

Will President-Elect Obama Offer Real Change in Wartime?

By Daniel Rothbart, Ph.D., ICAR Faculty, drothbar@gmu.edu

In his victory speech on November 4, 2008, President-elect Barack Obama appealed to our best selves, reminding us of an America acting from a sense of moral principle, an America that seeks to redress injustice at home and tyranny abroad. He called us to face our current crises from a shared sense of moral purpose. But I wonder whether he



Above: Barack Obama with General David Petraeus in Iraq. Photo: Wikimedia.

intends to address a crisis of massive proportion that continues in the current military interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan. The crisis centers on civilian suffering in war. From a global perspective the evidence of systematic devastation of civilian noncombatants is compelling. Studies show that war's weakest participants are its greatest

victims. In fact, civilian noncombatants die in far greater proportion than do combatants in wars of all kinds. The United Nations reports that civilians accounted for approximately 75 percent of war deaths in protracted conflicts occurring in the years from 1985 to 1995. And combat fatalities represent a small proportion of the total mortality that results from life-threatening conflicts that warfare generated.

A 2005 study confirmed that the majority of conflict-related deaths occur off the battlefield, typically from disease and malnutrition. For example, only six

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Commentary

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ICAR Hosts McAfee on Democracy

By Sara Cobb, Ph.D., ICAR Director, scobb@gmu.edu

This year ICAR has another philosopher and democratic theorist in its midst, Noëlle McAfee, associate research professor of philosophy and conflict analysis. Noëlle joins us after having spent two years in George Mason's philosophy department, and prior to that several years on the philosophy faculty at the University of Massachusetts Lowell.

Noëlle is spending the 2008-2009 academic year with ICAR thanks to funding from the Charles F. Kettering Foundation to work on a book on the meaning of democratic politics and to help oversee the Kettering Foundation's research on media and democracy. She is also the associate editor of the foundation's journal of political thought, the Kettering Review.

In the spring she will be teaching a graduate seminar on democratic theory and post-conflict democratization, drawing on her penchant for grounding theory in real-world problems and making sure that practice is consistent with the ideals it hopes to bring about. "There's always an idea behind our practice that will shape our practice," Noëlle says, "and these ideas need to be brought to light and scrutinized. If we think that democracy equals more ballot boxes but neglect the need for public spaces to build public relation-

ships, we can end up with more division and conflict rather than less."

Noëlle's main interest is in the possibility of democracy. "I turned to philosophy after working in the public interest world in Washington in the 1980s, where I began to despair that no amount of fighting the good fight would work if people were incapable of self-government." She ended up writing a dissertation on the implications for citizenship and democracy in the works of the European thinkers, Jürgen Habermas and Julia Kristeva, becoming an expert in contemporary poststructuralist thought. "I hang out with the black turtleneck crowd, but my research is as informed by what regular people are doing in their communities to create change as it is by the more esoteric resources of philosophy."

Last spring Noëlle's fourth book was published, titled *Democracy and the Political Unconscious*. In it she looks at the causes of trauma, terror, and retribution and the resources that deliberative democratic dialogue and other public testimonies can offer. The book moves between the theoretical and the actual, from, for example, a psychoanalytic understanding of the "repetition compulsion" of the endless war on terror to the ways in which people are creating institutions in their communities to provide more space for democratic practice. ■

network

Pursuing and Publishing a Resolution to the Caucasus War

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



Above: Border fence between Russia and Georgia. Photo: Wikimedia.

Shortly after the August war in the Caucasus, I spoke with Georgian and South Ossetian friends and colleagues there. These civil society-based peacebuilders were eager to talk with each other, but the tense ceasefire left no possibility for crossing the ceasefire line. As we talked, it became clear that an internationally facilitated meeting would be useful. While building towards a meeting at which Georgians and South Ossetians can sit together to assess the prospects for civil society

contributions to peacebuilding there, a Georgian, an Ossetian, and I wrote an article explaining why such meetings could be useful. Writing together was a conflict resolution process. We practiced careful attention to each other's concerns and creative thinking about possible options for language that would meet each author's approval. The product of this process? The article we produced has been circulated by the Common Ground News Service in English, Urdu, Arabic, French, and Indonesian and published by newspapers including the *Georgian Times* in Tbilisi, Georgia. Perhaps more significantly, the article's publication comes only weeks before we plan to sit down together with other Georgian and South Ossetian colleagues to learn together how to build peace with each other in the aftermath of war. Here is the article:

