Seeking Peace in Changing Worlds:
Conflict Transformation and
The New Geopolitics of Power

Seventh Annual Conflict Transformation Workshop
May 2009
A Report

Compiled by:
Manjrika Sewak

Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace
An initiative of the
Foundation for Universal Responsibility
of His Holiness The Dalai Lama
New Delhi
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Preface

WISCOMP Conflict Transformation Program

This publication is based on the proceedings of the Seventh Annual Conflict Transformation Workshop titled Seeking Peace in Changing Worlds: Conflict Transformation and the New Geopolitics of Power. Held in May 2009 in New Delhi, the Workshop brought together 40 young professionals from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and India. The participants represented diverse backgrounds such as media, education, NGO, law, theology, conflict resolution, public policy, and academia.

The Conflict Transformation Workshops of WISCOMP seek to facilitate dialogue between young people from across the conflict divide in South Asia. They were initiated in the belief that face-to-face dialogues along with professional training in the field of Conflict Transformation have the potential to transform enemy images, build long-term relationships and reduce the trust deficit among youth leaders from conflict zones.

The Workshops are informed by a generational approach to peacebuilding where the focus is on empowering “future influentials” to become agents of constructive social change in their families, communities, nations and the South Asian region. A first step in this direction is the creation of a space where young people can rise above the baggage of preceding generations and build a future based on trust and mutual respect. Since their initiation in 2001, the Workshops have brought together 240 participants in a model that has been widely appreciated and emulated by civil society groups in the region. While a majority of the alumni are Indian and Pakistani, other South Asian countries such as Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan have also found
representation at the Workshops. About 25% of the alumni are from Jammu and Kashmir on both sides of the Line of Control.

The emphasis on building strategic relationships is based on empirical research, which reveals that 40% of all peace accords collapse within five years of signature. It is now recognized that face-to-face contact with the other and the transformation of hostile relationships torn apart by decades of conflict are prerequisites for the sustenance of peace agreements.

The Conflict Transformation Workshops seek to:

- Motivate “future influentials” in South Asia with the skills and knowledge to engage in processes of Conflict Transformation;
- Transform the “trust deficit” between people belonging to different ethnicities and religions, encourage understanding of each other’s worldviews, and integrate these with the goal of professional development;
- Build strategic, cross-border partnerships in peacebuilding between young South Asians, and
- Build a gender-sensitive curriculum for Conflict Transformation that can create a foundation for a culture of peace and coexistence.

WISCOMP organized the First Conflict Transformation Workshop titled Rehumanizing The Other in 2001, bringing together graduate students from India and Pakistan. For most participants, this was their first opportunity to meet someone from the other country. This led many to observe, “The enemy now has a face”... “The other has been humanized.” Another participant noted, “My perceptions about the other have turned on their head. Several threat perceptions are fading.”

Since this first dialogue, the Conflict Transformation Workshops have provided participants with the “confidence and skills to actually do something.” Many participants said that they now have a sense of “how to implement ideas about peacebuilding,” and have the relationships to “make that difference.” The Workshops have also been able to sensitize participants to the importance of dialogue between policymakers and civil society actors from India and Pakistan. In so doing, they have attempted to bridge the conventional gap between traditional security establishments and those who call for a multi-track approach to the transformation of conflict. Each Workshop has adopted a multi-track approach, thereby facilitating a much-needed interaction between track one, professional conflict resolution, peace activism, the media, business,
educational institutions, and grassroots practitioners. Another important outcome of this process has been the engagement with curriculum and teaching material, in the field of peacebuilding, by educational institutions in Pakistan and India. The Workshops have also created and strengthened personal bonds of friendship as well as professional partnerships in the field of peacebuilding. They have influenced the career trajectories of several participants with a growing number of alumni taking the decision to pursue higher education and build a career in the field of peacebuilding.

The Seventh Annual Conflict Transformation Workshop

While the Conflict Transformation Workshops, since their inception in 2001, have managed to push the envelope on prejudice reduction and professional partnerships between young Indians and Pakistanis, the Mumbai terror attacks in November 2008 were a test of the resilience of the WISCOMP alumni network. On the heels of the attacks emerged several “global attitudes” surveys which revealed that a majority of Pakistanis saw India as a very serious threat; an even bigger threat than the Taliban or Al-Qaeda.1 Yet, even as processes of demonization were unleashed in the two countries in the weeks and months following the Mumbai tragedy, a flurry of activity was witnessed among the Indian and Pakistani alumni on WISCOMP e-groups and social networking sites. The Pakistani alumni were unequivocal in their support to the Indian alumni, urging them to ignore the messages that their media was sending out. They used internet sites and blogs to express solidarity with the Indian alumni. The trust and relationships built at the WISCOMP Workshops endured even when the governments floundered in their public statements and reactions to the Mumbai tragedy.

Khadija Amjad, a 2001 alumna from Lahore, wrote, “I find myself at a loss for words that will deliver my true feelings (about the Mumbai tragedy). Please know that I stand with each and every one of you and (with) all Indians. No person in their right mind on any side of the border would find such nonsense to be acceptable in any way. A tragedy like this only strengthens my resolve to never give in to these extremists.”

Even though relationships among the Indian and Pakistani alumni have endured the Mumbai attacks, there is the realization of a renewed hostility outside of this Conflict Transformation network. The post-Mumbai scenario has

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1 For example, according to the Pew Global Attitudes Survey 2009, 69% respondents in Pakistan see India as a bigger threat than the Taliban (57%) or Al-Qaeda (41%).
presented new challenges for Conflict Transformation between India and Pakistan.

The Seventh Conflict Transformation Workshop Seeking Peace in Changing Worlds: Conflict Transformation and the New Geopolitics of Power was designed with the two-fold purpose to transcend these challenges and to broaden the canvas of the bilateral relationship and invite insights from Afghanistan, Nepal and Bangladesh. In this context, the 2009 Workshop explored the possibility of building a collective regional identity and enhancing cooperation in a manner that is beneficial to each country and to the region. It foregrounded the issues of terror (of both state- and non-state actors), antagonistic identities, otherization and territoriality, and asked whether these could be transcended through approaches offered by the lens of Conflict Transformation. In this context, WISCOMP designed the following Workshop modules:

- Introduction to Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding
- Identity, Terror and The Other
- Geopolitics and Conflict Transformation: Afghanistan-Pakistan-India
- Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding in Jammu and Kashmir
- The Nuclear Conundrum: Security or Terror
- Role of the Media in Conflict Generation and Conflict Transformation
- Conciliation and Prejudice: Focus on Bombay Cinema
- Exploring the Place of the Sacred in Activism for Social Change

Participants of the Seventh Annual Conflict Transformation Workshop.
Workshop Methodology

The WISCOMP Conflict Transformation Workshops encourage experiential learning through interactive sessions, roundtables, lectures, film discussions, case study analysis, role-plays, panel and group discussions, and other forms of creative expressions. These multiple formats are informed by the “elicitive approach to learning” – drawn from the writings of Paulo Freire, and the subsequent “popular education” movement, which emphasize the creation of a mutual learning community where each individual, by sharing his/her own experiences, resources, skills and knowledge, enhances the process of learning and education.

The Workshops are designed from the perspective that “education is a conceptualization of our experiences.” Participants learn as much from what they are taught in a workshop setting as from the lived experiences of those they meet at such dialogues and from their own reflections on such encounters. The methodology is also influenced by the fact that WISCOMP focuses on a “bottom-up,” “multi-track” approach where the process of building bridges and trust is driven by the participants of the Conflict Transformation Workshops.

Key Concepts

Conflict Transformation & Peacebuilding

Sociologist John Paul Lederach first used the term Conflict Transformation in the context of the armed conflicts that erupted in Central America in the 1980s. Sharing his perspectives on the choice of this terminology, Lederach wrote, “Conflict Resolution carried with it a danger of cooptation, an attempt to get rid of conflict when people were raising important and legitimate issues. It was not clear that resolution left room for advocacy.”2 “Resolution tends to focus primarily on methods for de-escalating conflict. Transformation involves both de-escalating and engaging conflict in pursuit of constructive change. Transformation…goes beyond a process focused on the resolution of a particular problem to seek the epicenter of conflict. The epicenter of conflict is the web of relational patterns, often providing a history of lived episodes, from which new episodes and issues emerge.”3

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3 Ibid, p.31.
Lederach defines Conflict Transformation as a framework that addresses the “content, context and structure of the relationship.” It seeks to do this through three lenses: While the first lens helps us to see the immediate situation, Lederach explains that we need a second lens “to see beyond the presenting problems toward the deeper patterns of relationship” between the conflicting groups. “Third, we need a conceptual framework that holds these perspectives together, one that permits us to connect the presenting problems with the deeper relational patterns.”

Since the language of the field has evolved and adapted itself to the socio-cultural specificities of the regions where conflicts have been located, there is little agreement on the use of terminology, with concepts such as Conflict Prevention, Conflict Resolution, Conflict Management, Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding being used interchangeably in different contexts.

Recognizing the dilemma that such terminological fuzziness presents, in recent years, efforts have been made to build a consensus around the language of the field. Peacebuilding, a concept that gained prominence after the UN Secretary General, Boutros Boutros Ghali, used it in his “Agenda for Peace” in 1992, has increasingly come to be seen as a catch-all term to refer to diverse processes related to local, regional and international peace and conflict work. No longer seen as a post-conflict activity, peacebuilding includes issues of human security and the whole range of processes from crisis management to the more long-term efforts at relationship building, peace education, nonviolence training, and justice and reconciliation.

“Peacebuilding seeks to prevent, reduce, transform and help people recover from violence in all forms, even structural violence that has not yet led to massive civil unrest. At the same time, it empowers people to foster relationships…Relationships are a form of social capital. When people connect and form relationships, they are more likely to cooperate together to constructively address conflict.” Mohammed Abu-Nimer, a peace practitioner based at the American University in Washington DC, adds, “Peacebuilding includes the full spectrum of conflict resolution and transformation frameworks and approaches, including negotiation, conciliation, facilitation, alternative

5 For a glossary of key peacebuilding terms, see www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/glossary.htm
dispute resolution, problem-solving workshops, education and training, advocacy, and nonviolent resistance.”7

**Terrorism**

The term terrorism comes from the Latin word *terrere*, “to frighten.” While the word first appeared in English-language dictionaries in 1798 to suggest a “systematic use of terror as a policy,” terrorism has since been defined in multiple ways and all are subjective. As a result, efforts to arrive at a universally accepted definition, particularly following the September 11th attacks, have largely failed. The use of violence for the achievement of political or ideological ends is common to both state and non-state sectors. The challenge lies in building a criteria for determining when the use of violence (directed at whom, by whom, for what ends) is legitimate. The majority of definitions in use have been written by agencies associated with a government, and are biased to exclude governments from the definition.

However, setting aside debates on “state terrorism” on the grounds that the use of force by States is regulated under international law, the former UN Secretary General Mr. Kofi Annan, in his 2005 report to the United Nations General Assembly, “In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All,” described terrorism as any act “intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants with the purpose of intimidating a population or compelling a government or an international organization to do or abstain from doing any act.” At a minimum, terrorism refers to those acts that threaten to or carry out physical injury against innocent, unarmed civilians. It is the calculated use of violence (or the threat of violence) against civilians in order to attain goals that are political, religious or ideological in nature.

South Asia, which had experienced low levels of organized terrorism until the early 1980s, has undergone a dramatic transformation to become the scene of the bloodiest terrorist violence in the world. Combined with the threat of nuclear weapon power, terrorism is the most urgent challenge in the subcontinent. Perspectives on terrorism in the region are as varied as the kinds of terrorism pervading the South Asian space. Differing or converging, South Asian perspectives on terrorism agree on the fallibility of state apparatus in dealing

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with the prospects of large-scale terror attacks. Added to this is also the challenge of low-intensity conflict.

Although it is often observed that 9/11 was not as much a marker for terrorism in South Asia as it was in the Western world, in terms of increasing external involvement in the region, this event was certainly important. The terrorist attacks in Mumbai on November 26, 2008, represent, in many ways, a watershed in the history of terrorism in South Asia. The nature of these attacks was so audacious that it has widely affected the psyche of the Indian population at large and laid bare the vulnerabilities of the state and exposed its moribund institutions, corrupt underbelly and inability to provide security to its citizens. As the terrorists targeted symbols of affluence and safety, the discourse on terrorism also shifted dramatically. Investigations on the Indian side laid blame with Pakistan. As a result, the forward momentum that had been gathering for the resolution of the Kashmir conflict and other bilateral issues has slowed down considerably.

Calls for peaceful resolution have failed to attract much attention as a result of the xenophobia and hysteria that this unleashed. The attacks have also demonstrated weaknesses within the Indian system of law enforcement and governance. The blame-game however carries on unabated. In such a scenario, any room for a dispassionate understanding of the root causes of terrorism has been ceded to an aggressive discourse on terrorism and the need for states to acquire more sophisticated technologies to “combat the menace” by application of force.

**Geopolitics of Peace**

Traditionally, the term geopolitics refers to the political, economic and strategic significance of geography. It indicates the links and causal relationships between political power and geographic space. Sanjay Chaturvedi, Coordinator, Center for the Study of Geopolitics, Panjab University, Chandigarh, writes, “Geopolitics is derived from the written, often imagined geographies of politics.” The concept of “imagined geographies” as elucidated by Edward Said in his critique on Orientalism came to have various meanings for South Asian states. Particularly baffled by the problems of borders, South Asia’s history is plagued with issues

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of territoriality. The region is imprisoned by the same old cartography that remains distanced from the global mapping of flows in the form of corporations, trade and communications, infrastructure and oil and gas pipelines. In this region, understandings of borders as dividers, still prevails.

The implications of these “imagined geographies” for the South Asian region are important as these show the problems created by the use of popular discourse to construct views of other regions. Often, these views are stereotypical, thus robbing people of the opportunities to transcend these differences – by moving away from dividers towards a broader regional perspective.

The solution to this conundrum might be located within the discourse of the geopolitics of peace – a concept that emanates from critiquing and questioning geopolitics itself. Literature on the geopolitics of peace talks about how it implies an aspiration for a world where there is “freedom without fear and peace without domination.”11 It goes beyond the pronouncements of state institutions and organizations and demands a broadening and deepening of peoples’ and societies’ knowledge of each other through dialogic engagement.

**Sacred-Secular**

Notions of the sacred are central to the belief systems and daily practices of most communities in the South Asian region. Yet, their practice has often been reduced to a narrow religiosity, which divides rather than unites. In regions of conflict, in particular, it has been observed that religion touches the lives of individuals and communities in ways that are dangerously inflammable. This has often led activists and researchers to express their vision for justice and peace in non-religious terms, drawing either on liberal-democratic or left traditions.

Yet, in a geopolitical context where religion reverberates for millions of men and women, can we ignore its importance in our efforts to build just and peacefully societies? An engagement with approaches to Conflict Transformation must therefore address the role that religion plays in conflict and peace processes. While such engagement is crucial for professional peacebuilding, it can only begin with an exploration of the peace activist’s relationship with his/her own faith tradition. Using an elicitive methodology, the Workshop sought to address these questions in an effort to explore how the faith persuasions of participants influence peacebuilding practice.

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Workshop Overview

The Seventh Annual Conflict Transformation Workshop opened with an introductory lecture by Dr. Meenakhi Gopinath, Hon. Director, WISCOMP, on the overarching theme Seeking Peace in Changing Worlds: Conflict Transformation and the New Geopolitics of Power.

While WISCOMP does not subscribe to Samuel Huntington’s thesis on the “clash of civilizations,” it acknowledges today’s reality, which is that different worlds and worldviews are in collision. The world, which changed dramatically with the onset of globalization in the 1990s, experienced a major convulsion in the months following the September 11th attacks. The events that these attacks unleashed in Afghanistan, in Pakistan and in the entire region have transformed the geopolitics of South Asia.

Yet, it is important to bear in mind that the experiences of those affected by these events cannot be homogenized. Different communities and states were affected in different ways. Added to this, the ensuing discourse on terrorism generated its own set of problems. Infused with divisiveness and Islamophobia, the discourse labeled some acts of violence as “terrorism” while others were justified in the name of “protecting national security” or were acknowledged as “collateral damage.” Still others were simply not accepted as acts of terror.

Related to this, noted Gopinath, is the tragic concept of a pain calculus where some deaths matter more than others. While the September 11th attacks killed 3,600 individuals, more than 20,000 Afghan civilians have died since the
overthrow of the Taliban in 2001. Yet, those deaths that happen in the political and economic power centers of the world receive more attention, while the deaths of impoverished civilians become a mere statistic.

In such a context, what insights does the lens of Conflict Transformation offer to the task of building peace between worlds that are colliding with one another? Addressing this question, Gopinath underscored the central place that identity occupies in the consciousness of the peoples of the South Asian region. Religious identity, in particular, is a potent force, which affects the lives and consciousness of people in very intimate and inflammable ways. Yet, the majority of peace activists in the region have tended to ignore the role of faith (or religion) in conflict generation and conflict transformation processes, preferring to use a “secular” vocabulary that draws on a liberal democratic approach. Is it however possible for peacebuilders to bury identities that are enmeshed in faith traditions? Seeking to bridge this artificial divide between those who define themselves as “religious” and those who subscribe to a “secular” philosophy, the Workshop asked participants to retrieve, from the faith traditions that they were born into, a vocabulary that affirms the need for coexistence and nonviolence in an increasingly intolerant world.

A key purpose of the Conflict Transformation Workshops, noted Gopinath, is also to foreground a peacebuilding approach that allows participants to **build on the commonalities while respecting the differences and diversity that lie between them**. Adding a caveat to this, Gopinath asserted that the call to respect difference does not suggest that the difference of violence should be condoned. The purpose is to create a nonviolent and dialogic space where differences and incompatibilities can be articulated in a constructive manner. Citing the example of the India-Pakistan relationship, Gopinath said that the peace process hinges on an acknowledgment of, and respect for, Pakistan as an independent and sovereign state. The hegemonic tendency, in many Indian quarters, to conceal the social, cultural and political differences between Pakistanis and Indians by suggesting that “we are one people with one culture” has done a great disservice to the process of trust-building between the two estranged neighbors.

Saying that WISCOMP provides a psychological and spiritual space for such trust-building, Gopinath flagged the role that the Conflict Transformation Workshops seek to play in crafting an alternative discourse on issues of peace and security. The Workshops move away from the state- and military-centric Realist paradigm in the belief that the present-day complexities of armed conflicts call for a different and more nuanced vocabulary and approach.
The emphasis on building a synergy between expertise and potential by bringing together a group of carefully selected youth leaders from the South Asian region, who can, over the next decade, influence research, policy and praxis on issues of peace and conflict, has been another important leitmotif of the Conflict Transformation Workshops.

In conclusion, Gopinath highlighted the following axioms of peacebuilding:

- Create a safe and catalytic space where participants can collectively and dispassionately engage in a dialogue on the root causes of terror;
- Invite participants to converse with one another with an orientation towards collaborative problem-solving;
- Create a delight in social and personal encounters for their own sake;
- Build a reflective and option-generating capacity so that one can understand and empathize with those seen as the other.

Ms. Sanna Selin, First Secretary, Embassy of Finland, New Delhi, lauded WISCOMP for its professionalism in the field of peacebuilding and for its passion and commitment to building trust and relationships between youth leaders from across the conflict divide.

Saying that peacebuilding and gender issues are important foreign policy objectives of the Government of Finland, Selin highlighted WISCOMP’s contributions in these two areas in the South Asian region. Finland’s foreign policy objectives include an emphasis on conflict prevention and an investment in civil society organizations in the belief that the sustainability of peace accords depends on the participation of diverse stakeholders across society. While Finland has a small population of 5.3 million, its contributions to the field of peacebuilding, particularly to UN peacekeeping, have been significant. In fact, the country was bestowed the title “peacekeeping superpower” following the leading role it played in peacekeeping operations around the world. Underscoring the tool of dialogue, Selin noted that an important peacebuilding mantra for the Government of Finland has been to encourage conflictants to “talk with each other rather than to talk to or at each other.”
Introduction to Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding

The Workshop module on Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding focused on the approaches that the two overlapping concepts offer for sustainable peace and security in South Asia. The resource persons for this session, Ms. Shweta Singh, Assistant Professor, Peacebuilding Program, Lady Shri Ram College, New Delhi, and Dr. S.P. Udayakumar, Director, Transcend South Asia, Nagercoil, Tamil Nadu, addressed the following questions:

- How is Conflict Transformation different from the related concepts of Conflict Resolution, Conflict Prevention, Conflict Management and Peacebuilding? What are the areas of commonality and difference between these concepts?
- What are some of the approaches that have been used to facilitate Conflict Transformation in different regions of conflict?
- What are the new approaches that the lens of Conflict Transformation offers for conflicts in the South Asian region?
- What are some of the challenges that confront this new and burgeoning field?

Saying that the lens of Conflict Transformation offers a radically new way of looking at conflict and violence, Singh drew on the approach adopted by the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding at the Eastern Mennonite University (CJP-EMU), Harrisonburg, USA, to define conflict as “a state of relationship...
between parties who have real or perceived incompatible goals, needs, values or aspirations.” Dividing conflict into two categories – overt and latent conflict – the CJP-EMU approach focuses on the dangers of latent conflict which happens when parties do not express or even recognize their incompatibility. Latent conflict can also be a case of unjust or unfair institutions, laws, or rules that are perceived as conflict by those who suffer, but not perceived as conflict by those who benefit from the situation.

Central to this approach is the assumption that conflict is a positive phenomenon. In fact, conflict is a prerequisite for constructive social change. What is important is how conflict is dealt with. Conflict can be handled constructively or destructively. When it is managed destructively, violence is the end product. A constructive engagement with conflict involves the use of nonviolent and dialogic tools such as advocacy, nonviolent protest, persuasion, petitions, signature campaigns, negotiation, and face-to-face dialogue.

The origins of the field of Peacebuilding can be traced to the early 20th century. Beginning essentially as an anti-war peace movement, Peacebuilding at the time addressed the crucial question: “How do we respond to violence and war?” Between the 1930s and the 1960s, peacebuilding attempted to further the understanding of the phenomena of violence, war and conflict, drawing on insights from the disciplines of psychology, sociology, international relations, theology and education.

From the 1960s through the 1990s, peacebuilders focused specifically on Conflict Resolution mechanisms. There was a notable shift from conceptual knowledge to the practice and application of Peacebuilding techniques. The key question was: “How do we resolve, end or manage conflict?” Techniques like the Victim Offender Reconciliation Programs (VORP) were used to supplement the legal system of justice, along with processes of mediation, negotiation and multi-track diplomacy. In the post-Cold War era, Conflict Transformation began to emerge as a component of Peacebuilding and the focus shifted to building relationships with an aim to transform conflicts.

Within the field of Peacebuilding, the frameworks of Conflict Prevention, Conflict Resolution, Conflict Management and Conflict Transformation embrace overlapping processes and activities, and yet signify different approaches to addressing violent conflict.

Conflict Prevention refers to the anticipation and aversion of conflict escalation and violence. It is addressed at three levels. At the primary level, the focus is on
early warning – minimizing the possibility of the occurrence of a violent conflict. At the secondary level, containment and/or mitigation are the focus. At the tertiary level, the emphasis is on the prevention of a recurrence of armed conflict.

**Conflict Management** comprises approaches that seek to prevent conflict from spiraling into violence. Violent conflict is seen as an ineradicable consequence of differences in values and interests within and between communities. The resolution of conflict is therefore seen as unrealistic, and at best, it can be “managed” or “contained.” Although this framework offers valuable insights into how violence can be controlled and prevented, it does not focus on mainstreaming concerns relating to justice, reconciliation and the long-term needs for social change. Neither does it preclude the possibility of the use of force to manage conflict.

**Conflict Resolution** refers to nonviolent processes that comprise approaches and tools such as negotiation, mediation and facilitation, to resolve conflicts and to promote mutually acceptable agreements. Yet, several communities in conflict have expressed discomfort with this terminology because they believe that some conflicts ought not to be resolved. Sometimes, conflict must be escalated if the injustices of structural violence are to be highlighted and subsequently transformed.

In this context, **Conflict Transformation** asks a different question: How do we transform conflict and build peace? The focus is on “what we are trying to build,” not just “what we are trying to end.” Conflict Transformation shifts the focus to building trust and relationships across the conflict divide, with an emphasis on the tools of active listening and dialogue.

The fundamental distinction between these terminologies lies in how they perceive conflict. Sociologist and Conflict Transformation scholar John Paul Lederach writes, “Conflict Resolution has tended to focus primarily on methods for de-escalating conflict. Transformation involves both de-escalating and engaging conflict, even escalating in pursuit of constructive change. It includes, but is not bound by, the contributions and approaches proposed by resolution-based language.”\(^{12}\) Lederach points out that Conflict Transformation works at different levels. It brings about:

- **Personal change** through the creation of new attitudes, behaviors and knowledge (ex. trauma healing and coexistence programs);

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- **Relational change** through the creation of new or improved relationships between hostile groups/nations (ex. dialogue programs);

- **Cultural change** by emphasizing and promoting cultural values that support peace (ex. use of popular media to promote peaceful values); and

- **Structural change** which involves the initiation of new institutions and policies, and the empowerment of a new generation of leaders.

Former UN Secretary General, Mr. Boutros Boutros Ghali, in his “Agenda for Peace” (1992) highlighted two goals for Peacebuilding: the short-term goal of ensuring security and establishing ceasefires; and the long term goal of building relationships between conflicting groups, and rebuilding institutions and economies. Here, the underlying assumption was that a set of sequential activities are required at different stages of a conflict to build peace.

However, highlighting the complexity of Peacebuilding, practitioners question the neat chronology of activities provided by this definition. They stress that since half of all peace agreements lapse within five years, and others usually fail after the five-year mark, the aftermath of a conflict may prove to be the prelude to another conflict. Therefore, peacebuilding should have a broader agenda which incorporates activities that both precede and follow peace accords.

Moving beyond the chronology reflected in Boutros Ghali’s definition, in February 2001, the UN Security Council defined Peacebuilding as activities “aimed at preventing the outbreak, recurrence or continuation of armed conflict,” which include “a wide range of political, developmental, humanitarian and human rights programs and mechanisms.” “This requires short and long term actions tailored to address the needs of societies sliding into conflict or emerging from it.” Thus, Peacebuilding is no longer perceived as a post-conflict activity. It includes a range of processes from crisis management (humanitarian assistance and ceasefire negotiations) to the long-term efforts at conciliation, transformative mediation, relationship-building, peace education, nonviolence training, and restorative processes for justice and reconciliation.13

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In this context, Conflict Transformation practitioner Lisa Schirch identifies four categories of Peacebuilding approaches\(^\text{14}\) (*Figure 1*):

- Waging conflict nonviolently;
- Reducing direct violence;
- Building capacity;
- Transforming relationships.

It is essential to **wage conflict nonviolently** to increase a group’s power to address issues and ripen the conditions for transformation. This includes, monitoring and advocacy (monitor the way states and other actors protect human rights; create public awareness of abuses), direct action (raising awareness of injustice through protests, marches, non-cooperation and boycotts), and civilian-based defense (as used in Denmark in the Second World War to protect the Jewish population from Nazi persecution).

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A reduction in direct violence is a key component of any Peacebuilding activity. This can be achieved by restraining perpetrators of violence through legal and judicial systems; preventing and relieving the immediate suffering of victims as carried out by organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross; putting in place peacekeeping operations (Kosovo, Liberia); using force or military intervention to prevent violence (as in the former Yugoslavia); and by developing early warning systems to focus international attention and resources on a conflict before it erupts into mass violence.

Another crucial aspect is capacity-building i.e. training and development. A broader security agenda needs to be embraced so that military resources are channeled towards human security issues and needs. This agenda includes disarmament and reintegration of former combatants and child soldiers.

Schirch’s framework lists the following as processes which are central to the transformation of hostile relationships:

- Trauma Healing: This seeks to facilitate physical, emotional and spiritual healing and involves reconnecting people to their own self and to other people, and reestablishing a sense of personal control.
- Restorative Justice: This concept is used either as an alternative to the state-based criminal justice system or as a supplement to it. The goal is to involve the community in issues of justice by bringing together both perpetrators and victims of violence (for instance, the Gacaca tribunals in Rwanda).
- Transitional Justice: This becomes relevant in a post-war context when government authority may be weak. It requires the establishment of a system which addresses the need for justice during the transition period i.e. before the official mechanism of justice takes over.
- Governance and Policymaking: Effective design and implementation of policies for administration and governance form an important strand.

However, before initiating any of the above activities, Schirch asks peacebuilders to address the following questions:

- Through which processes and methodologies do we decide “what” to do? A variety of methodologies are available to peacebuilders, such as conflict analysis, needs assessment, listening projects and appreciative inquiry, to name a few.
- How do we decide “who” to draw into the peacebuilding process? Which sections and tracks of society do we involve in the peace process? Several actors emerge as stakeholders in a conflict, in addition to the
government, military and professional conflict resolution groups. These include business groups, religious leaders, educators, activists, grassroots’ community organizers, journalists, conflict spoilers, moderates, extremists, “insiders”, “outsiders” et al.

- **What is the “timeframe” for action?**
  Peacebuilding needs to occur before, during and after violence. For instance, in the pre-violence stage, early warning projects and advocacy can be initiated. During times of direct violence, in addition to capacity building and peacekeeping, initiatives that address the needs of both victims and offenders and build relationships across the conflict divide are needed. In the post-violence phase, issues such as disarmament, reintegration of armed groups, post-war trauma, human rights, and socioeconomic development must be addressed.

- **“Where” should such Peacebuilding work be done?**
  This requires an analysis of symbolically and socially important spaces that can support Peacebuilding processes.

- **“How” will Peacebuilding take place?**
  What are the core principles? What needs to be done to enhance coordination and collaboration between different actors and activities?

Examining the relevance of Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding to contemporary conflicts in South Asia, Dr. S. P. Udayakumar invited participants to search for approaches that are realistic and workable. He used the analogy of a continuum where at one end, there is The Dalai Lama, the Tibetan spiritual leader, who advocates nonviolence, but has achieved little success in his dialogue with China. At the other end of the continuum is the late LTTE leader Prabhakaran whose use of violence was also unable to provide dividends for the Tamil population of Sri Lanka.

Although nonviolence has worked in several regions across the world, beginning with the Indian freedom struggle, which influenced civil liberty movements in the American South, Poland, South Africa, and Chile, the question that Udayakumar posed was this:

> “In a context where states are becoming increasingly totalitarian, can nonviolence remain an effective methodology to transform injustice?”

Dr. S.P. Udayakumar
Director
Transcend South Asia
Nagercoil, Tamil Nadu
Udayakumar turned to the notion of “creative extremism” which he defined as nonviolent extra-constitutional action as an alternative to the pure nonviolence advocated by The Dalai Lama on the one hand, and extreme violence adopted by Prabhakaran on the other. Creative extremism, a term coined by Martin Luther King Jr., calls for the channeling of discontent and grievance into the “creative outlet of nonviolent direct action.” He defined such extremism in terms of “elevating action for compassion, morality, peace and justice.” Criticism of the status quo, he had once noted, would always be dismissed as ideological or extreme because such change would never be comfortable for those who profit from the status quo. In his “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” King Jr. addressed his fellow religious leaders concerning the charge of “extremism” they had levied against him. He wrote:

“So the question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be. Will we be extremists for hate or for love? Will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice or for the extension of justice?”

Drawing on the contributions of Peace Studies’ scholar Johan Galtung, Udayakumar offered a new set of lenses through which to look at conflict. He defined conflict as a combination of attitude, behavior and contradiction. While the “contradiction” lies at the root of the conflict, it is useful to also bear in mind that “attitudes” (which influence the way we look at a particular issue)
and “behavior” (the decision to act destructively or nonviolently) play a big part in hindering Conflict Transformation processes. The goal is to ultimately reach a place where the negative “attitude” is replaced by empathy towards the other and destructive behavior makes way for a commitment to nonviolence. Self-disclosure – the ability to speak openly, honestly, clearly and completely – was highlighted as an important Conflict Transformation practice that must be encouraged and cultivated. Such practice helps stakeholders to understand each other’s needs, interests and fears.

