Coexistence and Trust-Building:
Transforming Relationships
Sixth Annual Conflict Transformation Workshop
December 2007
A Report

Compiled by:
Manjrika Sewak

Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace
Foundation for Universal Responsibility
of His Holiness The Dalai Lama
New Delhi
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This publication is based on the proceedings of the Sixth Annual Conflict Transformation Workshop titled Coexistence and Trust-building: Transforming Relationships. Held in December 2007, the Workshop brought together 40 young professionals (in the age group of 25 to 35 years) from India and Pakistan. The participants represented diverse backgrounds such as media, education, NGO, law, theology, conflict resolution, public policy, business and academia. An important feature of this Workshop was the diversity in the regions that the participants came from. For the first time, cities (in Pakistan) such as Hyderabad, Quetta, Multan and Gujranwala were represented. The Workshop also created a space for the participation of Kashmiris from diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds on both sides of the Line of Control (LoC).

Since their initiation in 2001, the Conflict Transformation Workshops have brought together 180 youth leaders from India and Pakistan for a dialogue-cum-training in peacebuilding between the two countries. Designed as small steps in the direction of building bridges of understanding between the next generation of leaders in the two countries, the Workshops have provided a space for young Indians and Pakistanis to engage in face-to-face dialogue to build a future based on trust, mutual respect and coexistence.

In this context, the Conflict Transformation Workshops have sought to:

- Empower the future leaders of India and Pakistan with the motivation, skills and knowledge to engage in processes of Conflict Transformation.
- Transform the “trust deficit” between people in the two countries, facilitate prejudice reduction, encourage understanding of each other’s worldviews, and integrate these with the goal of professional development.
• Build strategic, cross-border relationships and partnerships in peacebuilding between young Indians and Pakistanis.

• Create a safe space for Indians and Pakistanis to together engage academically and through praxis with the field of Conflict Transformation.

• Build a gender-sensitive curriculum for Conflict Transformation that can create a lasting foundation for a culture of peace and coexistence.

The Workshops engage with the following concerns:

• Over the last six decades, the conflicts between India and Pakistan have displayed patterns that suggest intractability. Emotions such as fear, suspicion, hatred and misperceptions have played a significant role in sustaining these conflicts.

• The absence of sustained face-to-face interaction and relationship-building between young people from the two countries along with widespread negative stereotyping about people from the other country have led to processes that demonize people from the other side.

• These beliefs and attitudes are reflected in, and reinforced by, school textbooks, media reportage and the political discourse in the two countries.

• These in turn have contributed to the sustenance of a culture of mistrust, prejudice and fear in the region.

It is this culture of fear and mistrust that the Conflict Transformation Workshops seek to transform. Addressing this issue squarely, the 2007 Workshop, standing at the juncture of theory and praxis, introduced the new and growing fields of coexistence and trust-building in the context of the peace process between India and Pakistan. The focus was on approaches that could empower the next generation of leaders to work collaboratively on joint projects around issues that might be seen as “connectors” between the two countries. This, WISCOMP believes, will broaden the constituency for peace and thereby build a higher stake in the bilateral relationship.

Within this conceptual framework, the Workshop addressed the following topics:

• Trust-building in International Relations

• Public Diplomacy and Trust-building

• Military CBMs and Interaction on UN Peacekeeping Missions: Avenues for Trust-building between India and Pakistan
Employing the methodology of experiential learning, the Workshop included interactive sessions, roundtables, lectures, film discussions, role-plays, group discussions, dance performance and other forms of creative expression. This methodology is 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 popular education movement has made significant contributions to the teaching and practice of Conflict Transformation, particularly to the ways in which peacebuilders define peoples’ participation in a peace process. Conflict Transformation scholar John Paul Lederach summarizes some of the key principles of this “pedagogy” in the following words: “Popular education promotes change both in social and educational systems. It is centered on the concept of conscientization – the process of building awareness of self-in-context that produces individual growth and social change. Popular education is a process of mutuality – student and teacher discover and learn together through reflection and action, which are kept in direct relationship as the root of learning and transformation…Posing problems relative to real-life situations and challenges rather than providing prescriptions about those situations is an important pedagogical tool.”

The Workshop was designed from the perspective that “education is a conceptualization of our experiences.” Participants learn as much from what they imbibe 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 was also influenced by the fact that WISCOMP focuses on a

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“bottom-up,” “multi-track” approach where the process of peacebuilding is driven by the participants of the Conflict Transformation Workshops.

The Workshop closed with a session on Strategies for Conflict Transformation: Participant Brainstorming and Evaluation to explore the possibilities for follow up, partnerships and networks that could be sustained after the weeklong dialogue. In many ways, the Sixth Annual Conflict Transformation Workshop symbolized an opening of the accordion, building new contexts for Pakistani and Indian professionals to move beyond bilateral issues to collaborate on regional issues and emerge as partners on a global platform. It is our hope at WISCOMP that the collaborative endeavors initiated by participants at this Workshop will broaden the network of enlightened citizens in the two countries who would collectively explore new frontiers in the conflict transformation process.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The WISCOMP Conflict Transformation Program

Opening Comments and Workshop Overview

Meenakshi Gopinath, Honorary Director, WISCOMP, opened the Sixth Annual Conflict Transformation Workshop with an overview of the Conflict Transformation Program. Extending a warm welcome to the Indian and Pakistani participants, Gopinath expressed WISCOMP’s excitement at the unique opportunity that the gathering of young women and men from diverse regions in India and Pakistan presented.

A central goal of the Workshops – which seek to build a synergy between expertise and potential – has been to bring together a group of carefully selected Indians and Pakistanis who can, over the next decade or so, influence research, policy, and praxis on issues of peace and conflict. In order to accomplish this, WISCOMP provides the intellectual and spiritual space to craft a more people-oriented and gender-sensitive discourse on these issues. Over the years, the diverse backgrounds that the participants have represented – in terms of career trajectories, faith persuasions, identity and cultural traditions – have added tremendous value to the outcome of the Workshops.

In a context where the language of power is weighted in favor of military might and economic leverage, Gopinath hoped that WISCOMP’s Conflict Transformation initiative would facilitate a South Asian perspective where the vocabulary of power can find more humane and ethical definitions. The Workshops engage with young entrants and mid-career professionals in India and Pakistan such that the pool of expertise that emerges from these dialogues can become the “critical mass” that begins to transform relationships as well as policy in the region.
In South Asia, said Gopinath, resides the potential to generate sustainable and workable coexistence. “We have to become conscious of our collective power and learn to use synergies that transform conflicts democratically. This presents before us both challenges and opportunities – for one, how do we build a creative, imaginative, restorative response to conflict that recasts the dominant vocabulary on state and security in terms of human security and humane government? This is the crucial link between national security and people’s security and examines the many ways in which inter-state security and intra-state security interface.”

Gopinath listed the following as some of the principles that have informed the Conflict Transformation Workshops over the last seven years:

- The creation of a catalytic space for dialogue where parties feel safe to converse with each other.
- An orientation towards collaborative problem-solving.
- An emphasis on social and personal encounters for their own sake.
- Deep listening skills.
- An invitation to non-judgemental listening.

Drawing on the work of Conflict Transformation scholar, John Paul Lederach, Gopinath identified the following guidelines that peace workers could employ in their personal and professional lives:

- Reach out to those you fear the most
- Touch the heart of complexity
- Imagine beyond what is seen
- Risk vulnerability through transparency
- Put yourself in the shoes of the other
- Understand differences and build on the commonalities

Speaking on the various themes that informed the design of the Workshop, Gopinath said that peace is a process that needs to be sustained and nurtured over time and over generations. The opposite of peace is not just war or conflict, but indifference to both love and life. Gopinath cautioned against the tendency

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2 Comments made by Meenakshi Gopinath at the WISCOMP Conflict Transformation Workshop.
Sixth Annual CT Workshop

to depict peace as the “woman in white…either wholly passive or passively holy.” Working for peace is hard work and requires commitment, patience and sensitivity. She cited the example of Rosa Parks, a nonviolent, unassuming homemaker who refused to be thrown off a bus because of the color of her skin. She lit the fuse for social dynamite and transformed the history of race relations in the United States. A corollary to this is also that peace and security have to become everybody’s business and not remain the “holy cow” appropriated by the defense and security establishments.

A key focus of this years’ Workshop was the new and burgeoning discourse on trust-building. Saying that WISCOMP had woven into the Workshop design insights from various disciplines (in addition to International Relations), Gopinath shared that one of the pioneers in this field – Prof. Nicholas Wheeler, Department of International Politics, Aberystwyth University, United Kingdom – would lead a daylong Workshop, involving role-plays and simulations, on the role of trust in conflict transformation processes.

An important shift in the design of this Workshop was the manner in which the issue of Jammu and Kashmir was addressed. While previously, the Workshops had explored various models and proposals for the transformation of the Kashmir conflict (for example, the Irish model, the South Tyrol model, the Aland Islands’ model, the Aceh Accord et al) as well as new and creative frames through which to look at this conflict (for example, a quiz that focused on the land and its people, films screenings that sought to offer a space for dialogue between different perspectives, and paintings and sketches by artists displaced by the conflict), the 2007 dialogue was different in the following ways:

- For the first time, Kashmiris from both sides of the LoC as well as those living in the border regions participated in the Workshop. There was tremendous diversity in terms of regional representation, religion and ethnicity.
- This paved the way for a first-of-its kind “intra-Kashmir dialogue” among young Kashmiri leaders.
- Instead of drawing on models and proposals that were already in the public domain, participants – Kashmiris, Indians and Pakistanis – shared their own perspectives on what needs to be done for conflict transformation to take root in Kashmir.