[Published, *Georgian Times*, November 25, 2008] The Caucasus war this summer pitted predominantly Christian Orthodox Georgia against predominantly Christian Orthodox Russia and the Abkhaz and South Ossetians, whose Christianity, Islam and traditional spirituality weave a complex tapestry of religions cutting across ethnic and political divides. South Ossetia witnessed ethnic and political tensions over the past two decades, which came to a head

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ICAR Mixes Masters with Social Work

GMU Graduate Students Focus on ICAR-MSW Degrees

By Wallace Warfield, Ph.D., ICAR Faculty, wwarfiel@gmu.edu, and Natalie Baum, ICAR M.S. Student, nbaum@gmu.edu

The iconic and stereotypical image of the social worker as "little old ladies in tennis shoes" that flourished in the early-to-mid-20th century has long been relegated to the dust bin of history. Never true, the social worker has always been on the front lines of community development. Day or night, social workers can be found in the most devastated neighborhoods conferring with families, advising troubled youth in recreational centers, and in general, using nascent conflict resolution skills to knit the delicate fabric of a community.

Wallace Warfield: A relatively new faculty member in 1992, it came quickly to my attention that ICAR M.S. students in particular wanted a more embedded field experience as part of their curriculum. So when ICAR first gave thought to the creation of the Applied Practice and Theory program, GMU's School of Social Work was the first stop in my information gathering. The practicum has been a critical teaching tool in the social work pedagogy for many years. In fact, the GMU Masters in Social Work (MSW) places a greater emphasis on community practice than many other MSW programs—and does so internationally.

The recognition that the disciplines of social work and conflict analysis and resolution held a shared worldview of building capacity in local communities resulted in the creation of the dual degree program in 2007. The MSW theory-building and in-field skills development in social change at the family and community level fits comfortably with the ICAR M.S. in Conflict Analysis and Resolution focus on developing reflective practitioners capable of functioning in diverse settings globally. Under the three-year dual degree program, ICAR M.S. requirements would be fully completed; six credits of electives, however, would be covered by MSW required course work.

Natalie Baum: As a student of the program I was confident I would gain a varied and rich education. However, I did not anticipate experiencing a natural fusion of the two degrees for some time, certainly not in the first month. When I walked into a Fairfax County meeting to address a Restorative Justice initiative on behalf of my social work field



Above: ICAR M.S. Student Natalie Baum with participants from her field placement. Photo courtesy of Natalie Baum.

placement, Black Women United for Action, and recognized ICAR student Erin-Rose Feeley and conflict resolution education authority Marge Bleweis, I quickly understood the dual degree would offer much more than I imagined. Throughout the meeting I felt empowered by my accumulated knowledge from my studies at ICAR. Halfway through the meeting, in an unforced and relevant moment, conflict resolution vocabulary rolled off my tongue. I had melded conflict theory with social work advocacy to analyze the community conflict at hand. I felt simultaneously validated and elated. This rewarding experience early in my education affords me great comfort in knowing that in May 2010 I will graduate George Mason University armed with a dual degree education that significantly parallels the collaboration of conflict analysis and resolution and social work in real-world practice. It is anticipated that in the formative years of this program, only a few students will select the dual degree route. However, as the word spreads throughout the student body of the potential for this degree, we should not be surprised if an increasing number of students follow suit. ■

initiatives

Launch at ICAR of Handbook of Conflict Analysis and Resolution

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

EVENTS

As part of its nearly 30-year effort to institutionalize conflict analysis and resolution as a multidisciplinary field for research, theory building, teaching, practice and outreach in the United States and abroad, the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (ICAR) launched, on November 11, 2008, the *Handbook of Conflict Analysis and Resolution* (Routledge, 2009). The volume is coedited by Dennis Sandole of ICAR, Ingrid Sandole-Staroste of GMU's Department of Sociology and Anthropology and Women's Studies Program, and Sean Byrne and Jessica Senehi of Canada's first and only Ph.D. Program in Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Manitoba, in Winnipeg.

The genesis of the volume

was a chat between coeditors Sandole and Byrne about a collaborative project between the US's and Canada's premier Ph.D. programs that would capture much of the diversity of cutting edge developments in the field. The result comprises more than 35 chapters from a wide range of North (including Native)

American, European, Middle Eastern and other authors. It is structured in terms of (a) core concepts and theories; (b) core conceptual and methodological approaches; (c) core practices and processes;

and (d) alternative voices and complex intervention designs.