Concluding with a pocket mantra for peacebuilding, Udayakumar underscored the following values:

- Purity (of thoughts, words, and actions)
- Patience (transformation is a slow and gradual process)
- Perseverance (persist, don’t give up)
- Love (informed by a belief in nonviolence, humanism and universal responsibility)
Identity, Terror and The Other: *Search for a Vocabulary for South Asian Collaboration*

Religion, ethnicity, region, language and gender form the bedrock of identities. They are also the faultlines along which conflict premises itself most often. Conflict Transformation scholar John Paul Lederach’s assertion that “all conflicts are identity conflicts” has a growing resonance in South Asia, particularly in light of the way in which terror attacks and counter attacks have affected our core sense of identity. It is now increasingly acknowledged that conflicts are sustained by dehumanizing, even demonizing, the adversary.

Looking to develop a more nuanced and holistic perspective on the relationship between identity, terror and *the other*, the panel discussion *Identity, Terror and The Other: Search for a Vocabulary for South Asian Collaboration* addressed the following questions:

- How has the post-9/11 discourse on terror and terrorism impacted the multiple identities of people living in the South Asian region?
- How have recent terror attacks, and counter attacks, influenced the way in which we prioritize our multiple identities? Have certain aspects of our identity become more important as a result?
- What happens to our identity when we encounter the *other*? How does face-to-face dialogue with those perceived as “the enemy” influence our own self-image?
- What are the roadblocks to endeavors to build a vocabulary for South Asian cooperation? What measures may help overcome these challenges? What has been the record of regional groups such as SAARC? Are there insights from the European Union experience that are relevant to the South Asian region?
• Are “nations” and “states” distinct in the South Asian context especially in India where we see growing assertions of movements that are termed either “extremist, “militant” or “separatist”? What does identity and citizenship mean for people in this region?

Opening the panel discussion with the assertion that “South Asia” can be conceptualized as a civilizational region, Prof. T.K. Oommen, Chairman, Schumacher Center for Development, New Delhi, identified five identity streams which link language, religion and region in this part of the world:

• Aryan-Hindu-Sanskritic
• Dravidian-Hindu
• Islamic-Urdu
• Buddhist-Sinhala
• Sikh-Punjabi

The velocity of the conflicts between these diverse streams varies and, often, there are conflicts within these streams. For example, the Shia-Sunni conflict within the Islamic-Urdu identity stream.17

Speaking in the context of these identity streams, Oommen asserted that the idea of the nation-state, which indicates that there is a co-terminality between political boundaries and ethnic boundaries, is an untenable proposition.18 These two boundaries sit very uneasily in the South Asian context because the political boundaries simply do not coincide with the ethnicity of their inhabitants. Although there are pockets of religious majorities, religious minorities are substantially dispersed. For example, Muslims and Christians are substantially dispersed all over South Asia. This is also true of language groups.

15 Oommen noted that although the word “Hindu” is often used as an umbrella term suggesting a monolithic category, there is a clear distinction between Aryan Hinduism and Dravidian Hinduism.
16 The Islamic-Urdu stream cuts across the boundaries of the nation-state.
17 Participants posed questions about the conspicuous absence of the Tibeto-Burmese identity stream. Using a sociological lens, Oommen noted that this identity stream would be included in a discussion on civilizations in the context of South Asia and South East Asia. In fact, the difficulty of locating it within the identity streams of South Asia points to the complexities involved in matching the boundaries of culture and nation with those of the State.
18 A State is a self-governing political entity. A nation comprises a culturally homogeneous group of people, which share a common language, institutions, religion, and historical experience. A nation-state consists of a nation of people who have a State of their own. In other words, the nation has the same borders as a State.
The format of a nation-state requires that citizenship and nationality be in unison. These however are decoupled in South Asia. People belonging to a particular national group are not confined to a nation-state. In fact, many nations exist within each state. Despite this empirical reality, the conceptual vocabulary, used in South Asia, continues to conflate state and nation. In order to be useful, this vocabulary must change in order to reflect the empirical reality experienced by ordinary people.

In the context of this dilemma, Oommen proposed the idea of a “national state” to refer to the political entities of South Asia. Distinguishing between a nation-state and a national state, Oommen said that a nation-state is wedded to cultural homogenization. Nation-states across the world have ruthlessly indulged in attempts to homogenize the diverse ethnicities and cultures that their citizens represent. A national state, on the other hand, is a state in which cultural diversity is celebrated. “If we accept that South Asian states are national states – where citizenship and nationality are decoupled – then for the first time, we would make a departure from the existing vocabulary on the notion of the nation-state”, said Oommen.

The idea of a national state also suggests a distinction between national minorities and ethnic minorities – a distinction which has serious implications for governance in South Asia. According to Oommen, national minorities have legitimate claims to their historic homelands. They are majorities in their homelands, but minorities when looked at from the perspective of the national state or the polity as a whole. As national minorities, they have a legitimate right to a homeland and to nurture and cultivate their language, lifestyle and cultural traditions.

In contrast, ethnic minorities are de-territorialized groups. For example, while the Sindhis in Pakistan would be considered a national minority, the Sindhis in India would be an ethnic minority (as in, they are territorially dispersed). So far, the only demand from the Sindhi community in India is that the Sindhi language should be accepted as an official language. There is no movement for a Sindhi district or state.

Oommen noted that the idea of a national state has two implications. One, although the distinction between national minorities and ethnic minorities does not attempt to devalue the importance of the latter, the empirical reality that confronts the two groups in a democracy is different. While a national minority can elect its representative to bodies such as the Panchayat, State Assembly and Parliament, how might an ethnic minority – comprising a group of people that are territorially dispersed – acquire political representation?
The second implication of endorsing the idea of a national state is that the other is now internal, thereby making demonization a difficult proposition. Elaborating on this, Oommen stated, “In India, the other belongs to Pakistan or to Bangladesh, but the moment you accept a national state, the culturally different entities belong to your own state, and therefore the other is not necessarily an external agent as conventionally conceived. He/she is simply different and not necessarily an enemy.” The vocabulary of a national state recognizes the differences between ethnic and religious groups and, at the same time, asserts that people can coexist with respect and dignity.

The third implication is that identities are shifting and contextual. In a region as diverse as South Asia, no one identity can be defined as eternal and immutable. Rather, most individuals would recognize that they have multiple identities, and depending on the time, space and context, different identities assume significance. To elaborate on this point, Oommen articulated his response to the question, “what is your identity.” “I am a 5000 or a 62 year-old Indian, depending on the cut-off point in history. While the first refers to my civilizational identity, the second points to the Indian Republican identity. I am a 2000 year-old Syrian Christian19, and a 600 year-old Keralite or Malayali (a language which emerged some 600 years ago).20

Highlighting the role of context in terms of how people view their multiple identities, Oommen noted that when Indians and Pakistanis meet in a European country, they connect at the level of their civilizational identity, invoking their South Asian identity. Within India, an individual’s identity with a co-citizen – on the basis of a common ethnicity or religion – is invoked. Some of these identities are geographically anchored. For instance, Oommen noted that while his Christian identity is globally dispersed, his ethnic identity (Malayali) is anchored in a particular space within India called Kerala.

An acknowledgement of these shifting identities helps to dilute the process of otherization because the other in one context is an intimate co-national in another. Therefore, rather than stacking identities hierarchically, these should

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19 The apostle St. Thomas visited Kerala in AD 52 and converted a section of the local population to Christianity. This group is referred to as the Syrian Christian community.

20 Reflecting a similar perspective, Workshop resource person Dr. S.P. Udayakumar, speaking in the context of the Tamil-Sinhala conflict in Sri Lanka, said that the 70 million Tamils living in India empathize with “their people” caught in the conflict in Sri Lanka. “While my Indian national identity is only 62 years old, my connection with the Tamils of Sri Lanka is much older. How can I owe allegiance to the Indian state when members of my community are being killed in Sri Lanka,” said Udayakumar.
be arranged horizontally, thereby making the business of creating others and demonizing them somewhat suspect and difficult.

Commenting on the discourse on terror, Oommen drew attention to the three dimensions of violence: the physical, the structural, and the symbolic. While structural violence refers to the disparities, disabilities and deaths that are generated when institutions, laws and policies meet some people’s needs at the expense of others, symbolic violence seeks to stigmatize the other through various modes of social and cultural domination that are partly unconscious and often unnoticed.

Commenting on large-scale terror attacks such as those in the United States on September 11th, 2001, and in Mumbai on November 26th – 28th, 2008, Oommen cautioned against the tendency to retreat into the present in our analysis of such events. Often, the impression created is that such events provide a fresh cut-off point in history. On the contrary, they invariably represent the physical manifestations of historical and structural violence. “The event of 26/11 is the end-product of a long and historical cultural process,” said Oommen. “Some individuals are so deeply motivated for sacrificing their lives because they genuinely believe that the historical and structural wrongs committed against their group/nation should be set right. Terror therefore becomes a ritual against demonization of their group.”

In conclusion, Oommen advocated that the vocabulary of consensual equilibrium should replace the current focus on coercive equilibrium (also referred to as the “balance of terror”). Consensual equilibrium is anchored in the interaction between nations, peoples and civil society and is a prerequisite to building societies based on the principle of active coexistence.

Speaking on the interface between identity, nation and state, Prof. Ashis Nandy, Senior Honorary Fellow, Center for the Study of Developing Societies, New Delhi, located his presentation in the context of a paradox of political culture that nation-states confront. Whenever a group, a political party or a movement tries to secede from an existing nation-state, it invariably talks of problems which are intrinsic to the modern nation-state. For example, they believe that minority communities (religious, racial or ethnic) are not treated well and that their lifestyles, livelihoods and cultural traditions are under threat or cannot be adequately preserved within the structure of the nation-state. However, if they
succeed in attaining independence, they invariably build a nation-state with similar problems. This is one of the major paradoxes of the politics of nation-states across the world. This paradox acquires significance in light of the fact that, according to anthropologists and sociologists, there are between 3000 to 10,000 nations waiting to become states.

Asserting that the concept of the nation-state is not a permanent entity, Nandy noted that the classical notion that came into existence in the 17th century with the Treaty of Westphalia (1648) has already undergone significant changes in several parts of the world. For example, fourteen countries in the world do not have armies. The European Union now has a system where the local, regional and national governments are subservient to, and cannot defy, the human rights conventions signed amongst them. The ascendancy of the EU system has in fact meant that the standard notion of the “border” has disappeared in parts of Europe.

Yet, in South Asia, throughout the 20th century, an attempt was made to replicate the classical model of the European nation-state. As Nandy pointed out, the South Asian region had different kinds of conventions, traditions and notions of statecraft. In fact, during the first 100 years of colonization, the British Indian state did not follow the conventions of the modern nation-state but those of the Mughal Empire. For example, English became the official language as late as 1830 even though the British Empire was established in 1757. Persian was the official language of India till the 1830s (and even unofficially for several years later). During the reign of the Mughals and later the British, the diverse communities and regions had different degrees of integration with the Empire. In fact, the princely states accounted for one-third of British India. Although the paramount power was with the British, each state had a different kind of relationship with the British Empire.

Yet, as movements for independence gained momentum in South Asia in the first half of the 20th century, there was an aspiration to replicate the European model of governance and statecraft, thereby discarding indigenous systems and practices. For instance, in India, many of these conventions and traditions were not taken into consideration during the drafting of the Constitution. The first generation of leaders tried to emulate the European model of governance and statecraft. A whole range of problems arose because of the attempt to steamroll extremely diverse civilizations into a monolithic model.

In addition to adopting this model, India also tried to emulate the Western model of development. In this context, Nandy noted that one of the world’s
most large-scale genocides took place in North America and South America where an estimated 97% of the indigenous population was killed. While India’s passion for democracy and capacity to live with radical diversity have prevented such incidents to a considerable extent, the fact remains that in the last 62 years, development has displaced six million Indians. One third of the 250 tribes in India no longer have a tribal identity and a life-support system. They are tribes only in name and for the purpose of availing the benefits of affirmative action from the state.

With nearly one-third of India now affected by Maoist violence, the despair and desperation of these masses of uprooted communities has begun to show. The Maoists get most of their support from the tribal communities who are not only oppressed and poor but have also lost the life-support systems that brought meaning to their lives. While the affluent classes ascribe to them the identities of “poor” and “oppressed,” what is often lost sight of is that these communities also have their traditions, their own language, their own lifestyle and their own cuisine. Yet, these aspects of their identity have been denied to them in the misplaced belief that poverty alleviation alone can remove their sense of despair and bring back a sense of meaning to their life.

Commenting on the role of identity in the current discourse on terror, Nandy concluded his presentation with a reference to Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and the Khudai Khidmatgars (servants of God) who led a nonviolent freedom struggle against the British Empire in northwest Pakistan. Between 1926 and 1940, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan mobilized 100,000 Pathans to use nonviolence to resist British rule. In fact, the role played by the Khudai Khidmatgars during the Satyagraha movement was so significant that it led Mahatma Gandhi to comment that the Pathans had provided the most effective nonviolent resistance against the British. Although the British police were particularly cruel to them, not one Pathan resorted to violence even when they were fired upon or beaten up. Speaking of the volatile situation currently prevailing in northwest Pakistan, Nandy noted that in light of the Taliban’s claim that it derives inspiration from religion, it is important to remember that the Khudai Khidmatgars also drew on the nonviolent resources of Islam. In the context of the current global perception that most Taliban fighters are Pathans, Nandy posed two questions, “What turned the Pathans from one kind of resistance to another and what role has the state played in that transformation?21 Can we begin a dialogical process that enables us to draw on our own indigenous

21 Contrary to popular perception, the Taliban also comprises members from various other regions (Punjab and Sindh in Pakistan) and countries (Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, for example).
resources, traditions and history to find solutions outside of the standard format of the nation-state?"

Locating the discourse on identity in the context of inter-state relations, Dr. T.C.A. Raghavan, Joint Secretary (Pakistan-Afghanistan-Iran), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, New Delhi, traced the origin of the India-Pakistan conflict as one located in the communalization of religious identity (between the 1920s and 1940s). Drawing attention to the history of the current disputes between the two countries, Raghavan cited the example of the dispute over Sir Creek which originated as one between the Commissioner of Sindh and the Raja of Kutch (who was represented by the Government of Bombay). After 1947, Pakistan took the position of the Commissioner of Sindh and India took the position of the Raja of Kutch. Till recently, the evidential basis of discussions on this issue was the position taken by these two provincial authorities. Similarly, on the issue of river waters, it is pertinent to look at the pre-history of the Indus Waters dispute. The conflict has its roots in the politics of Punjab and Sindh in the 1920s. In the initial discussions at the World Bank, which was a mediator, many of the positions taken by India and Pakistan mirrored the positions that Punjab and Sindh had taken three decades earlier.

Such an exercise that looks at what Raghavan termed as the “pre-history” of contemporary conflicts helps to reduce the intensity with which the public and governments look at these issues. If Indian and Pakistani negotiators are mindful of the fact that each dispute has a longer history and background to it, this could bring a degree of humility to the negotiations. Such a focus on the “pre-history” can also help the public in the two countries to look at these issues outside of a nationalistic framework and develop a more dispassionate understanding of the bilateral relationship. Underscoring the complexities of this relationship, Raghavan said that the conflicts between the two countries

22 The Sir Creek is a 96 kilometer strip of water disputed between India and Pakistan in the Rann of Kutch marshlands. The creek, which opens up into the Arabian Sea, divides the Kutch region of the Indian state of Gujarat with the Sindh province of Pakistan. The dispute lies in the interpretation of the boundary line between Kutch and Sindh as depicted in a 1914 and 1925 map. At that time, the region was a part of the Bombay Presidency of undivided British India. After independence in 1947, Sindh became a part of Pakistan while Kutch remained a part of India.
should not be addressed purely in a spirit of volunteerism in the belief that “everything can be solved.” It is of greater utility to approach them with a spirit of caution and humility because these are issues which the best minds in both countries have addressed for more than half a century and have been unable to come up with satisfactory solutions.

Tracing the history of India-Pakistan relations with an emphasis on the phases where the political leadership displayed creativity and foresight, Raghavan said that in the 1950s, the two countries undertook genuine efforts to make a fresh start. Evident from the conduct of the political leadership on both sides, these efforts marked the first creative phase in the history of India-Pakistan relations. Although the 1950s also witnessed a great deal of bureaucratic work in terms of division of assets, a new trade relationship, and currency and banking related issues, there was also a sensibility that bilateral relations must improve.

The Indus Waters’ Treaty – one of the most successful agreements between India and Pakistan – was in fact seen as an outcome of these efforts towards conciliation. Although recent years have witnessed conflicts on issues such as Pakistan’s access to the Chenab river waters and Jammu and Kashmir’s participation in the negotiations, this Treaty has not faltered or collapsed. Every other agreement between India and Pakistan – whether it is with respect to diplomatic relations, people-to-people contact, trade or air flights – has met with challenges.

This phase however ended in the early 1960s. Attributing this to the larger Cold War politics which intruded into the politics of the subcontinent in a very significantly way, Raghavan shared that most Indian accounts of the time present the view that Pakistan’s entry into different regional blocs (that were set up as subsidiaries of the US-USSR conflict) led to the end of this creative phase between the two countries. Pakistan’s entry into the regional blocs was seen as a means of offsetting what was perceived to be a preponderant Indian presence.

The second phase was witnessed in the late 1970s. Marked by a sensibility that the two countries could not remain mired endlessly in their disputes and that perhaps the time had come to move on, the governments of India and Pakistan initiated several path-breaking measures with respect to visas, travel, and cultural interaction. In fact, many the discussions and agreements between 2004 and 2008 have their origins in this period. This phase however ended as an indirect consequence of the Soviet entry into Afghanistan, ushering in a new phase of the Cold War.
Notwithstanding the nuclear tests, the Kargil conflict, and the hijacking of the Indian Airlines flight to Afghanistan, Raghavan highlighted the period of the late 1990s as representing a **third creative phase** in the history of bilateral relations. It was marked by initiatives such as the Prime Minister of India, Atal Behari Vajpayee, undertaking a symbolic bus journey from Delhi to Lahore in 1999, and Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf visiting Agra in 2001. While these initiatives may not have been successful in terms of outcome, what is important is the impulse which gave rise to them. There was a commitment among the political leadership that the two countries must make efforts to normalize relations. Changes in technology, the easy availability of information (online newspapers, for example), and the easing of travel restrictions gave a further impetus to the desire for dialogue and friendly ties. The changes in technology, in particular, made demonization of the other much more difficult. With citizens being able to access each other’s cultural products much more easily through the internet, the ability of the state to mediate people-to-people interaction was weakened.

The period 2004 – 2007 represents the **fourth phase of creativity** in India-Pakistan relations. There was a much greater involvement of the public in what were considered to be foreign policy and diplomacy issues. Public diplomacy acquired a bigger role for itself, both in India and in Pakistan. Visas, travel, pilgrimages to the other country, and access to each other’s cultural products (films, for example) were some examples of public engagement on issues that were hitherto addressed only by the two governments.

Raghavan concluded his presentation with the assertion that there is a general unanimity of view in both countries that track one engagement must be sustained and that terrorism will occupy a central space in the composite dialogue. A fairly substantive agenda is already in existence and there is a considerable degree of agreement on what the components and yardsticks of progress would be in the future. However, the divergent perspectives on terrorism remain a key obstacle. The domestic politics of the two countries, Pakistan in particular, have also tightly circumscribed the official-level dialogue.

Dr. Baela Raza Jamil, Coordinator, South Asia Forum for Education Development, Lahore, examined the **role of the education system in identity formation in Pakistan**. Speaking in the context of the domestic political crisis in the country, Jamil shared an experience from a meeting of school teachers that she had attended in Jaffarabad, Balochistan. At this meeting, she had suggested that educators should learn skills to facilitate discussions on current
affairs in the classroom. This would help students to make sense of the events, often violent, that take place around them. Such an exercise, Jamil felt, was particularly important in a district like Jaffarabad which has a turbulent local history. The region is home to separatist and national movements. The Taliban have also entrenched themselves in some parts of the district. In 2006, the Baloch leader Nawab Akbar Bugti was assassinated here. While children are witnessing and absorbing all these events, they cannot talk about these issues in the home or at school. In this context, Jamil saw the classroom as a safe and healing space where conversations of this kind could happen.

The head teacher however rejected Jamil’s suggestion saying that school teachers were not allowed to talk about current affairs particularly with reference to the domestic political situation in Pakistan. She added that they were prohibited by the authorities and that such discussions could lead to political clashes. The other teachers at the meeting echoed this perspective.

Jamil noted that the problem with such official silence is that as children grow older, they begin to look for alternative identities and spaces that allow them
to articulate their perspectives on the issues and events that they experience on a daily basis. However, often such alignment happens along religious or tribal lines. For instance, Jamil shared the example of a recent incident in Balochistan where a group of young people took the position that the national anthem should not be sung in schools and the national flag should not be hoisted. Yet, the education system does not provide a space for youngsters to share such grievances and views nor does it allow for the creation of a critical vocabulary. As a result, rather than serving society for its evolution and growth, the education system has become an ossified instrument of the nation-state.\footnote{Education reform has had a checkered history in Pakistan. The national education policy of 1972 initiated a process of Islamization with the introduction of Pakistan Studies, which meant that the state of Pakistan would be defined in glorious forms of Islamic socialism and all other encounters with historiography would be done away with. In 1979, under Operation Cyclone, General Zia-ul-Haq opened madrassas across the country as a result of which, today, Pakistan is home to 15,000 madrassas with about 1.5 million students. The madrassas are affiliated to the State Education Boards and the degrees acquired at these institutions are recognized for employment purposes. The curricula have tended to prescribe official religion as ideology in every text and subject. Realizing the role that the education system has played in generating mistrust and prejudice among the youth, the Government of Pakistan, in 2005, undertook measures to revise the curriculum with a purpose to remove the hate speech and vitriolic writing from the textbooks.}

Shifting focus to the \textbf{"war on terror"}, Jamil shared that, on an average, five terrorist incidents take place in Pakistan every day.\footnote{“Interior Ministry reveals shocking extent of terrorism”, \textit{Dawn} (Lahore: April 17, 2009).} Terror and conflict of the worst kind have now become a way of life for the citizens of Pakistan. While the Taliban (with support from Al Qaeda) are responsible for many of these attacks, Jamil drew attention to the politics of the Cold War and how the United States and Pakistan financed the Taliban movement. Today, the Taliban comprises local followers as well as hired mercenaries and child soldiers. “They are pursuing an imagined, regimented, anti-human, demonized pan-Islamism. They are open to kidnapping for ransom and peddling drugs for money to feed the war where the end justifies the means,” said Jamil.

In this context, Jamil noted that there is a widespread belief in Pakistan and in the international community that religious fundamentalism is the result of mental and moral backwardness and archaic religious beliefs. The reality however is that fundamentalism has more to do with geopolitics, power, money, and control over territory than with religious beliefs. Fundamentalism in Pakistan can be traced to the era of General Zia-ul-Haq. It is a myth that only religious parties and sectarian outfits are responsible for this. Politicians from across the political spectrum in Pakistan have colluded in some way or the other.
Saying that terror afflicts various aspects of an individual’s identity – not merely the religious/ethnic dimension – Jamil pointed to the construction of gender identity in Pakistan. In many parts of Pakistan, the family, community and society collude to imbibe certain gendered values in children. For instance, the male child will be subjected to authoritarian discipline and will be taught how he should behave in order to be a future patriarch. The female child is taught how to perform her duties and have silent obedience as a key characteristic. Any line-crossing for either gender leads to punishment and consequences. Those who deviate pay dearly through all sorts of honor sanctions. These actions become enshrined in each family’s code of conduct and sub-culture codified through religious references and routine practices. Not limited to the private sphere, such practices are legitimised by the local police, jirgah, panchayat, and politicians, through legal institutional arrangements and protection in the name of respect for local culture, religious traditions and customary norms. Terror, therefore, in all its dimensions, flourishes and is reinforced in the concentric circles of the individual, family, society and state, with the education system reaffirming these transactions.

Jamil concluded with the assertion that any exercise that seeks to construct inclusive identities must hold as central the principles of equity and dignity, while steering clear of attempts to homogenise and exclude.

Speaking in the context of the domestic turmoil in Nepal, Prof. Sangeeta Thapliyal, Center for South, Central, Southeast Asian and Southwest Pacific Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, looked at the relationship between identity and conflict and the challenges that confront the country as it attempts to address the complex concerns of the many nations that reside within the Nepali state.

Despite the entry of the Maoists into mainstream politics and the removal of monarchy, peace and stability continue to evade Nepal. This, according to Thapliyal, is because of the misperception that the Maoists are the only stakeholders in Nepali politics, in addition to the monarchy and political parties. There are several other groups – for example, the Janajatis (“nationalities”), the Dalits and the Madhesis – that have divergent concerns and would like their political and social interests to be addressed as the country charts a new course for itself.
According to Thapliyal, rather than an ethnic movement, the Maoists represent a political movement with clear-cut political goals and ideology. During the civil war, which ended in 2006, many of their demands related to socioeconomic issues and this is what attracted people to the Maoist movement. There was also a convergence with the issues that the Janajatis were raising, for example, issues related to the Terai region. As a result, many of the Janajatis joined hands with the Maoists, but, as Thapliyal noted, they did not become Maoists nor did they join the Maoist cadres. It was not their goal to restructure the state, but rather to gain political representation because of the marginalization they experienced in jobs, politics, and various social sectors. Thapliyal concluded with the assertion that, for sustainable peace and security, each of these groups – that defines itself as a nation in the sense that each has its own language, religion, culture, territory and a history of independent statehood – should receive political representation and acceptance as key stakeholders in the peace process in Nepal.
The panel discussion on Geopolitics and Conflict Transformation explored the various “connectors” and “dividers” that tie together the interests of Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. From terrorism and security to the geopolitics of oil and gas pipelines, the areas of common interest and the avenues for cooperation are many. For instance, the suicide bombings on the Indian Embassy in Kabul and Hotel Marriott in Islamabad and the Mumbai terror attacks point in the direction of a shared threat of terrorism in the region. Despite the nature of these attacks, cooperation on counter-terrorism has been amiss within the region. Afghanistan, Pakistan and India are engaged in a blame game, debating the motivations and perpetrators of these attacks rather than working together on violence prevention. If seen as a connector, counter-terrorism measures might actually benefit from cooperation between Kabul, Islamabad and New Delhi. In this context, the panel discussion sought to address the following questions:

- How has the new geopolitical equation post-9/11 influenced relations between Afghanistan, Pakistan and India? What has been the impact of India’s growing closeness with Afghanistan on India-Pakistan relations?
- What shape is the regional geopolitical map likely to take in the coming years?
- Will the international community succeed in bringing security and peace to Afghanistan?
- How will the new US Af-Pak strategy affect the region?
- How might the three countries work collaboratively to address the common threat of terror and partner on joint interests?
Opening the session with a comment on the close ties that Afghan leaders have shared with India, Ambassador S.K. Lambah, Special Envoy to the Prime Minister of India, New Delhi, cited the examples of King Zahir Shah (who spent his childhood in Dehradun), President Hamid Karzai (who studied in Shimla), and the late Dr. Najibullah’s family (who received political asylum in India). The historically close ties, which were ruptured during the Taliban rule, were rebuilt in 2001 after the fall of the radical political group.

Saying that the shape of the regional geopolitical map will be determined by how Afghanistan, Pakistan and India cooperate with one another, Lambah listed the following as issues that impact bilateral and trilateral relations: cross-border terrorism, illegal migration, energy security, the threat of weapons of mass destruction, the use of water resources, and non-traditional issues such as food security, health security, and the environment.

On the question of whether the international community would succeed in bringing security and peace to Afghanistan, Lambah pointed to the great strides that were made in this respect up to 2006 when the Taliban regrouped and revived the insurgency. Unfortunately, the militants who were defeated in 2001 have now been able to recover financially and structurally. Saying that the insurgency is restricted largely to the south and southeast of the country, Lambah noted, “Ninety percent of the trouble in Afghanistan is in this 10% of the territory.” The rise in violence can be attributed to the existence of sanctuaries in areas where the writ of the government has eroded or simply does not exist. Also, the porous nature of the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan enables militants to cross the Durand Line, seek refuge in areas governed by local tribal laws, and return to Afghanistan after having regrouped.

The challenge for the international community is to address the insurgency without running roughshod over the rights and sentiments of the local population. Building such a balance between violence prevention, peacebuilding and respect for local sentiments is difficult because while indigenous traditions have their place, there is also the question of civil liberties and human rights, which are often denied through the practice of local customs. It is also the south and southeast part of Afghanistan that accounts for 98% of poppy production, a key source of funding for the insurgency. However, on a
positive note, Lambah cited a recent US administration report on drugs which reveals that the area under **poppy cultivation has fallen** from 19,7000 to 15,7000 hectares; poppy-free provinces have increased from 13 to 18; and, drug production has reduced by six percent.

Welcoming the new Af-Pak Strategy of the Obama administration, Lambah said that this approach would help to dismantle the infrastructure, which nurtures terrorism. Sovereignty, however, has emerged as a tricky issue in the implementation of this strategy. Yet, it was noted that the issue can be resolved if all the stakeholders approach the issue from a perspective of dismantling the common threat of terrorism.

Lambah identified the following as areas that would benefit from collaboration between Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. First, the three countries must work together to remove the structures that support terrorism. Second, trilateral and bilateral cooperation in economic and political areas should be encouraged. However, it would be futile to expect anything concrete from dialogues on cooperation in the area of oil and gas. Instead, the focus of collaboration should be on the economic development of each country, particularly Afghanistan, because such an approach would benefit the entire region.

The next presentation by Dr. Salma Malik, Lecturer, Department of Defense and Strategic Studies, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, looked at the **relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan**, which, in spite of a shared history and ethnic affinities, has been marred by mistrust and hostility. Trouble began as far back as 1947 when the Pakistani state was established and its northwest border was drawn on the basis of the 1893 Durand Line. The contentious Durand Line became a major sour point in bilateral relations and, in 1949, the Afghan Loya Jirga unilaterally ceased the border agreement which they declared defunct with the departure of the British Empire. The Line however is accepted as an international border (albeit a soft one).

Added to this, the affinities of the secular Pashtun leadership to India, their support for an independent homeland called Pashtunistan on both sides of the Durand Line, and Afghanistan’s reluctant recognition of the newly independent state of Pakistan created an atmosphere of mutual distrust between the two
Malik shared that relations had soured to such an extent that, in March 1955, the Pakistan mission in Kabul was looted and the Pakistani flag pulled down.

Cold War politics also played their part in exacerbating tensions between the two neighbors. While Afghanistan was a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, different political regimes had sided with the Soviets in varying degrees. This culminated in the April 1978 Saur Revolution, resulting in the exodus of four million Afghan nationals into Pakistan. The December 1979 Soviet occupation of Afghanistan opened a new chapter in Afghanistan-Pakistan relations. With Afghanistan becoming the last and decisive battleground of the Cold War, enormous financial resources and armaments were pumped into the country and large-scale guerrilla warfare training, specialized covert operations, and the manipulation of various Afghan resistance groups into mujahideens infused with religious fervor were initiated by the US in collaboration with Pakistan’s ISI. Then US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles strategized that nurturing (arming and training) religious radicals, instead of strengthening Left and liberal groups would be more beneficial in defeating the Soviets. A significant number of religious seminaries – madrassahs – in Afghanistan and Pakistan were converted into recruiting and training camps for the mujahideens, and eventually became a breeding ground for future militancy and sectarianism in the region. Additional funds for the Afghan jihad were provided through the replacement of tobacco and tea plantations with poppy cultivation.

The end of the Soviet occupation in 1989 was followed by a civil war in Afghanistan, which eventually led to the rise of the Taliban and the Al Qaeda. As a result, any efforts at disarmament, demobilization and micro-development failed. This not only prevented the return of Afghan refugees from Pakistan, but also led to the dispatching of many Pakistani-origin jihadis to the Indian side of Kashmir to participate in the indigenous Kashmiri movement in the 1990s.