Gopinath drew attention to the concept of coexistence, another important theme which had informed the design of the Workshop. The South Asian region is a
mosaic of varied cultures, religions, traditions, ideologies and political persuasions, where identities are forged or fractured along multiple faultlines of class, caste, religion and gender. In such a context, Gopinath said that coexistence has to be more than simply learning to live with those different from us. Its definition has to be more nuanced to mean more than just mutual tolerance. “Existing side by side without overt conflict but without trust is passive coexistence…a process that is still resonant of Realism, and which was, during the Cold War, referred to as ‘peaceful coexistence’,” said Gopinath.

Active coexistence must move towards a more affirmative engagement of making the world safe for difference and a celebration of diversity in our society. Active coexistence must traverse areas of cultural practice and belief systems – realms beyond the formally state-centric and formally political. Interfacing with a multicultural perspective, it should problematize power and permeate and cognize multiple identities. Therefore, said Gopinath, it must also involve generating structures and practices that enable us to settle conflicts, particularly those around identity and human security, without recourse to violence. Making the world safe for difference for the 192 states in the United Nations and for the more than 6000 identities clamoring for articulation is perhaps the greatest challenge for conflict transformation practitioners. Such a challenge requires the skills and sensitivity of peacebuilders who will infuse tired discourse with the vocabulary of hope and regeneration. The WISCOMP Workshops seek to facilitate the creation of such a community of committed peacebuilders.

Highlighting another important Workshop theme, multi-track diplomacy, Gopinath pointed to the importance of collaboration between civil society groups and policymakers in a manner that they support each others’ efforts. Religion – often seen as a “touch-me-not” issue by the Left in South Asia – does resonate for a people who live in this part of the world. “Religion touches us in very substantial ways and, to sweep it under the carpet is neither good political philosophy nor good social policy…We have to look at the ways in which the reservoir of religious beliefs can be drawn in order to fashion a peace vocabulary which is inclusive,” said Gopinath. The Workshop sought to address this complex relationship.

Gopinath concluded with a story and a poem that are indicative of the two extreme positions on the trust-suspicion continuum. The story is titled “The Guru and the Politician” and the poem – “I Understand You” – was composed in an effort to “humanize” the other in the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict.
The Guru and the Politician

“This is the only way to peace”, said the guru who was also a bit of a politician and so there was a war. “This is the only way to peace,” said the politician who was also a bit of a guru, and so there was war. “There is no path to peace,” said the anti-guru guru and so his anti-follower followers argued amongst themselves and so they had their own cosy little war.

I understand You

Because I love these hills, these landscapes, these deer and rivers and vines, I understand why you do.

Because I need to feel at home in this place, I understand why you do.

Because the life stories of my people bring me here, hold me here, I understand yours do.

Because I remember this place and feel attached to it even though I wasn’t here, I understand that you do too.

Because the vagaries of history have convinced me that I need to be here, I understand that you do too.

Because when I had felt afraid of you, I had imagined that you are a murderous beast, somehow inhuman

I understand that you have imagined that way too.

Because in fear I have acted in ways that are powerful but immoral and cruel, I understand that you may have too.

Because I have felt alone, abandoned by the world nations, I understand the additional burden of feeling alone in your suffering too.

Because my ancestors are buried in these hills, I understand why the graves of your people are a sacred magnet to you too.

Because I want to move freely in my land, grow and raise children and tomatoes and my spirit and health in this place, I know that you need this too.

My need does not cancel your need; my need helps me know yours better.
The India Pakistan Conflict Transformation Workshops (2001–2007): Tracing the Trajectory

Manjrika Sewak, Senior Program Officer, WISCOMP, walked the participants through a brief history of the Conflict Transformation Workshops. Sharing some of the theoretical assumptions that inform the design of the Workshops, Sewak said that face-to-face dialogue conducted in a psychologically and physically safe space has the potential to change enemy images, reduce prejudice, and build long-term relationships. Second, WISCOMP sees the teaching of Conflict Transformation not simply as a goal, but also as a strategy and a context for the building of strategic relationships, humanizing others, and addressing root causes of conflict. Third, WISCOMP believes that efforts to build trust and relationships have the potential to transform systems and structures. This emphasis on relationship-building is based on empirical research which reveals that 40% of all peace accords collapse within five years of signature. Sustained engagement with the other, joint initiatives, and transformation of relationships torn apart by decades of conflict, are prerequisites for the sustenance of peace agreements.

Informed by these perspectives, the first Workshop, titled Rehumanizing The Other (2001), brought together graduate and undergraduate students from universities in Pakistan and India. Some of the institutions that were represented at this Workshop were: Kinnaird College for Women (Lahore), Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture (Karachi), Lahore University of Management Sciences (Lahore), University of Peshawar (Peshawar), Lady Shri Ram College
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(New Delhi), Delhi College of Arts and Commerce (New Delhi), St. Stephens College (Delhi), Jawaharlal Nehru University (New Delhi), Tata Institute of Social Sciences (Mumbai) and St. Xaviers’ College (Mumbai). For most participants, this was their first opportunity to meet a college student from the other country. This led many of them to observe that “the enemy now has a face”... “the other has been humanized.” Khadija Amjad, a Pakistani participant from the first Workshop, sent WISCOMP the following feedback: “My perceptions about the other have turned on their head. Several threat perceptions are fading... I have realized that all Indians are not anti-Pakistan.”

The goal was not to arrive at a consensus on the issues that divided the Indian and Pakistani participants, but to change the way they saw each other and interacted with one another. The idea was not to negotiate on the positions that India and Pakistan have held onto for six decades, but to enhance the capacity of young people to solve problems and to dialogue on difficult subjects.

The second Workshop, held in 2003, broadened the profile of participants to include researchers, journalists, grassroots’ practitioners and educators from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Tibet and India. Titled Transcending Conflict, it focused on the peace process in Sri Lanka and the efforts for long-term social change in the war-ravaged island nation. The goal was to learn from the experiments in justice and reconciliation that were being undertaken in Sri Lanka at the time and the challenges faced. The experiences of countries in transition, such as South Africa and Rwanda, were also analyzed.

Titled Dialogic Engagement, the third Workshop (2004) sought to promote wider civil society ownership of the peace process between Pakistan and India. The focus of the Workshop was the role of the mass media in conflict generation and conflict transformation. For the first time, a module titled Kashmir: The Way Forward was factored into the workshop curriculum. It broke new ground on approaches for the transformation of the Kashmir conflict and provided a context to study and critique diverse international peace accords and lessons for India and Pakistan.

Envisioning Futures: Dialogue and Conflict Transformation, the title of the fourth Workshop (held in 2005), sought to shift the focus to leadership models and methodologies for sustained dialogue. Seeking to build leadership among multiple stakeholders, the Workshop explored new models of leadership that the framework of Conflict Transformation offers. Leaders can play an important role in situations of conflict by reducing fear and suspicion, and shifting public consciousness from vulnerability and psychosis to mutual
strength and respect. Emphasizing the need for greater attention to leadership models that can prevent and transform armed conflicts, Ambassador Ragnar Angeby, Director of the Conflict Prevention in Practice Project, Folke Bernadotte Academy, Sweden, and a Workshop resource person, writes: “A leadership that is rooted in participatory processes offers an open and inclusive space where participants build political processes to address the sources of conflict, develop skills to work with serious controversy, and initiate a process of confidence-building and mutual understanding.”

The fifth Workshop, titled Collaborative Explorations (2006), was informed by the framework of multi-track diplomacy. The engagement moved beyond an understanding of the role of various tracks, and delved into the constraints that different tracks work with, and the points at which they intersect. The Workshop also addressed the Kashmir conflict, using multiple formats such as a quiz, group discussions, film screenings and exhibits. While the quiz on Jammu and Kashmir sought to facilitate an appreciation of the multicultural ethos of Jammu and Kashmir, the medium of documentary film was used to capture the contemporary realities in Jammu and Kashmir following the outbreak of the armed conflict. Expert panels, participant presentations and group discussions facilitated engagement on the conceptual vocabulary of security, peacebuilding and futures studies in the context of Jammu and Kashmir.

The 2006 Conflict Transformation Workshop was a homecoming in many ways; a new beginning in sustained collaborative explorations between young Indians and Pakistanis on shaping the kind of region they wish to call their own. The purpose of this Workshop – which brought together WISCOMP alumni – was to build on the learnings from the last few years and to put in place mechanisms for collaborative work between Indians and Pakistanis.

Coexistence and trust-building were the foci of the 2007 Workshop. Exploring the theory and praxis of the two frameworks, the Workshop looked at how these can build strategic relationships across the divisions of conflict and influence the processes of conflict transformation between the two countries. In addition to simulations and dialogues on coexistence and trust-building, the Workshop included sessions on education for a culture of peace, stereotypes in multicultural societies, the role of the media in conflict generation and conflict transformation, and, the discourse on religion as a source of conflict as well as a resource for peacebuilding.