The volume builds upon earlier ICAR efforts to capture, and advance the state of the field, such as (a) ICAR's first book-length publication, *Conflict Management and Problem Solving: Interpersonal to International Applications* (1987; edited by Dennis Sandole and Ingrid Sandole-Staroste, with the Foreword by Kenneth E. Boulding) and (b) *Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice: Integration and Application* (1993; edited by Dennis Sandole and Hugo van der Merwe, with the Foreword by Herbert C. Kelman).

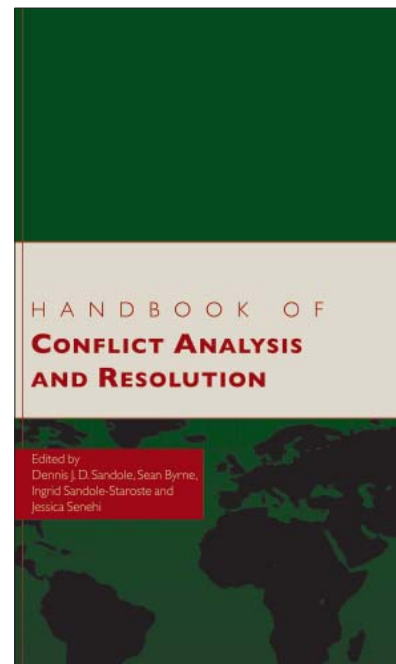
The volume also complements other recently published handbooks, such as:

(a) *The Oxford International Encyclopedia of Peace: Global Conflict, Analysis, Transformation and Nonviolent Change* (four volumes), editor-in-chief, Nigel Young (2009).

(b) *The SAGE Handbook of Conflict Resolution*, edited by Jacob Bercovitch, Victor Kremenyuk, and William Zartman (2009).

“The volume builds upon earlier ICAR efforts to capture and advance the state of the field.”

—DENNIS SANDOLE



(c) *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace and Conflict* (2d Edition, three volumes), editor-in-chief, Lester Kurtz (2008) of GMU's Department of Sociology and Anthropology. (Prof. Kurtz attended the launch.)

(d) *Handbook of Peace and Conflict Studies*, edited by Charles Webel and Johan Galtung (2007).

(e) *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice* (2d Edition), edited by Morton Deutsch, Peter Coleman and E.C. Marcus (2006).

Together these (and other) volumes constitute an enhanced conflict analysis and resolution library that captures the complexity, diversity, and richness of our multidisciplinary field. This enhanced CAR library is of value not only to students, teachers, researchers, trainers and practitioners in the field, but also to policymakers, especially those associated with Barack Obama: the most conflict-resolution-friendly president in American history. ■

Upcoming ICAR Community Events

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

December 2: Makram Ouais Dissertation Defense: The Impact of Political Alliances on Voter Prejudice in Post-Conflict Countries

10:30 am-1:00 pm, Original Building, Room 244

December 2: Joan Orgon Coolidge Dissertation Defense: Toward a Just Peace (James H. Laue's Theory of Applied Practice)

1:30-4:00 pm, Truland Building, Room 555

December 3: Alex Scheinman Dissertation Defense: From Explanation to Understanding: Toward a Critical Reconstruction of Conflict Resolution Theory

1:00-3:00 pm, Truland Building, Room 555

Entire events listing available at <http://icar.gmu.edu/events.htm>

ICAR STUDENT OPINION

Uniting the United States of America

By Kathryn Roberts, ICAR M.S. Student

President-elect Barack Obama ran victoriously on a platform of "change". Now that he's won with a clear majority, it's time the American people internalized that notion in order to transition from a polarized nation to a united one, with Obama at the helm. This race gave us time to firmly wedge ourselves—if we hadn't already—into political parties. Our most difficult obstacle now will be separating out these political party identifications from the stereotypes they evoke. We label Republicans as uneducated NASCAR fans with a beer in their hands and a rifle in their pick-up trucks and we judge Democrats to be elitist, granola-loving hippies looking for a government handout. For many of us, the connection between the identity and the stereotype is one and the same.



