means to advance complex political and financial agendas.

#### 4) Exercise: *Identifying and Dealing with “Conflict Entrepreneurs”*

Course participants will analyze and address “conflict entrepreneurs” in the fictional case of Bambaku. Teams will present recommendations how to better deal with similar occurrences in the future, as 1) general preventative measures, and 2) crisis management techniques.

*Related Readings:*

Eide, Espen Barth. "Conflict entrepreneurship: on the art of waging civil war" *PRIO Report*, 4(1997), pp. 41-69.

Smock, David. "Religion in World Affairs: Its Role in Conflict and Peace" USIP Special Report 201, February 2008

Tavernise, Sabrina. "Turkish Schools Offer Pakistan a Gentler Vision of Islam" *New York Times*, May 4, 2008.

### **September 23: Engaging Local Actors through Dialogue and Ritual**

#### 1) Exercise and Small-Group Discussion: *When their Religion is Different, When their Secularism is Different*

Participants use a perception-building activity to explore the issue of how their own personal values or religious faith shapes their conception of peacebuilding. The aim is to demonstrate that engaging religious actors can often be qualitatively different from secular groups and outreach or overtures may be unsuccessful unless they actively resonate with local parties' worldview. The focus is on a more nuanced understanding of the religious mindset, in both traditional and modern forms.

#### 2) Guided Discussion and Exercise: *Religion and Politics: Differences in Practice*

Religious traditions underpin and guide politics, even within the largely secular West. The discussion focuses on drawing out these often implicit influences and it is noted how some taken-for-granted principles of peacebuilding are more specifically Western than universal in nature.

The exercise covers principles of various religious traditions that promote conflict resolution. It makes use of theological language and concepts to emphasize how differences in religious peacebuilding materialize and become complicated when dealing with Buddhist, Hindu, and Islamic cultures. Participants will brainstorm ways to approach and manage these differences.

#### 3) Guided Discussion and Exercise: *Apology, Honor, and Ritual Transformation*

Rituals are crucial tools of peacemaking when there are symbolic dimensions of conflict and parties cannot or will not articulate their true feelings through the use of words in dialogue. Techniques are relayed to recognize nonverbal cues for gestures of apology or honor and how to utilize ritual and symbol to bring about tangible, lived experiences of change. Participants will role-play groups in divided societies, and must agree upon the design of either 1) joint mourning rituals or 2) a monument to the deceased (of both groups) as part of a peace process.

#### 4) Guest Talk: Ayse Kadayifi-Orellana, School of International Service, American University

#### *Related Readings:*

Atran, Scott and Jeremy Ginges, "How Words Could End a War" *NY Times*, January 25, 2009

Gopin, Marc. "The Use of the Word and Its Limits: A Critical Evaluation of Religious Dialogue as Peacemaking" in David Smock, ed. *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding* (Washington DC: USIP Press, 2002).

Streusand, Douglas E. and Harry D. Tunnell IV. "Choosing Words Carefully: Language to Help Fight Islamic Terrorism" National Defense University, Center for Strategic Communications, May 23, 2006

## **September 24: Utilizing Traditional Governance and Reconciliation Practices**

### 1) Guided Discussion and Exercise: *Reframing the In-Group*

Many cultures and peoples in conflict have traditional reconciliation practices that are overlooked or underutilized by third party mediators and other advisors. Participants will be asked to analyze the potential advantages and pitfalls of using such resources to try to enhance the legitimacy of outside peacebuilding efforts.

### 2) Case-Study Exercise: *Hostages in Iraq*

Three Japanese nationals in Iraq were abducted in April 2004, with the demand for their release being the withdrawal of all Japanese forces in the country. Course participants will be given the general outlines of a strategy successfully used by the Japanese government at the time, and will be asked to make use of this approach to present specific recommendations to secure the hostages' freedom.

### 3) Discussion and Exercise: *Empowering Women in Post-Conflict Environments*

It is important to involve women in peacebuilding, but the challenge lies in navigating the patriarchal cultures of many developing countries. Participants will be asked to devise strategies to empower women in the "opportunity space" often provided by post-conflict situations.

### 4) Guest Talk: Susan Hayward, USIP

#### *Related Readings:*

Irani, George E. and Nathan C. Funk. "Rituals of Reconciliation: Arab-Islamic Perspectives" Kroc Institute Occasional Paper # 19:OP: 2, August 2000

## **September 25: Identity and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding**

### 1) Guided Discussion and Exercise: *Different Levels of Trust*

Deeply divided societies tend to remain segregated even in a successful peace process. Participants will reflect upon the ability of local leaders in these communities to build trust, and how outside advisors can shepherd this process in moments of crisis.

## 2) Guided Discussion and Exercise: Using Ex-Combatants as Change Agents

Militias commonly form along ethnic and sectarian lines and often constitute prominent sub-groups within the life of a conflict. They in turn can be important resources for peace. Participants will be asked to make recommendations how to give ex-combatants a more active role in peacebuilding efforts, but in a way that does not undermine disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) measures enacted at the end of armed conflict.

## 3) Simulation Exercise: *Myth, Memory, and Refugee Resettlement*

Course participants will be given a case dealing with conflict management in the African nation of Burundi. As part of peace negotiations in the country, they must advise on a plan to begin resettling refugees who fled a war and genocidal campaign years before.

### *Related Readings:*

Tatsushi Arai, "A Journey Toward Cultural Fluency" in Michelle LeBaron and Venashri Pillay eds., *Conflict Across Cultures* (Boston: Intercultural Press, 2006).

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