**Closer to Ourselves**  
**Stories from the Journey towards Peace**

An overview of the various outcomes and initiatives that the Conflict Transformation Workshops have generated was also shared in this session.

An important outcome has been the **Collaborative Research Award** which supports joint research by an Indian and a Pakistani alumna. The Research Award provides a context for young people in the two countries to dialogue on a sustained basis and to link their academic research with the experience of working collaboratively. Another spin-off has been the engagement with curriculum and teaching material, in the field of peacebuilding, by educational institutions in Pakistan and India. Kinnaird College for Women, Lahore, and Lady Shri Ram College for Women, New Delhi, are two such institutions that have drawn on the Workshop curriculum to introduce certificate/degree courses on peace and conflict studies.

The Conflict Transformation Workshops have provided participants with the “confidence and skills to actually do something.” They have generated a sense of empowerment in many participants who said that they now know “how to translate some ideas about peacebuilding to the Indo-Pak process” and also have the relationships to “make that difference.” The Workshops have also been able to facilitate dialogue between policymakers and young civil society actors from the two countries. In so doing, they have bridged the conventional gap between the traditional security school of thought and those who call for a multi-track approach to peacebuilding. The Workshops have also influenced the career trajectories of several participants. At least 35% of alumni have written to say that their participation influenced their decision to pursue higher education and/or build a career in the field of peacebuilding.

More significantly, the Conflict Transformation Workshops have initiated several journeys of trust-building and sustained dialogue between young women and men across the divisions of conflict. Each year, WISCOMP has received feedback that the levels at which the Workshops have facilitated change have been several.

The theme of prejudice reduction has found resonance in all of WISCOMP’s workshops. Each Workshop has attempted to address the “trust deficit” that young Indians and Pakistanis have absorbed from their families, media and the political discourse in their respective countries. In so doing, the Workshops have helped participants to develop new attitudes, behaviors and knowledge
about people perceived as “the enemy.” As a participant from the first Workshop in 2001 had articulated, “Prejudice hardens us, and the more we harden, the less accepting we become of people different from us. This increases our tendency to believe that there is only one truth.”

**Relational change** – new and improved relationships between the next generation of leaders in India and Pakistan – represents another significant outcome. An underlying assumption is that strategic relationships among “future influentials” can affect social change and public policy in the long run. In this context, an important outcome has been the building of **social capital** – networks of strategic, cross-border, personal relationships that can translate into professional partnerships in peacebuilding. Relationships are a form of social capital. When participants connect and form relationships, they are more likely to cooperate together to constructively address conflict. By promoting the values of human dignity, mutual respect and coexistence, and by introducing new leadership models⁴ for the next generation of peacebuilders, the Workshops seek to meet the long-term goal of **social change** in the relationship between India and Pakistan.

These and many other experiences of transformation – at the personal and collective level – were shared in the Workshop session **Closer to Ourselves: Stories from the Journey towards Peace.** Launching a WISCOMP book of the same name, the session highlighted select narratives from Indian and Pakistani alumni on issues relating to identity, prejudice and conflict transformation.

Undertaken as a collaborative project by the Indian and Pakistani alumni, and compiled by Workshop alumna Anupama Sekhar, the book **Closer to Ourselves**⁵ captures some of these experiences of personal change and social transformation, illustrating the power of human contact and its ability to build trust between individuals across the divisions of conflict.⁶ At the Workshop, four alumni stories were profiled. These are shared in the following pages.

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⁴ Drawing on a definition by Workshop resource person, Ambassador Ragnar Angeby, WISCOMP believes that “leadership is the ability to influence feelings, patterns and values, learning with the surrounding environment rather than attempting to steer it... Leadership is not necessarily linked to those in power but rather related to having the capacity to create change.” See Ragnar Angeby, *Preventing Violent Conflict through Dialogue and Leadership*, Conference Report No.1 (Stockholm: Folke Bernadotte Academy, June 2005), p. 7.

⁵ This phrase is borrowed from CT alumna Ambreen Noon Kazi’s narrative in the book *Closer to Ourselves*.

⁶ Copies of the book **Closer to Ourselves: Stories from the Journey towards Peace in South Asia** are available at the WISCOMP office. An online version of the book can be accessed at [http://www.wiscomp-ctstories.net/](http://www.wiscomp-ctstories.net/)
Sharing Memories

Stuti Bhatnagar*

“You just can’t trust these Muslims.”
“I hope the Pakistani cricket team loses.”
“We will never give away Kashmir to the Pakistanis.”
“Because Pakistan was created, we had to leave our lands, come here and start from scratch.”

Recollecting these statements from the past often make me wonder just how much has truly changed.

How does the past impact the future? Does it impact the future at all? Is it possible to discard the memories of the past into the bygone era of yesterdays? I have often wondered about these questions.

Recurring questions. Still without simple answers.

Who am I?
Unearthing my family identity

My metropolitan upbringing has often overshadowed my ethnic and religious identities. I stumbled upon these identities purely by chance. It was triggered by the simple fact of a cricket match between arch sporting foes, India and Pakistan. During one such match, my grandmother’s anguish and pain, well acquainted with the memories of the partition days, came to the fore. It happened in response to being questioned by my younger sister on the common Indian need to be passionate about Pakistan’s loss in a cricket match.

It was at that moment in time that we – third generation Indians – came face-to-face with an ocean of memories. Memories, both good and bad, from my grandparents’ generation. Memories of childhood life and of losing a home. Of uncertainties and betrayals and memories. Of a longing to be back in that bygone space at some point in time. For years, these memories had been suppressed and hidden from us; so, we had very few clues to the history and identity of the family. What could otherwise have been a useful lesson instead led to a total disregard for the struggles and achievements of elders who started life afresh in India in 1947. I realised – at this point and for the first time – that I belonged to a Punjabi family with roots in pre-partition Lahore and Rawalpindi, now in Pakistan.

* Stuti Bhatnagar has served as Junior Programme Officer at WISCOMP, New Delhi, India. She is currently working on her Doctoral Thesis titled The Role of Islam in Iran’s Policy Towards Pakistan and is presently based in the UAE.
Who are they?
Encountering the familiar ‘other’

That conversation stayed with me. I continued to reflect on it from time to time. It perked my curiosity as a 15-year old to know more about the partition and what happened then. The numerous research studies conducted on the partition of the Indian sub-continent in 1947 are in agreement on one historical fact: that the event was a holocaustal one affecting millions of human lives and altering the identities and realities of generations of South Asians. People had not only been uprooted from their land but also from the reality of their very identity. They had not merely lost their means of livelihood but also access to childhood memories. They had lost the opportunity to perform simple, everyday gestures like revisiting the place of their ancestors or their old playgrounds and schools.

One basic contention of that conversation was that the Muslims migrating to Pakistan had resorted to more violence than the Indians. This argument triggered an interest in finding out just what these ‘Pakistanis’ were all about.

Despite the contemporary globalized environment, avenues of interaction for common Indians and Pakistanis remain severely limited. Consequently, I was extremely lucky to have just such an opportunity (and not once, but several times) thanks to WISCOMP’s Annual Conflict Transformation Workshops in New Delhi. Year after year, these workshops bring together young Indian and

![Stuti Bhatnagar with CT Workshop alumni Zahid Shahab Ahmed (Islamabad) and Michelle Baxter (Chennai).]
Pakistani professionals to deliberate on peace and conflict transformation. Crucially positioned as the Workshop’s Participant Coordinator, I enjoyed the chance to interact with the participants both during and much beyond the ten days of the residential event in Delhi.

I first met the Pakistanis at WISCOMP’s Third Annual Conflict Transformation Workshop Dialogic Engagement in 2004. What struck me the most about my interactions with them was the ease with which I could talk to these people, relate to their language and identify (quite substantially) with their culture despite our differing religious identities. This made me realise just how much my Punjabi identity – of which I had been unaware all these years – had a bearing on my communication.

The subsequent Conflict Transformation Workshops (Envisioning Futures in 2005 and Collaborative Explorations in 2006) provided more avenues of interaction with Pakistanis. These Workshops have blessed me with many cherished memories and some very close relationships that extend far beyond the artificial border created between the people of our two countries.

Who are we?
Bringing together two estranged generations

The conversations I have had with my friends from Pakistan are countless and it is a tough task indeed to pick a particular story or experience to share!

Nevertheless, I would like to mention a couple of my experiences and conversations with Zahid Shahab Ahmed, a Conflict Transformation Workshop alumnus from Pakistan.

Zahid once narrated a partition story very different from my own. Of how he had – during the visit to his hometown by a Hindu family in the early 80s – come to know of the kind deeds of his grandfather during the partition of 1947.

“The headmaster of a school in Toba Tek Singh (now in Punjab, Pakistan), my grandfather had helped many Hindu families with medicines, food and transportation during the partition. It had all been done so that the Hindu families could have a safe journey towards their new homeland, India. We came to know about these dignified deeds of our grandfather only when members of one of these Hindu families visited our hometown in the early 80s. Through their expression of gratitude for our grandfather, they provided us with crucial insights into our family’s close association with the partition,” recalled Zahid.
According to me, unearthing such stories is critical because the partition generation is disappearing with time. However, it is equally important to attempt to heal these wounds in every possible manner and to achieve some measure of reconciliation with the past.