We've learned from our political leaders that the easiest way to remain loyal to our own identity is to dehumanize our opponent and rely on stereotypes to explain their actions instead. Senator McCain, for example, injected dehumanizing techniques into the campaign by refusing to look at his opponent and, most noticeably, referred to him as "that one" in the final debate, which only further encouraged a split in our country.

Politics is personal for much of the country. Consequently, the topic of politics has been banned from discussion in workplaces and family rooms in order to prevent relational rifts. This will have adverse ramifications on our country. By refusing to talk to each other, these stereotypes will continue to lie dormant until another government crisis or election season causes them to be stirred up once again.

At ICAR, we are taught to value communication between conflict parties. Let's take advantage of this brief cease-fire in order to promote humanization in our government systems. By creating awareness of this tendency to stereotype our opponent, students, faculty and alumni can foster local community awareness, as well as a more national consciousness.

On a community level, we must begin to promote this topic in discussion with friends, family and co-workers. Even though politics is often a personal identity issue, there are often common underlying values that shape our political views. On a national level, we must increase our academic presence in the media as a tool to promote humanization of political entities. We must capitalize on these opportunities now so that we are not left bickering and assigning blame the next time our country faces a challenging crisis that requires a bipartisan effort to solve. ■

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

After the Shooting Stops

By Michael Shank, ICAR Ph.D. Candidate
The Guardian, 11/28/08

A Resolution to the Caucasus War?

By Susan Allen Nan, ICAR Professor, George Khutsishvili, and Lira Kozaeva Tskhovrebava
Georgian Times, 11/25/08

Why Not a Luxury Magazine with Non-Profit Niches?

By Susan Allen Nan, ICAR Professor
Financial Times, 11/22/08

We Lead Developed World in Poverty and Inequality

By Michael Shank, ICAR Ph.D. Candidate, and U.S. Representative Wayne Gilchrest (R-MD)
The Hill, 11/18/08

Somalia Resurfaces

By Michael Shank, ICAR Ph.D. Candidate
Foreign Policy in Focus, 11/17/08

The Break-Up Danger

By Dennis Sandole, ICAR Professor
The Economist, 11/14/08

Poverty, Political Instability and Somali Piracy

By Michael Shank, ICAR Ph.D. Candidate
Financial Times, 11/14/08

Serbia's Surprising Turn Westward

By David Young, ICAR M.S. Alumnus and Eleanor Roosevelt Scholarship Awardee ('07/08)
World Politics Review, 11/13/08

After-Election Dialogue: Students Explore Differences

By Patricia Maulden, CAR Professor
Mason Gazette, 11/10/08

African-American in the Marine Corps Votes Obama, Respects McCain

By Jana El Horr, ICAR Ph.D. Student
Al Hayat, 11/03/08

press

Abraham Houben

By Zoe Rose, ICAR Graduate Admissions Assistant and M.S. Student, zrose@gmu.edu

Abraham (Bram) Houben, an ICAR M.S. student, obtained his Bachelors at Laurea University of Applied Science in Finland. The University is centered in the competitive region of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area and strives to strengthen international networks outside Northern Europe. Since the school is heavily focused on international cooperation, it is no surprise that Bram chose to continue his studies in conflict analysis and resolution. Studying in Finland, Holland, China, and Chile expanded Bram's perspective of conflict and he decided to increase his knowledge by heading to the U.S. ICAR filled a void; Bram says that the institution "offered a depth of courses and support that I didn't find anywhere else." At ICAR, Bram can pursue his previous work which focused on the difficulties faced by Somali and Southeast-Asian peoples as they transitioned to Helsinki and assimilated into the new culture.

Bram's other passions include youth issues. After spending an extensive amount of time in the Caucasus and former Soviet states, Bram is particularly interested in how children from these regions are impacted by internal displacement. In effort to acknowledge the youth narrative, Bram helped to organize conferences focused on increasing dialogue between conflicting countries throughout the European Union. His work with youth was deeply enriching. Says Bram, "These programs were enlightening and seeing young people engaging in such depth of dialogue was encouraging."