The recognition and patronage rendered to the Taliban by Pakistan cast a negative shadow on the two countries’ relations. The September 11 attacks

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25 In order to minimize the impact of the ethnic divide created as a result of the Durand Line, the six major Pashtun tribes on both sides of the Line were granted an “easement clause,” by virtue of which they could move across the border and carry out trade and commercial activity with the permission of local political authorities. Although for the newly independent Pakistan, the greatest security threat emanated from its eastern border, given the divergence in geopolitical perspectives, Pakistan and Afghanistan were unable to develop a smooth bilateral relationship.
brought about a change in Pakistan’s foreign policy and it became the third and last country (after UAE and Saudi Arabia) to sever its ties with the ultra-zealot regime. While the ensuing war on terror brought relief to the Afghans, it also caused a spillover of the Taliban and Al Qaeda activities into Pakistan via FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas). As a result, FATA and the North Western Frontier Province of Pakistan became the center stage of the Taliban militancy, with areas such as Swat, Malakand and Dir facing the worst brunt. It is estimated that the insurgency resulted in more than 3.8 million internally displaced people. While the Pakistan military’s counter insurgency operation Rah-e-Raast succeeded in restoring peace and stability in these areas and a good number of the IDPs returned, Malik noted that as long as the Pak-Afghan border remains porous and militancy continues in FATA, the problem will persist.

Concluding with the assertion that the mutual distrust between Afghanistan and Pakistan can be transcended if leaders end the “blame game” and display genuine will and commitment, Malik made the following recommendations for improving bilateral relations. First, both countries must collaborate on breaking the deadly nexus of drugs, weapons, illicit trafficking and corruption. Second, the Durand Line, regardless of previous disputes and demands for re-evaluation, must be secured with appropriate measures to check cross-border infiltrations and trafficking. Third, existing traditional institutions should be strengthened rather than creating new ones that fail to deliver. For instance, the Pak-Afghan Aman (Peace) Jirga can facilitate track two level dialogues to a great extent. Fourth, multi-track initiatives should be encouraged. Youth exchanges, a joint trade and commerce chamber, academic and research collaboration, and a sensitive media can help to reduce the trust deficit and build a foundation for durable peace and security.

Addressing the question, Will the West succeed in Afghanistan, Dr. Philipp Ackermann, Head of Political Department, Embassy of Germany, New Delhi, spoke on the role of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force in helping to build a democratic, peaceful and stable Afghanistan. NATO entered Afghanistan with the aim to fight the extremist threat in the country and to help create a safe and secure environment for development and reconstruction activities. After eight years of military and reconstruction commitment, the situation has improved, but by no means have the Western countries been able

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26 This presentation includes the personal remarks and views of the speaker and does not reflect the perspectives of the German government.
to meet the benchmarks set out in 2001. The Central government is still in no position to manage the security threat and has been unable to establish a stable and strong system of governance.

While some regions in Afghanistan (especially the south) have not seen sufficient reconstruction and development activities due to the security situation, other regions (such as the north), which previously were quite safe, have seen an increase in violence, including suicide attacks. Reconstruction and development projects are not equally distributed across the country.

Ackermann listed the following as challenges that the NATO-led mission confronts in Afghanistan:

- Rise in the number of attacks and combat situations;
- Shrinking popularity, and sometimes open hostility, towards Western forces;
- Shrinking popularity of the mission in the home countries of the forces. For example, 64% Germans are against the presence of the Federal Armed Forces in Afghanistan. Domestically, Western governments are confronted with questions pertaining to the mandate, the strategy, the costs, and the aim of the mission.

Ackermann noted that international presence, including military presence, are necessary for the goals of reconstruction and development in the country. Further, the global security situation calls for such a presence. A failed state, which becomes a safe haven for terrorism is a security risk not just for Afghanistan, but for the region and the entire world. The establishment of a strong, stable, and reliable government in Kabul, which has efficient security forces and which can improve living conditions for the Afghans, is in the interest of the people of Afghanistan as well as the world. Underscoring the importance of a military presence, Ackermann said that all of this work can happen only if people feel safe and the environment is secure. As he put it, “Military strength is a message which is very well understood by the militants.”

On the issue of development, while progress is visible in the cities and in some provinces, there are still regions where living conditions have hardly improved since 2001. Better infrastructure, improved access to health and education, and the creation of a better economic environment are paramount
for sustainable peace and security. Also highlighted was the need for more
**coordination** and **cooperation** between the various countries and international
organizations operating in Afghanistan. In the absence of some form of
coordination, there is the very real danger that each country adopts a different
approach, which may result in confusion and contradiction. For example,
Ackermann shared that a US Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) is
fundamentally different from a German-run PRT. While the purpose is not to
have a uniform approach, it would be helpful for the local Afghan population
if there was some consistency and an overall common framework within which
each country developed its own approach. Existing UN mechanisms do work
towards such coordination, but cannot manage such a complex task single
handedly.

**The strengthening of government institutions** was identified as a key area
of focus. This, to begin with, involves efforts to strengthen the security forces,
army and police. While the army is perhaps the most professional institutional
body in Afghanistan so far, there is room for improvement in its performance.
Reform of the police force is perhaps more difficult since much of the training
happens “on the job.” Corruption, arbitrariness, lack of training and experience
are some of the weaknesses that plague the Afghan police. Ackermann cited
the example of a police reform process, initiated by Germany, which trained
top-level officials at the Kabul Police Academy. It was however noted that
police training and performance in the villages and provinces have proved to
be much more difficult. Similarly, there is a need to strengthen the capacity
and efficiency of the Afghan civil service.

Perhaps an equally challenging task is that Western governments have to
convince their populations that the Afghanistan mission is justified and
necessary. Taking the example of Germany, Ackermann shared that the average
German has negative ideas about Afghan people. Afghanistan – a country 6000
kilometers away – is associated with terrorism, human rights violations, and
the depressing plight of women. Images of burqa-clad women on television
news channels only serve to reaffirm the perception that Afghanistan’s
conservative culture is very far removed from German or for that matter
European culture. Such a perception leads people to ask their governments:
“Why do we spend money in Afghanistan when they kill our soldiers? Why
don’t we leave them alone since they don’t seem to appreciate the help
we offer?” Although the perception is not one of a “clash of civilizations,”
there certainly is a lack of knowledge and understanding about Afghan culture
and politics. It was therefore underscored that if Western countries want to
succeed in Afghanistan, they must convince their own citizens of the need for such a mission.

Western governments must educate their respective domestic constituencies that the overwhelming majority in Afghanistan prefer a democratically elected, internationally recognized strong government and believe that international aid and military presence have improved the quality of life in comparison to the pre-2001 Taliban period. Domestic constituencies also need to be informed that the international mission in Afghanistan is not a NATO mission. Several countries including India, Japan, Iran and Bangladesh work in the country to improve infrastructure, education and health services. Western troops secure the environment for such reconstruction work.

What also needs to be underscored is that the mission is going to take a long time to succeed. A poor country with a complicated social texture and a turbulent past cannot be transformed within a couple of years. The scars of three decades of war and the trauma that an entire generation of young Afghans has experienced cannot be healed in a short span of time. It will take several years to transform the physical and psychological wounds that 30 years of war have inflicted on the country.

Concluding with the observation that success in Afghanistan requires patience, focus and understanding, Ackermann said that the US administration’s Af-Pak Strategy is a step in the right direction. The Strategy, which has led many Western countries to readjust their mission aims in Afghanistan, seeks to:

- Strengthen Afghan civilian institutions;
- Increase the number of troops;
- Increase aid for development; and,
- Increase coordination among military and civilian actors as well as between contributing countries.

Drawing attention to some of the complexities of the Af-Pak Strategy, Dr. Shanthie Mariet D’Souza, Associate Fellow, Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses, New Delhi, raised questions about how the “region” and “success” are to be defined. What role is each participating country in the region required to play? Is success defined in terms of decimating the Taliban and Al Qaeda completely, as mentioned in Af-Pak? Or, is the goal to build a stable Afghanistan, which is capable of handling its own affairs and regional
countries do not intervene? This is a particularly important question because the mess in Afghanistan is a manifestation of consistent interference by outside powers.

Examining the perception that Afghanistan has emerged as a frontier of Indo-Pak rivalry, D’Souza summarized the nature of India’s engagement in the war-torn nation. India is involved in reconstruction activity and supports projects that envisage long-term stabilization. Most of the USD 1.2 billion aid is channelled in the direction of health, education and infrastructure. There is no defense component and there are no Indian soldiers in Afghanistan. Second, India looks to Afghanistan as a connector between Central Asia and South Asia.

The perception that Afghanistan has emerged as a new arena of conflict between India and Pakistan is a simplistic characterization of the very complex issues at stake. Pakistan-Afghanistan relations and India-Afghanistan relations have their own context and background. However, given the history of mistrust and conflict, it is in the nature of India-Pakistan relations that anything that happens between India and Afghanistan will be looked at with suspicion in Pakistan. It was noted that Pakistan’s concerns about India and Afghanistan will ease when its own relationship with Afghanistan eases. Otherwise, it is in the nature of this triangular relationship that the apprehensions of each country will feed on the other.

With the inclusion of Afghanistan in SAARC, the potential for economic cooperation between the three countries is enormous. Yet differences over trade and transit rights have blocked such opportunities. For example, partnerships over energy pipelines could accrue huge benefits to the region. These could generate about 10000 jobs in Afghanistan and provide economic benefits to the Afghani economy. Again, owing to insecurities and competition, such cooperation is blocked.

In this context, D’Souza made the following recommendations for sustainable peace and security in Afghanistan and in the region:

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27 D’Souza identified the following “regional” countries in the context of the Afghan conflict: Pakistan, Iran, Central Asian Republics, China, Russia, and India.
• Organize a regional conference in South Asia along the lines of the Bonn conference where a role could be allocated to the various countries that constitute the “region.” The countries could make a commitment to stay out of the internal affairs of Afghanistan and demarcate it as a neutral territory.

• There is a need to move from a bilateral to a multilateral framework. Such a framework, which involves the regional countries, might enable actors to rise above bilateral problems and focus on issues that benefit the region as a whole.

• The global economic downturn and recession might affect the staying power of the Western forces. In such a scenario, it is crucial that the regional countries explore resources and options that ensure the long-term stabilization of Afghanistan. It was suggested that counter-insurgency experts who have worked in Kashmir and in the Northeast of India could be consulted on developing a model that might work for Afghanistan.

• Confidence-building measures that facilitate the easy flow of people and goods and services in South Asia could serve as an avenue for cooperation between India and Pakistan.

• A regional media mechanism should be established to highlight the success stories and the narratives of hope and courage from Afghanistan. This will play an important role in changing public perception about Afghan culture and politics, which is currently dominated by the image of suicide attacks and combat operations.

• Regional cooperation, particularly in the area of counter-terrorism, can benefit the three countries enormously. It can help them to transcend a zero-sum mindset and enhance peace and security within and beyond their borders.

• The root causes of terrorism must be addressed. While counter-insurgency operations, which use a military approach, can achieve only limited success, it is crucial to address the grievances and injustices that lead people to support terror groups such as the Al Qaeda. For example, the rise in civilian casualties as a result of the military approach of the US has increased the support for groups such as the Taliban. In Pakistan, the issue of the American drone attacks has been exploited by radical groups to rally support for their fundamentalist ideas.

• A serious rethink on international aid is required. Much of this aid has been given to the military rather than for the purpose of long-term institution-building, both in Afghanistan and Pakistan.
The key question that all actors seeking to work in support of the peace process in Afghanistan must ask is this: “What kind of Afghanistan do we want to see 10 to 20 years from today?” Such envisioning should inform current policies and practices.

Discussion

The discussion opened with interventions and questions from the Afghan participants. Ms. Rangina Hamidi, who has been living and working in Kandahar since 2003, shared the perceptions of the Afghan people who reside in the troubled south. While the slow pace of development and reconstruction have been a key factor in turning many Afghans against the government, given the track record of the international community in Afghanistan over the last three decades, there is also some confusion among the people about what really is the mission of the international community. It was this “international community,” which armed and trained different ethnic communities in Afghanistan to fight one another. While ordinary Afghans recognize the assistance that Pakistan has provided to millions of Afghan refugees, at the same time, they are also aware of Pakistan’s role in training mujahideen fighters who ended up killing innocent civilians and destroying their country. Following Russia’s departure from Afghanistan in 1989, members of the international community intervened to support different ethnic communities in the civil war that ensued. While Pashtun mujahideen leaders were supported by Pakistan, the Tajiks were supported by countries in the North, the Uzbekks by Uzbekistan, the Turkmen by Turkey, and the Hazara leaders by Iran. The result was further polarization and trauma for the Afghan people. Since a majority of the population was Pashtun, Pakistan’s strategic support to the Taliban enabled it to control a significant section of the Afghan populace and steer events within Afghanistan in its favor.

Voicing questions that are uppermost in the minds of the Afghan people, Hamidi said:

- If, in 2001, a house that held Al-Qaida leaders could be identified from a plane and bombarded without any destruction to the houses next to it, why is it that, today, after eight years of experience, the international community is not able to deal with a handful of insurgents?
On the one hand, Pakistan is at the center of the Obama administration’s Af-Pak Strategy and receives financial support from the US. Yet, even today, Pakistan benefits from this war. Pakistan knows that the hub of the insurgency is within its borders. Why is it not allowing the international community to address it on the ground? Why is Pakistan not acknowledging that it is, to some extent, responsible for the mess within Afghanistan?

Complicating matters further is the belief in Pakistan that the Indians have been funding the insurgent activities in Kandahar in order to badmouth Pakistan. This has caused much frustration among the Afghans who see their country as a battleground for Indo-Pak hostility.

What is important, Hamidi pointed out, is that the hearts and minds of the people are filled with these perceptions, and it is in such a context, that support for the insurgents who promise a different alternative, flourishes. There is also a perception among ordinary Afghans that the violence and instability in their country is part of a much larger political game that is beyond their control and that can only be addressed by the regional and international powers.

Sharing his views on the reasons for the deterioration in the security situation and the ascendance of the Taliban, Mr. Sayed Ikram Afzali, President, Youth in Action Association, Kabul, said that public support for the radical group has increased as a result of the failure of the international community and the government of Afghanistan to address the needs and grievances of Afghan citizens. The deadly nexus of insecurity, corruption and narcotics has led people to question the very legitimacy of the government. Warlords, who operate at the center of this nexus and whose hands are soaked in blood, now hold high-level positions in the government and in Parliament. In the absence of any justice mechanism, their ascendency in government has led ordinary Afghans to view political leaders with mistrust and suspicion. Yet, as Ackermann pointed out, in the search for a political solution to the Taliban, engagement with the warlords is inevitable. Moreover, it is the elected government in Kabul which has decided to include the warlords in the political process.

While not absolving the Pakistan government from harbouring the Taliban, participants from Pakistan urged for a dispassionate engagement on the issue of terrorism, saying that the people of Pakistan have suffered as well, perhaps even more so than Afghan or Indian nationals. In fact, Pakistan witnesses a
minimum of *five terrorist incidents a day*. While the government of Pakistan may have benefited from its policy of nurturing the Taliban, the people of Pakistan have suffered enormously and incurred heavy losses as a consequence of this misguided decision.

A question was posed with reference to the role of the United Nations in Afghanistan. In light of the hostility that NATO forces have faced, would it not perhaps help to have a United Nations force replace the former? Ackermann shared that while the United Nations legitimized the NATO-led mission, the multilateral organization is hesitant to send a peacekeeping mission to Afghanistan. The nationality of the UN soldiers, a majority of whom are Indian, Bangladeshi and Pakistani, might become a political issue with reference to the involvement of their respective countries in Afghanistan.

Should the Afghan government and Western forces engage with “conflict spoilers” such as the Taliban? If so, how? The discussion on engagement with the Taliban brought up the issue of the Obama administration’s characterization of the “good Taliban” and the “bad Taliban.” It was noted that if a religiously orthodox and conservative party accepts the Constitution of Afghanistan, there is a space for it to join mainstream politics? If the Taliban wants to enter the mainstream as a political entity and use constitutional means to address its grievances, there is no problem whatsoever.

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28 “Interior Ministry reveals shocking extent of terrorism”, *Dawn* (Lahore:Friday, 17 April, 2009).
Although most international attention is focused on the internal security situation, it is useful to bear in mind that the progress, which Afghanistan has seen since 2001 is very substantial and nobody wants to go back to the situation that existed in the 1990s. The expectations that the international community has of Afghanistan that includes the full range of issues from security and governance to women’s rights, corruption and drugs, makes it difficult for any government to address these in a holistic manner. Caution was expressed at the tendency to overload the agenda with the suggestion that the emphasis should be on the core issues of security, education, health services and governance.

Summarizing the key issues that emerged from the discussion, the session Chair Prof. Satish Kumar, Editor, India’s National Security Annual Review, New Delhi, flagged the following points:

• All three countries must re-examine the tendency to invoke a militant interpretation of religion to achieve narrow political objectives. Can this process be reversed? Is the political leadership or civil society willing to undertake the role of reversing this thought process?

Ms. Saira Bano, Lecturer, Fatima Jinnah Women’s University, Rawalpindi; Ms. Amina Khan, Research Fellow, Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad; Dr. Saeed Ahmed Rid, Lecturer, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad; Mr. Hakeem Irfan Rashid Madroo, Reporter, The Rising Kashmir, Srinagar.
• While Afghanistan’s decision to invite India to help with the reconstruction process has been seen with suspicion in Pakistan, the conflict within Afghanistan can be resolved only with the cooperation of all the regional powers, including India.

• Commenting on the regional political map, Kumar asserted that while Afghanistan and Pakistan can make efforts to legitimize the Durand Line, the three countries should ensure that there is no convulsion in the geopolitical map of the region.

• While it is in the nature of the media to pick on bad news, the result of the perpetuation of a certain stereotype of Afghanistan is that a very negative image of the country has been created in the countries that support the reconstruction process.

• The international community should agree to a Convention guaranteeing Afghan neutrality and non-interference by any of the regional or international powers.
Through the Conflict Transformation Program, WISCOMP has made a sustained effort to provide a context for young Indians and Pakistanis to explore diverse perspectives for the transformation of the Kashmir conflict. Efforts to build sustainable security in the South Asian region necessitate an engagement with the dynamics of this conflict, whether or not one agrees on its centrality to the peace process between India and Pakistan.

The Workshop session *Conflict Transformation in Jammu & Kashmir: Towards a Sustainable Agreement* sought to facilitate a deeper understanding of the “back channel” diplomacy that has been underway since the initiation of the composite dialogue in 2004. Former Pakistani Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri’s recent assertion that India and Pakistan were close to an agreement in 2007 to resolve the issue of Jammu and Kashmir has renewed public interest in the contours of a potential agreement between the two countries.29 “Proposals put forward by then President Pervez Musharraf and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh were discussed during the course of a dozen meetings” between Indian and Pakistani diplomats who “succeeded in putting together a framework that was all but formally agreed upon by India and Pakistan.”30 In this context, the session addressed the following questions:

- What could be the contours of a future agreement on Jammu and Kashmir?
  How realistic is it to expect conflict resolution post-26/11?
- What steps can be taken to build trust and promote conflict transformation in the region?

29 G. Parthasarathy, “We can work it out”, *The Times of India* (New Delhi: March 3, 2009).
30 Ibid.
Prof. Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, Dean, Faculty of Contemporary Studies, National Defense University, Islamabad, opened the discussion with the assertion that innumerable solutions and ideas have been proposed for the transformation of the Kashmir conflict. What, perhaps, has blocked progress is the **mindset with which India and Pakistan have approached the issue**. Saying that the two countries should transcend their nationalistic perspectives and adopt the principles of accommodation, flexibility and reciprocity in their approach, Cheema identified **four prerequisites** for building sustainable peace and security in Jammu and Kashmir:

- **Create an atmosphere conducive for dialogue:** Although there is a realization in both countries of the need to build an environment conducive for dialogue, incidents such as the Mumbai terror attacks have caused a setback to the overall peace process. In such a context, the mindset with which the parties approach the dialogue is important. As Cheema stated, “If you are not listening to each other, if you are accusing each other, you are in fact polluting the atmosphere for dialogue.” Acknowledging the impact of the Mumbai attacks on the Indian psyche, Cheema cautioned against the use of emotions to deal with political issues. Although at one level, the emotional response to the attacks was very understandable, at another level it meant that many of the accomplishments of the bilateral dialogue were washed away with the waves of emotion.

The media can play an important role in building an environment conducive for dialogue. For instance, Cheema noted that many Indians and Pakistanis
are not familiar with the intricacies and complexities of the Kashmir dispute. Therefore, the media can play a valuable part by educating the vast majority of people in both countries and also preparing them for an eventual resolution of the dispute which may require a compromise, some give and take, and stepping down from the adopted hardened positions. However, it was noted that at times of crisis – as was the case in the days and months following the Mumbai tragedy – the Indian and Pakistani media became extremely nationalistic and contributed to the vilification of the other country.

- **Recognition of the changed realities:** An environment conducive for dialogue requires that the two countries recognize the changed ground realities. Elaborating on this point, Cheema said, “Kashmir is a dispute between India and Pakistan and denying its disputed nature amounts to closing our eyes to the ground reality, especially when the entire world recognizes it as the main dispute between India and Pakistan.” The nuclearization of the subcontinent has only increased the international attention on this dispute. Further, it is also important to recognize that, owing to the several developments that have taken place over the last 60 years, the conflict is more complex than it was in 1947. It would therefore be unrealistic to discuss solutions that were proposed in the late 1940s and 1950s. Another reality that the two countries must acknowledge and cooperate on is that of emerging extremism and terrorism in the region. The issue of terrorism has occupied an important place in the composite dialogue and India and Pakistan need to work closely to respond to this menace.

- **A framework for negotiations:** Rather than wasting time on evolving new frameworks, Cheema suggested that the two countries could use the existing agreements as a compass to guide them in their dialogue. Four such frameworks were identified: the Shimla Agreement (1972), the Lahore Declaration (1999) and the India-Pakistan Joint Statement (2004). Saying that the Pakistanis often add a fourth framework – the UN resolutions (1948-49) – Cheema felt that the two countries could negotiate an inclusive agreement within the contours of these four frameworks.

- **Accommodate each others’ sensitivities:** If the two countries approach the dialogue with a desire to accommodate the others’ sensitivities, they will be able to inject into the peace process a great deal of realism, flexibility and reciprocity. Also, each party needs to recognize that it might have to step down from the positions it has traditionally held since 1947. Former Pakistani President General Pervez Musharraf had articulated this perspective when he suggested the negation of those proposals that any of the three
parties (Pakistan, India, Kashmiris) found unacceptable. If the parties adhere to the above principles during the dialogue process, they will be able to make significant headway.

Looking at next steps, Cheema suggested the following:

- **Resume the composite dialogue** (which was stalled following the Mumbai attacks). Dialogue becomes even more crucial during times of crisis. The blocking of constructive communication in the weeks and months following a crisis only exacerbates the problem. In the case of 26/11, the problem worsened because of the jingoistic nature of reportage in the media. For example, Cheema shared that, in Pakistan, there was a vociferous and widespread condemnation of the Mumbai attacks. However, the Pakistani and Indian media failed to convey this condemnation to the Indian public.

- **Initiate new CBMs and strengthen existing ones.** While CBMs cannot solve the Kashmir dispute, they build trust, provide an opportunity for people to talk to one another, and improve the atmosphere for dialogue. Initiatives such as the bus and rail services between the two countries have, over the last few years, helped to reduce the suspicion and mistrust that Indians and Pakistanis have of each other.

- **Foreground the role of the Kashmiris in the peace process.** Although the two governments have established contact with the Kashmiris on their side of the LoC, the latter have not been formally included into the dialogue process. The composite dialogue on the Kashmir dispute should now officially include the Kashmiris as participants and stakeholders.

- **Begin with what is doable.** The two countries should speed up the negotiations on those issues that are “doables.” There is recognition on both sides of the border that Siachen and Sir Creek can be resolved within a short span of time. The ground work for a consensus on these two issues has been done. Resolution of these two issues can serve as a booster for the more complex issues of Kashmir and river-water sharing.

The next speaker, Mr. B.G. Verghese, Visiting Professor, Center for Policy Research, New Delhi, invited Workshop participants to **move beyond the past**, shed the baggage of history and its different interpretations, and instead focus on problem-solving and peacebuilding in Jammu and Kashmir. Yet, before engaging in such an exercise, Verghese noted that it is important to identify all the stakeholders in Jammu and Kashmir. “When we use the phrase Jammu and Kashmir, we need to remember that Kashmiris, as a racial type, are only those who live in the Valley and those who migrated to Pakistan Administered
Kashmir. *Jammu and Kashmir* also constitutes the people of Jammu and Ladakh – the majority of people in these two provinces have different political aspirations and ideological leanings.\textsuperscript{31}

Speaking about the political aspirations of the people in the Valley, Verghese said that the belief that the Hurriyat Conference represents the Kashmiris is incorrect. Pointing to the large voter turnout in the state assembly elections (November-December 2008), despite a boycott call by the Hurriyat, Verghese pointed to the different positions the party had taken on the elections. Finally, the party was arm-twisted into boycotting the polls following orders from Syed Salahuddin of the Pakistan-based militant conglomerate, the United Jehad Council. Asking “why Pakistan is afraid of the people of Jammu and Kashmir being consulted,” Verghese doubted the transparency of the electoral process in Pakistan Administered Kashmir, particularly in the Northern Areas.

Verghese took the view that a change in Pakistan’s mindset about the threat from India is crucial to the sustenance of the peace process. He quoted a newspaper report (May 21, 2009) which said that Pakistan believes that it continues to face a threat on its eastern border (from India). Saying that this is an example of a mindset that is unwilling to change and that is blocking a positive bilateral relationship, Verghese questioned the authenticity of this threat. At a time when the country is facing internal threats from groups such as the Taliban in the northwest, it is ironic that Pakistan is seeking to shift international focus to its border with India.

Looking at steps that the two countries could take to make headway on the Kashmir conflict, Verghese identified the following:

- The two countries must transcend the mindset of being locked in the past. They need to move beyond seeing each other as a threat and instead focus on building a partnership whereby each has a vested interest in the progress of the other.

- Build on the achievements of the dialogues between Indian Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and Pakistani President General Pervez Musharraf between 2004 and 2007. Statements by the two heads of state reflected a

\textsuperscript{31} Comments made by Mr. B. G. Verghese at the Conflict Transformation Workshop.
convergence of ideas on Jammu and Kashmir. While Dr. Singh stated that “borders cannot be redrawn, but we can work towards making them irrelevant...just lines on a map,” Gen. Musharraf suggested that stakeholders should “think out of the box” by negating those options that are unacceptable to either country and build a consensus on creative and mutually-beneficial solutions. By encouraging creativity in the way concepts such as “sovereignty” have conventionally been defined, the two leaders opened a dialogue on solutions that transcend territoriality.

• Conflicts over river-water sharing should be addressed through mutual accommodation. The Indus river, which has been affected by global warming, is a lifeline for both Pakistan and northwestern India. It was suggested that the two countries can follow the Indus Treaty and build an Indus II which talks about future cooperation instead of partitioning the waters. Allaying fears that India is going to dry up Pakistan or flood Pakistan, Verghese said that a study of hydrology and of the topography of the region would reveal that the Baglihar dam can neither flood nor starve Pakistan. Because of the distance between the dam and the border, any attempt to dry out the waters or flood Pakistan would be preceded by a devastating impact on a large portion of the population in northwestern India.

• The principles of flexibility, reciprocity and accommodation should guide the dialogue between the two countries.

Saying that trust is crucial to the success of any steps towards peace and normalization, Verghese pointed to certain actions of the Pakistani government post-26/11 that have caused concern in India. For example, while India would like to believe that Pakistan is sincere about prosecuting those responsible for the Mumbai attacks, the fact that the Jamaat-ud-Dawa (a front group for the Lashkar-e-Taiba, the prime suspect of the Mumbai attacks), which was banned in Pakistan, has resurfaced in Swat as a relief agency is cause for concern. Similarly, it was noted that following the 2005 earthquake in Kashmir, several banned organizations resurfaced in Pakistan Administered Kashmir as relief agencies. Some reports alleged that the relief work was a front for the groups to engage in violent activities across the LoC.

Verghese concluded with the assertion that barring a few hard-line, right-wing elements, the majority in India does not want the dismemberment of Pakistan nor do they see it in India’s interest. India’s highest interest lies in a strong, stable, peaceful, and progressive Pakistan working in friendship and in cooperation with India and as a member of the SAARC community as a whole.
Speaking from the perspective of a grassroots’ practitioner, Ms. Ashima Kaul Bhatia, Consultant, WISCOMP, said that a key gap in the track one dialogue on Jammu and Kashmir has been the failure to address the **human dimension of the conflict**. The human dimension refers to the loss of human life, homeland and culture. Deeply related to issues of justice, it also points to the conflictual relations between the different regions of Jammu and Kashmir.

Any Conflict Transformation process must, to begin with, address the diversity of the region and open a free, democratic and public space through which men and women can dialogue and negotiate their differences. While the government-level negotiations form one component, perhaps equally important is the sustenance of a public dialogue process through which the people of Jammu and Kashmir can build relationships based on equality and dignity.

Bhatia noted that the diversity of Jammu and Kashmir – in terms of its ethnicity, religion, culture etc. – has been exploited by divisive politics to construct homogenous, exclusive identities pitched against one another in an ideological war. This has resulted in extreme polarization along regional, religious, ethnic and cultural faultlines, thereby making the conflict more complex and intractable. Prime Minster Manmohan Singh’s Roundtable initiative sought to address this problem by inviting all stakeholders – government, non-government institutions, political parties, and civil society – to dialogue and collectively rebuild human and institutional relationships across various faultlines.

Critiquing this initiative, Bhatia said that the Roundtables and the five Working Groups that were instituted\(^32\) are now almost a lost effort to institutionalize a public dialogue. The initiative, which sought to improve relationships, address structural gaps, and reform constitutional and political arrangements, became a victim of the bitter zero sum game between the various participants. Bhatia listed the following gaps that contributed to the failure of the Roundtable initiative:

- The effort to “institutionalize relationships” in the absence of a healthy and active civil society in the region was a non-starter. The purpose and meaning of a space wherein citizens could have the freedom to exercise their options,

\(^32\)The five Working Groups are: Confidence-building measures across segments of society in the State; Relations across the Line of Control; Economic development; Good governance; and, Relations between the State and the Center.
negotiate their fears, and dialogue with a purpose to listen and understand each other, was missing.

• The recommendations of the Working Groups were not rooted in the existing ground realities. Some recommendations were tactical in nature and were aimed to achieve political gains. Therefore, they remained mere symbolic gestures. Rather than seriously intervening to rebuild relationships, create trust and restore the dignity of the people, they fell into the bureaucratic trap of files and reports.

• The inability of the government to communicate to the citizens and to the participating groups that the Roundtable was primarily an effort to engage with the internal dimension of the conflict and to promote the wellbeing and security of the people of Jammu and Kashmir led to considerable confusion, unrealistic expectations and hence large-scale disappointment.

• The women of Jammu and Kashmir were conspicuous by their absence. Not only were women missing, the Working Groups also failed to use the lens of gender in their analysis and recommendations. Located as victims in the entire Roundtable discourse, their perspectives, insights and experiences were not included. This was particularly harmful for the entire process because, over the last decade, women have demonstrated their skills and expertise in bridging ethnic, religious, cultural and political divides in Jammu and Kashmir. Bhatia shared that it was in response to this gap that Athwaas (a WISCOMP initiative), using a multi-track approach, brought together women and men from across the political spectrum in Jammu and Kashmir for a Convention on “Women at the Peace Table.” The recommendations that emerged from this Convention were forwarded to the Prime Ministers’ Roundtable initiative so that these might find a voice at the track one-level dialogue.

Discussion

The assertion that young people should **transcend the baggage of history and move beyond the past** was the subject of heated discussion and debate. While acknowledging that Kashmiris should not be hostage to the past, the Kashmiri participants articulated the view that the wounds of past horrors must be addressed in order to build a **just** and **peaceful** Kashmir. Mr. Pervez Majeed, Correspondent, Sahara Times, Srinagar, said, “Historically, Kashmir was not a part of...”
of India, and a denial of the past would only lead to more confusion and a misrepresentation of facts.”

Speaking for those Kashmiris who had picked up the gun in the early 1990s and had later renounced violence and turned to peace and development work, Mr. Ishtiaq Ahmed Dev, Social Worker, People’s Forum for Peace, Doda, Jammu and Kashmir, said that forgetting the past is easier said than done. While a former militant like himself might want to engage in peace and development work, it is the Indian state that doesn’t let him move beyond his past. He cited the example of his inability to get an Indian passport because of his association with the militant movement in the early 1990s.