The need of the hour is dialogue: dialogue among the members of the partition generation as well as dialogue between the first and third generations of Indians and Pakistanis. It is important to learn from the lessons of the past, to take pride in achievements, to find common ground so that we can move towards a peaceful future.

*Closer to Ourselves*, this collection of real stories by young Indians and Pakistanis, will enable historians from both sides to engage with each other to evolve a common version of history, rather than the contradictory one currently in existence. Also, a common history textbook could be used in Indian and Pakistani educational institutions, so as to remove the prejudices internalised due to the teaching of distorted histories. Although some would consider it wishful thinking, in this, the sixtieth year of Indian and Pakistani independence, my experience says that such a move is indeed possible, although only in very incremental terms.

During one of his visits to India, I introduced Zahid, my Pakistani friend from the Workshop, to my grand-parents. As they interacted with this young Pakistani, it was a humbling experience for me to witness the emerging dialogue. It moved from an atmosphere of total suspicion and hostility, through apprehension to some level of comfort with, and curiosity about, this person from the land of their birth. It grew into a sharing of the stories of familiar sites from their childhood memories and finally ended in the hope and longing that, perhaps, one day their grandchild – me – would be able to visit the land of their past through this rehumanised other – Zahid – and, thus, complete their journey, at least, in spirit.

The questions that are now put to me by my grand-parents are these, “When are you going to Pakistan? Will you ask Zahid and your other “friends” to help you find our previous homes in Lahore and Rawalpindi?”
It Has To Be Us

*Muna Baig* & *Jyotirmoy Chaudhuri**

Jyotirmoy...

My first impressions

It has been a long time since the first WISCOMP Annual Conflict Transformation Workshop Rehumanizing the Other, which I attended in 2001. I was a wild card entry to the Workshop. I had finished my Master's degree with an okay grade; the next academic step and life beyond were in limbo, when a friend leaving for London (and thus unable to attend the Workshop) sent me off to the WISCOMP program instead.

I landed at the preliminary meeting of the Indian participants (in the Jacaranda Hall at the India Habitat Center, New Delhi) and found quite a large gathering seated at the roundtable. All around me, there was an incredible sense of poise. Most of the young participants around me seemed to know exactly who they were and what they wanted to say. I still remember some faces from that gathering: Prerona Prasad, Shreya Jani and Manjri Sewak. Still remember all those first impressions of the day.

Among my most powerful remembrances of the Workshop that followed were of the people involved in the process. I felt elated sitting among my peers with their strong sense of purpose and all that energy! There, at the Workshop, we were being told that we had the rights and the wherewithal to change the direction of the strained relationship with our neighbours, the Pakistanis.

Peeling off the layers

I have always considered myself something of a “Pak expert”, whatever one understands by that term. I grew up with a fixation of sorts on Pakistan.

Our extended clan was a pretty mixed one, with a number of castes and creeds intermingling. There is a favourite aunt who moved first from Bhopal to Karachi, later to Birmingham, then London and later married my uncle. Older generations in the family had served in the army and so, stories and photographs of Quetta and Peshawar were common. Then there was the literature, both in English and Bengali, about the romantic Far North. Lahore was always that cultured city you had to visit, and in my imagination, Kabul was also near.

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*Muna Baig is based in London where she is currently in the process of qualifying as a solicitor.

**Jyotirmoy Chaudhuri is associated with the Society for Aerospace Studies, New Delhi.
Next came the introduction to Kashmir. My father was a surgeon in the Indian Army and had done close to four tenures in Jammu & Kashmir. The state was always present in our lives. There were also two long holidays with my father there. There were always letters coming in from Kashmir. In 1989 and the years afterwards, the situation in the Valley was quite bad. We used to worry constantly. We lived far away in West Bengal in the east of India and back then, one did not quite use the telephone the way we do now.

The Conflict Transformation Workshop in 2001 was the first time I actively untied these strands, peeled off layers of romantic illusions and saw the whole picture with clarity. For example, I realized that in my growing-up years, Pakistan was never "real"; it was always part of a greater, beautiful India where all castes and creeds lived happily ever after. So, at the 2001 Workshop, consciously pegged Pakistan as a vibrant, developing country in its own right, albeit with similar problems and misconceptions of their own regarding India. It was my meeting with the post-Partition, post-1971 generation of Pakistanis and Indians at the Workshop that changed the way I looked at things.

**Muna...**

**The-other-who-must-be-addressed-now**

It was during this process of unknotted pre-conceived notions with a bright group of the post-1971 generation that Jyoti and I discovered how many of our questions and thoughts veered on the same plane. Unlike Jyoti’s initial romantic notion of Pakistan, I had always been made to see India as the neighbouring country that was never going to be a friend. Like Jyoti, I too realised that "the other side" was a vibrant, developing country in its own right.

I had just finished studying the global environmental crisis at university and was all gung-ho about campaigning for global unity in the face of impending calamities such as climate change. It was at this time that I got the opportunity to discover and address that very idealistic notion of unity of interests with a country that simply did not seem to want to be friends. Sharing a similar geography meant that I saw the same faces from the other side at the Workshop with a shared love for cricket, Bollywood films, Mughlai cuisine and *barsaat ki pehli baarish* (the first burst of the monsoon). Shared cultural unity was, however, not enough to bring regional unity. It was not enough to bring positive change either.

If that had been possible, it would have happened by now. And, we would not have been sitting together as we were at the Workshop in New Delhi that summer
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of 2001. Although we were meeting to try and undo the ghosts of the partition and to dialogue with the-other-who-must-be-addressed-now for the sake of bringing a change in attitudes, I was left wondering if this was enough. I was left wondering whether the few moments – be it at the Taj Mahal in Agra or at Karim’s in Old Delhi – when we lowered our guards in the face of complete exhilaration in each other’s company were enough to bring about change. It seems to me like they were. Jyoti’s colorful family and my international take on the regional tension got us talking. His ideas about Pakistan would make me laugh but his sincerity towards peaceful coexistence made us friends for life.

**New beginnings**

Were these efforts enough to counter terrorism, the Kashmir issue and the age-old Muslim-Hindu rift? Not entirely, to be honest. Perhaps, they can never be. And this because it is not we who are rigid enough not to look beyond ourselves and at the vast opportunities that peace can bring to the region. It is not we who are unwilling to move ahead with hands held out to each other in a gesture marking new beginnings.

Yet, it is, perhaps, we who can bring that change eventually. It has to be us. I am very hopeful of it. I have been to India once more since 2001 and Jyoti has been earnestly promising to come to Lahore since the Workshop. We have been plotting to have me installed at some think-tank in Delhi so I can shop at Nalli’s and eat out at Karim’s to my heart’s content! So, I do believe it will be our generation, which will bring forth that elusive peace one day. I know we will. What do you think Jyoti?

**Jyotirmoy...**

**The need for harmony**

Muna, which of my ideas about Pakistan made you laugh? Yes, it would be good to travel to Pakistan and see it for myself. The trip to Lahore has to happen sometime soon. I also want to visit Murree, Quetta and Karachi.

Getting back to our peers from Pakistan... most of the connections made at the Workshop continued for quite a while afterwards, mainly through the internet. I met some participants again, such as Muna. Then there was Bilal Murtaza Siddiqui, a regular in Delhi since he has friends here. Over time, however, it has only been Muna who has been in touch.

Ours was a young group in 2001 with most participants on the verge of either higher studies or matrimony. So, most went their own ways. There were no
projects or common action plans to bind us then. Maybe other participants made more working alliances and dealt with issues of peace hands-on. My notions of peace, however, remain in the realm of thought and imagination, one built from the knowledge gained through books and the internet. Yet, one likes to believe that it is the consciousness of the need for harmony that matters. It feels great when Muna says we are friends for life!

First Steps & Giant Leaps

"If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear as it is – infinite."

– William Blake (1757-1827) English engraver, illustrator & poet

The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step. As we walked down the hallway to attend the first session of the WISCOMP Conflict Transformation Workshop, we knew we had taken that first step in our quest to discover peace.

Problematising peace

We started the first session with a simple question: "What is peace? What came forth was the idea that peace was beyond definitions. Was something amorphous that could, perhaps, only be perceived by each through her own distinctive lens.

Each expression of peace at that session was different; yet, they struck the same chord. Like different notes blending to create harmony. It was with this gentle knock on the doors of perception that we began our journey to the other side.

With little steps, we tread the beautiful and adventurous path of discovery towards that common underlying chord which bound all our definitions of peace. That which gave our definitions the strength of the collective and the space of the individual.

Our pursuit for peace began by problematising the very notion of it. Was peace the mere absence of violence between two countries? Or did it mean something

*Anisha Kinra teaches Political Science at a community college in Gainesville, Florida, USA.

**Seema Sridhar is a Doctoral Scholar at the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India.
else, something more? What motivates groups of people to mutilate and slaughter one another? Why are more and more people – and not just in our two countries – taking to violence to make their voices heard? These critical questions of contemporary times marked the start of the journey we began.

Understanding peace and turmoil at the individual level and relating to one another at the human level were instrumental in our larger quest to understand conflict and envision a future bereft of it. The medium of the Conflict Transformation Workshops were aptly suited for this endeavor. We began to comprehend the complexities of our individual pursuits for peace, We realized that we often forget the fact that nations are a collection of individuals. To create a lasting impact on the behaviour of nation-states, we have to first go through transformative experiences as individuals. These individual journeys would then reflect at a higher level in the behaviour of the collective.