After he graduates from ICAR, Bram hopes to partake in international work which allows him to get involved directly with people experiencing conflict. When asked if ICAR is sufficiently addressing all areas of conflict, Bram acknowledged that there are a lot of "forgotten" conflicts in the world which do not get a lot of international media attention, especially in the U.S. He believes that the media in the U.S. is focused too much on domestic issues and does not offer as much information on international disputes as it should. In light of this, however, Bram hopes that he, along with his colleagues, "can not only revive attention to forgotten conflicts, but be a part of their resolution as well." ■

Patricia Maulden

By Zoe Rose ICAR Graduate Admissions Assistant and M.S. Student, zrose@gmu.edu

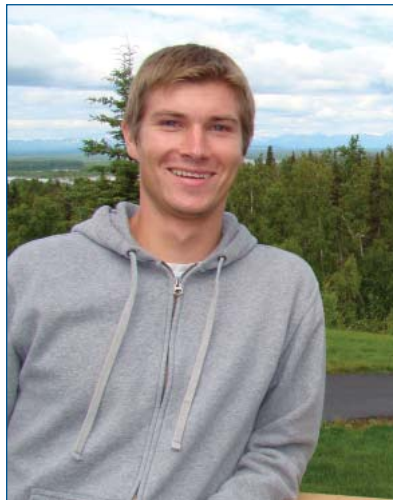
For Dr. Patricia Maulden, being an ICAR alum has advantages. First, as an Assistant Professor of the undergraduate program, Patricia knows how to relate to students' trials and tribulations as practitioners in an emerging field. A second advantage is the opportunity to advise students on job-hunting in a competitive marketplace. But the most exciting advantage of one who journeyed through ICAR are the bragging rights about all the new ICAR graduates coming up through the ranks. As the conflict field grows, so too does the undergraduate program and Patricia cites the positive contributions from ICAR faculty and undergraduate staff as the reasons for the program's success.

Additionally, Patricia directs the Dialogue and Difference Project. The first project—the After-Election Dialogue—was attended by 49 students and facilitated by nine student facilitators. Patricia explains that the goal of such dialogues is not to convince but to understand. She stresses that

"the dialogue process focuses on acknowledging differences, discovering similarities, and possibly exploring how individuals or groups can reframe their relationship in order to work toward specific and mutually desirable ends." Providing the groundwork

for relationship building, the Project gives students the opportunity to learn the skills needed to move from theory to practice—the most valuable aspect.

Patricia's research interests involve generational and gendered dynamics of violence. Her theory of social militarization analyzes the sanctioning of personal and social violence through changes in socio-cultural norms, values, and practices. The generational aspect focuses on the changing roles of the adult and child, such as using children as combatants. The gender component observes the role of girl soldiers and the differentiation in treatment from that of boys during war and peace. ■



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—ABRAHAM HOUBEN

Will President-Elect Obama Offer Real Change in Wartime?

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percent of the total 2.5 million war-related deaths in the Democratic Republic of Congo were combatants.

U.S. military leaders often describe civilians as

"objects" and their casualties as "collateral" to war's primary forces. From a militaristic perspective warfare is not "theirs" to win or lose. The plight of civilians constitutes an aspect of war that is, presumably, universal, timeless, and uncontrollable. And the polarizing rhetoric of "us against them" and "their gain is our loss" reinforces an indifference to the plight of civilians in war.

This militaristic perspective masks an anti-civilian ideology in which civilians are cast through the lens of the instruments of war. In this framing civilians are characterized as frictions to war's machines, collateral to their efficiency, and systematically eliminable to the military progress of "civilized" nations (see von Clausewitz). Just below the surface of war's rhetoric is a radical objectification in which civilians are treated as mere material bodies, atomized into isolated units, and alienated from their own (social) humanity.

Two days before Obama's victory speech, the President of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai, spoke about the devastation that coalition forces brought to his country: the bombing of an Afghan wedding party in October and a similar episode in August in which 90 civilians were killed. He could also have mentioned the fact that more than 4,000 Afghan civilians have been killed by coalition forces since the beginning of the so-called war on terror.

Is the U.S. military leadership prepared to take responsibility for such crimes and apologize to Afghanistan, the combat soldiers, and the American



Dan Rothbart is a professor of at ICAR.

public? Clearly, the true test of America's commitment to moral principle will be shown in public acts of

forgiveness and in meaningful commitments to stop killing war's weakest participants. ■

Can Barack Obama Stop the Status Quo?

By Min Oo, ICAR Ph.D. Candidate, moo@gmu.edu

Senator Barack Obama, who campaigned on a willingness to talk to foes of the United States, has decisively won the presidential election. Will conflict resolution be a guiding principle in U.S. foreign policy under President Obama? Perhaps the exuberance of optimism may have overlooked the United States's power structure in international politics. Regardless of his rhetoric on change, President Obama will be inheriting some core elements of President Bush's foreign policy. The top unchanged policy will be the U.S. military doctrine adopted since the end of the Cold War.