Responding to the above comments, Verghese clarified that he made the statement in the context of negotiators. Saying that negotiators cannot live in the past, Verghese said that while we must remember the past, we must also learn from it and move on.

Verghese’ assertion that the large voter turnout in the state assembly elections (2008) was a reflection of a change in the mindset of the people was also questioned. Mr. Faheem Aslam, Correspondent, Greater Kashmir, Srinagar, cautioned against reading too much into the voter turnout for these elections, which were also surrounded by allegations that people were coerced into voting. He pointed to the Parliamentary Elections (April-May 2009) which a majority of Kashmiris boycotted.

Agreeing that the 2008 assembly elections were fair, Majeed wondered why the Indian government did not listen to those Kashmiri leaders who entered mainstream politics through these elections. As he put it, “If you are saying that the elections were fair, then people such as Omar Abdullah who got elected are also fair. But when the very same people ask you to reduce the number of troops in Kashmir, why don’t you listen to them? This means that you doubt the fairness of the elections.” While acknowledging that the Hurriyat Conference did not represent the people of the Valley, Majeed alleged that it was the Indian government that groomed and protected the Hurriyat leaders. “While they might serve a purpose for both India and Pakistan, the Hurriyat leaders do not represent the Kashmiris.” Majeed also questioned Verghese’ definition of a Kashmiri (i.e. those people who speak the Kashmiri language and live in the Valley). He took the view that the entire population of undivided Jammu and Kashmir, including the Northern Areas, is Kashmiri. “We are one nation, irrespective of the differences in our language and religion. We have a connection and this is our history,” said Majeed.
Commenting on the perception in the Valley that the Central Government hesitates to give autonomy to the elected government of Jammu and Kashmir, Faheem Aslam said that in the absence of real changes on the ground, particularly with reference to human rights and governance issues, this belief will continue to persist. The role played by bureaucrats deputed to Kashmir was also highlighted to indicate that instead of contributing to the development of the state, they are seen as the “Viceroys of Delhi” which causes further discontent on the ground. Related to this, Aslam added that while enhancing the participation of Kashmiris in governance institutions should be an important goal, equally significant is the emphasis that should be placed on increasing the number of Kashmiris at the decision-making level.

The heavy military presence in Jammu and Kashmir was also the subject of heated discussion. The need for 600,000 troops when, according to the Indian government, there are now only about 800 militants in the state, was questioned. The time has perhaps now come to withdraw the armed forces from involvement in urban areas and it was suggested that the Jammu and Kashmir police should be empowered to handle these issues.

Ms. Sadia Tasleem, PhD candidate, Department of Defense and Strategic Studies, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, questioned Verghese’s assertion that India is not interested in the dismemberment of Pakistan. She pointed to the history of conflicts and wars between the two countries to suggest otherwise. In particular, India’s role in the Mukti Bahini movement and in the creation of Bangladesh in 1971 was highlighted as an example of India’s involvement in the dismemberment of Pakistan. Because of India’s support to the Mukti Bahini movement, there is a widespread perception in Pakistan that India has a stake in the destabilization of Pakistan. Such events have deeply influenced the psyche of the Pakistanis and therefore it is extremely difficult to shed the baggage of history and set aside the past. The trauma and the wounds of the past must heal if the two countries are to build a future based on trust and cooperation.

Ms. Priyashree Andley, a Delhi-based researcher, questioned the wisdom of adopting an “incremental approach” to the peace process. While the idea that the stakeholders begin by addressing the smaller issues, initiate CBMs,
people-to-people contact and move to the core issue only after sufficient trust has been built, looks well-thought out on paper, the reality on the ground suggests that such an approach leads to the setting aside of basic human needs and rights. Andley cited the example of refugees from Pakistan Administered Kashmir who have been living in mud houses on the Indian side for the last six decades. They barely have access to basic facilities like health care, education and employment. Their demand for refugee status is always met with the response that the peace process is ongoing and once the Kashmir conflict is settled, they can decide where they want to live. These are however basic human needs which cannot be negotiated and delayed indefinitely till a final settlement on the larger conflict is reached.

Articulating an Afghan perspective on the subject, Sayed Ikram Afzali, President, Youth in Action Association, Kabul, noted that Kashmir is a regional issue because it has affected India and Pakistan’s relationships with other states. For example, it has influenced Afghanistan’s relations with India and Afghanistan’s relations with Pakistan through different times since 1947. Afzali advocated a regional perspective on Kashmir, rather than looking at it through the narrow lens of national interest and realpolitik. “The Kashmir issue should be solved with a focus on the interest of those people who live in that territory and who will be affected by any decision on the subject,” said Afzali.

Participants from Jammu and Kashmir: Ms. Nazia Shafi, Reporter, Times of India, Srinagar; Ms. Shahana Bashir, Reporter, Press TV, Srinagar; Ms. Asifa Amin Koul, Correspondent, Kashmir Times, Srinagar.
The session Chair, Ambassador G. Parthasarathy, Former High Commissioner of India to Pakistan, drew the group’s attention to a framework proposed by former Pakistani President General Pervez Musharraf in October 2004. Calling for a dialogue on this framework, Parthasarathy said that General Musharraf’s proposal was informed by a desire to explore those points over which there was a convergence of interest between the two countries. The framework suggested the following:

- Kashmir should be divided into seven distinct regions.
- There should be a process of demilitarization, although the specificities of this were not stated.
- There should be self-governance in Jammu and Kashmir, although self-governance was not defined.
- India and Pakistan should agree to joint management.

The Indian Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh responded to this proposal in March 2006 with the statement, “Borders cannot be redrawn, but we can work towards making them irrelevant, towards making them just lines on a map.” In other words, he asserted that Jammu and Kashmir was one entity and dividing people who lived on either side of the LoC was not the solution. The Prime Minister then added that people on both sides of the LoC should be allowed to move freely and trade with one another. In response to General Musharraf’s proposal for “joint management,” he said a situation can be envisaged where the two parts of Jammu and Kashmir can, with the active encouragement of the governments of India and Pakistan, work out a cooperative and consultative mechanism. The purpose of this mechanism would be to ascertain what the people of Jammu and Kashmir want.

The framework, which draws on ideas from the Good Friday Agreement that sought to end the conflict in Northern Ireland, suggests extensive self-governance for Jammu and Kashmir without touching the issue of sovereignty. Institutions could be built for cooperation on a range of areas such as health, education, water management, and the environment. These could include elected representatives of India, Pakistan and Jammu and Kashmir (from both sides of the LoC). On the issue of self-governance, Parthasarathy proposed that it should be to a maximal extent with devolution of powers at all
levels, including at the grassroots. There should be empowered village councils on both sides of the LoC with mechanisms for cooperation between the two sides. Also, self-governance should not be limited to the Valley; it should be extended to both sides of the LoC.

Parthasarathy shared that this is the broad framework on which agreement had nearly been reached in 2007, following 12 rounds of discussions between Ambassador S.K. Lambah, the Indian interlocutor, and his Pakistani counterpart, Mr. Tariq Aziz. The talks were hindered by the domestic political crisis that erupted in Pakistan following the arrest of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry and the Lal Masjid siege. The two governments committed a grave mistake by not seeking to build a consensus in their domestic constituencies on the framework that had been discussed between the Indian and Pakistani interlocutors. While General Musharraf was constrained by the domestic situation in Pakistan, Dr. Singh should have shared information about these negotiations with the Indian Parliament.

Looking at next steps for the peace process in Jammu and Kashmir, Parthasarathy made the following observations:

- The two governments should build on the progress made between 2005 and 2007. The convergence of ideas, starting with Gen. Musharraf’s Kashmir proposal and Dr. Singh’s 2006 statement on making borders irrelevant, and followed up with 12 rounds of dialogue between Indian and Pakistani interlocutors, was an important accomplishment. It should not be discarded because of the Mumbai attacks. Through the discussions over these years, Indian and Pakistani interlocutors have been able to arrive at a consensual definition on self-governance and have successfully skirted the issue of sovereignty. The current governments should build on the successes of this phase and work towards an inclusive agreement on Jammu and Kashmir.

- The Kargil conflict has ruined the prospect of any early settlement of Siachen. The position of the Indian army is that members of the Northern Light Infantry from Gilgit and Baltistan, initially proclaimed to be mujahideen, crossed the Line of Control. Their identity was denied till the conflict ended with their decision to withdraw. In this context, Parthasarathy summed up the position of the Indian military with the question, “If we pull back 500 kilometers and Pakistan declares that it too has withdrawn its military, but also adds that now the mujahideen or the freedom fighters have occupied the Soltoro Ridge, what would India do in such a situation?”
Because of these developments, solution to the Siachen question cannot come in isolation. It will come once trust and confidence are reestablished between the two countries.

- The two countries can draw on the SAARC Vision 2010 framework in which the heads of state of the member countries agreed that SAARC will be made a free trade area by 2010, a customs union by 2015, and an economic union by 2020. The framework to envision a South Asian region with open borders which facilitates the free movement of people, goods, services and investment, has been agreed upon by the SAARC countries, and it is now up to India and Pakistan to take the lead in the realization of this goal.
Prospects and Challenges to Peacebuilding in Jammu and Kashmir

Moving beyond track one engagement, the session Prospects and Challenges to Peacebuilding in Jammu and Kashmir adopted a multi-track approach33 to explore the perspectives of diverse civil society actors and foreground the peacebuilding work that they have undertaken in the region. In this context, the following questions were addressed:

- Recognizing that peace requires the intervention of governments as well as multiple stakeholders representing diverse ethnicities, faith persuasions and political beliefs, how might we build the foundation for a sustainable agreement that truly represents the aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir?
- What has been the gendered impact of the conflict on women and men in Kashmir? What roles have women’s groups played in building peace?
- How might former militants emerge as resources for peacebuilding? What steps need to be taken to reintegrate them into society?
- What shape and form have citizens’ initiatives for peace taken in the region? What has been their impact on the broader peace process?

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33 The notion of multi-track peacebuilding is based on the premise that citizens from a variety of backgrounds have certain skills and expertise that can be used to transform intractable conflicts. Multi-track peacebuilding refers to a complex web of processes that incorporates different roles, strategies and interventions employed by different people at different stages of conflict development. It focuses on the resources and expertise of a broad range of actors including representatives of governments, multilateral organizations, conflict resolution practitioners, NGO workers, academicians, media-persons, nonviolence trainers, business leaders, trauma counselors, grassroots’ groups and human rights activists.
How has the politics of ethnic identity played itself out in Jammu and Kashmir? What role has identity played in exacerbating the conflict? How might it be used in efforts for Conflict Transformation?

Dr. Salma Malik, Lecturer, Department of Defense and Strategic Studies, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, opened the panel discussion with a presentation on the Pakistani perspective to Conflict Transformation in Jammu and Kashmir. Locating the historical context of the conflict, Malik said that the problem started with the faulty border demarcation plan executed by the British. While for India, it is a question of consolidating the edifice of political secularism, for Pakistan, it signifies completion of its nation-statehood. For India, there is a concern that yielding territory would lead to balkanization and fissures within its own structure. For Pakistan, it is a quest for the fulfillment of its national identity and ideology. The demand for self-determination maybe interpreted as an issue of militancy and secessionism by one side; for the other side, it symbolizes a call for azadi. Over the last two decades, it has acquired a strategic dimension with the international community describing it as a potential nuclear flashpoint.

Sadly however, over the last 62 years, policymakers in both India and Pakistan have failed to consider the aspirations and concerns of the Kashmiris, the primary stakeholders. Although the Pakistani leadership has engaged with the Kashmiri leadership from both sides of the Line of Control and India has initiated the Roundtable parleys with those willing to dialogue with the
government in New Delhi, there has been no talk of an unconditional trilateral dialogue, which would bring all the stakeholders to the negotiation table. Further, the post-9/11 discourse has linked the Kashmiri movement for self-determination with terrorism, thereby failing to look at the legitimate humanitarian concerns of the people who experience violence and tension on a daily basis.

Exploring the various options for Conflict Transformation in Jammu and Kashmir, Malik walked the participants through some of the key proposals for sustainable peace and security in the region. Figure 2 on the following page briefly lists these proposals.

Malik articulated the view that while small incremental steps such as the cross-LoC bus service and minor commercial activity have generated hope, the absence of visible progress (since 2007) has led to a sense of despondency among the Kashmiri people. The silence of the Pakistani government in the wake of the 2008 conflict over the transfer of land (in the Kashmir Valley) to the Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board (SASB) to set up temporary facilities for Hindu pilgrims was criticized by the ethnic Kashmiri population residing in Pakistan. The general sentiment voiced by the people has been one of disappointment over a near stagnant and unidirectional peace process. Malik added that “the Pakistani establishment was caught by surprise at the mass scale protests and slogans raised in Indian Kashmir not only in favor of azadi, but Pakistan as well. Also highly noticeable was the call to march towards Muzaffarabad, which though largely symbolic was noticeable for its indigenous tenor. The composite dialogue process has also been criticized for not being able to resolve even the minor issues of Sir Creek and Siachen – issues over which the two governments have already built consensus.”

Commenting on the role played by the spoilers in the peace process, Malik said that sections of the domestic constituencies in both India and Pakistan have often successfully disrupted the progress made by the governments. She shared that the failure of Indian policymakers to take forward General Musharraf’s proposal to “think out of the box” provided an opportunity for radical groups and those with vested interests to perpetuate the conflict and manipulate the situation to their advantage. The failure to prioritize this dispute will give interest groups the time and context to engineer demographic changes, which in turn will give rise to complex and irreconcilable ethnic tensions.

Looking at next steps, Malik cautioned against the tendency to view the issue through the prism of nationalism alone since Jammu and Kashmir has been
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Nature of Solution</th>
<th>Basic Principles</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>India's Response</th>
<th>Pakistan's Response</th>
<th>Kashmiris' Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1958-68</td>
<td>India-Pakistan Statement of Objectives (1963)</td>
<td>Political, peaceful settlement</td>
<td>Equitable, honorable and final boundary settlement</td>
<td>Abandoned</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
<td>Excluded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Tashkent Declaration</td>
<td>Status Quo</td>
<td>Status Quo</td>
<td>Overtaken by events</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
<td>Excluded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sumit Ganguly's proposal, first offered by Indian Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri after Tashkent Declaration</td>
<td>Status Quo</td>
<td>Line of Control could be converted into recognized international boundary between India &amp; Pakistan.</td>
<td>Possible solution; under consideration.</td>
<td>Favored</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Selig Harrison's proposal, discussed between President Ayub &amp; Prime Minister Nehru</td>
<td>A Trieste Solution</td>
<td>In Italy and the former Yugoslavia, residents of Trieste were given free access to the other side. The same solution was suggested for Kashmir, while giving a special autonomous status to the region. Defense, foreign affairs, communication &amp; currency would be controlled by both India &amp; Pakistan, leaving Kashmir independent in all other matters.</td>
<td>Possible solution; under consideration</td>
<td>Fall-back option</td>
<td>Opposes</td>
<td>Oppose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969-79</td>
<td>Shimla Agreement</td>
<td>Status quo pending final solution</td>
<td>Bilateral approach, including mutually acceptable forms of mediation</td>
<td>Possible solution; under consideration</td>
<td>Favored, with narrow interpretation</td>
<td>Favored, with broad interpretation</td>
<td>Indifferent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-90</td>
<td>Robert Wirsing’s proposal</td>
<td>International Mediation</td>
<td>Apply international pressure more deliberately, consistently and impartially in order to resolve the dispute</td>
<td>Possible solution until recently</td>
<td>Strongly opposed</td>
<td>Favored</td>
<td>Divided; some segments support, while others oppose</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### Prospects and Challenges to Peacebuilding in Jammu and Kashmir

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<th>Period</th>
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<tr>
<td>1991-2001</td>
<td>Proposal of BJP &amp; other Hindunationalistmovements</td>
<td>Demographicchange</td>
<td>Opening Kashmir to Hindu &amp; Sikh settlements to transform Kashmir into a Hindu-Sikh majority state</td>
<td>Internationally rejected</td>
<td>Strongly opposed</td>
<td>Strongly opposed</td>
<td>Strongly opposed</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Jammu &amp; Kashmir Liberation Front</td>
<td>Independent Kashmir</td>
<td>Recognition of fully independent and democratic state of Jammu &amp; Kashmir</td>
<td>Remains a possibility</td>
<td>Strongly opposed</td>
<td>Strongly opposed</td>
<td>Strongly opposed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Kashmir American Council</td>
<td>ActiveUSmediation</td>
<td>Initiate step-by-step peace process through US-supervised negotiations</td>
<td>Possible solution; under consideration</td>
<td>Strongly opposed</td>
<td>Strongly opposed</td>
<td>Strongly opposed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Raju Thomas’ proposal</td>
<td>Creation of several independent states in South Asia, along ethnic &amp; religious lines</td>
<td>Create several independent states</td>
<td>Not valid, threatens to further enhance ethnic &amp; communal violence</td>
<td>Favored with reservations</td>
<td>Strongly opposed</td>
<td>Strongly opposed</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Jammu &amp; Kashmir Liberation Front</td>
<td>Independent Kashmir</td>
<td>Recognition of fully independent and democratic state of Jammu &amp; Kashmir</td>
<td>Remains a possibility</td>
<td>Strongly opposed</td>
<td>Strongly opposed</td>
<td>Strongly opposed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Kashmir American Council</td>
<td>ActiveUSmediation</td>
<td>Initiate step-by-step peace process through US-supervised negotiations</td>
<td>Possible solution; under consideration</td>
<td>Strongly opposed</td>
<td>Strongly opposed</td>
<td>Strongly opposed</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Raju Thomas’ proposal</td>
<td>Creation of several independent states in South Asia, along ethnic &amp; religious lines</td>
<td>Create several independent states</td>
<td>Not valid, threatens to further enhance ethnic &amp; communal violence</td>
<td>Favored with reservations</td>
<td>Strongly opposed</td>
<td>Strongly opposed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Period</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Nature of Solution</td>
<td>Basic Principles</td>
<td>Status</td>
<td>India’s Response</td>
<td>Pakistan’s Response</td>
<td>Kashmiris’ Response</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema’s Proposal</td>
<td>Combination of partition, limited plebiscite &amp; UN trusteeship</td>
<td>AJK &amp; Baltistan stay with Pakistan; Jammu &amp; Ladakh with India; and Kashmir Valley should be put under UN trusteeship for a decade or more until a final plebiscite</td>
<td>Possible solution; under consideration</td>
<td>Opposed</td>
<td>Opposed</td>
<td>Mostly opposed</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Kashmir Study Group</td>
<td>Shared sovereignty</td>
<td>Trilateral discussions</td>
<td>Widely discussed</td>
<td>Opposed</td>
<td>Flexible</td>
<td>Favored with reservations</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Ayesha Jalal</td>
<td>Creation of a Sovereignty Association</td>
<td>A sovereignty association within a political framework for a unified and independent Kashmir would accommodate the fears and interests of the two main regional powers</td>
<td>Unlikely</td>
<td>Opposed</td>
<td>Unconvinced</td>
<td>Unconvinced, though some segments demand unification &amp; independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mushtaq ur Rahman</td>
<td>Divided Kashmir</td>
<td>Indus Water Treaty as a model.</td>
<td>Hotly discussed</td>
<td>Acceptable as a fall-back position</td>
<td>Acceptable as a fall-back position</td>
<td>Unacceptable</td>
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<td>1999</td>
<td>Lahore Declaration</td>
<td>Negotiated Settlement</td>
<td>Bilateral discussion</td>
<td>Hotly discussed</td>
<td>Acceptable as a viable option</td>
<td>Agreeable, with reservations</td>
<td>Excluded</td>
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<tr>
<td>Period</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Nature of Solution</td>
<td>Basic Principles</td>
<td>Status</td>
<td>India’s Response</td>
<td>Pakistan’s Response</td>
<td>Kashmiris’ Response</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Andorra Model</td>
<td>India-Pakistan Condominium</td>
<td>Bilateral Discussion</td>
<td>In circulation among American circles</td>
<td>Might be acceptable as an alternative</td>
<td>Agreeable as fall-back position</td>
<td>Excluded</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Chenab Formula</td>
<td>Division of J&amp;K</td>
<td>Bilateral discussions</td>
<td>Discussed during Track Two talks between Niaz Naik &amp; R.K. Mishra</td>
<td>Opposed</td>
<td>Might be acceptable</td>
<td>Excluded</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Musharraf Proposal</td>
<td>Division and demilitarization on geographical basis</td>
<td>Bilateral discussions</td>
<td>Hotly debated in Pakistan</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
<td>Acceptable</td>
<td>Mixed reaction from Kashmiri groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Aland Islands Model</td>
<td>Demilitarization, limited autonomy</td>
<td>International involvement and guarantees</td>
<td>Seldom discussed</td>
<td>Offered to Kashmiris as part of autonomy formulas</td>
<td>Not acceptable</td>
<td>Mixed reaction from Kashmiri groups. Majority not in favor.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Good Friday Agreement (Irish Model)</td>
<td>Sustained &amp; structured dialogue process</td>
<td>Popular consent and self-determination</td>
<td>Hotly discussed</td>
<td>As a possible option</td>
<td>Widely discussed</td>
<td>Widely discussed without outright rejection</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
defined as a disputed territory by the United Nations, involving the lives and livelihoods of an entire nation. The Shimla Agreement can be a reference point if it offers a solution that all three parties consider satisfactory. Urging the parties to explore the possibility of eliciting the support of the international community, Malik stated that several conflicts in South Asia have been solved with the help of a third party (for example, Tashkent, the Runn of Kutch issue, the Indus Water Treaty and the Kargil conflict). In fact, the United States has played a subtle facilitative role, especially after the nuclearization of the subcontinent. It has encouraged multi-track peacebuilding, back channel initiatives as well as shuttle diplomacy to diffuse tensions between the two countries. Therefore, it might be instructive to consider third party facilitation in Jammu and Kashmir.

The most important need however, noted Malik, is to seek the participation of the Kashmiri people and to invite to the negotiation table Kashmiri leadership from across the political, ethnic and religious spectrum. Malik concluded with the assertion that an amicable settlement can be a realistic expectation if India and Pakistan display genuine will and sincerity of purpose and if they see the Kashmiri people as central actors in the peace process.

Kashmir is no longer an India-Pakistan issue, but a complex, intractable conflict, which holds hostage the development, stability and security of one-fourth of the world’s population. If we are sincere about resolving this conflict, it is crucial that we change our mindsets and rid ourselves of preconceived notions and historical and ideological baggage.

Dr. Salma Malik

Speaking on the subject of the Politics of Ethnic Identity in Jammu and Kashmir, Prof. Rekha Chowdhary, Department of Political Science, Jammu University, Jammu, addressed the internal dimensions of the conflict, looking specifically at the genesis of identity politics in Jammu and Kashmir. Arguing that any proposal for Conflict Transformation must transcend the rigidities of the nation-state, Chowdhary listed three prerequisites for peace, each inextricably linked to the other:

- Participation of the people of Jammu and Kashmir;
- Personal liberties and human rights;
- Addressing the separatist sentiment in the Kashmir Valley.
Chowdhary identified three phases over which ethnic identity in Jammu and Kashmir has evolved and asserted itself. The period of 1920–1947 represents the first and formative phase when Kashmir as a political collective was imagined. During this phase, the desire to have a political role was the most important urge. The Kashmiri identity evolved around the issue that the region had been controlled by outsiders (whether it was the Mughals, Afghans, Sikhs or the Dogras). The sentiment among the people was that they should regain control of their homeland. The construction of ethnic identity during this phase was also informed by a desire to restore to the Kashmiris their dignity. The treaty of Amritsar (1846), seen as a sale deed, had brought widespread indignity to the Kashmiri identity. Economic reconstruction was also identified as an important goal in the imagination of a new Kashmir. This along with the need to regain control over the destiny of their homeland and to restore human dignity marked the first phase of the construction of ethnic identity in Kashmir.

Ethnic identity politics manifested themselves in the second phase (1953-1975), when Shiekh Abdullah who was sidelined from mainstream politics, started what is seen as the beginning of separatist politics in Kashmir. The demand for plebiscite influenced the psyche of the people of Kashmir. It was also during this period that the government in New Delhi began to intrude in local politics. The autonomy that local Kashmiri politics enjoyed was diminished. There was also the erosion of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution and, Jammu and Kashmir, to a large extent, was brought at par with the rest of the states in India. This further eroded the dignity of the Kashmiri people and affirmed the belief that the people of Kashmir did not have any control over their political destiny. Also, the peoples’ faith in the democratic process began to diminish. With a highly politicized community beginning to feel that it was just a mute spectator without a political role and with Sheikh Abdullah contesting India’s relationship with Kashmir through this demand for a plebiscite, there was a growing feeling among the populace that the Kashmir question is open and its future is still to be decided. In hindsight, if autonomy and civil liberties had been restored during this period and if the Center had made a sincere effort to increase the peoples’ faith in the democratic

35 Through this Treaty, the British Empire in India ceded territory in Kashmir to Maharaja Gulab Singh Dogra.
process, an important question to ask is this: Would the Kashmir problem have still emerged in the form it did in 1989?

The third phase of Kashmiri identity politics is marked with the onset of militancy in 1989. Here, an important question relates to the role of religion in ethnic identity politics. In this context, it is important to note that there is no single Kashmiri identity; there are multiple, shifting identities depending on the context and the situation. For example, while at times, the regional identity gains significance, at other times, a Kashmiri Muslim identity or a Muslim Kashmiri identity or a Muslim identity might be more pronounced. In the first phase of ethnic identity politics, Kashmiri leaders took a conscious decision to transcend religion. So the Muslim Conference metamorphosed into the National Conference. Also, Sheikh Abdullah, in his autobiography, states that, in 1947, the choice for Kashmiris was between joining India and choosing independence. Joining Pakistan was not a viable option because Kashmiris wanted a political space for themselves which they felt would not be available had they chosen Pakistan. Their identity would have been assimilated into the pan-Muslim identity of Pakistan. So the factor of religion had been rejected in the first phase.

Yet, religion does influence Kashmiri identity politics and this has been debated over the last twenty years. In 1989, there was an attempt by fundamentalist groups to hijack the militancy. At this point, Kashmiri women had voiced their subtle opposition to veiling and to any attempt to segregate people on the basis of religion. Yet, there was also a concern that Kashmiri Muslims were being discriminated against, and as a minority community in a country with a Hindu majority, this became an important issue. For this reason, the demography of Jammu and Kashmir is important in the Kashmiri psyche, and the May 2008 conflict over the transfer of land (in the Kashmir Valley) to the Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board (SASB) to set up temporary shelters and facilities for Hindu pilgrims is a reflection of the intense fear of any demographic change. Even though Muslim consciousness is strong in the Valley, Chowdhary noted that the Kashmiri identity remains secular.

Chowdhary also addressed the specificity of the problem with reference to the Kashmir Valley. Although the entire state has been implicated in the conflict in one manner or the other, the major basis of the conflict is located in the Kashmir Valley. In this context, Chowdhary stated that people who live outside of the Valley often have diverse and divergent political aspirations. While there are some who are not participants in the movement but sympathize with the cause,
there are others who are not at all sympathetic to the movement and who have
different political urges. In addition to the ethnic and cultural diversity, there is
tremendous political divergence among the people of the state. Chowdhary
noted that, while the India-Pakistan and India-Kashmir engagement is
important, what is perhaps equally significant is the inter-regional and intra-
regional dialogue. It is only through such internal dialogue that a consensus
will be built on the divergent political aspirations and goals that the people of
Jammu and Kashmir hold.

Exploring the various options on the basis of which a consensus can be built,
Chowdhary stated that Kashmiris are united in their belief that the region should
not be divided. The danger of such a division, whether on the basis of a plebiscite
or otherwise, is that it will most likely be on the basis of religion. And this will
create a new set of majorities and minorities. More significantly, it will lead to
a dangerous partition of villages and towns. Foregrounding the need to narrow
political divergences, Chowdhary said that the proposal to make borders
irrelevant and to take forward a notional unity of Jammu and Kashmir could
be seen as an option that is not only inclusive but one that also transcends the
concept of the nation-state.

Using a psychosocial approach to peacebuilding, Dr. Shobna Sonpar, a clinical psychologist based in
New Delhi, spoke about her work with former Kashmiri militants who have made the journey from
violent activism to peacebuilding.

Introducing the psychosocial framework, Sonpar said that there is a close connection between the
psychological aspects of an experience (thoughts, emotions, behaviors, attitudes) and the wider social
experience. A psychosocial approach looks at how the
social realities of economics, politics, history, and culture link up with the
inner psychological world of an individual. It holds that any behavior emerges
from a combination of factors such as an individual’s frame of mind,
interpersonal and group relations, and the wider social, political and cultural
context. Since there is an overlap between these dimensions, a change in any
one of them will have repercussions for the others.

The term “violent activism” emerged from a study that Sonpar had carried out
on former militants in Jammu and Kashmir. The study indicated that militancy
could be understood as an activism or a social movement that took a violent
form due to a variety of psychosocial and political factors. A second finding was that a large number of the former militants that Sonpar interviewed had personal qualities and commitments common to social activists, and also that they continue to participate in social, cultural, humanitarian and political activities.

Looking at the various ways in which a psychosocial approach can make peacebuilding programs more effective, Sonpar said that it is important to **acknowledge the emotional complexities** surrounding violent conflict. These complexities include the impact of chronic political violence on individuals and communities as well as on the polarized perceptions of conflicting parties. Here, *the other* is demonized and dehumanized. Sonpar explained that such emotional complexities affect everyone – from the people on the streets who are directly involved in the violence to those at policy and decision-making levels. While there might be an acknowledgement that these emotional factors impinge on the lives of the common people, there is insufficient recognition of the way in which these factors influence decision-making and policy-making at the macro-level.

Second, effective peacebuilding programs are cognizant of the **power of asymmetry** between conflicting parties. For example, majority versus minority communities, state versus non-state actors, and so on. Sonpar noted that while *Kashmiriyat*, a belief that Kashmiris share a centuries’ old culture that overrides the boundaries of religion, was given importance, one has to also acknowledge that political power rested with the Central government in Delhi and governance and administrative powers were largely in the hands of a Hindu civil service. Such complexities that surround power asymmetries must be unpacked and discussed.

Third, peacebuilding programs should recognize the importance of including both **top-down and bottom-up processes**. For example, policy-level interventions such as the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus initiative must go hand in hand with the interventions of local citizens, for example, women’s dialogue initiatives across the LoC, and so on.

Sonpar identified three questions that the peacebuilding community should address in Jammu and Kashmir:

- While the causes of the conflict have invited much dialogue and debate, what has received little attention is the culture of fear that permeates everyday life in Kashmir. The conflict has left a majority of Kashmir’s population
traumatized and yet interventions to respond to this reality are few in number. How might we reverse this culture of fear and address the widespread trauma prevalent in Jammu and Kashmir? While there have been attempts to address peoples’ mental health needs, little attention has been given to the culture of fear or what Sonpar terms as “socio-trauma.” This refers to the emotional climate which is dominated by fear, mistrust, anger, helplessness, cynicism and a sense of loss.

- The second question relates to how peacebuilders can undo the processes of otherization that have taken root in the state. As a first step, peacebuilders must engage with the emotional blocks that interfere with internal reflectivity. Internal reflectivity suggests honest introspection on the part of those who have more power in the conflict, whether they are the majority group or representatives of the state. While a sense of victimization, discrimination and oppression intrudes on the reflectivity of those with lesser power, those with greater power are perhaps blocked by a feeling a threat to an accustomed and unexamined sense of superiority and entitlement. In the past, stakeholders have dismissed such mental blocks in the belief that these are “irrational” or “emotional.” Yet, there is a logic to, and reason behind, any emotional block and, stakeholders must address these in their efforts to build sustainable peace.

- Third, how do we create a reflective space that allows us to discuss the issues dispassionately, express divergent opinions, and engage in nonviolent activism and other peacebuilding activities? Freedom from fear is a necessary psychological prerequisite for such a space to emerge. It is only when we are no longer absorbed in trying to keep safe and being alert to danger that we can begin to think in a reflective way. In fact, Sonpar noted that this is also partly the reason for stakeholders requesting that international mediators be involved. There is an expectation that external mediators might be able to create a neutral space for such reflection.