**Learning & unlearning**

For us, "the other" did not just mean those from across the border or from a conflict-ridden state. "The other" was more of the all-encompassing sort, including every individual present at the Workshop: a few closer to home, a few with whom we had a lot in common and a few we had no idea what to expect from.

Each passing day had something new to offer. And this was not limited to the academic sessions alone. In fact, much learning and unlearning happened outside the Workshop classroom. When we entered the Workshop session every morning, the socializing from the previous evening would have prepared us for the day’s re-learning!

**The semantics of difference**

A part of that re-learning was exploring and discovering interfaces between the personal, the spiritual and the political. It was impossible to keep our personal experiences, our growing friendships and deepening bonds outside the conference halls. Our detachment from and indifference to the violence across the border – often conveniently shielded behind the façade of political ideologies and pseudo-patriotic beliefs – was shattered. People from across the border were no more anonymous identities. They now had faces, names and a place in our hearts. As boundaries blurred, "the other" not merely seemed closer, but also similar. Difference became a matter only of semantics.

The politics of ideology is simultaneously a politics of otherisaton, for our identity is defined vis-à-vis the other. But as we lived through the Workshop
experience together – debating, talking, laughing, crying – all identities merged into one. Under that roof, in that shared space, we were not Indian or Pakistani; Hindu or Muslim; only peacemakers seeking a new struggle, a new challenge, a new journey.

Some memorable instances and interactions left a powerful impact upon us and helped shape our perceptions.

**Sharing stories**

The Workshop session on *Sustained Dialogue: A Public Peace Process* was most rejuvenating for it made us relate to one another’s stories.

Participants were divided into groups in which all individuals were given a chance to narrate powerful personal experiences. This exercise enabled the simplest, most direct and remarkable means of communication! As one human being to another. Interchanging what we had learnt in our respective groups with the rest of the Workshop participants palpably broke the ice between us. As we returned to the Workshop hall after the session, the air was filled with a positive aura. With a sense of belonging and togetherness that was perceived by the organizers as well.

**The spirit of Navratri**

One truly transformative experience was watching the musical ballet, Ramayan at Delhi’s Sri Ram Centre. The performance was part of the *Navratri* festivities, which had set the city abuzz with cultural programmes and colourful Durga badis.

The WISCOMP regulars were playing the part of perfect hostesses by helping with the interpretation of the musical ballet. A Pakistani participant seated further away from us was being told the story by a Kashmiri Muslim. The lucidity in the flow of his narrative diverted our attention from the beautiful musical on stage!

The story of Ram – which has become a gruesome war cry in recent years – had so much more to offer with its message of peace, temperance and sacrifice. What better way of learning this than from a Kashmiri whose perceptions of identity and conflict had evolved in a milieu very different from ours! We witnessed the bonds of culture surpassing the manacles of politics around us. We witnessed the values of seemliness and grace in the face of hardship. Of warriors treating enemies with dignity and respect even in the face of defeat. All depicted in an enthralling performance on stage. There was perfect synergy between the Ramayana’s on-stage story of peace and tolerance and that of the human faces among us who had surmounted great conflicts.
In each other's shoes

Barriers crumbled in the Workshop session, Theater as a Methodology for Dialogue and Conflict Transformation as we literally stepped into each other's shoes. Small groups of participants exchanged personal experiences for a few minutes before moving on to form other, newer groups and repeat the exercise. At the end of the session, most of us knew a lot more about most others. And in a way that regular conversations would not have permitted us to know. Some revelations were stunning and some others very moving.

Before we could analyze, judge or attach value – something our social conditioning has trained us to do – we would have moved to the next set of people and their worlds. The exercise was all about discovering the common streak of humanity in all of us. Yes, we all wanted different things. Yet, that which we did not want were the same. Violence. Oppression. Injustice. Bad relationships. Being told what to do. And so on. We seemed then to be made from the same clay, only cast in different forms.

As participants narrated personal stories, others enacted them; this effectively made us live through the experience of "the other". Participating in these theatre exercises opened a world of new experiences. We shed our inhibitions, reached out to traces of ourselves in others as also to the unknown in ourselves, blending the common shades and differing hues in one creative collage.

What was most wonderful about this experience was that we also got to know our fellow Indians, some of whom we had not made the effort to know. One had found peace in embracing Buddhism, another in working long hours at the office. Yet others by choosing to work with street children or writing poetry. Discovering people proved to be a fascinating journey. We had never before encountered such diversity in the pursuit of one thing universal.

Imagining futures

We finally understood what our favourite musical icon meant when he sang Imagine. The Conflict Transformation Workshop indeed helped us create that world in our minds. It has set us on a quest to discover peace within and without and to redefine it as a state of mind rather than the state of affairs, for it is only the former which enables the latter.

The greatest challenge in this journey will be sustaining the enthusiasm, commitment and sense of purpose beyond the safe spaces that WISCOMP accorded us. There will be moments when we will want to walk away, let go, give up. What alone will sustain us in this journey is the vision of a future beyond violence, beyond boundaries.
Those Borders In My Mind

Shreya Jani*

I hate Pakistan.
I hate Pakistan!
I hate Pakistan?

I accept Pakistan?
I accept Pakistan!
I accept Pakistan.

Pakistan is?
Pakistan is!
Pakistan is.

I am an Indian.
I do not hate Pakistan.
Pakistan is.

Pakistan is my neighbor and its people struggle with the same questions of peace, development and daily living as I do.

This is the story of my journey to peace, reconciliation and transformation, with many milestones crossed and many more to come. It is hard to remember exactly when hatred became acceptance and acceptance, celebration. However, some incidents remain in my memory as testimony to this journey.

That mysterious neighbor

As a child, I remember waiting for the Republic Day parade on January 26 with great excitement. I used to be thrilled watching smartly dressed military and police forces march from India Gate to Red Fort. Then, there was the display of the weapons in our arsenal and the MiG-17 aircrafts that performed acrobatics in the air. Looking at those powerful weapons and smart people, I often wanted to join the army and become a secret commando who would fight “the enemy”.

“The enemy” was the mysterious neighbor on the other side that hated us, rejected us and constantly conspired to harm us. We were secular; they were

* Shreya Jani recently completed her Master’s in Peace Education from the University for Peace, Costa Rica. She now lives in New Delhi and works in the area of Education for Peace.
not. We were democratic while they always seemed to be struggling with their democracy. We were multicultural while they were a monolith. Hence, the assumption that we were better. And that they were evil, responsible for the partition and a reminder of the colonial legacy of the two-nations theory.

These strong images were reinforced socially by Bollywood movies of patriotism, newspaper reportage on the Kashmir imbroglio, history classes on Indian independence and stories of those who lost everything during the partition narrated by grandmothers, uncles, aunts and acquaintances who had lived the horror.

My throat used to swell up while watching the television serial, Param Veer Chakra that told stories of fearless army officers fighting for mother India and saving us from the dushman on the other side. The American poet E.E Cummings once wrote, “Hate bounces.” I hated Pakistan.

I remember history lessons on the Indus Valley civilization in the sixth grade. I had wanted to go see these sites for myself only to realise that they were on the other side of the border. I remember watching Richard Attenborough’s Gandhi in high school. One of the last scenes in the film is that of Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan and Gandhi at the last Indian National Congress session before the partition. Gandhi and Gaffar Khan hold each other and cry. I remember crying too and wanting to know more about “this” Gaffar Khan. I looked around for information and found some. Well, not as much as I found on Jawaharlal Nehru, Lokmanya Tilak or Maulana Abul Kalam Azad at any rate. I felt frustrated. I became curious about “the enemy”: wanting to know more and trying to understand my hate for the unknown.
The land of the enemy

My curiosity found the wings to fly when I was 16 years old. It was 1997 and my school decided to send 20 students to Pakistan to celebrate 50 years of independence from colonial rule. Soon, I was off on a two-week adventure through Lahore, Panja Sahib and this was an eye opener in my journey towards reconciliation, acceptance and understanding. Towards questioning popular stereotypes.

I finally got to see the excavation of the Indus valley civilization, Taxila, the fort of Akbar and the hand print of Guru Nanak on the rock at the Gurudwara of Panja Saheb. And, I ate the world’s best kebabs and chocolate cake in Lahore.

The man who sold shararas

However, the story most vivid in my memory took place in Lahore’s Aanarkali Bazaar.

Walking around this colourful market place, I saw an old man selling beautiful shararas. He stopped me and asked whether I was one of the Indian students he had heard about. When I responded with a yes, a distant look clouded the man’s face; but there was a smile in his eyes. He then told me that he had crossed over from India to Pakistan during the partition and that he still had family back in India. Therefore, he added, he was very happy to meet me. He wanted me to meet his grand daughter, who was about the same age as me. Then, he held me and started to cry.

Why was this grown man crying? I did not understand it! Our bus was leaving and I had return to the group. I panicked and made my apologies to the old man. I promised to return soon to meet him and his grand daughter and ran.

I did not go back to meet the man. I honestly do not know what confusion made me run. I am glad to have met the old man; yet, am regretful that I never went to meet his grand daughter. I had accepted Pakistan, but had not yet made the attempt to understand and embrace its people.