The doctrine is set to maintain U.S.'s military superiority by keeping a significant gap between the U.S.'s military and its potential peer competitors. The second part of the doctrine aims to preserve the U.S. military's power projection all over the world—that is, the ability to strike any part of the world within a relatively short period of time.

Additionally, Obama has not scrapped Bush's preemptive-war doctrine, especially when it comes to counter-terrorism. Obama has spoken in favor of targeting Al Qaeda in Pakistan even without the authorization by Pakistan authorities.

The U.S. military strategy and preemptive doctrine have fostered a categorical arms race. To counter the U.S.'s air superiority, Russia has invented and deployed S-400 air defense system that the Kremlin claims to be more effective than the U.S.'s second-generation Patriot missile system. China has modernized its naval units, ballistic missiles and electronic warfare systems to deter the U.S.'s intervention in the Taiwan Strait if the conflict emerges. A recent RAND study suggests that the U.S.'s military is not adequate to thwart a Chinese attack on Taiwan in 2020.

Both China and Russia are exporting sophisticated weapon systems to U.S. adversaries, including Iran, a state which is likely to be nuclear-weapons powered during the Obama administration if its uranium enrichment continues as originally planned. Obama calls for the U.S.'s unwavering support to Israel and reiterates that a nuclear-armed Iran is "unacceptable."

Obama's defense plan has no indication of reducing the military budget, except Iraq-related spending. Actually, Obama's electoral victory has raised the stock portfolio of U.S. defense industries.

Since the end of the Cold War, all U.S. presidents used military force against other states for one reason or another. Unfortunately, this structural aspect of U.S. power remains unchanged under President Obama. Conflict resolution may still be in the back seat of U.S. foreign policy. ■



Pursuing and Publishing a Resolution to the Caucasus War

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in August. Each side has offered competing explanations for their military engagement. Georgian troops explain that they were fighting to repel Russian troops and secure territorial integrity. Abkhaz and South Ossetians tell us they were fighting against Georgian aggression and for self-determination. Russians say they were fighting to protect South Ossetia and Abkhazia from Georgian attacks and to establish a security buffer around them. Local peacebuilders also waged a peaceful struggle for a non-violent resolution of the disputes and lasting security for all parties involved. Beyond official "track one" government-to-government discussions, such as the Geneva talks that convened briefly on 15 October and again on 19 November, long-term peace in the Caucasus will require more creative channels of communication to rebuild relationships across the conflict's divide.

Unofficial "track two" diplomacy could augment the high-profile Geneva negotiations held earlier this week, in which participating diplomats seem to have made little progress towards an official agreement. In a process complementary to official "track one" diplomacy, ongoing relationships between civil society peace builders across the Caucasus' diverse religious, geographic and ethnic communities provide a foundation on which Abkhaz, Georgian, Russian and South Ossetian political leaders can begin building sustainable peace. Even while bombs were falling in August, and face-to face meetings were impossible, individual

peace builders reached out to each other via phone, e-mail, and through the Caucasus Forum Yahoo! online group, lamented the war and its human cost, and presented widely divergent assessments of the causes of the war. While they disagree vigorously, these peacebuilders share a fundamental faith in each other's humanity.

This bridge at the civil society level is useful, but a stable peace will ultimately require that the political leadership learn from this example. Respectful, constructive conversation is possible across the conflict's divides when political leaders are willing to recognize the humanity of the other side. These civil society leaders have developed a wealth of insights about the conflict's dynamics that could usefully inform political leaders' search for a way forward. For example, over several discussions in unofficial peace-building dialogues during the course of the conflict, a Georgian NGO leader realized the importance of building the kind of Georgia in which Ossetians and Abkhaz might want to live, a Georgia with an impeccable human rights record, inclusive democratic rule, and respect for all ethnic groups. Others learned that sovereignty is not always an all-or-nothing affair.

Remainder of article available online at icar.gmu.edu/ICAR_Newspage. Written by Susan Allen Nan, George Khutsishvili (International Center on Conflict and Negotiation in Tbilisi), and Lira Kozaeva Tskhovrebova (Association of Women of South Ossetia for Democracy and Human Rights in Tskhinvali). ■



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