Saying that there is an urgent need to create conditions where fear is not an overriding feature, Sonpar noted that, paradoxically, the presence of the military in Jammu and Kashmir (which is supposed to make people feel more secure) has terrorized civilians and aggravated the sense of fear. This culture of fear has also damaged the social and moral ordering principles that govern normal life which are based on assumptions of trust, goodness, goodwill and meaningfulness. In other words, a sense of predictability, a very important human need, has been lost. Instead, one finds, in Kashmir, a malevolent order based on suspicion, mistrust and fear. Pointing to the recent reduction of troops in the Valley, Sonpar said that state and non-state actors must use this opportunity
to restore conditions that facilitate nonviolent activism of issues concerning human rights, social development and politics.

Sharing examples of how the culture of fear has affected an individuals’ belief system, Sonpar talked about her conversations with ordinary people in Doda. In these conversations, people would invariably talk about how the conflict has disoriented their lives and destroyed everything (including their value system). They struggled to grasp the meaning behind all the destruction and misery that has permeated their lives, and in a broader sense, they looked for philosophies and ideologies that could help them regain a sense of meaning. The result, as Sonpar noted, was that many turned to fundamentalist ideologies because these provided a symbolic order in a situation where all the other assumptions and values that held society together had been destroyed. In such a context, young people turned away from the nonviolent resources of their own traditions, and looked for role models that represent fearlessness and live life on their own terms. As a young man from Doda told Sonpar, “We have discussed Islam, we have discussed Gandhi, but many of us believe that the philosophy of Charles Sobhraj is the best.”36 His flashy lifestyle, his rejection of societal values, and his belief in living life for his own personal gains, even if this meant killing people, were some of the features that attracted the young men that Sonpar interviewed. This in fact, shared Sonpar, was a poignant reminder of the gruesome way in which the culture of fear has affected the lives of ordinary people at a very basic level.

Other manifestations of this culture are the **high incidence of suicides** (and attempted suicides) and cases of **post-traumatic stress disorder** (PTSD) in Jammu and Kashmir. The trauma of the last two decades has affected the psyche of Kashmiris to such an extent that there has been a breakdown of the social, symbolic and moral order of society. Ensuring the rule of law and delivering justice would be a first step in restoring this order. In addition, Sonpar suggested that transitional justice mechanisms could be initiated to create a sense of validation among the victims of the conflict.

Returning to her study on former militants, Sonpar shared that a majority of them have an activist potential for peace and development and exhibit qualities that hold true for committed social activists. They are not only passionate about issues larger than the personal self, but believe in taking action and have

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36 Charles Sobhraj, a French serial killer of Indian and Vietnamese origin, preyed on Western tourists throughout South and Southeast Asia in the 1970s. He was convicted of 12 murders and spent ten years in an Indian jail. Currently, he is serving a life sentence in Nepal.
the courage of conviction to put themselves at great personal risk. Because of their experiences in the field, they also exhibit leadership qualities and expertise in planning, organization, and motivating others. They also have a very intimate insight into the nature of violence through their personal engagement, both as perpetrators and as victims.

Agreeing with these comments, Workshop participant Mr. Akhter Hussain, a former militant from Doda, shared his experiences of participating in the armed struggle and later his transition to peace and development work in Jammu and Kashmir. Opening with the assertion that “one man’s terrorist is another’s freedom fighter,” Hussain talked about the different identities he held as a militant – a “terrorist” for the Government of India and a “freedom fighter” and “patriot” for the Kashmiri people. Hussain joined the armed struggle in 1993-94 when the movement was at its peak. Later, he left the movement because he realized that the “gun culture” would not help Kashmiris realize their political and social aspirations. After leaving the movement, he returned to complete his education, and founded the Forum for Peace and Development through which he participates in a variety of peacebuilding projects.

Although Hussain has reentered the mainstream and is an active participant in peacebuilding work, he continues to experience prejudice from the local authorities. He cited the example of an instance when he required police verification for an identity-proof document. Even though there is no FIR registered against him at the police station, Hussain had a tough time completing the police verification process. In this context, he felt that the Government of India should make a more sincere effort to rehabilitate and reintegrate ex-combatants. Hussain concluded with the assertion that the sentiments and aspirations of the Kashmiris must be taken into consideration by the Government in New Delhi, and their dignity and self-respect must be central principles of any proposed solution.

The next presentation, Strengthening the Positive, Arresting the Negative, by Dr. Suba Chandran, Deputy Director, Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, New Delhi, addressed the following questions:
• What do “peace” and “normalcy” mean in Jammu and Kashmir?

• Does Conflict Transformation have to be a positive phenomenon? Is there a possibility that Conflict Transformation takes a negative turn?

• How might we strengthen the positive developments that have taken place over the last few years?

With reference to the first question, Chandran noted that “peace” and “normalcy” have different connotations for different actors in the state. For instance, a resident of Poonch might have different perceptions from a resident of Kargil or Srinagar. For the Government of India, peace and normalcy are measured in terms of good elections (transparency, accuracy, high voter turn-out, et al) and reduction in violence (in terms of casualties and infiltration). There is also a perception that the number of tourists that visit the state in a year is an indicator of normalcy. Chandran however felt that this might not be an appropriate indicator because, for example, pilgrims traveling to Amarnath will travel via Srinagar, but may not visit the Dal Lake or Gulmarg. Their stay in Srinagar would at best last for a few hours. Therefore, looking at tourism in terms of the number of people visiting Srinagar might not be a good indicator.

Chandran quoted a Kashmiri friend (based in Sopore) who responded to this question in the following way: “If I travel from Sopore to Srinagar without being frisked or without being stopped, that is normalcy.” Or, peace and normalcy might have an economic connotation. For example, if a Kashmiri is able to do good business through the sale of his apples, that would be normalcy for him. For a student in Jammu and Kashmir, peace and normalcy would have a different meaning. These prevail when the university schedule is not disrupted and when exams are held on time and results are declared in time for the students to apply to institutions of higher education in other parts of India and the world. The average youth in Kashmir might also define peace in terms of his ability to visit a restaurant with his/her friends. Chandran quoted a resident of Ladakh who said that when the Kailash Mansarover route opens, then he will know that peace and normalcy have returned. A doctor in Anantnag told Chandran that she will know peace when the high rates of teenage abortions in her district reduce.
Looking at the negative ways in which the conflict has transformed itself in Jammu and Kashmir, Chandran identified four issues.

- The regional polarization between Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. The recent conflict over the transfer of forest land to the Amarnath Shrine Board is an expression of the deep divisions between Jammu and Kashmir.
- Communal polarization has increased over the last few years. Religious faultlines have become more accentuated.
- Radicalism and fundamentalism in all of the three regions is on the rise.
- New issues are emerging and adding to the long list of grievances in the state. For example, Chandran drew attention to the Gujjar-Pahari conflict that is brewing in the Rajouri-Poonch district.

Speaking about the **positive developments**, Chandran said that the recent elections in the state were an indicator of the fact that people are politically aware and would like to use the democratic process to address their aspirations. Second, governance has become an important issue, and looking at the way the Kashmiris voted in the legislative assembly elections, it is clear that those who failed to deliver on governance were voted out. Third, despite bottlenecks and criticisms, the Roundtable conferences between New Delhi and Jammu and Kashmir have brought to the fore useful recommendations. Fourth, steps to reduce the presence of the military have been taken. The Jammu and Kashmir police are now more confident of taking over the security apparatus. Fifth, the fact that the cross-LoC buses and trucks continue to ply between the two Kashmiris, despite hiccups in the composite dialogue, is a positive sign. In this context, Chandran suggested that the bus service could be expanded to include all Kashmiris\(^{37}\) and cross-LoC tourism could also be considered.

Ms. Ashima Kaul Bhatia, Consultant, WISCOMP, made a presentation on the **Athwaas women’s initiative in Jammu and Kashmir**. Locating the initiative in the context of the field of peacebuilding, Bhatia drew on the “strategic peacebuilding matrix” of Lisa Schirch, a Conflict Transformation scholar, to highlight the diverse range of activities that fall under this umbrella term. Schirch identifies four clusters of peacebuilding. These include activities to reduce direct violence (legal and justice systems, humanitarian assistance, peacekeeping, ceasefires, establishment of peace zones and early warning programs), activities to wage conflict nonviolently (human rights monitoring, advocacy, nonviolent action, and civilian based defense), activities to build capacity (training, education, 

\(^{37}\) As of now, only those Kashmiris who have families on the other side of the LoC are allowed to take the bus.
research), and activities to transform relationships (trauma healing, transitional justice, governance and policy making).

While there are several civil society organizations in Jammu and Kashmir pursuing these diverse peacebuilding activities, Bhatia focused on the Athwaas women’s initiative of which she is a co-founder and member. Preferring to use the terminology of “civil society organizations” (CSOs) over “non-governmental organizations” (NGOs), Bhatia stated that the former provides an enabling framework to capture the myriad social actors that form groups outside of the family, the market and the state. CSOs refer to non-governmental and not-for-profit organizations that have a presence in public life, expressing the values of their members based on ethical, cultural, political, scientific, religious or philanthropic considerations. While NGOs represent one category of CSOs, the other components include community groups, labor unions, indigenous groups, charitable organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, student's federations and foundations.

In Jammu and Kashmir, while CSOs have gained widespread respect for their humanitarian and development work, their efforts to address human rights and the political, economic and social causes of the conflict have received mixed responses. Bhatia shared that during the course of her efforts to rebuild relationships across the conflict divide, she had often been accused of “indianizing the Kashmiris.” In fact, given the complex and challenging terrain of peacebuilding work, the legitimacy of several CSOs (working in Jammu and Kashmir) is mired in controversy. It is alleged, sometimes not without reason, that they can be co-opted by state actors to serve narrow nationalist agendas. The Indian and Pakistani states pitch their constituencies against each other through such initiatives. At the same time, there is also a civil society constituency, which is part of the same populace that is challenging both states. Bhatia noted that in such a sensitive context, there is always the danger of faulty interventions or even well-intentioned ones ending up with unintended consequences such as worsening divisions between conflicting groups or participants in the peace process reinforcing structural violence and disempowering local actors. These are consequences that have played themselves out several times over in Jammu and Kashmir.

Given their immense potential in channelizing the energies of local actors to rebuild conflictual relationships and contribute to the peace process, Bhatia cautioned against the urge to discourage CSOs from working in the field of peacebuilding. Instead, the focus should be on best practices and lessons learned.
The contributions of CSOs to the field of peacebuilding have been several. They have generated a new framework for action in conflict zones, imaginatively captured by Conflict Transformation scholar Harold Saunders in his conceptualization of “a public peace process.” “A public peace process,” according to Saunders, is a sustained political process through which citizens outside government come together in dialogue to design steps for changing conflictual relationships in ways that create capacities to build the practices, processes and structures of peace. The public peace process stands apart from the formal mediation and negotiation processes of governments and, at its best, can complement, support or even energize the official peace process.”

Such a framework acknowledges and affirms the centrality of citizens’ groups outside the formal space of the government as an important element in peacebuilding.

In this context, Bhatia co-founded Athwaas, a citizen’s dialogue initiative led by Kashmiri women, in 2000. Athwaas, which in Kashmiri means a “handshake,” was initiated at a time when most people were unwilling to acknowledge and address existing injustices and deep-rooted anxieties. In such a context, ten women from across the political spectrum in Jammu and Kashmir, representing diverse faith traditions and cultures, came together to listen to each other. Bhatia shared that through a sustained dialogue over the last nine years, the women of Athwaas have been able to build trust, acknowledge each other’s realities, and have created a common ground for collective grassroots action. The Samanbals (a meeting place) represent a grassroots’ initiative that each member of Athwaas has taken ownership of. The initiatives vary from trauma counseling and livelihood projects to conflict resolution training for Kashmiri youth and domestic violence workshops for Kashmiri women.

Bhatia shared that while, at the micro-level, the sustained dialogue process has enabled the women of Athwaas to move from a position of separation and division to unity, at the macro-level, it has emerged as an example of the possibility of accommodating the aspirations of all the three regions as well as those of ethnic and religious groups and minorities.

Saying that while civil society groups such as Athwaas, through a process of sustained dialogue, can play a vital role in Conflict Transformation in Jammu and Kashmir, Bhatia concluded with the assertion that they need to go a step further. They must engage with the political discourse and the political peace process.

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process rather than operating outside the realm of government negotiations. They must be at the center of the political process in order to build sustainable peace and security.

Throughout the discussion on Jammu and Kashmir, Workshop participants were often confronted with the question: “What is our definition of Kashmir?” Addressing this question, Mr. Parvez Dewan, Chairman, India Tourism Development Corporation, New Delhi, said, “Our definitions are influenced by our location in terms of where we reside and what is ‘home’ for us.” For example, those from the Valley of Kashmir (the “ethnic Kashmiris”) often assert that “Kashmir” does not mean Jammu, Kargil or Ladakh, and neither does it refer to Pakistan Administered Kashmir. If looked at from the perspective of a Pakistani, all of Jammu and Kashmir is “Kashmir.” Similarly, for a non-Kashmiri Indian, “Kashmir” is shorthand for Jammu and Kashmir.

Tracing the **demographic trajectory** of Jammu and Kashmir on both sides of the LoC, Dewan said that when the state was partitioned in 1947, Pakistan got very little of what is seen as “Kashmir.” There were parts of Jammu and Ladakh that formed Pakistan Administered Kashmir. In addition to the Kashmir Valley, there are 12 villages in the Muzaffarabad area (in Pakistan Administered
Kashmir) which are ethnic Kashmiri. Ethnic Kashmiris can also be found in Doda, Rajouri and Poonch (in Jammu).

With the exception that a majority of the Kashmiris on both sides of the LoC are Muslim, the differences in language, culture and caste are several. The population living in the Valley of Kashmir is primarily homogeneous, despite the religious divide between Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs. The people of the Valley share a common ethnicity, culture, language, and customs. The people living in Jammu who profess Hinduism and Islam are ethnically different from those living in the Kashmir Valley in terms of ethnicity, language, and culture. The people living in Ladakh are primarily Buddhist and are of Tibetan origin. The Muslim minority in Ladakh belongs to the Shia sect.

The people living in Pakistan Administered Kashmir share a common religion with their counterparts across the Line of Control, but are not ethnically and culturally similar to those living in the Valley. The population in Pakistan Administered Kashmir is marked, as is only to be expected in such a mountainous region, by a great deal of local diversity. While the Sudhans, an elite tribe that resides in the Poonch district of Pakistan Administered Kashmir, identify themselves with the Kashmiri identity, so do the Mirpuri-Jats who live in the southern most district of Mirpur. Yet their aspirations for Kashmir are quite different. The Sudhans – who control the administration in Muzaffarabad – would like to integrate Kashmir with Pakistan, while most Mirpuris support a Kashmiri entity which would be independent of both India and Pakistan. Interestingly, the Mirpuri Jats – who make up two-thirds of all British Pakistanis – are at the forefront of shaping the new Kashmiri identity in Great Britain. In fact, they are in leadership positions of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) in Great Britain.

Adding complexity to the task of defining a Kashmiri identity, Dewan drew attention to the Qureshi tribe of Kundal Shahi, a village in the Neelam Valley of Pakistan Administered Kashmir. This tribe speaks a language distinct from any other in the area, although it is influenced by Kashmiri and Hindko. What is however interesting to note is that for much of the last 300 years that the Qureshis have been living in the Neelam Valley, they have functioned in a state of stable multilingualism, using Kundal Shahi among themselves and languages such as Kashmiri and Hindko with outsiders. However, in recent

40 Hindko is a predominant language in the Neelam Valley in Pakistan Administered Kashmir.
years, they have started using Hindko in their interactions with their children, thereby seeking to transfer to the next generation Hindko rather than their native language.41

Speaking in the context of this cultural and linguistic diversity, Dewan attributed the drop in the number of people taking the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus to the fact that the number of families (in the Kashmir Valley) with relatives on the other side of the LoC is much smaller than previously projected. The differences are even starker if we look at the demography of Kargil or the Northern Areas. The story, however, is very different in Jammu. Contrary to popular perception, the bulk of the divided families reside in Jammu (Rajouri and Poonch), Mirpur, Kotli, and Baltistan.

Given the very substantial cultural differences between the Kashmiris of the Valley and those of Pakistan Administered Kashmir, the prospects of contradictions between the two populations are very strong. Such contradictions in fact serve as a hindrance to the efforts of those who talk of a wholly independent Jammu and Kashmir.

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Discussion

Moving beyond the bilateral definition of the India-Pakistan conflict over Kashmir, Salma Malik asserted that the ideas and proposals of the Kashmiris – whether these support autonomy, independence or a confederation – should form the contours of a future agreement. They should be central participants in any negotiation process on Jammu and Kashmir. With reference to the methodology to elicit the views of the Kashmiri people, Malik said that a plebiscite could be used to determine public opinion on the issue.

Echoing this view, Ashima Kaul Bhatia added that it is for the people of Jammu and Kashmir to make choices on the political formations and institutional relationships that they desire for sustainable peace. However, highlighting the challenges and complexities of such a process, Workshop participant Mr. Shahnawaz Choudhary, Law Student, Jammu University, Jammu, noted that all the different ethnic and religious groups, and not just the majority communities or those who have a political voice, should be consulted during the track one dialogue process. He advocated that minority communities such as the Gujjars and Bakerwals should have representation in the Roundtable Conferences instituted by the Prime Minister.

Noting that while the contours of the problem have been debated for several decades, and all stakeholders as well as the international community are aware of the limits to which India and Pakistan can go in accepting “out of box” proposals, the session Chair, Prof. Satish Kumar, Editor, India’s National
Security Annual Review, New Delhi, posed the following question: “What are some of the issues around which a consensus can be reached between India and Pakistan?” Attention was drawn to the example of Europe, a continent which was the site of the maximum number of wars of the worst kind in world history. Yet, today its countries have increasingly invested faith in the notion of a borderless Europe. Perhaps, the solution to the Kashmir conflict lies in envisioning a region where borders become irrelevant, so aptly captured in the dialogic exchanges between Dr. Manmohan Singh and General Pervez Musharraf.

Kumar concluded the discussion with the assertion that, in the discourse on Jammu and Kashmir, what has not been given sufficient importance is the long way that the whole situation has traveled over the last 62 years. Because of the vast changes that have taken place in Jammu and Kashmir over the last several years, solutions that were conceptualized six decades ago are no longer relevant. The change in the situation on the ground was recognized by former President Gen. Musharraf and Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh when they came to delineate the limits beyond which no fundamental change can be brought about and their articulation that we have to find a way to coexist. The formulation that the two leaders offered, that borders should be made irrelevant, is extremely significant. It means that there is a recognition of the change in the mindset and psyche of the people on both sides of the border and within Jammu and Kashmir that the only solution is coexistence. Kumar noted that track two processes and civil society initiatives such as Athwaas and the WISCOMP Conflict Transformation Workshops (that bring together young Kashmiris, Pakistanis and Indians), have played an extremely valuable role in building the foundation for coexistence within Kashmir and between India and Pakistan. They have provided a space for free and frank debate and an exchange of ideas, and, in so doing, they have helped to change the mindset and psyche of the people as well of the leadership in the two countries.
The acquisition of nuclear weapons by India and Pakistan has led to the description of South Asia as a region precariously close to the possibility of a nuclear conflagration. Even a small-scale nuclear incident could produce casualties of an unprecedented magnitude given the region’s weak medical and emergency infrastructure and the close proximity of populous areas to likely targets. The protracted conflict between the two countries has also increased the risk of nuclear terrorism with the possibility of incendiary groups being able to access nuclear technology. Although the nuclear regime in South Asia exhibits stability during periods of calm, it does become precarious during times of conflict and crisis.42

The problem however facing India and Pakistan is far greater. It is the deficit of trust between them – in their strategic establishments and scientific communities, and in their ruling elites. This deficit spills over to the other neighbors, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal, who are all impacted, and consequently must have a stake. The security establishments in both India and Pakistan, however, continue to claim that they are responsible nuclear powers and that nuclearization has played the role of a deterrent in the conflict between the two countries. Yet, civil society movements have often expressed concerns about the desirability and safety of this nuclear engagement.

In recent years, the search for nuclear energy for peaceful uses has added a new dimension to the debate on nuclearization. In the face of rising energy

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demands, depleting fossil fuels, and volatile oil prices, nuclear energy development has become highly appealing. Added to this, the need to mitigate climate change (through reductions in carbon emissions) has led to a growing scramble for alternative sources of energy. Nuclear energy has emerged as an attractive choice for countries that have growing energy needs and that would like to exercise environmental responsibility.

While the India-US Civilian Nuclear Agreement has generated considerable unease in the region, especially within Pakistan, in much of the official discourse in India, the acquisition of nuclear capacity has been tied to the peaceful use of nuclear energy. The Agreement has also generated, for the first time in India, an extended public debate on the issue of nuclear energy, although it has tended to be both reductivist and essentialist. Opposition has also come from quarters that point to the impact of a nuclear power plant on the local environment and on the health and safety of the local population.

This panel discussion titled *The Nuclear Conundrum: Security or Terror* engaged with the diverse perspectives on the nuclearization of the subcontinent. Looking at the possibilities of disarmament, it addressed the following questions:

- How has the nuclearization of India and Pakistan impacted the sense of security of the other countries in the region?
- Is civilian nuclear cooperation about energy or about strategic influence for the USA?
- Would the growing demand for civilian nuclear energy increase the chances of proliferation?
- Will the India-US Nuclear Agreement enhance non-proliferation efforts? How will this Agreement benefit India? What are some of the pitfalls of the Agreement? How will it affect the international discourse on nuclear non-proliferation?
- How real is the threat of nuclear and radiological terrorism? What steps can be taken to forestall the possibility of terrorists having access to nuclear weapons or the means to attack nuclear installations?
- While the setting up of a nuclear power plant might address issues of energy security, what dangers does it pose to the local environment, to the livelihoods of the local people, and to their health and safety?
The panel discussion opened with a presentation by Prof. Achin Vanaik, Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Delhi, Delhi, on the concepts of **Terrorism, Deterrence, and Disarmament**. Acknowledging the complexities involved in attempts to find a universally accepted definition of terrorism, Vanaik said that, at a minimum, it refers to those acts that threaten to or carry out physical injury against innocent, unarmed civilians. While some definitions highlight the role of *intent* – suggesting that terrorism refers to those acts that have the *intent* of killing civilians – Vanaik put forth the perspective that the philosophical gap between knowingly killing civilians and unintentionally killing civilians is not that wide, especially when the scale is so enormous. An inclusion of *intent* enables actors (particularly state actors) to define the killing of unarmed, innocent civilians as “collateral damage.” Yet, as Vanaik noted, such violence is not unintended; governments usually are aware that police or military action against armed non-state actors will also result in the deaths of unarmed civilians.

Terrorism is a technique, a tactic, a method, a means, not a characterization for a certain category of people. Precisely because it is a tactic, a method, a means, it can be used by a variety of agents, whether it is the individual, a group or larger collectivities like the apparatuses of the state. Vanaik therefore asserted that while there is non-state terrorism, there is also state terrorism, which can be state-sponsored, state-directed, and state-executed. He identified three differences between **state terrorism** and **non-state terrorism**. First, non-state terrorism is two-directional in the sense that through the act, it seeks to send a message to its opponents (“we are going to continue fighting for our cause”) as well as one to its home constituency (“don’t give up...we’ll keep on fighting”). The attempt is to derive political symbolic value from the act. In fact, former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher had once said, “Publicity is the oxygen of terrorism.”

State terrorism, on the other hand, is unidirectional. It does not want its acts to be made known to its home constituency. For instance, in India, if civil liberty groups visit Kashmir or the Northeast, and report on human rights violations carried out by state actors, the activists run the risk of being labeled “anti-national,” unpatriotic, and so on.

Second, the scale of state terrorism is much larger than non-state terrorism. Vanaik cited the example of the United States of America, which, since 1945,
outside of its borders, has killed more civilians than the rest of the world’s countries put together. A minimum of 100,000 people were killed by US forces after the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Although states have greater means to carry out terror acts; what is more disturbing is that, because they are able to project the end goal in such grandiose terms as “bringing democracy and peace to the world,” states are able to justify their acts to such an extent that they are not even considered “terrorist acts.”

The third difference is that non-state terrorism seems random. It can happen in a market place, on a busy street, or in an office building. As a result, there is a perception that it can interfere with the daily lives of citizens. State terrorism is more focused and more distant, in the sense that it refers to events in far-away Iraq or Afghanistan. It doesn’t affect the average Indian because it is something happening in the Northeast or in Kashmir, far away from the metropolis.

Vanaik asserted that efforts to address terrorism will succeed only if there is recognition that the terrorism of states, including democratic states, constitutes a far greater challenge and therefore must be foregrounded in the discourse on terror.

Terming the “war on terrorism” as deceptive and fraudulent, Vanaik explained that a war cannot be waged against a technique or a tactic. Further, this terminology has been coined by the United States for reasons that have less to do with the question of terrorism and more to do with geopolitics. Such terminology also attempts to justify the use of one kind of violence in the name of fighting another kind of violence. In other words, by militarizing the solution to the September 11th terror attacks (which killed 3000 people), the US and its allies killed more than 10,000 civilians in Afghanistan in the ensuing months.

Vanaik suggested the following strategies to address and transform the problem of terrorism. First, state terrorism must be addressed. Second, there must be universal and impartial opposition to all forms of terrorism, irrespective of their source. This opposition should be universal and impartial at three levels: moral, political and emotional. Moral opposition suggests that there should be no double standards in defining terrorism. Politically, it must be recognized that there is an action-reaction relationship between state terrorism and non-state terrorism. There is a perception that states are able to get away with large-scale violence and atrocities without these ever being defined as terrorism. This creates a feeling of injustice and resentment among non-state
actors, thereby leading to a situation where the terrorism of the state and of the non-state actors feed on each other. Also, any serious attempt to transform the problem of terrorism must address the political context from which it emerges. The example of the Israel-Palestine conflict was cited.

The emotional dimension points to the mass sentiment after a terror attack. Vanaik explained that people usually respond to such situations with the assertion “never again.” “But, you can say ‘never again’ in two ways. You can say ‘never again’ to my people or you can say ‘never again’ to any people. If you say never again to my people (as is the case in most contexts of conflict), then you will build an emotional reservoir of support for your governments to carry out violence against others.”

Describing nuclear weapons as weapons of terror, Vanaik argued that deterrence, which is the fundamental rationale for possessing nuclear weapons, is essentially a terrorist doctrine. It is a doctrine that justifies the production, possession, and even the limited use of nuclear weapons. It is fundamentally abstract and flawed because if one country believes that nuclear weapons are necessary for its security, then other countries are also justified in thinking that these weapons can bring them security, thereby causing a chain reaction of fear and insecurity.

Addressing the widespread perception that non-state actors could gain access to nuclear weapons (particularly in the case of Pakistan), Vanaik argued that this assumes that terrorism refers to a particular category of people who are irrational, dangerous, fanatical, and so on. Yet, some of the greatest crimes of history have been carried out by states, whether it is the example of the Jewish Holocaust in which six million Jews were massacred, the dropping of the bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Stalin’s inequities in the former Soviet Union, the US invasion of Iraq which resulted in the deaths of 100,000 civilians, or the thousands of Afghans who were killed in response to the September 11th attacks.

Vanaik suggested that global non-proliferation efforts should focus on the CTBT (Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty) and the FMCT (Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty) and oppose BMD (Ballistic Missile Defense). At the regional level, governments and civil society should engage in a dialogue on policies that could be put in place to move towards a South Asian nuclear weapons’ free zone. While this is a long-term goal, a mid-range perspective should focus on efforts to diffuse the several conflicts between India and Pakistan. Such efforts
could focus on establishing a de-nuclearized and de-militarized corridor on both
sides of the border; working towards an agreement in which the Pakistanis and
Indians commit to a no-war pact; and, Kashmir, on both sides of the Line of
Control, could be a nuclear weapons’ free zone.

Vanaik added that other South Asian countries can also take steps to encourage
India and Pakistan to agree to a nuclear weapons’ free zone. For example, Nepal, in its new Constitution, could declare itself as a single state nuclear
weapons’ free zone. Bangladesh, the only country whose government has openly
supported the idea of a South Asian nuclear weapons’ free zone, could work
towards an expansion of, and become a signatory to, the Bangkok Treaty
(through which Southeast Asia was established as a nuclear weapons’
free zone).

The next presentation by Dr. Rajesh Manohar Basrur, Associate Professor, S.
Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University,
Singapore, looked at the relationship between Nuclear Policy and Terrorism.
This relationship presents two dilemmas for scholars and practitioners.
The first is the nuclear security dilemma. The Realist perspective on
International Relations is that the world is composed of states which exist in a
condition of anarchy. There is no higher authority to manage relations and
hence there is no trust. Therefore, every state must arm itself (because it fears
that, in the absence of weapons, it might be subjected to blackmail or even an

Ms. Saira Bano, Lecturer, Program of Defense and Diplomatic Studies, Fatima Jinnah
Women’s University, Rawalpindi; Dr. Rajesh Manohar Basrur, Associate Professor,
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore
The word *deterrence* which we use commonly to describe nuclear weapons’ relationships has the same root as the word *terror* or *terrorism*. The Latin root is “to fill with fear.” Deterrence between states or terrorism committed by non-state actors is not that different.

Dr. Rajesh Manohar Basrur

attack). However, a critic would respond with the assertion that security cannot be obtained by acquiring weapons because such acquisition would provoke a response from other states, which would buy weapons out of fear. Thereby, a chain reaction of fear and insecurity is set into motion. This presents states with a security dilemma.

The security dilemma is also referred to as the **stability-instability paradox**, which is that when two states have nuclear weapons, and they are deterring each other to avoid war altogether, it actually creates space below the level of nuclear war for increasing levels of conflict. Basrur sighted the example of the India-Pakistan relationship as one in which more space has been created for terrorists after the nuclearization of the subcontinent. By the late 1980s, the two countries knew that the other possessed nuclear weapons, and it is in this period that the level of fear and terrorism started accelerating.

The second is the **human security dilemma**. Pointing to the close relationship between nuclear technology and human security, Basrur shared that several big developing countries have started looking at nuclear energy as a means to meet basic needs such as electric power. There is talk about how nuclear energy can be the basis for a clean form of power in comparison to the energy generated by fossil fuel. Yet, the challenge is presented by the fact that such nuclear materials and technology are also used for making nuclear weapons.

Basrur identified two problems that emerge out of the availability of such materials. The first relates to the fear of **nuclear terrorism** – that somehow terrorists might be able to obtain nuclear weapons. This fear is not all that far-fetched. As Basrur explained, “While it might be difficult to obtain a sophisticated nuclear weapon, acquiring a weakly-working, usable, single weapon may not be all that difficult. The fear is there because even if the possibility is not very high, the actual effects of that particular incident are extraordinarily high. So this is a cause of worry even if the probability is low.”
The second problem relates to **radiological terrorism** – where terrorists might obtain radiological or radioactive material and use it primarily to spread radiation and create fear, panic and gain political advantage from such a situation. Terrorists could even attack existing sources of such materials. Such sources are not always well-protected because a number of these materials are found in industrial and medical usage. If they are obtained and combined with ordinary explosive, the impact could be devastating.

In the context of these dilemmas, Basrur raised two questions: Can the security, and especially the nuclear security, dilemma be resolved? How do we go about resolving this dilemma? While there is a perspective that advocates the management of nuclear weapons, there is another view that points to the dangers to human civilization if we fail to manage these weapons, and therefore advocates the elimination of nuclear weapons (a perspective that peace movements across the world articulate). This question assumes even greater significance in the context of the India-Pakistan relationship. Second, “how do we address the human security dilemma revolving around the existence of civilian nuclear technology? Do we manage civilian technology or do we seek alternatives?” Basrur noted that it is rather surprising that the international debate on the civilian use of nuclear technology has not shed much light on the dangers and pitfalls of such technology. These are very real issues, particularly for the countries of the South Asian region, and require rigorous dialogue and reflection.