Peers from enemy territory

What followed next was vigorous questioning and seeking.

As a student of Political Science at Lady Shri Ram College, New Delhi, I spent three years challenging my national identity and understanding the meanings and premises of notions such as nation-states, sovereignty, autonomy
and citizenship. I participated in rallies against the nuclearization of India, protested the Kargil war and was deemed “anti-national” by many of my peers for doing so.

Pakistan remained the launch pad of questions that challenged my long-held beliefs in peace, dialogue and transformation. Did I have it in me to go beyond acceptance towards empathy and collaboration in the future?

In Buddhism, it is believed that the teacher appears when the time is right. In the fall of 2001, I was given a chance to face my past, brave my stereotypes and foster empathy and understanding. I was invited to participate in WISCOMP’s First Annual Conflict Transformation Workshop: Rehumanizing the Other. It was, perhaps, the first attempt to bring together university students from India and Pakistan for training in Conflict Transformation. Here, uncomfortable questions were asked and vulnerabilities exposed. Here reflected hope that a new generation was ready to move on, embrace each other and create spaces for true dialogue.

The teacher of new histories

I carried with me the insights gained and techniques learnt at this Workshop to both my teacher training and my tenure as a middle-school history teacher (which began in the fall of 2005).

My seventh-standard students in Varanasi’s Rajghat School supported me in the challenge as we sat down to examine the two statements thrown at me during the 2001 Workshop: I am an Indian. I hate Pakistan.

Our explorations into these two statements led us to the understanding that the problem lay not with people, but in structures. The honesty of the children in examining the sentences, which even adults and scholars shy away from, gave me hope that peace between the two nations was possible.

A student of peace

Accepting, understanding and empathising with Pakistan and forging friendships with its people have taught me a lot. Mostly, it has helped me challenge the notions one acquires without much exploration and thought; recognise the stereotypes that govern our lives; and, realise the need for critical thinking.
These friendships are largely responsible for my interest in educating for peace. Presently, as I complete my Master’s in Peace Education in Costa Rica, I remember people’s reactions to this subject in the past. I have been met with smirks, sarcastic comments and puzzled expressions. Some dismissed peace education as a “soft” topic that only the rich have the privilege to engage in, while others just did not understand the content of the subject and its practical importance, especially for Asia, which has so many “real” problems to grapple with. Mostly, people dismissed it as a “fashionable” thing to do. When met with such reactions, I am amazed at the cynicism of people. I cannot understand how creating unequal paradigms can be more respectable than building paths for society to move from a culture of violence towards a culture of peace!

I am thankful for my relationship with Pakistan and for the time spent at WISCOMP’s Conflict Transformation Workshop which helped me realize the importance of peace education. As Gandhi rightly said: “There is no way to peace, for peace is the way.” My relationship with Pakistan has helped me understand the meaning of this statement. Shukriya to all the people from both sides of the border who gave me the courage to face hatred and work towards transforming it into love.
Trust-building and Conflict Transformation

“Trust is a peculiar resource; it is built rather than depleted by use.”

Of the several applications that WISCOMP received from Indians and Pakistanis for the 2007 Conflict Transformation Workshop, two themes found resonance in a majority of the applicant essays: the challenge presented by the “trust deficit” between the two countries, which participants identified as a root cause of the conflict as well as an obstacle to the peace process; and second, many applicants expressed a profound belief in the power of human encounter – the role that the methodology of sustained face-to-face dialogue and inter-cultural interaction between diverse stakeholders in the two countries can play in overcoming the “trust deficit.” The participants of the 2007 Workshop identified the twin processes of “trust-building” and “relationship-building” as an important expectation. As one participant noted in her application essay, “even when there is a thaw in relations and the leaders embrace each other on camera, a deep-rooted suspicion still lurks in the hearts.”

Since the initiation of the first dialogue between youth leaders from India and Pakistan in 2001, WISCOMP has focused on the goals of trust-building and prejudice reduction. The need for trust arises from the recognition of our interconnectedness with other human beings. Strategic relationships built on this realization have the potential to transform structures and systems from insecurity to security. Underscoring the need for a greater focus on trust-building, Dr. Harold Saunders, President, International Institute for Sustained Dialogue, Washington D.C., writes that in a nuclear world, the security of one state depends on the others’ sense of security.7 This is particularly relevant for

India and Pakistan. The building of a web of strategic relationships between people and institutions in the two countries can lead to the building of trust which in turn can positively influence the official peace process.

In this context, the relationship between Trust-building and Conflict Transformation was a central theme of the 2007 Workshop. According to Prof. Nicholas J. Wheeler, an international scholar in the new and dynamic field of trust-building, and Professor in the Department of International Politics at Aberystwyth University, United Kingdom, “trust exists when two actors, based on the mutual interpretation of each others’ attitudes and behavior, believe that the other can be relied upon to desist from acting in ways that will be injurious to their interests and values. This minimalist conception of trust can be contrasted with a maximalist one where actors mutually attempt to promote each others’ interest and values.”

Early theories of trust described it as a one-dimensional phenomenon that simply increased or decreased in magnitude within a relationship. More recent approaches however suggest that trust builds along a continuum of hierarchical and sequential stages, such that as trust grows to a higher level, it becomes stronger and more resilient and changes in character.

In this context, WISCOMP organized a daylong workshop on Trust-building in International Relations to introduce participants to the theory and practice of the new and burgeoning field of trust-building. Drawing on interdisciplinary research from his recent book The Security Dilemma: Fear, Cooperation, and Trust in World Politics, Workshop resource person Prof. Nicholas Wheeler

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used multiple formats including lecture, group discussion and role-plays to explore joint initiatives that might promote trust and cooperation between the two countries.

Applying theoretical approaches to trust and mistrust in the discipline of International Relations to the particular challenge of understanding and overcoming the dynamics of mistrust in India-Pakistan relations, the Workshop provided a space for participants to:

- Discuss and evaluate the key approaches to trust in International Relations.
- Explore, through a role-playing exercise, how fear and mistrust can exacerbate conflict and hostility.
- Gain a greater appreciation of how one’s own actions can provoke fear on the part of others.
- Explore how far a dramatic trust-building move by India or Pakistan might transform relations, and the possibility of such a move occurring.

Prof. Nicholas Wheeler (Department of International Politics, Aberystwyth University, Wales), Noorali Surani (Market Risk Analyst, MCB Bank Ltd, Karachi), Amina Afsal (Research Fellow, Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad), Ishrat Afshan Abbasi (Lecturer, Department of International Relations, University of Sindh, Jamshoro).

The Workshop structure was as follows:

- A lecture on the theory and practice of trust-building in International Relations followed by a discussion of themes arising out of the lecture.
- A role-play which simulated a future round of bilateral negotiations between Indian and Pakistani decision-makers. The exercise required Indian participants to play the role of Pakistani policy-makers and Pakistani participants to do the same for India. The purpose was to help participants
gain a greater understanding of the role that fear and mistrust have played in shaping India-Pakistan relations.

- A role-play where participants worked in small groups to identify trust-building moves that either India or Pakistan could make that would transform relations. The desirability and feasibility of such moves were discussed and critiqued in a wider plenary session.

- A de-briefing session in which participants reflected on what they learned from the Workshop.
Lecture

Trust-building in International Relations
©Prof. Nicholas Wheeler

The WISCOMP background paper for the Workshop makes reference to the “trust deficit” in India-Pakistan relations, and this deficit extends to theorizing trust itself. There has been little systematic theorizing of trust as a core concept in the field of International Relations and the same goes for its sub-disciplinary specialisms of Peace Research, Peace Studies, and Conflict Transformation.

There is a tendency to treat trust as a given and move on. However, we need to develop a more rigorous approach to theorizing trust. Such an approach is available in other disciplines, but what is striking about this work is that none of it has been applied to the question of whether trust is possible at the international level. My work on trust-building and the ideas I share in this lecture have developed out of the book that I have recently authored with Ken Booth titled The Security Dilemma: Fear, Cooperation and Trust in World Politics.9 I am now embarked on a sister volume focused on trust-building, provisionally titled Is Trust Possible? The Human Factor in World Politics. This research is at a preliminary stage and I welcome the opportunity to hear views on how it might develop in the future.

Trust is basic to all society. In the words of the political theorist John Dunn, “The question of whom to trust and how far is as central a question of political life as it is of personal life.”10 But is the trust available in “civil life” possible in world politics? Can there be trust between nations, ethnic groups and other political units? Can trust overcome uncertainty and conquer the fear and suspicion that it gives rise to?

The lecture will cover the following topics:

- The factors that promote mistrust in world politics (and the fatalist view that it is not possible to develop trust in a world of states).
- The current state of theorizing about trust in International Relations and its limits (focusing on the rational choice approach to trust of Andrew Kydd).

The importance of the emotional bases of trust.

The properties necessary for building trust in International Relations.

The Sources of Mistrust in World Politics

The Security Dilemma

The starting point for security dilemma theorizing is that all human relations take place in an existential condition of uncertainty about the motives and intentions of others. This is what philosophers call the “other minds’ problem.” In relation to the biggest and most violent stage of all – international politics – this means that governments (their decision-makers, military planners, foreign policy analysts etc.) can never be one hundred percent certain about the current and future motives and intentions of those able to harm them in a military sense.