Looking at the issues of civilian nuclear energy and non-proliferation, Ambassador Arundhati Ghose, former diplomat based in Delhi, made a presentation on the **India-US Civilian Nuclear Agreement**. Saying that the Agreement is balanced on both sides with each country undertaking specific obligations, Ghose explained that India, for the first time, has agreed to place all her civilian nuclear facilities (those that will be open for international cooperation) under IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) safeguards. This entails a separation of the civilian and military facilities, because unlike other nuclear weapon states, India’s program started as a civilian one. Out of that, the weapons program grew. So separation has become a major procedure in order to distinguish the civilian facilities from the military ones. Ghose shared that India has signed an additional protocol with the International Atomic Energy Agency; it has agreed to retain
its voluntary moratorium on testing; and it has also agreed to participate positively in the negotiation of a universal, non-discriminatory, verifiable, fissile material cut-off treaty.

With reference to the obligations that the United States undertook, Ghose explained that the US changed its laws so that it could engage in nuclear energy cooperation with India. Previous US laws prevented the country from entering into any such agreement – civilian or otherwise – with India. Since the restraints on India were global, the United States and other countries such as Russia and France worked on the members of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) to acquire a waiver for global nuclear cooperation with India. Following the NSG waiver, India signed similar civilian nuclear agreements with France, Russia, and Kazakhstan.

The India-US Agreement is significant for several reasons. First, it has transformed relations between the two countries. The nuclear issue was a thorn in the side of India-US relations for three decades. One of the foreign policy objectives of the US was to restrict the possession of nuclear weapons to the five countries that were permitted by the NPT (Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty) to retain their weapons till disarmament (if and when it should happen). India, on the other hand, as a country with very few natural resources, had decided to build a knowledge-based economy through high technology. This set the two countries on a collision course because it was high technology that was denied to India through various conditions laid down by the NSG. In such a scenario, normalization of relations between India and the US was a distant possibility. With the Civilian Nuclear Agreement, a major obstacle to the normalization of relations has been removed. Second, the Agreement, in addition to freeing up access to nuclear technology and fuel (needed by India’s civilian reactors), has corrected the imbalance in India’s global relations.

Commenting on the impact of the Agreement on international efforts to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and technology, Ghose said that the Agreement does not approve or in any way support India’s weapons program. It is restricted to safeguarded civilian facilities. Further, today India is more confident about supporting efforts for nuclear non-proliferation.

The recent global interest in civilian nuclear energy should not be linked to the acquisition of nuclear weapons. The reasons are very different. A country seeking to develop nuclear weapons usually does so for security reasons, and sometimes, for status and prestige. The second is linked to the fact that the five permanent members of the Security Council (that have a veto power) possess
nuclear weapons. A country seeking to acquire civilian nuclear energy is unlikely to possess a clandestine desire to build a weapons program. As Ghose put it, “To assume that countries seeking civilian nuclear energy have clandestine intentions is a very untenable basis on which to proceed.” Nonetheless, to prevent any such possibility, the international community has proposed the idea of providing fuel through fuel banks. This way, fuel will be provided to countries looking for civilian nuclear energy without allowing them to develop their own technology for the full fuel cycle (which would enable access to weapons’ technology).

De-linking proliferation issues from the India-US Agreement, Ghose articulated the view that, at the international level, proliferation concerns are focused on Iran, The Democratic Peoples’ Republic of Korea, and Pakistan. Even though Pakistan has voiced its objections to the Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty Negotiations in Geneva on the basis of the India-US Nuclear Agreement, none of these countries are as such linked to the Agreement.44 Since Iran is a signatory to the NPT, if it develops a nuclear weapons program, it would be in violation of its obligations under the Treaty. DPRK is a focus of non-proliferation interest since it conducted a nuclear test in May 2009 and has walked out of the NPT. With reference to Pakistan, the concern is different. It relates to the global perception that, due to the instability prevailing in the country, there is a likelihood that non-state actors or unauthorized personnel might gain access to nuclear materials or technology.

Concluding with the assertion that the India-US Agreement offers unorthodox solutions to new challenges, Ghose shared that in none of the discussions and recommendations (put forth by the preparatory meetings) for the NPT Review Conference (scheduled for 2010) has the suggestion been made that the India-US Agreement has weakened the NPT regime. It is therefore unlikely that the issue will be addressed at the 2010 NPT Review Meet.

Addressing the impact of the nuclearization of the subcontinent on the lives and livelihoods of people in rural India, Dr. S.P. Udayakumar, Director, Transcend South Asia, Nagercoil, Tamil Nadu, spoke about peoples’ resistance movements and the public opposition to the India-US Nuclear Agreement.

44 Participants from Pakistan expressed concerns about the impact of India-US nuclear relations on Pakistan’s security. Looking at the Civilian Nuclear Energy Agreement in the context of the Ballistic Missile Defense Cooperation and the India-US Defense Framework Agreement, they felt that this new partnership could threaten Pakistan’s security as also regional stability.
Public acceptance and support are crucial if nuclear energy programs are to be successful. Several factors shape public acceptance of nuclear energy, such as unknown risk factors, public-government relationships, safeguarding of livelihoods, public participation in nuclear decision-making processes. Alleging that the Indian government has failed to address any of these issues with respect to educating the public about its nuclear energy program, Udayakumar noted that an emphasis on the economic and technological benefits of nuclear energy have dominated the discourse with little thought placed on addressing public concerns over the potential drawbacks of nuclear power.

Questioning the belief that nuclearization was necessary for India’s national security, Udayakumar said that nuclear technology has a poor track record when it comes to improving the quality of life for India’s teeming majority. Added to this, is the danger that a nuclear power plant poses to the health and safety of the local population. Udayakumar cited the example of the Koodankulam nuclear power plant, located near the southernmost tip of India, where the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited is setting up two 1,000 MW light water reactors (with a proposal to set up six more nuclear reactors) with Russian technology and loans.45 This has raised concerns about the dangers the nuclear power plant poses to the local environment, to the livelihood of the local people, and to their health and safety. As Udayakumar noted, the Koodankulam plant poses a risk not just to the ecological balance of the region, but also to the health (through radiation leaks) and livelihoods of the local farming and fishing communities.

With about 350 million people continuing to live on less than 20 rupees a day, and with 250 million having no access to a toilet, Udayakumar concluded with a plea for serious engagement on how nuclear energy can be linked more closely to human security and to improving the lives of India’s poor.

Articulating the concerns that the India-US Civilian Nuclear Agreement has raised within Pakistan, Prof. Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, Dean, Faculty of Contemporary Studies, National Defense University, Islamabad, said that the Agreement has damaged global and regional non-proliferation efforts.

45 For information on the Koodankulam nuclear power plant, see S. P. Udayakumar (ed.), The Koodankulam Handbook (Nagercoil, India: Transcend South Asia, 2004).
It has created a perception in Pakistan that the US and India are using double standards in the context of their positions on nuclear non-proliferation.

Responding to comments about the instability in Pakistan and the possible takeover of nuclear weapons by jihadi groups, Cheema shared that the nuclear establishments are protected by technical intelligence as well as human intelligence, in addition to various secret codes. There is a national command and control authority which was set up in 1999 and the weapons’ facilities are under strict security control by the military. Saying that such perceptions about the insecurity of Pakistan’s nuclear weapons are baseless and far-fetched, Cheema sought to put in perspective the perceived ascendance of the Taliban (in the northwestern part of the country) which has been curtailed by military action initiated in May 2009.

Acknowledging that the discourse on nuclearization (and its association with both security and terror) has proved to be extremely divisive, Cmde. Uday Bhaskar, Security Analyst, New Delhi, urged Workshop participants to search for spaces for dialogue between states and anti-nuclear movements. From a Conflict Transformation perspective, how might civil society actors build a constructive and fruitful dialogue between those who support nuclear weapons programs or civilian nuclear energy and those against any such use? Saying that this might serve as a bridge between the very desirable vision of disarmament and the present-day reality, Bhaskar suggested, as a starting point, a closer scrutiny of the symbiotic relationship between security, terror and otherization. Further, he added that it might be a useful exercise for the Workshop participants to dispassionately look at the competing narratives on the nuclear issue in India and Pakistan. Engaging with the empirical roots of these narratives might help to remove certain misperceptions about the other. For example, Bhaskar shared that “there is a received view in India that the Pakistani state has used its nuclear weapons to create a greater space for terrorism.” He invited Workshop participants to look at the different views, particularly those based on empirical research, to affirm or refute this perception.
Reflecting on the diverse perspectives raised by the speakers, the session Chair, Mr. B.G. Verghese, Visiting Professor, Center for Policy Research, New Delhi, flagged the following concerns:

- Although there is a need to address the violence and injustices perpetrated by states, these inequities should not serve as a justification for non-state terrorism. While the grievances and aspirations of those groups that resort to violence must be addressed, state violence should not be used to rationalize the violence perpetrated by non-state actors.

- International concerns about proliferation are focused on state actors (such as North Korea) as well as on non-state actors and rogue elements. Making a reference to the A. Q. Khan episode in Pakistan, Verghese questioned the perception that the nuclear scientist acted on his own without the knowledge of the state (particularly since the nuclear program is under the control of the Pakistani military). And, if Khan did indeed act out of his own will, it suggests that the Pakistani state was unable to secure a facility that was ostensibly under its control. Rolf Mowatt-Larssen, a former CIA officer,
in an article in Arms Control Today, noted that the threat of insiders in the nuclear establishment working with outsiders seeking a bomb is nowhere greater than in Pakistan. “Pakistani authorities have a dismal track record in thwarting insider threats.” In this context, proliferation with reference to non-state actors becomes a cause of concern. This concern is exacerbated by the fact that the possession of even a “suitcase bomb” can cause enough damage to terrorize people. Non-state actors do not need to gain access to a “complete bomb” in the military sense. Even a “dirty crude weapon” could serve the goals of a group wanting to cause fear and terror.

- The solution lies in strengthening international institutions such as the United Nations so that there is a democratic and global management of these issues. Such a system would also prevent militarily stronger states from arm-twisting and leveraging their power over other countries.
Role of the Media in Conflict Generation and Conflict Transformation

In 1992, even as “terrorism” was entering the lexicon of South Asian researchers and practitioners, Mumbai-based constitutional expert, A.G Noorani, had pointed to the dangers of the lack of clarity in the Indian mind when it comes to understanding the rights and responsibility of the media in reporting terrorism. There is no doubt that terrorism is a matter of public concern and the press has a right to report it and comment on it. It is for the press and the government to win each other’s confidence when a terrorist attack happens but the onus is more on the government than the press because, as Noorani indicates, “governments tend to lie much more than the press can misreport.” In addition, the state has instruments of suppression at its command. The press cannot abdicate its duty in favor of the government…It cannot compromise its integrity and independence.46

Seventeen years down the line, this debate on the rights and responsibilities of the media seems to have gained a fresh relevance, especially in the context of the reportage of the Mumbai attacks in November 2008. As TV channels competed for viewer-ship, the focus was on instant reportage, often with unedited footage. In this scramble to grab and beam the most dramatic image, the deeper reflections that reveal multiple facets of a question as they unfold, that address the complexities of the issues at stake, that represent the striving to bring forth a “polygon of perspectives” were all given short shrift. 26/11 will remain an important benchmark not only because of the nature, the scale and the audaciousness of the attack, but also for the broader issues it flagged

on the ethics of journalistic intervention and the relationship between media and society.

The result of the kind of competitive reporting that was witnessed was that the news channels became more accommodating to the terrorists’ mass mediated goal. Anjali Deshpande and S. Pande succinctly sum this up, “If there is one thing the electronic media helped in particular, it was to bolster the confidence of the terrorists and give them a sense of achievement far greater than their actions may have provided them.”

The terror attacks have now assumed the role of a filter through which all news from Pakistan is judged. The media response to the attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team on March 3, 2009 was a case in point. By the evening of the attack, the editorializing and blame game harking back to the Mumbai attacks had begun. Straight news coverage was substituted with possible theories regarding whether the attacks were staged to distract public attention in Pakistan from the investigations of 26/11.

In this backdrop, the panel discussion on the Role of the Media in Conflict Generation and Conflict Transformation focused on the following questions:

- What were the major highlights of the reportage of November 26, 2008 and its aftermath in India and Pakistan in their respective English, Hindi and Urdu media?
- What are some of the possibilities as well as constraints of a real time medium like television and how did this play itself out in the reportage of the Mumbai attacks?
- To what extent has print and TV journalism contributed to creating a culture of aggressive nationalism in India and Pakistan?
- What is the relationship between the media and the government and, when the media reports an event like 26/11, what are the sources it consults?
- What role can the media, particularly the alternative media, play in bringing back an element of critical self-reflection into the manner in which events are reported? Was it able to play this role in the months following the Mumbai attacks?

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What were some of the debates on the larger role of media and society that were generated in the aftermath of 26/11? Have these debates brought in an element of introspection on the ethics of journalistic intervention?

Articulating a perspective from Pakistan, Dr. Baela Raza Jamil, Coordinator, South Asia Forum for Education Development, Lahore, opened the discussion with a quote from renowned Pakistani journalist and human rights activist I. A. Rehman who, in an opinion piece in the Dawn, said,

“Terrorism is not a transitional law and order problem. The roots of the threat to both India and Pakistan lie in the pre-partition communal politics, and their future lies in burying that hateful legacy of religion-based politics. The Mumbai killers...were enemies of the peoples of India and Pakistan – they damned the Indians by killing many of them and wounding their government’s pride, and they damned the Pakistanis by putting them in the dock. Without minimizing the enormous hurt to the people of India, it can be demonstrated that the Mumbai terrorists caused much greater harm to the world’s Muslims, including those living in Pakistan and India, just as Muslims the world over have been the victims of 9/11 more than the Americans... The people of Pakistan, on their part, have to conduct an honest self-appraisal... The question whether Pakistan has fostered terrorism beyond its frontiers has become irrelevant. What is relevant today is that the world is not convinced of its disclaimers despite the fact that militants have forced a civil war on it. Pakistan can escape being branded an international pariah only if it undertakes a sincere and concerted campaign against extremist elements whose existence cannot be denied.”

Jamil stated that this perspective is a reflection of how many Pakistanis responded to the Mumbai attacks, and not the jingoistic projection that was witnessed on Pakistani news channels. In this context, she added, “The WISCOMP Workshops are needed now more than ever and please do not feel for a moment that this current state frenzy reflects the mood of the people, but only of those vested interests who want to distract attention from the core issues within.”

Jamil traced the evolution and growth of the electronic media in Pakistan in order to provide a deeper insight into how the Mumbai attacks were perceived

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in the country. The expansion of the electronic media, which ironically happened during the Presidency of General Pervez Musharraf, resulted in the induction of 70 television and radio channels. A majority of these channels are infused with a **culture of aggressive journalism**, which has developed as a genre by itself since September 11th. This becomes more pronounced when a crisis happens, as in the case of the Mumbai attacks.

Jamil noted that any analysis of the Pakistani media’s response to the Mumbai attacks should be informed by the political and security situation prevailing within Pakistan at that point of time. There was a shift taking place from the so-called frontline state facing Afghanistan to a frontline state facing inwards where the whole terror spectacle had moved inside Pakistan itself. Suicide bomb attacks and large-scale civilian casualties became commonplace across the country, and there was already a sense of victimization among the populace. It was in this context that the Mumbai attacks happened.

While some of the Pakistani media coverage of the 26/11 attacks reflected this sense of victimization, **much of the reportage was influenced by decisions and events in India**. For example, as soon as reports started coming in that Pakistani artists visiting Mumbai had to leave, sports programs were postponed or cancelled, and Pakistani theater performances in India were halted, the Pakistani media got into a reactive mode and started coming up with its own responses, which were highly negative. Rigid positions taken by Pranab

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*Dr. Baela Raza Jamil, Coordinator, South Asia Forum for Education Development, Lahore; Ms. Seema Mustafa, Editor, COVERT, New Delhi; Prof. Sudhish Pachauri, Head, Department of Hindi, University of Delhi, Delhi.*
Mukherjee and P. Chidambaram and the highly inflammable statements of Varun Gandhi in the subsequent months provided fodder for jingoistic and hardened reactions from the Pakistani media. Jamil added that the Pakistani media coverage of 26/11 also represented vested interests, not just political or economic, but also those of intelligence agencies, security agencies with political stakes, and even terrorist outfits.

Although not reported widely in the media, civil society groups and journalists in the two countries tried to halt the unending tit-for-tat between the two governments and the mainstream media. They tried to send out positive messages of what Indians and Pakistanis truly desire. The people of both countries had looked forward to the dividends from the peace process, which now stood derailed. Jamil shared that there were street protests in the provincial capitals of Pakistan demanding peace, month-long signature campaigns in both countries, and cross-country visits of civil society leaders and senior journalists. The purpose was to tell the people of India and Pakistan that the jingoistic and hardline positions adopted by certain sections in the two countries did not reflect the sentiments of the majority of Indians and Pakistanis. In this context, sections of the media played an important role in bridging the divide.

Tracing the history of journalistic collaboration between the two countries, Jamil shared that till the 1965 war, there was a tradition of journalistic pieces being shared across the border. After the war, for nearly 40 years, there was almost no sharing in each others’ newspapers and publications, and films (from across the border) were banned. In April 1984, the first attempt to reverse this censorship was made by the Pakistani English language daily The Muslim when it organized a conference of Indian and Pakistani journalists, politicians and retired civil servants and military officials. In 1994, The Frontier Post hosted a series of meetings between Indian and Pakistani journalists in Lahore. The Pakistan India People’s Forum for Peace and Democracy (established in 1995), PANOS South Asia Media Organization (established in 1997), and the South Asia Free Media Association (established in 2000) gave a further impetus to partnerships between journalists and media houses from the two countries.

The media coverage of the Mumbai attacks (in both India and Pakistan) has raised the following questions: Can the media engage with the views of the other in a dispassionate manner? Can it represent the voices of those whose story might differ from the state version of the conflict? Can it acknowledge that the same facts can be interpreted in different ways? Can the media deconstruct negative stereotypes and take the bold step of seeking to build an inclusive consensus? Perhaps these are some of the questions that the media,
especially the television news channels in the two countries, must engage with when reflecting on their coverage of crises such as the Mumbai attacks.

Jamil concluded with the observation that while the media should continue to play an important role in informing and educating people, it should also try to serve as a platform for political discourse where there is room for dissent and alternative opinions so that people are able to recognize that there are different ways of looking at events such as 26/11.

The “watchdog” and “advocacy” roles of the media are also important, particularly in a region where governance is often in crisis and governments stand so compromised. In this context, Jamil made the following suggestions:

- When conflicts take place, a culture of joint and collaborative reporting should be encouraged.
- Independent newspapers and electronic media should focus on building an alternative genre of journalism where protocols for conflict reporting are put in place and multiple viewpoints are highlighted. Newspapers such as the Dawn and The Indian Express have initiated such practices where people from across the border are invited to share their opinions.
- A paradigm shift in India-Pakistan relations is taking place in the realm of inter-country youth-led initiatives and dialogues. Young Indians and Pakistanis are looking at the conflict differently and exploring alternative frames of analysis. Yet, with a few exceptions, this change is largely unreported in the media of the two countries. Collaborative and joint degrees and cross-country research on critical issues at journalism and communication studies’ institutes could be initiated to influence beliefs and attitudes and bolster the voices of third generation Indians and Pakistanis.

The quality and accuracy of the news that the English language press in India dishes out (particularly with reference to the Mumbai attacks) was the focus of the next presentation by Mr. Siddharth Varadarajan, Deputy Editor, The Hindu, New Delhi.

Starting with an example from The Hindustan Times – one of the largest English language dailies in the country – Varadarajan referred to a report carried in the April 15, 2009, edition of the paper. Labeled as an “exclusive,” the report was headlined, “On eve of trial,
26/11 breakthrough in Europe.” The report communicated that on the eve of the Ajmal Kasab trial in Mumbai, a dramatic breakthrough had taken place in Europe. It told the reader that following a 60-day global manhunt by Indian investigators, Shahid Riyaz, the alleged kingpin of the Mumbai attacks, was arrested in Europe. The story was un-sourced (and attributed to unnamed Home Ministry officials) but was carried as a Hindustan Times exclusive. On the previous day, all newspapers had carried the report of a press conference held by Mr. Rehman Malik, Pakistan’s interior minister, where he had announced that Pakistan had arrested Shahid Riyaz in connection with the Mumbai attacks. They had managed to lure him back to Pakistan from Barcelona. The Hindustan Times report had obviously been cleared by a couple of reporters and editors before the decision to carry it as an “exclusive” was taken.

This story raises several questions about the quality of journalism in India. Given that Pakistan had announced that it had arrested the same person, why didn’t any of the reporters or editors at The Hindustan Times attempt to verify the report? Why weren’t Home Ministry contacts tapped to check on the authenticity of the story? Since two similar stories had emerged, why didn’t the editors investigate as to which of the two was correct before labeling one of them as an “exclusive”?

Citing this as an example of lazy and sloppy journalism which most national security reporting in India is full of, Varadarajan revealed that journalists who cover beats such as the intelligence agencies do not want to engage in the kind of legwork that is needed to develop and cultivate contacts and sources in such institutions. They would rather take the easier route of “dictation” without verifying the story. A reporter should have the skill to corroborate and investigate any information that an intelligence official supplies him with, rather than taking everything at face value.

Saying that media speculation about the identity of the perpetrators of the Mumbai attacks was a legitimate reaction, Varadarajan felt that journalists failed in their duty to interrogate and analyze the perspectives that came in from various commentators. If the media is to play a role in Conflict Transformation, it must initiate a more constructive dialogue on how India and Pakistan can proceed to accomplish the long-term goals of stability, security and peace. But before it can play a role in building peace, the Indian media needs to be more professional, accurate and rational in its coverage of conflicts. Editorials and opinion pieces need to adopt a more balanced approach in evaluating the constraints of the Indian and Pakistani governments and put forth perspectives that have been researched and corroborated.
Shifting focus to a related dimension of conflict reportage – the language and vocabulary used by the media – the presentation by Prof. Sudhish Pachauri, Head, Department of Hindi, University of Delhi, Delhi, examined the impact of war-like phrases that television news channels used during and after the Mumbai attacks. The definition of the “terrorist attack” was influenced by media phrases such as “war on Mumbai,” “city under siege,” and “final assault” along with footage of the terrorists from closed-circuit televisions. This was accompanied by inflammable bytes, high on patriotic zeal from politicians like Mr. Narendra Modi and Mr. L.K. Advani.

The reportage of most of the television news channels was similar in its lack of objectivity and professionalism. As Pachauri put it, “The reporters seemed to have a personal vendetta against the terrorists.” As the intensity of this vendetta increased, the phraseology too changed from “Mumbai attacked” to “city under siege,” to “war on Mumbai” and finally to “this is war.” In this context, Pachauri posed a pertinent question, “On whose command did sections of the electronic media label the terrorist attacks as ‘war’?” At a time when the Government of India was being cautious in the way it defined the attacks, why did the media use a more war-like vocabulary?

A few days after the attacks, the television news channel NDTV 24/7 organized a talk show against the backdrop of the Taj Hotel. While the anger of the participants was understandable, what was unpardonable was the air-time given to incorrect statements about Indian Muslims and Pakistan. Ms. Simi Garewal, one of the celebrity guests on the show, declared that many of the slums in Mumbai hoist the Pakistani flag. Although a correction was made later that she had mistaken the Pakistani national flag for another flag, the damage had been done. It had colored the perceptions of several thousand Indians.

Summing up the behavior of television journalists reporting the Mumbai attacks, Pachauri said, “You use global communications technology in your work, but your language continues to be that of a fifth grader. You want to communicate more than what a picture is saying. You don’t want to convey the news; you want to communicate your own views and transfer your anger and frenzy to the audience.”
In fact, for more than a month after the Mumbai tragedy, the English news channel Times Now continued to advocate a military solution for dealing with Pakistan, using a vocabulary that was the trademark of George Bush in the months following the September 11 attacks. The demonization of Pakistan by sections of the media reached such alarming levels that the pain and sorrow of the people of Pakistan became a myth for most Indians. Consent was manufactured to retain the image of Pakistan as the “enemy.”

Drawing attention to an equally dangerous trend, Pachauri said that the television coverage of the Mumbai attacks also revealed the reporters’ lack of understanding of the root causes of terrorism – the structural, political, cultural and socioeconomic factors that create an environment conducive for the use of violence as a means to communicate a message or to achieve a certain goal. A nuanced and refined analysis of the causes of terrorism was missing from the television coverage of the Mumbai attacks.

Seconding the view about mediocrity in television journalism, Ms. Nidhi Razdan, Senior Special Correspondent, NDTV 24/7, New Delhi, shared that, today, journalists rarely use words such as “alleged” or “claimed.” There is a tendency to depend on government sources for information and to take everything at face value. The practice of verifying and corroborating news stories from different sources is the exception rather than the norm. Reporting has become so sloppy that journalists often don’t question what is handed out to them. Many of these mistakes were repeated several times over during the Mumbai tragedy.

While acknowledging that television channels made errors in their coverage of the Mumbai tragedy, Razdan said that a big part of the problem was that the attacks were of a magnitude that journalists had not covered before. Without any sort of training in conflict reporting, field reporters were left to report and assess the situation as and when it unfolded.

Razdan addressed some of the major charges that were leveled against television news channels. The first charge was that reporters compromised on the security of the hostages. Razdan shared that the reporters stationed their cameras where they were told to do so by security personnel. No instructions were given to the media to keep their cameras at a certain distance away from the Taj Hotel.
or from Nariman House. Yet having said this, Razdan acknowledged that the media should have exercised its own judgment and realized that such non-stop coverage from a location so close to the hostage sites could have harmed the rescue operation.

The second criticism was that the media should not have interviewed the relatives of the hostages. While acknowledging that this was a valid criticism, particularly with reference to the silly questions that reporters asked, Razdan said that many of the relatives that NDTV 24/7 interviewed had voluntarily approached the reporters. Perhaps, they wanted to share what they were feeling during those tense moments or they felt that their relatives might be watching television inside the hotels and this was their way of connecting with them.

Many of the errors made by television reporters were also related to the pressures of live television and real-time reporting. There is a lot of pressure, especially on the younger reporters, to be the first to get the news. Further, the stiff competition between the numerous news channels has only added to this pressure and to the emphasis on “sound byte journalism.” During the three days of the hostage crisis, there was intense competition not just in terms of who broke the news first, but also with reference to who got the most dramatic pictures first.

Although the editor failed in his/her role to filter the news before it was aired during the three days of the hostage crisis, Razdan noted that the bigger problem related to what happened after the crisis was over. The editorializing that happened on the panel discussions flouted all rules of journalism—it was irresponsible, biased and ill-informed. Recalling a discussion on the Times Now channel, Razdan shared that the news anchor-turned security expert spoke about the possibility of bombing Pakistan as one of the options. Discarding the principle of neutrality, anchors became opinionated and vociferously advocated military strikes against Pakistan.

Echoing this criticism of the xenophobic nationalism that news anchors indulged in, Mr. Shuddhabrata Sengupta, a writer and editor currently associated with the Sarai Program at the Center for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi, said that despite the odd lapses, the reportage of the Mumbai tragedy was not as bad as the editorializing that began in the days after the attacks. Reporters on the field, who worked under enormous pressure and constraints, approached the situation with a view to understand what was going on. However, in the newsrooms of the television channels, the story was different. News anchors donned the role of experts and discussed the question
of war with Pakistan. Two channels in particular – Times Now and India TV – discarded any respect for facts and objectivity and, through their televised panel discussions, became platforms for war-mongering and for the demonization of Pakistan. In one instance, a news anchor on Times Now, declared, “This is war.” Such statements only compounded the sense of fear and Pakistan-bashing that had been unleashed by some sections of the media.

Sengupta drew attention to a significant trend that had emerged in the media reportage of terrorist attacks, in both India and Pakistan, prior to 26/11. Skepticism about intelligence handouts was beginning to appear in the work of field reporters and journalists. There was an increasing use of the qualification “alleged” in words such as “encounter” and “terrorist.” There was a greater caution and unwillingness in the media to lap up claims made in intelligence handouts in both India and Pakistan. An attempt was made to verify and corroborate the claims from different sources. However, the tragedy of 26/11, Sengupta noted, is also that all this good work, that had actually begun to create a climate where newspapers and televisions became a space for legitimate questions to be raised about the “alleged encounter” or “the alleged terrorist”, was thrown out with the deluge of the editorializing that followed the attacks.

Even as the war-mongering that several news channels engaged in was condemned, how does one deal with the fact that such xenophobic nationalism is also what the viewers demanded? Added to this, how do journalists respond to irresponsible citizen-speak, most aptly reflected in the comments made by celebrities such as Simi Garewal and Sohail Seth? Sengupta drew attention to the need to also look inwards and ask the question, “To what extent did consumers of television news contribute to the climate of jingoism and war-mongering that news channels engaged in?”

Although there was widespread criticism of the two statements made by Garewal on the NDTV 24/7 show We The People, it must also be acknowledged that these statements reflected the perceptions of many Indians. The first statement that “Pakistani flags can be seen in the slums of Mumbai” reflected the widespread ignorance that exists in the public domain about the so-called other. And, as the panel discussions on news channels post-Mumbai revealed, the media, rather than separating fact from fiction, contributed to a further

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49 Workshop participant Sandeep Bhardwaj echoed this perspective, citing the example of the panel discussions on Doordarshan in the weeks following the Mumbai attacks. While the quality of these discussions was far superior to those aired on the private channels, there were few takers for the former. Viewers preferred to watch those channels that indulged in sensationalism and dramatization.
blurring of lines between the two. The second statement that India should “carpet bomb some parts of Pakistan” reflected the assumption, again widespread, that we (Indians) can do no wrong... all wrong must have come from across the border. Therefore, every action that India takes is seen as legitimate and moral.

Pointing to the paucity of public memory in India, Sengupta drew attention to a similar incident in 1985 when 146 unarmed men, women and children, on a pilgrimage in Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka, were massacred by the LTTE. At that time, the LTTE not only had the moral backing of the Indian government, it also received its arms’ supply from across the Palk Strait. While several other incidents can be cited, the point here is that there is an assumption that the Indian government has not supported violence outside of its borders and that there is absolute moral legitimacy in State action. In such a context, television can become a forum for a dispassionate reflection on the history of such issues. It should also be the responsibility of those who produce editorial content on television to be able to give a certain amount of historical depth to a crisis such as 26/11.

Commenting on the reportage of the Mumbai tragedy on Pakistani channels, Sengupta said that the response was equally reprehensible and jingoistic. It was an evenly matched game between the Indian and Pakistani news anchors who had metamorphosed into security experts and public performers. What was interesting to see on both sides of the divide was the tendency, particularly amongst the hyper-patriotic commentators, to take up very fringe reports and magnify them out of proportion in a way that the viewer begins to feel that a disaster is about to unfold. Sengupta cited the example of Pakistani news anchor Zaid Hamid who picked up a report that was circulating on the fringes of the internet stating that the 26/11 attacks were a Mossad plot. The report received considerable coverage on Pakistani channels. Similarly, Sengupta pointed to the reportage of the Swat insurgency in the Indian media. Reports of the Taliban’s activities were often qualified with the phrase “just 100 kilometers from Islamabad.” One hundred kilometers from Delhi, in Haryana, people are being lynched and killed on the basis of inter-caste marriages. This, stated Sengupta, surely does not mean that Indian society is besieged and is spinning out of control! In such situations, it is important for the media, in both countries, to find a reasonable balance in terms of how events from across the border are reported.
Discussion

Speaking in the context of the conflict over the transfer of land to the Amarnath Shrine Board in Jammu and Kashmir, Faheem Aslam, a Workshop participant and Correspondent with Greater Kashmir, Srinagar, shared that some news channels were so blatant about their political leanings that it influenced their coverage of conflicts. As a result, their reporters and camera-persons in Kashmir had to conceal their identity in order to be able to cover the conflict. Such was the public anger against channels that were seen to be biased in their reportage of this conflict.

Ameya Kilara, a Student at the National Law School of India, Bengaluru, posed a question on the subject of regulatory mechanisms for television. Who defines the boundaries in terms of which news story is appropriate to air and which is not? And, how and when are these boundaries drawn? The panelists were unanimous in their opposition to any government-controlled accountability mechanism since this would not only be abused and misused, it would also lead to unnecessary censorship, curtail journalistic freedom and add to the chaos and rumor-mongering that surrounds most conflicts. However, doubts were expressed about the extent to which self-regulation would work. Although news channels have agreed to implement an internal code of conduct\(^{50}\), Razdan was skeptical as to whether this would be adhered to when the next big conflict grips the country. Saying that self-regulation is really the only way in a free and democratic society like India, Varadarajan shared that the electronic media has set up a watchdog organization headed by a former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

Commenting on the need to verify and corroborate stories, particularly those pertaining to terrorist attacks, Shahiuz Zaman Ahmed, Honorary Secretary General, The Dolphin Trust, Guwahati, cited the example of the recent serial blasts in Assam where hundreds of people were killed. Within 24 hours, the media carried a story that the Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HuJI) was responsible for the attacks. The story heightened communal tensions in Assam because it created a perception that “Muslim” terrorists were behind the blasts. However, once the investigation was completed, the local police revealed that the identity of the perpetrators was different and HuJI was not linked to these attacks. By not verifying the story put out by intelligence agencies about the identity of the perpetrators, the media heightened communal tensions in the state, not to mention that it carried a story that was factually incorrect.

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\(^{50}\) For example, news channels have decided that the bodies of victims of mass violence will not be shown on television.
Uddipan Dutta, a Guwahati-based researcher expressed concern about the blackout of news from the Northeast on most English news channels. The commercialization of news has meant that most stories are metro-centric, ignoring perspectives from not just the Northeast but even from cities like Agra and Aligarh that are proximate to the national capital. Sadly, because of the emphasis on TRPs, a traffic jam in Bengaluru might make it to the nine-o-clock bulletin at the expense of a story on mass violence in Guwahati.

Saying that it is also important to focus on the positive efforts to reduce tensions and build peace in a conflict situation, Ishtiaq Ahmed Dev, a social worker based in Doda, Jammu and Kashmir, drew attention to the “stories of hope” that are conspicuous by their absence in the media. He cited the example of a massacre in Doda in which militants killed 22 Hindus. In protest, resident Hindus and Muslims took out a joint procession against the violence. The Muslims spoke out vociferously against the massacre of their Hindu neighbors. Yet, even though the media was present, none of the news channels or newspapers covered this story.

Several questions put forth the dilemma that journalists are presented with when they have credible information but are not allowed to reveal their source. Varadarajan took the view that it is not necessary for a source to be revealed as long as the reporter and the editor are confident about the credibility and truth of the story. Razdan shared that, in television, there are several instances when journalists cannot report a story with people going on record. The India-US Nuclear Agreement was cited as an example of a story where the journalists at NDTV had credible information from different sources, but because of the sensitive nature of the issue, they could not cite a source even though they were right about the story. This has therefore become an accepted practice in both television and print media.

There was a difference in perspective among the panelists on the “peacebuilding role” of the media. Session Chair Ms. Seema Mustafa, Editor, COVERT, New Delhi, took the view that the media can play a crucial role in ensuring that prejudices and biases do not exacerbate an already tense situation. Through its role as a watchdog of society, through its focus on the marginalized and the oppressed, and through its efforts to remove ignorance and prejudice, the media can contribute to violence prevention and enhance justice.
in a society. Recounting her experiences of covering a broad range of conflicts in the 1980s, Mustafa shared that reporters were trained by their editors to enter the conflict region with a certain sobriety and a sense of commitment to the people who had experienced the violence. Once the reporter would file her story, the editor would read every word to ensure that nothing in the story could incite violence back in the area where the conflict was raging. The guiding principle was that the journalist should not write anything that could potentially exacerbate or deepen the conflict.

Varadarajan put forth the perspective that while journalists should ensure that their work promotes peace and harmony, or, at a minimum, that it does not exacerbate tensions, he cautioned against the tendency of journalists to become activists. Further, he added that reporters should be as skeptical of peace activists as they should be of governments. Irrespective of the source, all stories should be cross-checked and verified. Razdan felt that rather than being peace activists, reporters should focus on implementing the ethics and principles of good and professional journalism.

The session Chair, Ms. Seema Mustafa, concluded the discussion with the following observations:

- The September 11 attacks, the US-led invasion of Iraq, and the coinage of a new vocabulary (“embedded journalism”) have created a situation where the media, globally, is hesitant to question the “truth” that States project and, at the same time, propagates “half-truths” that give leverage to xenophobic ideas and prejudices. The term “embedded journalism” marked a turning point in the history of conflict reportage because it gave justification to the coverage of conflict from the victors’ point of view, ignoring the perspectives of the victims. While moving its focus away from human suffering, it eclipsed the horror of war in its glorification of violence. The coverage of the Mumbai attacks was a reflection of this shift in discourse in conflict reportage. Related to this is also the phenomenon of the media increasingly attempting to manufacture consent by selecting and projecting news in a manner that serves the politics of divisiveness.

- Many of the problems that emerged in the coverage and editorialization of the Mumbai attacks can be attributed to the diminishing role of the professional editor. Editors have played an extremely important role because, as Mustafa pointed out, they not only taught young entrants journalistic skills, they also guided them through the ethics of the profession. With the corporate class taking over media houses, the designation of the
professional editor is increasingly being done away with. Although the trend of business houses owning a newspaper is not new, Mustafa noted that, in the past, corporate bosses did not interfere with editorial decisions. There was no interference in the work of the editor or the journalist. This has however changed today.

- The editor played an important role in also empowering reporters with the skills to go beyond the story put out by the government and to investigate issues involving corruption, the killing of innocent people, and other forms of violence, which had state sanction. As Mustafa put it, “They taught us the importance of irreverence by empowering us with the skills to question government handouts.” Similarly, the editor would train reporters in the skill to unravel the politics behind acts of mass violence. However today, professional editors are conspicuous by their absence in most media houses in India.

- Sadly, there is a growing mediocrity in the profession, which has meant that just about anyone can become a journalist. However, it shouldn’t be so. The media should be one of the most respected professions in a society, particularly in a democratic society. It is one of the institutions on which an informed democracy is built.

- An important consequence of the corporate takeover of the media has been that newspapers try to increase their sales by marketing their writers as “stars.” Television news channels seek to do the same with their anchors. There is an attempt to project a television anchor or a newspaper reporter as a sought-after brand. Yet, as Mustafa stated, “Journalists are not supposed to be stars, but observers who report a story. They are not the story.”
Conciliation and Prejudice:
Focus on Bombay Cinema

A discussion on media and conflict in South Asia would be incomplete without an engagement with the role of Bombay cinema, popularly known as Bollywood, in conflict generation and conflict transformation. The Workshop module Conciliation and Prejudice examined how films from Bombay cinema have dealt with issues of identity, terrorism, and conflict transformation. The potency of this medium lies in its ability to create and reinforce negative stereotypes as also in its ability to build trust and transform existing prejudices.

Looking at the influence of Bombay cinema, which has a pan-South Asian presence, this session addressed the following questions:

- What role has Bombay cinema played in conflict generation and conflict transformation in different contexts of conflict?
- Can cinema emerge as an instrument for conflict transformation? Can it be used as a tool to open dialogue between people from different sides of a conflict? Has it played such roles? If so, what are some of the examples?

Workshop resource person Dr. Ira Bhaskar, Associate Professor, School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, opened the session with an analysis of how identity formation and otherization are addressed in Bombay cinema. Processes of otherization are an inevitable by-product of any exercise that seeks to construct, influence or alter the identities of an individual or a community. In India, as in other countries, majority communities have exhibited the tendency to other minority communities (defined on the basis of differences in language, religion, ethnicity, class or caste).
In recent times, this otherization has become more pronounced because of the rigid manner in which identities in South Asia have been constructed. While these demarcations, increasingly along religious lines, have been brought into effect mainly for purposes of political mobilization, the impact on inter-personal and inter-community relationships has been devastating. Clear-cut boundaries have been created between people who share historical and cultural ties and whose lives – social and economic – are inextricably linked. This notion of rigidly bound identities often leads to the creation of negative stereotypes about the other, whether it is the Hindu in Pakistan or the Muslim in India. However, if seen through the lens of culture, South Asian identities are fluid, multiple and cross-cutting. There are diverse cultural sources from which individuals draw their identities.

Bhaskar located her presentation in the context of how Bombay cinema has portrayed India-Pakistan relations and Hindu-Muslim relations in India. With reference to the latter, she looked at how the Muslim community in India has been stereotyped as the other in popular discourse and how cinema has intervened in this process. Screening clips from films (from Bombay cinema) which have dealt with issues of prejudice and terror in the context of identity construction, Bhaskar said that the influences of Islamic culture on Bombay cinema have been significant.

Saying that the portrayal of Hindu-Muslim conflicts and of the Muslim as a terrorist is a recent phenomenon (dating back to the early 1990s), Bhaskar stated that Bombay cinema, over the last 60 years, is replete with positive stereotypes of the Muslim. In fact, till the 1980s, filmmakers steered clear of representing communalism and Hindu-Muslim conflicts precisely because of the inflammable nature of the subject. It was only in 1992 that a Muslim, for the first time, was portrayed as a terrorist in a mainstream film – Roja. Prior to this, there is a whole history of the positive portrayal of Islamic culture in Bombay cinema.

While Roja (a Mani Ratnam film) was criticized for the way in which the terrorist was portrayed with critics pointing to the dangers of stereotyping and the prejudices it can generate about minority communities, other films have tried to address stereotypes in a constructive manner. Bhaskar showed a clip
from *Sarfarosh*, a film about cross-border terrorism. Through the character of *Saleem*, an Indian police officer, the film draws attention to how Indian Muslims, especially those in government service, are looked at with suspicion. At the same time, they are also targeted by the radical and conservative elements within their own community.

The film *Hey Ram*, set at the time of the 1947 partition of British India explores this issue further by looking at how prejudices about the other enter into everyday discussion and discourse, and therefore also into politics. *Hey Ram* is about two friends – a Hindu and a Muslim. While the Muslim – a follower of Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan and Mohandas Gandhi – has moved from Karachi to Delhi after the partition, the Hindu has come under the influence of a right-wing political group and has been selected to assassinate Gandhi. Through the conversations between the two characters, *Hey Ram* attempts to counter the processes of otherization and openly critiques Hindu right wing groups that it holds responsible for the death of Gandhi and for much of the post-partition violence.

This theme continues in other films such as *Mission Kashmir* which seek to communicate the message that terrorism has no religion. In the film, the protagonists plan to attack the Shankaracharya Temple as well as the Hazratbal Mosque in Kashmir, indicating that terrorists are not committed to any religion, Hinduism or Islam.

The above films – *Roja, Sarfarosh, Hey Ram* and *Mission Kashmir* – looked at how stereotypes and prejudices influence identity construction and demonstrate that contemporary discourse on the relationship between Hindus and Muslims in India has somehow come to pin itself on two issues: **communalism in India** and **cross-border terrorism in the relationship between India and Pakistan**.

Shifting to the subject of the homeland, nationhood and the figure of the woman, Bhaskar screened clips from *Pinjar* and *Khamosh Pani* which look at the gendered nature of violence during the 1947 partition. Women’s bodies not only took the brunt of the violence but also became symbols of honor and dishonor for whole communities. *Pinjar*, set during the time of the 1947 partition is about an abducted Hindu girl who later falls in love with her abductor and acknowledges him as her husband. *Khamosh Pani*, a Pakistani film, is set in Pakistan in the 1970s. The central character is a Sikh woman who survives the partition violence and stays back in Pakistan while the rest of her family moves to India. After partition, she converts to Islam and leads a happy life till this
particular moment in the film when her brother visits Pakistan in search of her. The films look at how the woman makes a home for herself in opposition to her natal family. In so doing, the films question statist notions of identity and point to the ironic disconnect between nation and home for women.

Exploring **cultural resources for coexistence in Bombay cinema**, Bhaskar screened clips from *Dharamputra* (1961), *Refugee* (2000) and *Jodhaa Akbar* (2008). These films celebrate syncretic traditions that are hybrid and culturally plural. Questioning singular notions of identity, they introduce the ideas of plural selfhood and cross-cutting identities. In this context, Bhaskar noted that Bombay cinema, across the decades, has tried to communicate that **secularism in India**, rather than a divorce of religion and state, represents a plural religious experience. Often, this plurality has been shown through the portrayal of Sufism and Sufi music, even in films where the storyline has nothing to do with religion. Also, the significance of Sufism in present-day Bombay cinema has to do with an attempt to generate a different view of Islam, which is not linked to terrorism. Through the use of Sufi music or the portrayal of Sufi traditions, filmmakers are trying to introduce to the public the idea that Islam is about music, poetry, equality, and social responsibility, which are easily repressed because of the perception that links the religion to misplaced terrorism.

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*Ms. Pallavi Kaushal, Research Associate, PRS Legislative Research, New Delhi; Ms. Rangina Hamidi, President, Kandahar Treasure, Kandahar; Mr. Hamayoun Khan, Research Fellow, Institute of Strategic Studies, New Delhi.*
Concluding the discussion, Bhaskar urged Workshop participants to look at what cinema does with prevailing stereotypes. Does it reinforce them, does it question them or does it go further to break negative stereotypes? Cinema can play a role in transforming stereotypes by generating images that are more realistic and creating alternatives that are beyond the reality that we see today. In fact, Bhaskar noted that, in Bombay cinema, filmmakers, barring a few exceptions, have demonstrated a larger commitment to humane, liberal and plural values.51

Ms. Amima Sayeed, Senior Manager, Advocacy and Program Development, Teacher’s Resource Center, Karachi.

Seated: Mr. Akhter Hussain, Teacher, Higher Secondary School, Doda; Mr. Nadeem Inamdar, Senior Correspondent, Daily News & Analysis, Pune; Dr. Shahiauz Ahmed, Hon. Secretary General, The Dolphin Trust, Guwahati.

51 In this context, Workshop participant Sandeep Bhardwaj articulated the view that Bombay cinema has shown considerable restraint with reference to Pakistan. For instance, the word “Pakistan” was used for the first time in the film Sarfarosh. While films such as Veer Zaara and Main Hoo Na counter common stereotypes (for example, the latter portrays the terrorist as a Hindu), movies such as Kabul Express humanize a Pakistani soldier who fought with the Taliban in Afghanistan.
“Truth is my God. Nonviolence is my way of realizing Him.”

Mohandas K. Gandhi

Opening with an invitation to participants to reflect on their relationship with, or ambivalence to, faith or religion, the Workshop Exploring the Place of the Sacred in Activism for Social Change engaged with the idea that an interweaving of the sacred and the secular is possible, and perhaps even desirable; and this can play a role in Conflict Transformation processes, especially in socio-cultural contexts where faith traditions are strongly rooted. The purpose of this dialogue was to initiate reflection on the assumptions upon which we act, our conceptions of ourselves as peacebuilders and of the people with whom we work, the practices that inspire and sustain us, our approach to difference and conflict, and how we might deal with religion, a social force with the potential to destroy or heal, divide or unite.

Informed by the writings of Dr. Lata Mani in her book SacredSecular, the Workshop employed a participatory and experiential approach to enable participants to embark on a journey of exploration and self-discovery, moving from the personal to the political. The purpose was not to initiate an intellectual discussion on religion, secularism and conflict, but rather to encourage participants to reflect on their own personal journeys vis-à-vis the sacred-secular and how these influence their professional work for social change.

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52 Lata Mani, SacredSecular (New Delhi: Routledge, 2009).

53 Since the experiences shared in this session were personal and, at times, difficult and self-critical, the perspectives and reflections of the participants have been shared without revealing their identity.
The conversations were informed by the following questions:

- How do we understand the sacred in the context of the various faith traditions from which we come and in which we work?
- How might the wisdoms from these traditions inspire our work for Conflict Transformation? Or, do practitioners prefer to employ a non-religious approach to their work? What are the points of conflict and compatibility?
- As peacebuilders, how might we be more inclusive in our work with people representing diverse faith traditions, particularly in contexts where religion is a factor in conflict generation as well as in conflict transformation?
- Is it possible to create a vocabulary that engages the best traditions of what are considered to be the “sacred” domain and the “secular” domain?
- What might be the complexities and challenges of such an approach?

What is our relationship with religion and with notions of the sacred?54

At the outset, Workshop participants acknowledged that faith and religious traditions are on the ascendance in South Asia. While the reasons for this are several and vary from one country to the other, rapid social and economic change and the project of modernity were seen as a key factor in the growing relevance of religion in the region. In a situation of rapid change, religious traditions prove to be a source of stability, providing a means for individuals to cope with turbulent situations. Moreover, it was noted that religious traditions fulfill two critical roles: first, they create a sense of individual identity, and second, they generate a sense of belonging to a larger group. In other words, they provide a “way of life” and infuse a sense of psychological security and social cohesiveness.

The word sacred, drawn from the Latin sacrum, refers to that which is “holy,” which has “power,” and which is worthy of veneration. Since the concept of the sacred is a product of centuries’-old socio-cultural practices in a given society, different communities attach diverse meanings to it. However, participants – representing different religions, cultures and countries – were unanimous in their belief that love, humanism, respect and peace would be universal elements in any definition of the sacred.

54 Participants expressed comfort with the word “religion” rather than with “sacred.” Hence, the word “religion” has replaced “sacred” in some sections of this report.
Spatially, the term refers to the **physical space in and around a place of worship.** While these could be places of natural beauty (such as mountains, caves or rivers), often they refer to sites that commemorate special religious events of the past, for example, the birthplace of the Hindu God Lord Krishna, the site of Lord Buddha’s enlightenment, the spot where Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) ascended to heaven, or where Jesus Christ was crucified and later resurrected. Physical spaces such as shrines, temples, mosques, churches, gurudwaras and synagogues, where people congregate to engage in collective worship and where it is often believed that some manifestation of “God” resides, are also defined and set aside as “sacred.”

Inviting participants to reflect on their understanding of, and relationship with, the sacred, the Workshop facilitator, Ms. Kamla Bhasin, a feminist activist, author and poet, based in New Delhi, opened the conversation with her own understanding of spirituality: “For me, spirituality is a daily practice of compassion, of caring, of a belief that all human beings are equal, all have dignity and rights, and all are interconnected and interdependent.”

**Perspectives from Afghanistan**

- A participant from Kandahar felt that in a country where wars have been fought in the name of God, how can one possibly take religion out of the problem? Sharing her understanding of the sacred, she traced the history of her relationship with Islam, which began when she was living in the United States as a refugee child of a refugee family. It was through the *lens of Sufism* that she got closer to her religion and became a proud Muslim. In 2001, she decided to return to Afghanistan to help with the rebuilding process. Sharing her experience of life in Afghanistan, she said,

> “I came back to a nation that I thought was Muslim and was accepting of change. I was wrong. Politics aside, at a personal level, I found it disturbing that the level of my faith decreases when I travel to a Muslim nation than when I am in the ‘kufur’ nation of the United States of America. In America, I feel the sense of freedom and ability to practice my faith the way I want to, the way I understand it, and I feel much closer to God. But
in my own country, I am judged...my actions, my words and my commitment to my work are judged on a notion that is so far removed from what I believe... I see violence in the name of the God that I believe in. Irrespective of whatever title we give it (jihad, war on terror, or anything else), we kill innocent people...we kill our sons and our daughters in the name of God. How, then, does one express a belief in God in a context where violence, intolerance and bigotry seek religious sanction? If we believe that being Muslim means showing love and compassion, I don’t understand why, today, all over the world, most of the terrorists unfortunately are Muslim. So there is a disconnect. How do I understand and reconcile these two dilemmas?”

• Addressing this dilemma, a youth activist from Kabul articulated the view that such radicalization has roots that go beyond religion. The root causes of violent extremism can be traced to the social and political processes of the last few decades rather than to the domain of religion.

• An Afghan participant, who attended high school in Jalalabad during the Taliban rule in the late 1990s, shared that he studied seven subjects on religion. Although this was under the Taliban rule, he said that the knowledge...
he acquired was important and helped him to answer many of life’s questions, which a secular philosophy failed to do.

“Religious traditions give complete guidance by answering the questions that an individual faces at different stages of his life; while a secular philosophy fails in providing such guidance. I see faith as something solid in my life. I make a comeback to it and it is always there for me. It is the one thing I rely most on, especially in difficult times.”

- Religion was identified as an important reference point for Afghans. It would be impossible to bring social change in Afghanistan if peacebuilders adopted an approach that was not based on religion. People will accept changes in their attitudes and behavior if these are aligned with their religious and cultural traditions. Participants working with the youth in Afghanistan shared that they use religious metaphors to talk about social issues such as girls’ education. The message is received with more open-mindedness if it is conveyed through the prism of religious vocabulary. On the flipside, it was also acknowledged that, in a context where faith traditions rule people and societies, transformation of the negative dimensions of rituals becomes a challenging task.

- Commenting on the commonalities between religions, participants asserted that the source of all religions is the same because they all emerged in a context where society was in decadence and there was a need for constructive social change. The similarity between religions also lies in their emphasis on personal change as a prerequisite for social change.

Sacred is/are…

- Nature
- The values that make us better human beings, such as compassion, love, honesty, and peace
- Respect for faith traditions different from our own
- The principle of nonviolence and its practice in our behavior towards others
- The belief that all living beings are born equal and have equal rights
- Ideas, values and customs enshrined in various religions and cultural traditions
- The ideals of social justice, human dignity, equality and coexistence
- A belief in our interconnectedness and interdependence
• The Islamic tenet that “there is no compulsion in religion” was articulated as a sacred principle. No one can be coerced into embracing Islam since the use of force is prohibited.

**Perspectives from Pakistan**

• Religion is sacred because it lifts a human being from the sphere of mere physical existence and leads him/her towards freedom. Religion signifies a very **private relationship between an individual and his/her God**. There are no intermediaries and no one should be judged on the basis of their religious beliefs.

• Although there are different definitions of the sacred, it is mostly related with religion. Sufism, which is prevalent in the Sindh and Punjab provinces of Pakistan, provides a space for an interweaving of sacred and secular visions, which is not only possible but is required in a region where no one can afford to take religion lightly. It is infused with Islamic traditions as well as practices from other faiths such as Buddhism and Hinduism. **Respect for all religions is central to Sufi philosophy**. Sufi saints such as Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai, Sachal Sar Mast, Bulleh Shah, Khawaja Farid and Rahman Baba promoted a relationship with God which was non-oppressive and enabled people to be religious and, at the same time, respect the beliefs of others. Their condemnation of the misuse of religion by clerics and their...
opposition to wars in the name of religion has a great relevance for present-day South Asia.

- A Pashtun participant from Pakistan said that it is important to be mindful that each individual has a different way of practicing his/her religion. She noted that, “We do a great injustice to Islam when we reduce its significance to just the act of visiting the mosque and fasting.” Highlighting the gap between what the religion preaches and the actual practice, she pointed to the treatment of women in the North Western Frontier Province of Pakistan, where, in the name of the Shariah, women are kept indoors; they are flogged and brutalized. While such practices do not have the sanction of religion, attention was drawn to the distinction between cultural practices and religion. Islam guarantees equal rights to women and men in areas such as education and inheritance. Yet this has not been put into practice in some parts of Afghanistan and northwestern Pakistan in the belief that local customs and culture do not grant women such rights.

- Certain practices which are inherent in local culture are packaged as religious norms, Compassion – a central tenet of “religious” and “secular” cultures – was defined as the effort to “put ourselves in the shoes of the other.”

Participants shared the following quotes to underscore the “sacredness” of the principle of compassion. It is instructive to also note that compassionate action makes practical sense in a world, which is increasingly interconnected and interdependent.

“My religion is kindness.
Compassion is based on the recognition that others have a right to happiness, and therefore, even your enemy is a human being with the same wish for happiness as you. A sense of concern developed on this basis is what we call compassion.
The Dalai Lama, Buddhism

“Love your neighbor as yourself.”
Jesus Christ, Christianity

“That which is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor.”
Rabbi Hillel, Judaism

“Kindness is a mark of faith, and whoever is not kind has no faith...
A Muslim is one who becomes a refuge for humankind.
Prophet Mohammad, Islam

Compassion lies at the heart of all religious and spiritual traditions, calling us always to treat all others as we wish to be treated ourselves.
Karen Armstrong,
Charter of Compassion
when they have nothing to do with religion. In this context, it was felt that people are hesitant to come out and reclaim Islam, thereby allowing the radical elements to define the religion as they so wish.

- The concept of **peaceful coexistence**, which is the foundation of secular philosophy, is a core Islamic teaching. A participant from Islamabad talked about how her ancestors had lived in peaceful coexistence with Hindus and Sikhs before the 1947 partition. For her family, it was a sense of pride that they would celebrate Hindu and Sikh festivals with as much gusto as Islamic festivals. This “sacred legacy” is prevalent among many families in present-day Pakistan. Speaking about her relationship with her faith tradition – Islam –, this participant mentioned that alongside her Islamic education, she was taught that the cardinal beliefs of followers of other religions should not be challenged or objected to, and the commonalities between different religions should be highlighted.

- Also articulated was the perspective that while the institution of religion was at one point of time considered sacred, it has now been exploited and reduced to a mere tool in the hands of those who seek to achieve narrow political gains. The example of Pakistan – a nation of moderate and tolerant people which has become a victim of religious and sectarian violence – was cited to indicate the politicization and exploitation of religion by so-called “religious” groups with transnational connections. Individuals professing to be “men of God” have created their own version of Islam and unleashed a wave of terror through practices such as suicide attacks, beheadings, public floggings and executions, which they interpret as *Shariah*. Seeing this as a distorted and adulterated version of Islam, participants said that **such brutality and extremism is completely missing from the life and practices of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH).**

- Sacred is that which is common to any and all faiths. These areas of commonality include the **sanctity of life** (in any form or specie), the **sanctity of personal space and preferences** (which should not be encroached upon), the principle of **social justice**, and the values of **trust and love**.

- Some participants also articulated the view that while they are deeply religious, **their practices are not always aligned with the given “Code.”** Often, they question some of the practices that Islam asks them to follow. Also, there are other practices which are carried out in the name of Islam but which have nothing to do with the religion. For example, many people in Pakistan use separate kitchen utensils for domestic help and do not share a drink with a person from a different religion or sect. This violates the principles of Islam which ask for equal treatment of all human beings.
Similarly, condemning other religions is un-Islamic. A surah in the Quran was cited, which requests followers not to judge or speak negatively about other religions.

• The gap between the life of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and the present-day practice of Islam was, in part, attributed to the translation of the Quran. It was noted that the nature of Arabic language is such that each word has multiple meanings and, added to this, each translator’s worldview and preferences influence the written text. The dissent and diversity in practices and interpretation, which were part of the intellectual culture of Islamic societies, began to recede in the 19th century with the interpretation of Islam becoming increasingly monolithic and being influenced by those political and sectarian agendas, which had their roots in Wahabism.

**Perspectives from India**

• Religion is needed for personal liberation as well as to help individuals change society towards peace and justice. Although religion is often seen as a way of life, there is a strong culture of “live and let live” in India.

• The messages of pluralism and insaaniyat (humanism) are synonymous with the notion of the sacred. For example, Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) requested his followers to avoid consuming onions before stepping out of their homes since the smell would disturb the people they came in contact with. How can a religion which asks people not to eat onions, because this could offend others, advocate violence? Similarly, Hinduism asks its followers to worship the cow and respect animals. How can such a religion,
which inspires people to respect all living beings, advocate violence against those of another faith? It was suggested that we draw on the core teachings of our respective religions to build peace and justice in our societies.

- The commitment to religion, for some participants, began with a desire to **transform behavior that was considered risky or harmful**. A participant from Delhi shared that she turned to religion as a last recourse to help her overcome anger and her addiction to smoking. Using the methodologies of prayer and fasting, she was able to overcome both. Another participant talked about the role that religion had played in empowering her to **transcend ego** and pride in the workplace and in the home.

- A distinction was made between **religious philosophy and religious rituals**. While religion as a matter of personal belief must receive due recognition, concern was expressed with the ritualization of religion, particularly when these are imposed on people who have different views. Such dictation becomes especially scary when it is imposed on women.

- Several Indian participants defined themselves as **atheists**. The reasons however varied. While some drew on **Marxian thought** to articulate that religion is a tool through which the ruling elite exerts its control over society, for several of the female participants, their inclination towards atheism was influenced by the **position of women** in their families. For example, while one participant talked about how her mother was forcefully married so that she would be confined to the boundaries of the household and perform her duties as a wife and mother, another participant wondered if her religiously conservative to-be in-laws would allow her to build a career for herself. The treatment meted out to widows was also cited as an example of the huge gap that exists between the depiction of women in the scriptures and the position that society accords to them. Others acknowledged that religion did form an integral part of their socialization, but they had decided to renounce it because of the **violence that had been carried out in the name of protecting the tenets of their religion**.

- Saying that the sacred is merely a construct, another group of respondents attributed the negative connotation of religion to the reality that, today, in all religions, a handful of men dictate and force their interpretations on followers of the faith, whether it is the **imposition of dress codes, behavioral patterns or food habits**. Adherents of this perspective chose to invest their faith in the concepts of human rights, secular education, and the rule of law.

- The rejection of religion as a reference point for life’s decisions also came from quarters that saw the **gap between its theory and practice** as too
wide to reconcile. “Rituals,” “tradition,” and “culture” have hijacked most religious discourse to such an extent that there is a constant marginalization of some group or the other. This marginalization, some participants felt, went against what they believed to be sacred.

- Articulating an inclination towards pantheism – a belief in the laws of nature rather than in a supernatural intelligence – a participant defined nature as sacred and worthy of her veneration. Rejecting the common belief in a supernatural intelligence that answers prayers, keeps a record of good and bad deeds, forgives or punishes, or even performs miracles, she articulated faith in the principle of karma (i.e. we largely reap what we sow).

- Describing herself as agnostic, a participant from Delhi distinguished faith – an extremely personal form of devotion – from religion. While religion is an organized form of worship, faith is a more personal acceptance of a larger force. Faith was described as an ever-present feeling and emotion while religion was seen as a rigid structure.

- Some participants talked about their attraction to Buddhism for the reason that it does not force them to believe in a particular God. Rather, it allows them to focus on improving themselves and the world.

**Perspectives from Nepal**

- Articulating a perspective from Nepal, a participant based in Kathmandu, talked about the respect and position that the different ethnic groups in Nepal have received after it was declared a secular State. After 2007, the State, which hitherto celebrated upper-caste Hindu festivals, has declared 54 national holidays in order to send out the message that all religions are accorded equal respect.

**What is our understanding of Secularism?**

Participants differed in their definitions of secularism. While some adhered to the classic definition of separation of religion and state, others drew on the Indian interpretation, which advocates respect for all religions equally in public life. The ban on the hijab in France, on the grounds that this went against the secular ethos of the French nation, colored the views of participants on the classic approach to secularism.

Secularism, as defined in India, recognizes the right of every Indian to profess, practice, and propagate his or her own religion while respecting the rights of his/her fellow beings to do the same. Informed by the phrase sarva dharma
sambhava (all religions are equal and can live in harmony), it calls for coexistence among different faiths while protecting the rights of each tradition. Rejecting any governmental interference, it notes that the State shall not ally itself with any single religion but rather treat them all equally and without prejudice. However, in the context of this definition, the following question was posed: Does this mean that the State will be impartial towards all religions, or does it mean that the State will actively uphold the interests of all religions (with their affiliated social practices)?

Participants who called themselves religious, rejected secularism in the belief that the latter has emerged in opposition to faith and, therefore, the two cannot coexist. If the values of coexistence, nonviolence and compassion are inherent in their religion, why should they look to a secular philosophy to put these into practice? A devout Muslim or Hindu can practice these values without using the vocabulary of secularism. As a participant put it,

“Secularism says that you should equally respect all religions, but I have imbibed this teaching from my own religion. And my religion gives me so much more. So why should I follow secularism?”

Similarly, those who followed a secular philosophy questioned the need for religion. An adherent of secularism posed the question,

“We are saying that all religions talk about love, compassion, and respect for others. But why should I follow a religion to do all this? Without following a religion, I can be humble, compassionate and help others. So why submit my will to a higher force when I can use a secular vocabulary to be a good human being?”

Commenting on this divide from a Pakistani perspective, a participant asserted that, in Pakistan, those who call themselves “secular” would mock her if she made a reference to religion and tradition in her work for social change. In fact, it was shared that most Pakistani “secularists” would hesitate to embrace identities that are informed by religion.

It was however conceded that if secularism is defined as acceptance of, and respect for, all religions, the points of convergence between the sacred and the secular would be many. For example, the ideals of social justice and human rights – considered as elements of a secular vision – are spelt out in detail in
various religious scriptures as well. It was also noted that if we look at the core of every religion, we will find that our secular vision for a humane and socially just society is not at odds with faith and tradition.