In this context, the security dilemma is the “unresolvable uncertainty” that confronts actors about the motives and intentions of others.\(^\text{11}\) It creates dilemmas of interpretation and response for actors. Those responsible have to decide whether a state’s actions – especially its military behavior – signal that they have defensive or self-protection purposes only (to enhance security in an uncertain world) or whether they are for offensive purposes (to seek to change the status quo to their advantage). Decision-makers then need to determine how to react. Should they signal, by words and deeds, that they will react in kind, thereby building up a capability in the event that the other’s intentions prove to be hostile? Or should they seek to signal reassurance?

The answer given by political realism to this question is that because of the condition of uncertainty, there is no alternative but to mistrust at the international level. As J.J. Mearsheimer says, “There is little room for trust among states.”\(^\text{12}\) And it is this proposition that dominates mainstream thinking in the field of International Relations.

This view argues that trust is in short supply in world politics, but perhaps more tellingly, that to trust can actually be dangerous. If you trust too readily, the argument goes, you risk being taken advantage of through exposing yourself


to betrayal. Trust is not always the best policy, and there can be high costs from governments showing misplaced trust at the international level. This leads Barry Posen to argue that governments have to assume the worst because “the worst is always possible.”

**Benign Self-Images**

Policymakers exhibit a benign self-image when they believe that other governments know that their intentions are peaceful or defensive. This however leads states to interpret any arming, on the part of adversaries or potential adversaries, as evidence of hostile intent. But policy-makers with a peaceful/defensive self-image fail to appreciate that their own actions might be seen as threatening by that state. The following statement by U.S. Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, during the Cold War, is a case in point: “Khrushchev does not need to be convinced of our good intentions. He knows we are not aggressors and do not threaten the security of the Soviet Union.”

The British historian Herbert Butterfield was the first to capture how these psychological dynamics can work to exacerbate conflict. Diplomats, he wrote, “may vividly feel the terrible fear that (they) have of the other party, but (they) cannot enter into the (others’) counter-fear, or even understand why (they) should be particularly nervous. It is never possible for you to realize or remember properly that since (the other) cannot see the inside of your mind, (they) can never have the same assurance of your intentions that you have.”

Butterfield was very doubtful that state leaders were capable of entering into the counter-fear of their enemies, but as I argue below, such an intention and capacity is crucial to the building of trust.

If both sides exhibit benign self-images, there is the risk of spiraling mistrust as both come to see themselves as on the defensive against an implacable foe, and each fails to appreciate that its own actions might be provoking fear and insecurity on the part of the other. Developing and elaborating Butterfield’s work, Robert Jervis, in the 1970s, had described these dynamics as the “spiral model.” Jervis argued that what fuelled the “spiral model” was the inability of policymakers to appreciate that they were ensnared in one.

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**Ambiguous Symbolism**

These psychological dynamics are compounded by the problem of ambiguous symbolism. The term refers to the difficulty (many would say the impossibility) of safely distinguishing between “offensive” and “defensive” weapons. Even if states profess that their weaponry is only to be used in self-defense after an attack, others will worry that such capabilities might be used for offensive purposes. This was the security dilemma that confronted NATO and the Warsaw Pact during the Cold War. Each side professed defensive intent, but both alliances had offensive military strategies that led policymakers and planners on each side to question the other’s peaceful intentions.

Such arguments have also been invoked in the South Asian context to explain the risks of instability during crises. For example, in the context of India and Pakistan, did the crises in 1999-2002 show the difficulty of distinguishing precautionary “defensive” moves from preparations for attack? Did Indian and Pakistani decision-makers face nuclear dilemmas of interpretation and response?

**Ideological Fundamentalism**

Ideological convictions have often been decisive in how policymakers have resolved uncertainties about the motives and intentions of others. Ideological fundamentalism is a mindset which assigns enemy status because of what the other *is* – its political identity – rather than how it actually behaves. Once a government has decided that another is an implacable foe, there is no security dilemma because the *dilemma of interpretation* – as Booth and I call it – has been resolved in favor of the view that the other is an aggressor. Instead, we argue that decision-makers believe (rightly or wrongly) that they face what we call a *strategic challenge*.

Ideological fundamentalism gives rise to what Ole Holsti calls “an inherent bad faith model” of one’s adversary. In a landmark study, Holsti showed how John Foster Dulles adopted an “inherent bad faith model” of Soviet behavior in the 1950s. Holsti’s verdict was that for Dulles, the Soviet Union must behave in the negative way it did solely as a result of the ideological nature of the state.

The idea of an “inherent bad faith model” fuelling mistrust has been applied to several different cases, namely, US-Soviet relations during the Cold War, US-Iranian relations today, and there have been claims that such a mindset has afflicted India-Pakistan relations.
The implication of bad faith thinking for trust-building is that governments operating with this outlook will always treat cooperative moves as either a trick to lull them into a false sense of security or as a sign of weakness. In other words, an “inherent bad faith model” leads states to impute malevolent intent to any actions of their adversaries, including cooperative ones. Such a mindset leads to negative stereotyping and strong enemy images, and even genuine attempts at building trust will be treated with great suspicion.

In exploring this source of mistrust, while ideological fundamentalism is not always a bad thing, since governments might find themselves facing an implacable foe motivated by a creed that commits them to aggressive actions, the problem is that because of the security dilemma, there can be no certainty about the motives and intentions of others.

Having identified these drivers of mistrust and provided some illustrations, I hope we can explore, through the role-playing exercises, how far these factors can be seen at work in the mistrust that characterizes India-Pakistan relations over issues like Kashmir and nuclear weapons.

**From Mistrust to Trust: The Challenge of Trust-building**

While the discipline of International Relations has been quite limited in its theorizing of trust, a notable exception is the American scholar Andrew Kydd. In his 2005 book *Trust and Mistrust in International Relations*, he defines trust as the “belief that the other side prefers mutual cooperation to exploiting one’s own cooperation, while mistrust is a belief that the other side prefers exploiting one’s cooperation to returning it.” At the heart of Kydd’s theory of trust-building is the concept of “costly signalling,” which he defines as “signals designed to persuade the other side that one is trustworthy by virtue of the fact that they are so costly that one would hesitate to send them if one were untrustworthy.”

It is no good sending a signal, he argues, that could be dismissed as “cheap talk,” and so will fail to reassure the other side about one’s intentions. Consequently, a state wanting to be seen as trustworthy should be prepared to take some risks in order to persuade the other that it is serious about cooperation. However, the difficulty here is that governments are often reluctant to make

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the kind of unilateral moves that would signal trust for fear that this might expose them to danger if their trust proves misplaced. Evan Braden Montgomery, in his 2006 article in *International Security*, captures this point well. “Governments are often confronted with a difficult trade-off: the same actions necessary to reassure their adversaries will also endanger their own security if those adversaries are in reality aggressive.”

This suggests that trust is easier when there is a *margin of safety*, but trust can only exist when some vulnerability is accepted. But this means that if actors seek to a greater margin of safety, this will drive out trust. Kydd’s theory of trust-building does not explore the relationship between vulnerability and trust, and this weakness is compounded by his neglect of the fundamental importance of the emotional dimension of trust. Kydd cites the trust that developed between Gorbachev and Reagan in the mid-to-late 1980s as evidence to support his theory. Here, he contends that Gorbachev’s costly signaling in the form of the Soviet concessions over the 1987 INF Treaty and even more crucially, the Soviet leader’s announcement that Moscow would reduce those Soviet forces that most worried NATO, built the trust between Reagan and Gorbachev. However, what has to be explained is how the trust became possible that led Gorbachev to make these moves in the first place.

On this point, Kydd is silent. But Mikhail Gorbachev was one of those rare leaders who appreciated the importance of the emotional dimension of trust. He reflected in his *Memoirs* that what he called the “human factor” had been essential to the development of trust between him and President Reagan. This argument about the importance of emotions in thinking about trust finds support in the work of sociological writing on trust.

J. David Lewis and Andrew Weigert have argued that trust always involves both rational reasons (what they call the “cognitive element”) and an “emotional base.” Stripped of the cognitive element, Lewis and Weigert suggest, trust would be “blind faith” or “fixed hope,” while divorced from feelings, it would simply be “rationally calculated risk: the ultimate war game in which the only logic is self-interest and kill ratios. Trust, in everyday life, is a *mix* of feeling and rational thinking.”