While secularism as the divorce of church and state has its problems, particularly in a region where diverse faiths and traditions coexist and where religion is an integral part of people’s lives, the practice of secularism in India also poses challenges. While it was acknowledged that religious philosophies should not influence government practices, participants pointed to the tendency among government officials to conduct public rituals or public ceremonies which were seen as “Hindu,” even though they may not be aware of this. The example of an inauguration ceremony where a political leader lights a lamp was cited to suggest that such public rituals, which draw on Hindu practices, are seen differently by minority communities.

**Questions, Challenges and Reflections**

- While several participants called themselves religious – followers of a particular faith – there were others who were quite clear about their identity as atheists. In spite of this difference, there was agreement on the values that they held as central to their lives. For example, while devout Muslims, Hindus and Christians shared that their respective religions taught them the principles of compassion, respect for all religions, and coexistence, atheists and others who did not see religion as a reference point in their lives, also underscored the same values. These are also the values that are central to secular philosophy and are enshrined in documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Indian Constitution. What emerged was that the sacred and the secular were simply two different labels given to the same set of values. Yet, even as this was acknowledged, the question that remained unanswered was this, “Can secularism actually percolate down to the individual level and provide a spiritual substitute for religious tradition?”

- Women, across the religious spectrum, expressed concerns over the discriminatory practices of their respective faith traditions, highlighting several examples of unequal treatment. The threat of violence in the name of religion has imposed restrictions on the freedom and ease with which a woman can move freely in her city and country. The incident where a group of right-wing Hindu men beat up girls at a Mangalore pub on the grounds that the girls were violating Hinduism by visiting a restaurant where alcohol was served was cited. Also highlighted was the fact that 40% Indian
women are exposed to domestic violence, and often such violence has the sanction of those who proclaim to be the custodians of religion. Describing men who beat up and molest women as “terrorists,” participants pointed to the need to tackle the “terrorists” within instead of focusing on the “external other.”

- Bringing to the discussion the notion of “living with the terrorist,” a participant from Delhi talked about her family roots, which were entrenched in an anti-Muslim Hindutva. Raised in a family that advocated violence against the Muslim community, she found it increasingly difficult to distinguish the xenophobic views of her family from those of terror groups that resort to violence in the name of religion. As she put it,

“What do you do when the terrorists are in your own home....when they are your family? Professionally, I may go out and do coexistence and peacebuilding work, but when I return home, it’s the same conversations of otherization and demonization that I have to listen to.”

When the terrorists belong to another country, when they are the “external other,” it is easier to deal with them. However, when they are members of your own family, when they are people that you also love, the process of conflict transformation acquires a different meaning and challenge.

- A key problem that was identified with respect to the religions represented at the Workshop was the huge gap between what the scriptures preached and present-day practice. While several stories and anecdotes had been narrated from the scriptures to highlight the values of compassion, nonviolence and coexistence, the question confronting the group was this:

“Is anyone living these stories in the name of religion? Where are the people who have experienced these stories of compassion and coexistence in the regions where wars are being fought in the name of religion?”

While it was acknowledged that all religions talk about respect for different faith traditions and peaceful coexistence, real-life examples were difficult to come by. On the contrary, participants shared experiences of religious prejudice. A participant from Pakistan, who is currently working in London in the area of Islamic finance, talked about the caustic remarks and stereotyping that she was subjected to by her Indian friends because she worked in this area of finance. Although Islamic finance is emerging as an important and profitable aspect of international finance, few of her non-
Muslim friends saw it this way. The immediate reaction was to label her as radical and conservative rather than looking at the subject as an emerging career option.

- How do we put into practice the notion of religious coexistence – a concept that resonates for all religions? In this context, the subject of cow slaughter tested the beliefs of the participants in religious coexistence. If participants have acknowledged that, irrespective of their faith persuasion or inclination towards atheism, they share a common set of values, how do we put this into practice when issues such as cow slaughter in India are raised? India has the third largest population of Muslims in the world. For the 161 million Muslims in this country, eating beef is not a problem, but for the majority Hindu population, it is a problem. How would secularism address such an issue? Do we ban cow slaughter out of respect for the religious sentiments of the majority Hindu community or do we allow the sale of beef out of respect for the sentiments of Muslims, Christians and other ethnic groups that do eat beef? Similarly, do we ban pork slaughter in adherence to Islamic principles?

The devolution of power was suggested as a possible solution to the question of cow slaughter. Rather than a central authority imposing its view on different groups, a deeper devolution of power would enable different parts of India to take independent decisions on cow slaughter. The obstacle however to such a solution would of course be that in most parts of India, Muslims and Christians are territorially dispersed among Hindu populations, with perhaps the exception of some communities in the Northeast.

In the context of the Hindu-Christian conflict in India, should evangelism and religious conversions to Christianity be permitted, or should the sentiments of Hindus who oppose conversions be respected? Since the Bible advocates conversion, how should this be balanced with the sentiments of the Hindu population who might be offended by such practices?

Should Muslim girls be allowed to wear the hijab in plural and secular societies? If the hijab is banned, how will this impinge on their right to practice their religion? Should Muslim and Sikh boys be allowed to sport a beard in school? Would this dilute the “secular” space of the school? If such religious symbols are banned, would they hinder the goal of religious coexistence?

Should the United Kingdom introduce Shariah law or should the State divorce itself from matters of religious practice? In keeping with the non-interference of the State in matters of religion, should it allow certain sections of its
population to forcefully marry off their daughters and carry out other discriminatory practices or should the State step in and take action on the issue of gender-based violence?

In the context of these dilemmas, the pertinent question is,

“Who will decide on these issues? Which community will have to make a sacrifice out of respect for the sentiments of other communities? Who will have to submit? And, to whose will?

• The baggage of history and of past experiences, particularly those involving violence against one’s own community serve as an obstacle to efforts to cultivate respect for other communities. The example of the Spanish Inquisition and Crusades against the Muslims was shared to note that historical trauma of past violence remains deeply etched in collective memory, even several centuries later. In such a context, it becomes difficult for the victim community to separate the “real” faith of the perpetrator community from how the latter practices it. Therefore, what emerges is a xenophobic view of an entire religion.

• In response to the widespread articulation of the need to return to the scriptures and reclaim religion in its originality, caution was expressed at the tendency to glorify all that is written in the scriptures. The scriptures also contain messages that are discriminatory and prejudiced. The examples of the caste system in India and the writings of the law-giver, Manu (who wrote that the three things that should be beaten in order to get work out of them are animals, drums and women), were cited to highlight the need for caution when blindly following religious scriptures.

• The issue of religious dress-codes in secular and multicultural societies invited heated debate. In addition to the view that a Muslim woman should have the right to wear the hijab or the burqa, just as a Catholic nun is allowed to cover her head, also articulated was the perspective that such dress codes make women feel safer. If a woman feels more secure by dressing up in a certain way, she should be allowed to do so in a free and secular society. However, it was asserted that, in a free and secular society, a woman should not have to veil or cover herself to feel secure. She should have the freedom to wear clothing of her choice without the fear of getting pinched or assaulted.

Yet, as the Workshop dialogue revealed, the issue of the hijab is more complex. While several feminists have expressed concern vis-à-vis the practice of veiling, many women who wear the hijab talk about how this gives them a sense of autonomy. While some would have ordinarily been
married off after school, once they wore the hijab, these women were allowed to leave the confines of the home and attend university. So in such cases, the veil has enabled women to embrace a certain kind of personal, intellectual and financial freedom, which would have otherwise been denied to them.

The discussion however returned to the question of choice. To what extent was a women’s decision to veil herself of her own volition? The example of Iran was cited to indicate that even non-Iranian women who enter the country must wear the hijab. So there are people who have the power to impose what they believe in and they define how the religion must be practiced. Where does this leave a woman’s right to choose whether she wants to wear the hijab or not? Similarly, in Hinduism, a woman cannot visit a temple if she is menstruating. In many parts of rural India and rural Nepal, a menstruating woman is confined to a cowshed. Who has the power to decide that a menstruating woman is impure? Several other examples were cited to make the point that all kinds of discriminatory practices are carried out against women in the name of religion.
Interweaving the Sacred and Secular for Social Change

**Participant Recommendations:**

- Interfaith dialogue as a means to remove religious prejudice and enhance cross-cultural understanding and respect.
- A friendly and sympathetic reading of the scriptures of religions different from our own.
- Multicultural education and a multicultural classroom: Growing up with children from different faith traditions and cultures creates a sensitivity and respect for other religions.
- Exercise your vote: This is key to long-term social transformation.
- Participate in the festivals of other religions and invite people of different communities to your home.
- Highlight and practice the commonalities while respecting difference.
- Non-interference in others’ religious practices and no attempt to make others follow one’s own faith tradition.
- Greater cross-cultural travel and interaction with individuals from diverse cultures and with different religious beliefs.
- Initiatives that strengthen and deepen the roots of religion in people were advocated in the belief that such a process would prevent extremist groups and the self-proclaimed custodians of religion from misinterpreting religious texts and customs. Extremist groups succeed when people have a shallow understanding of religion.
- A “shared moral language” rather than a strictly scriptural vocabulary could be used in public conversations to communicate the message of religious terms. This recommendation was forwarded in the context of the misperception of Islamic terms such as *jihad* and *shariah*. While Muslims might use these words with a certain meaning in mind, a secular audience might hear something completely different. Therefore, at least in public conversations, rather than using scriptural terms, it was suggested that a common language such as English could be used to communicate the moral and spiritual principles that inform religious terms. This would also help to remove the perception that Islamic and secular ethical values are at odds with each other.

The Workshop concluded with a consensus that the divide between the sacred and the secular is artificial and fluid. One can be deeply religious and secular and there is no contradiction between the two. Further, participants
acknowledged that it is their responsibility to ensure that the voices of extremism do not drown out those of compassion, forbearance and mutual respect – tenets that form the bedrock of all faith traditions. Such traditions are complex and carry within them kernels of peacebuilding, which are often at odds with the views of the self-proclaimed custodians of religion.

This dialogue also served as a forum through which participants articulated an interest in working collaboratively in the areas of religious coexistence and peacebuilding. Seeing the Workshop as a compass to envision future professional partnerships, they committed themselves to building and sustaining inter-faith and inter-cultural dialogues among the diverse communities they represented.

\textit{Gal samjh lai te Raula kiya}  
\textit{Eih Ram Rahim tey Maula kiya}

Translation:  
If you have truly found the truth,  
Why fight over names of Allah, Lord or Ram!

\textit{Bulleh Shah}
Resource Person Profiles

Philipp Ackermann (Bonn, Germany) is Minister Counsellor (Head of Political Department) at the German Embassy in New Delhi. He received a Ph.D. in Art History from Bonn University and subsequently, joined the German Foreign Service. Dr. Ackermann has served at the German Embassy in Morocco and at the Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations in New York. He was also a member of the inner cabinet of Foreign Minister Frank Walter Steinmeier. In 2006, he was assigned to be the Civilian Head of the German Provincial Reconstruction Team in Kunduz, Afghanistan. Dr. Ackermann, together with seven other New York-based experts in law and multilateral diplomacy, co-founded The International Legal Foundation in 2001, a public defender organisation with projects in Afghanistan and Nepal.

Rajesh M. Basrur (Singapore) is Associate Professor at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. His work focuses on global nuclear politics, nuclear terrorism, South Asian security, international relations theory and human security. He is the author of South Asia’s Cold War: Nuclear Weapons and Conflict in Comparative Perspective (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2008); Minimum Deterrence and India’s Nuclear Security (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006); and India’s External Relations: A Theoretical Analysis (New Delhi: Commonwealth Publishers, 2000). He has also edited several books, most recently Challenges to Democracy in India (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009). He is Associate Editor of India Review and a member of the International Board, Asian Security Monograph Series, Stanford University Press.

Kamla Bhasin (New Delhi, India) is a well-known feminist activist, author and poet. She is Co-Founder and Advisor, South Asian Network of Gender Activists and Trainers (SANGAT). She is also one of the founder members and conveners of the South Asian Women’s Forum, Jagori, and Ankur (Society for Alternatives in Education), New Delhi. Ms. Bhasin has served as a member of the Asian Cultural Forum on Development (ACFOD) and of the Governing Body of the Spastic Society of Northern India, New Delhi. She has worked with the Freedom from Hunger Campaign of the FAO for over twenty years. She has written extensively on issues related to development, participatory training, media and communication and gender.
Ira Bhaskar (New Delhi, India) is Associate Professor of Cinema Studies at the School of Arts and Aesthetics at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Previously, she has been a teacher of English at Gargi College, Delhi University. She has organized and coordinated several Film Appreciation and Film Studies Courses at different colleges of Delhi University. Dr. Bhaskar has been Visiting Faculty at the University of Pavia, Italy, at the Mass Communication Research Center, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, at the Film and Television Institute, Pune, at the Whistling Woods International Film School, Bombay, and at the School of Convergence, New Delhi. She has critical interests in “historical poetics,” cinematic forms including melodrama, cinema and modern subjectivities, literature and film, and historical trauma, violence, memory and representation. She has published on narrative poetics, adaptation, and nationalism and cinema. She is currently editing a volume of Ritwik Ghatak’s film scripts - Ghatak’s Partition Quartet and recently published a book on Historical Trauma, Memory and Representation in Indian Cinema.

D. Suba Chandran (New Delhi, India) is Deputy Director at the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS), New Delhi. His primary area of research includes Pakistan’s internal security, in particular Balochistan and FATA. Dr. Chandran also works on Jammu & Kashmir and is Consulting Editor of a monthly magazine – Epilogue, published from J&K. He edits an annual journal, Armed Conflicts in South Asia, published by Routledge. Currently, he is working on two projects: “Trade, Tourism and Conflict Transformation in J&K”; and, “Failing States in South Asia”.

Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema (Islamabad, Pakistan) is Dean, Faculty of Contemporary Studies, National Defense University, Pakistan. He has taught at various colleges including Government College (Lahore), Pakistan Administrative Staff College (Lahore), and Quaid-i-Azam University (Islamabad). He has also worked in various capacities like Research Fellow, Senior Fulbright Scholar, Visiting Scholar etc. for Australian National University (Australia), School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University (USA), Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, (Singapore), and ACDIS, University of Illinois at Urbana - Champaign (USA). Previously, Prof. Cheema served as President of the Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI). Prof. Cheema has many books and monographs to his credit. Some of his recent publications include The Shimla Agreement: Its Current Relevance (co-author), The Armed Forces of Pakistan, Perceptions, Politics and Security in South Asia: The Compound Crisis of 90 (co-author).
Rekha Chowdhary (Jammu, India) is a Professor in the Department of Political Science, University of Jammu with 23 years of teaching experience. She is also the Coordinator of the University Grants Commission sponsored Special Assistance Program in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Prof. Chowdhary has published two books and a range of articles on contemporary issues concerning Jammu and Kashmir, especially on problems of militancy, internal contradictions of separatism, and popular discontent. She has been a Visiting Fellow at Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford (1992-1993), a Commonwealth Fellow at the University of Oxford (1997-1998), and a Visiting Fulbright Scholar at the School of Advanced International Studies, John Hopkins University, Washington DC (Jan – April 2005).

Parvez Dewan (New Delhi, India) is currently the Chairman and Managing Director of the Indian Tourism Development Corporation and was previously the Resident Commissioner, Government of Jammu and Kashmir in New Delhi. A senior member of the Indian Administrative Services, he has served extensively in Jammu and Kashmir and was previously in Srinagar as the Commissioner of the Kashmir division. He has published nine books and his academic work is primarily centered on the oneness of all religions and all people. Mr. Dewan also writes a weekly column in *The Hindustan Times*.

Shanthie Mariet D’Souza (New Delhi, India) is Associate Fellow, Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses, New Delhi. Dr. D’Souza has been a Visiting Fulbright Scholar, South Asia Studies, at The Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), Johns Hopkins University, Washington D.C. Previously, she has worked at the Institute of Conflict Management, Guwahati, Assam, and United Services Institute, New Delhi. Dr. D’Souza specializes in issues of terrorism and strategies in counter terrorism, Conflict Management and Conflict Resolution in South Asia and internal security issues (concerning Jammu & Kashmir, India’s Northeast, naxal violence and urban terrorism), and has published several articles in academic journals on these themes.

Arundhati Ghose (New Delhi, India) joined the Indian Foreign Service in 1963 and served in various capacities in the MEA and in Missions abroad. She was in charge of economic relations as Assistant Secretary in the Government of India when economic reforms were launched in 1991. She also served in the Branch Secretariat of the Ministry to liaise with the Bangladesh Government in exile in Calcutta and as Ambassador in Egypt, South Korea, as Permanent Representative to UNESCO and to the UN Offices in Geneva. She was also Ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament and later a member of the
Task Force set up in 2007 by MEA on Non-Proliferation and Disarmament. After her retirement, Ms. Ghose was appointed as Member of the Union Public Service Commission and Member and Chairman of UN Secretary General’s Disarmament Advisory Board. She was elected as Member from India on Committee for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights from 2004 to 2005. She is currently on the Executive Council of Pugwash-India and Global India Forum, Kolkata, and on the editorial Board of Disarmament Times, New York, and Faultlines, New Delhi.

Baela Raza Jamil (Lahore, Pakistan) is a public policy specialist and activist in the education sector. She has worked extensively in the areas of community-based initiatives for equity, district education planning, local governance and public-private partnerships. She has studied comparative education, public policy, and economic history at the Institute of Education, University of London, Rosemont College USA, Georgia State University USA, Graduate School of Education at Harvard and the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), UK. Dr. Jamil is currently Chairperson, Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (Center for Education & Consciousness) and Coordinator, South Asia Forum for Education Development (SAFED). She is also associated with Sanjan Nagar Public Education Trust, Democratic Commission for Human Development (DCHD). Dr. Jamil served for four years as Technical Advisor to the Ministry of Education in Pakistan.

Satish Kumar (New Delhi, India) is Editor-in-Chief of India’s National Security Annual Review. Currently, he is also Counselor of International Relations, Academy for World Watch, Shanghai. He has held positions as the MEA Chair, United Service Institution of India, New Delhi and the India Chair, University of World Economy and Diplomacy, Tashkent. He has also held various professorial positions at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi; University of Turin, Italy; University of California at Berkeley; and The Johns Hopkins University, Washington D.C. He represented India in the Peace and Security session of the United Nations Regional Conference organised by the UN Regional Office, Bangkok, at the UN University, Tokyo, in September 1999, as Preparatory to the Millennium Assembly of the UN in September 2000. He is a Member of the Indian delegation to the ongoing India-Pakistan Track II dialogue called the Neemrana Initiative. His publications include CIA and the Third World (1981), The New Pakistan (1978), and numerous research and newspaper articles.

S.K. Lambah (New Delhi, India) is Special Envoy in the Office of the Prime Minister of India. From November 2001 to July 2002, he was India’s Special
Envoy for Afghanistan. Born in Peshawar, Pakistan, he joined the Indian Foreign Service (IFS) in 1964. Over a diplomatic career spanning more than four decades, he has experience of working in several Indian missions across the globe. He has served as Ambassador of India in Hungary (1986-89); High Commissioner of India to Pakistan (1992-95); Ambassador of India to Germany (1995-98); Ambassador of India to the Russian Federation (1998-2001). Amb. Lambah was Deputy Secretary General of the 7th Non-Aligned Summit held in Delhi in 1983 and later Coordinator of the Commonwealth Heads of Governments meeting in India. During 2004-05, he was the Convener of the National Security Advisory Board (NSAB) Government of India. During his tenure as Consul General of India in San Francisco (1989-91) he was conferred a “Trustees’ Citation” by the University of California, Berkeley in 1991.

Salma Malik (Islamabad, Pakistan) is Lecturer, Department of Defense & Strategic Studies, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad. Here, she teaches War, Military Sociology, Strategic Dynamics of South Asia, and Dynamics of Foreign & Defense Policies of India and Pakistan respectively. She has also been a visiting faculty at the Intelligence Bureau Academy, Islamabad, and PAF Air War College, Karachi. Previously, Ms. Malik was a researcher at the Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad. Her main areas of interest are Conflict Management & Transformation, Human Security, Disarmament (Small Arms & Landmines).

Seema Mustafa (New Delhi, India) is Editor, COVERT magazine. Previously, she was Political Editor and Delhi Bureau Chief with the Asian Age. She was also associated with the Patriot, Indian Express, Telegraph and Economic Times. She has covered the violence through the 1980’s including violence in Punjab, from the first morcha to Operation Bluestar. She conducted several meetings and interviews with Jarnail Singh Bhindranwala. Ms. Mustafa also covered the Beirut war in 1982, the only Indian journalist to reach Israeli-surrounded Beirut. She writes extensively on Kashmir, Pakistan, West Asia and US imperialism.

Ashis Nandy (New Delhi, India) is Senior Honorary Fellow at Center for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi, of which he was a director for a number of years. He has worked for more than thirty-five years on two diametrically opposite domains: social existence, human potentialities or creativity and human destructiveness, particularly mass violence. He is currently working on a study of genocides in South Asia. Prof. Nandy has served in a number of commissions, hearings and investigations into communal riots, the violence of development, racist crimes against women, electoral malpractices, and human rights abuses.
Trained as a sociologist and clinical psychologist, Prof. Nandy is also known for his work in political science and future studies. He has published several books: *Alternative Sciences, At the Edge of Psychology, The Intimate Enemy, The Tao of Cricket, The Illegitimacy of Nationalism, The Savage Freud and Other Essays in Possible and Retrievable Selves, An Ambiguous Journey to the City, Time Warps, The Romance of the State and the Fate of Dissent in the Tropics and Traditions, Tyranny and Utopias.*

**T.K. Oommen** (New Delhi, India) is currently Chair, Schumacher Center, New Delhi. He taught for more than three decades at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, and has been a Visiting Professor at several universities including, the Department of Sociology, University of California, Berkeley, USA; Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, Canberra; Institute of Advanced Studies, Budapest, Hungary and the Scandinavian Institute of Advanced Studies, Uppsala, Sweden. He was the Secretary General of the XI World Congress of Sociology, the quadrennial Congress of the International Sociological Association and the only scholar from Asia to be elected as the President of the International Sociological Association. He is recipient of several awards and honors including the V.K.R.V. Rao Prize in Sociology; G.S. Ghurye Award in Sociology and Social Anthropology; and the Swami Pranavananda Award for Sociology. Prof. Oommen has authored more than 20 books and writes regularly for national dailies. Prof. Oommen has published extensively on the intricate relationship between nation-state, minorities and multiculturalism. He has been the Ford Foundation Chair of “Non-Traditional Security” at the Delhi Policy Group and was a Member of Prime Minister’s High Level Committee for preparation of Report on Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India.

**Sudhish Pachauri** (New Delhi, India) is Head, Department of Hindi at the University of Delhi. He is also a noted literary and media analyst, and has more than 50 books to his credit on the themes of Hindi literature, literary theory, cultural theory, cultural studies, media, popular culture, post structuralism and post modernism. Among his books are *Uttar-Adhunik Sahityik Vimarsh* (1996), *Seemanton Ke Anweshak: Shyamcharan Dube* (Ed) (1997), *Sahitya Ka Uttarkand: Kalaa Ka Bazaar* (1998), *Doordarshan: Vikaas Se Bazaar Tak* (1996), *Naamwar Ke Vimarsh, Navsamrajyawad Aur Sanskriti* (1991). Prof. Pachauri holds the distinction of writing one of the longest standing weekly columns (more than 25 years) in *Jansatta* titled “Deekhi Suni” which reviews radio and television content. In addition, he has been writing a column
on contemporary issues in *Rashtriya Sahara* for the last ten years. He also writes several other columns in magazines and newspapers including one in *Aha Zindagi* (a monthly from the Danik Bhaskar Group) called “*Popular Paplu.*” Prof. Pachauri has also been on the Prasar Bharti’s evaluation committees that review serials for broadcasting.

**G. Parthasarathy** (New Delhi, India) is a former diplomat. He has served as Ambassador of India to Myanmar (1992-95), High Commissioner of India to Australia (1995-98), High Commissioner of India to Pakistan (1998-2000) and High Commissioner of India to Cyprus (1990-92). He also served in Indian Missions abroad as Second/First Secretary, Embassy of India, Moscow (1969-1973), Deputy High Commissioner to Tanzania (1974-1976), Counselor (Political and Press), Embassy of India, Washington D.C. (1978-1981); and Consul General of India, Karachi (1982-1985). Amb. Parthasarathy is presently Visiting Professor at the Center for Policy Research in New Delhi. He is also a member of the Executive Committee of the Center for Air Power Studies in New Delhi. Amb. Parthasarathy is a widely read Columnist, writing for a number of newspapers and news agencies in India and abroad on foreign policy and national security issues. He is a member of the Editorial Board of the *Indian Defense Review*. He is on the Panel of Experts from India for Track II Dialogue with ASEAN. He is also a member of the Indian Delegation to the high-level Indo-U.S. Strategic Dialogue organized by the Confederation of Indian Industries and the Aspen Institute in the USA.

**T.C.A. Raghavan** (New Delhi, India) is Joint Secretary dealing with Pakistan-Afghanistan-Iran in the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. He holds a Masters degree in Modern Indian History and a Ph.D in Modern History from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. A member of the Indian Foreign Service since 1982, he has served in Kuwait, Bhutan, and the UK, interspersed with postings in New Delhi in the Ministry of External Affairs and the Ministry of Commerce. From February 2003 till March 2007, Dr. Raghavan was posted in Pakistan as the Deputy High Commissioner of India.

**Nidhi Razdan** (New Delhi, India) is a Senior Anchor and Senior Special Correspondent with New Delhi Television (NDTV). Considered one of India’s leading television journalists, she anchors the prime time news on NDTV and hosts the news show “Left, Right & Center,” where the key players in current headline stories debate each other. Ms. Razdan joined NDTV in 1999 and has since then covered various important stories including the Nuclear Deal,
the Gujarat earthquake, and state and national elections. As a correspondent, she focuses on foreign affairs, politics, and Kashmir, providing comprehensive reportage from Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan, Iran, and China. Ms. Razdan studied at the Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC). She recently received the prestigious Ramnath Goenka Award for her reporting from Jammu and Kashmir.

Sanna Selin (Helsinki, Finland) is First Secretary at the Embassy of Finland, New Delhi. Her responsibilities at the Embassy include the follow-up of Indian political affairs, development questions, press and cultural affairs, as well as follow-up of Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh. Ms. Selin has an M.Sc. degree (Geography) from the Helsinki University, Finland. She has been serving at the Finnish Embassy in Delhi since September 2008. Before coming to India, she was posted in Cyprus for three years.

Shuddhabrata Sengupta (New Delhi, India) works with the Sarai Program at the Center for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi, and is an artist, writer and curator with the Raqs Media Collective. He is a member of the editorial collective of the Sarai Reader Series. He takes an active interest in researching surveillance and the political uses of information. The Raqs Media Collective’s work has been shown at Documenta 11 and at the 50th and 51st Venice Biennales, apart from at the Istanbul, Sydney, Taipei and Liverpool Biennales. The Collective recently curated “The Rest of Now” for Manifesta 7: The European Biennale of Contemporary Art.

Shweta Singh (New Delhi, India) is Assistant Professor, Peacebuilding Program, Lady Shri Ram College, New Delhi. At LSR, she co-teaches papers on Introduction to Conflict Transformation, and Skill Building: Dialogue, Negotiation and Facilitation. She has done her specialized training in Peacebuilding from the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding, Eastern Mennonite University, U.S.A. Her current Doctoral research at Jawaharlal Nehru University focuses on “Human Security Approaches to Conflict Resolution Strategies in Sri Lanka.” She has also worked on critical issues around Education for Peace, Pedagogy for Peace, and recently published a module for Teacher Educators on “Education for Peace” in the Resource Manual published as part of Ministry of Human Resource and Development and Delhi University Project 2008.

Shobna Sonpar (New Delhi, India) is a clinical psychologist with a psychotherapy practice in New Delhi. Apart from her involvements in the practice and profession of clinical psychology, she is interested in the interface
of psychology and society and has researched and written about issues like gender, social violence and mass violence. Since the past nine years, she has been involved in a variety of activities in Kashmir ranging from training in psychosocial support to psychosocial research on militancy.

**S.P. Udayakumar** (Nagercoil, India) is a political scientist and peace educator by training and the Director of South Asian Community Center for Education and Research, Nagercoil, Tamil Nadu, India. He writes for several publications in India and around the world and offers talks, workshops and courses on Conflict Transformation, nonviolence, human rights, sustainable development and future studies.

**Achin Vanaik** (New Delhi, India) is Professor of International Relations and Global Politics in the Political Science Department of Delhi University. Previously, he was Assistant Editor in Mumbai for The Times of India; Research Fellow at the Center for Contemporary Studies, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi; and Visiting Professor to the Department of Political Science and the Academy of Third World Studies at Jamia Millia Islamia. He has authored, coauthored, and edited several books on a range of issues including contemporary India’s politics and economy, religion, secularism, communalism, globalization, international politics, Indian foreign policy and regional and global nuclear weaponization and disarmament. Prof. Vanaik was on the Government of India appointed “Expert Committee” to evaluate the National Literacy Mission. He is a co-recipient (along with Praful Bidwai) of the Sean MacBride International Peace Prize for the year 2000.

**Siddharth Varadarajan** (New Delhi, India) is Deputy Editor with The Hindu. He has reported on the NATO war against Yugoslavia, the destruction of the Bamyan Buddhas by the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, the war in Iraq, and the conflict in Kashmir. Mr. Varadarajan has edited *Gujarat: The Making of a Tragedy* (Penguin Books: 2002), which contains accounts of the violence against the Muslims of that state in India. In 2007, he was a Visiting Professor at the Graduate School of Journalism, University of California, Berkeley. He studied Economics at the London School of Economics and Columbia University and taught at New York University for several years before joining The Times of India as an editorial writer. Mr. Varadarajan was awarded the Elizabeth Neuffer Memorial Prize for Print Journalism by the United Nations Correspondents Association. In March 2006, he was awarded the Bernardo O’Higgins Order by the President of Chile – the country’s highest civilian honor for a foreign citizen – for his contributions to journalism and to the promotion of India’s relations with Latin America and Chile.
**B.G. Verghese** (New Delhi, India) is columnist, author and Visiting Professor at the Center for Policy Research, New Delhi. He is Chairman of the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative. He holds the Non-Traditional Security Chair of the Delhi Policy Group. Previously, Mr. Verghese has served as Information Advisor to the Prime Minister, Information Consultant to the Defense Minister, and Member of the National Security Advisory Board and of the Kargil Review Committee. He was formerly a journalist and served as Editor of The Hindustan Times and The Indian Express. He is associated with several NGOs and educational institutions and is a member of the Track-II India-Pakistan Neemrana Initiative and other inter-country dialogues. He is a recipient of the Magsaysay Award for Journalism (1975). Mr. Verghese has authored several books on issues relating to water resources, India’s Northeast, Asian geopolitics and the media. His most recent books include *Rage, Reconciliation, Security: Managing India’s Diversities* (2008), *Tomorrow’s India: Another Tryst With Destiny* (2006), *A Jammu & Kashmir Primer: From Myth to Reality* (2006), and *Warrior of the Fourth Estate* (2005).
Participant Profiles

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About WISCOMP

WISCOMP (Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace) is a unique South Asian initiative. It provides an interface between academia and the NGO sector, and positions its work at the confluence of Gender and Peacebuilding.

WISCOMP strives to:

- Enhance the role of women as peacebuilders, negotiators and as agents for nonviolent social change;
- Empower a new generation of women and men with the expertise and skills to engage in peace activism through educational and training programs in Conflict Transformation;
- Contribute to an inclusive, people-oriented discourse on issues of security, which respects diversity and which foregrounds the perspectives of women and the hitherto marginalized;
- Facilitate theory-building and innovative research on holistic paradigms that address the transformation of intra- and inter-state conflicts;
- Build synergy at various levels – between theory, practice and policy; between those working in academia, in the formal structures of foreign policy and diplomacy and those engaged in grassroots peacebuilding;
- Build constituencies of peace through training, research and praxis in areas such as multi-track diplomacy, peace advocacy, coexistence and cross-border civil society dialogues; and,
- Work with educational institutions to engender a culture of peace through the development of curricula and innovative methodology.

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