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Kydd’s theory of trust-building belongs to a rationalist approach to International Relations theory where trust is explained in terms of the calculations of rational egoists. The inadequacies of the rationalist approach to trust have been critiqued at length by the philosopher Martin Hollis. He has argued that rational egoists (Hollis calls them “philosophical egoists”) can never give up the chance to exploit others if their utility will be benefited by such action. Trust requires actors to be prepared to eschew the satisfaction of their own utilities – something that is contrary to the nature of rational egoism.\(^{19}\) According to Hollis, “Even if one had an egoistic reason to play fair with a stranger, it would be only when one had no better reason not to. That would make trust a merely practical question.”\(^{20}\)

Having critiqued the dominant approaches in International Relations which either reject the possibility of trust (political realism), or empty it of meaning by reducing it to rational egoism (Kydd’s rational choice approach), I now want to expound an alternative theory of trust-building rooted in the human factor. And I do so in the knowledge that it is this approach to trust – with the emotional dimension at its core – that guides the daily trust-building endeavors of WISCOMP.

\[^{19}\text{Martin Hollis, Trust within Reason (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 59–60.}\]

\[^{20}\text{Ibid, p. 160.}\]
Defining Trust in International Relations

Ken Booth and I define trust as follows: “Trust exists when two or more actors, based on the mutual interpretation of each other’s attitudes and behavior, believe that the other(s), now and in the future, can be relied upon to desist from acting in ways that will be injurious to their interests and values.” We go on to argue that trusting relationships are made possible by the following linked pairs of properties:

- leap in the dark/uncertainty
- empathy/bonding
- dependence/vulnerability
- integrity/reliability

For trust to become embedded between political units, it is necessary for positive relationships between decision-makers to be replicated at the inter-societal level, and vice-versa, through a mutual learning process.

The Properties of Trust

Leap in the dark/uncertainty

Trust scholars disagree over whether trust stems from a judgment as to the trustworthiness of the trustee which leads the trustor to place his or her trust in the trustee. This is often referred to as the “passive” model of trust. Opposed to this is the proposition that trust begins in a risky shift of position by a person or group, the first act seeking to express and bring about a relationship of trust. This is the “active” model of trust.

Does trust-building require as a first step what Lewis and Weigert call a “leap” of trust? The concept of uncertainty refers to the existential condition in which that relationship – like all human interactions – takes place. Trust and uncertainty are mutually implicated. This is because trust always develops under conditions of uncertainty and never entirely escapes it. If humans had one-hundred-per-cent certainty in a relationship, they would not need trust; it would become an irrelevant concept.

Orthodox thinking about statecraft traditionally honors playing it safe, yet international history furnishes us with a set of significant cases in which leaders chose (with positive outcomes) to take a political “leap in the dark.” This actual phrase comes from Robert Schuman, the French Foreign Minister, in relation to the launching of the ECSC, the first major act of European integration.

An example of radical risk-taking by a leader was the courageous decision by President Anwar Sadat of Egypt in 1977 to fly to Jerusalem, and, in a speech before the Knesset, publicly recognize the right of Israel to exist. This led to a spectacular breakthrough in Egypt–Israeli relations.

Setting aside the personal risks, since as we know Sadat was killed by an extremist opposed to the peace process four years later, such a leap in political contexts usually involves people with courage, conviction and vision, who will risk being rebuffed, exposed and betrayed.

Even if leaders are prepared to make such leaps of trust, they can backfire. One fascinating case in the South Asian context is Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee’s visit to Lahore in 1999 which was full of symbolism, and, I would argue, can be seen as a “leap in the dark.” This one did not turn out as the Indian Prime Minister had hoped, leading him to state in an interview in 2002 that, “I had gone to Lahore with a message of goodwill but in return we got Kargil.”

This is a case that I would like participants to think about while preparing for the role-play: Do you agree that Vajpayee took a leap in the dark, and are there any lessons to be learned from this encounter for future Pakistani and Indian leaps in the dark?

**Empathy/Bonding**

The problem with governments taking on the perspective of others is that they often find it very difficult to empathize with the fears of other states because they believe that others know that they do not mean them any harm. This is the problem of “benign self-images” that I mentioned earlier as a source of mistrust. A capacity to enter into the counter-fear of others, whilst remembering that fear does not always do all the work and that ambition is sometimes at play, should be part of the training for all of us, but especially diplomats. What has to be cultivated in all of us is what Booth and I call “security dilemma sensibility” which we define as follows:
Security dilemma sensibility is an actor’s intention and capacity to perceive the motives behind, and to show responsiveness towards, the potential complexity of the military intentions of others. In particular, it refers to the ability to understand the role that fear might play in their attitudes and behavior, including, crucially, the role that one’s own actions may play in provoking that fear.

This is what Gorbachev and his advisors were able to do. The most dramatic example of this was the announcement in December 1988 that the Soviet Union would cut those conventional forces that most worried NATO. Here, Gorbachev appreciated that others do not always see you as you see yourself, and he made a dramatic move to signal reassurance and not provocation.

A further example of how empathy and sympathy can lead to trust-building is WISCOMP’s work in Jammu and Kashmir. From a trust-building perspective, what is important here is that trust has come from the parties internalizing the emotions/feelings and psychological realities of the other, and realizing that pain, loss and suffering are shared experiences. As Meenakshi Gopinath and Sumona DasGupta of WISCOMP note, “It has not always been an easy process, but slowly and surely mutual trust and greater understanding have grown...women have reached across the divide, they are prepared, sometimes for the first time, to listen to the other, and a thirst for vengeance has been supplanted by an urge to reconcile.”

Going beyond the development of empathy, bonding occurs when actors translate a level of empathy and sympathy into a political relationship characterized by positive feelings and the forging of a new collective identity. There are similarities here with Alexander Wendt’s discussion of how trust leads to new collective identities in his book *Social Theory of International Politics*, and with Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett’s important discussion of how security communities develop in their 1998 edited book *Security Communities*. Adler and Barnett’s work stands out as one of the few books to develop the concept of trust outside of a rationalist framework, but though they appealed in 1998 for a new research agenda focused on trust, there has been little response to this call in mainstream International Relations and Peace Research. Over the course of the WISCOMP Workshop, participants have made reference to the importance of “we-ness,” and this is what is understood by the idea of bonding. Such bonding is invariably a difficult and lengthy process,

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especially if there is an enmity between the political units involved going back generations (memory, inheritance of hatred et al.).

**Dependence/vulnerability**

Aaron Hoffman wrote in his 2006 book *Building Trust* – a rare monograph on trust in International Relations – that “Trust refers to an actor’s willingness to place something valued under another actor’s control.” The corollary of this is that actors must be willing to accept their vulnerability to betrayal if their positive expectations about the motives and intentions of others prove misplaced. The moral philosopher Annette Baier commented in the same vein: “Trust is acceptance of vulnerability to harm that others could inflict, but which we judge that they will not in fact inflict.”

The big question that arises from the vulnerability issue for students of trust-building relates to the “margin of safety” issue that I mentioned earlier. What has to be recognized is that the acceptance of vulnerability is an essential property of trust.

**Integrity/reliability**

While trust can never escape uncertainty, it nevertheless requires confidence in the attitudes and behavior of another party such that betrayal is seen as improbable. Actors must be confident that others will prove worthy of the trust invested in them. This is related to the property of integrity, which implies that partners have confidence that the other will do what is right. Integrity refers to what Hollis calls “trust as bond.” Consider, for example, the Oslo peace process. There was no history of trustworthiness on either side, yet any degree of success at Oslo required Rabin and Arafat to believe that the other would do the right thing and prove a predictable partner.

Diego Gambetta and Heather Hamill have argued that trust requires actors to “shut off certain risks and try not to think of their vulnerability.” Success in the Oslo process depended on the militarily more powerful partner, Rabin,

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believing Arafat’s promise in their exchange of letters in August 1993 that in return for Israel transferring parts of the “Holy Land” to Palestinian control, violent acts by the Palestinians would come to an end in both Israel and the Occupied Territories. For his part, Arafat and the PLO had to believe Israeli assurances that the establishment of a new Palestinian Authority under the Accords would lead to a Palestinian state, making possible a final and comprehensive settlement of the highly divisive issues of the status of Jerusalem, the future of Israeli settlements in Gaza and the West Bank, and what some believe to be the most difficult issue of all, the right of return of Palestinians to their homeland.

**Conclusion**

In none of these discussions am I wanting to claim that trust is easy to achieve, or that if it is achieved that it represents a panacea. Trust in all walks of life is far easier to destroy than to build and sustain. This is because it always takes place in conditions of both uncertainty and vulnerability.

Just as uncertainty and the acceptance of vulnerability must be the beginning of thinking about the security dilemma, so must they be the beginning of thinking about trust. This is why Booth and I say that the security dilemma cannot be escaped, but it can be transcended – that is, militarized security competition can potentially be eliminated between enemies. The challenge for trust-building in world politics is to recognize the reality that the security dilemma cannot ultimately be escaped, but at the same time, seek to develop the political conditions that reduce uncertainty and promote trust.

This has arguably been the achievement of West-European states in their project of rebuilding Europe after 1945 as a security community. The members of the community once took the risk of trusting; over time, proved themselves to be trustworthy; and then created a virtuous spiral of trust to replace the historically familiar pattern of ratcheting up the arms race. The other interesting point about Western Europe is that it is not just trust at the level of leaders; it is embedded in the communities and in society at large. There is this sense of “we-ness” and inter-societal trust in West Europe. The security community of Western Europe is the most successful example of trust-building at the international level. This is the sense in which we say that the security dilemma has not been escaped, but it has been transcended.

When we consider the risks and costs of taking leaps of trust which might prove misplaced, we need to remember that so-called “playing it safe” and
following the realist advice to assume the worst brings with it the risk of spiraling mistrust and an ever increasing security competition that could have been avoided. In conclusion, has the discipline of International Relations been too preoccupied with the costs of mistrust and not given sufficient attention to the possibilities of trust? And playing it safe isn’t then necessarily safe. It can actually be more dangerous than taking risks for trust.

Trust, then, exists in a practical arena of risks and dangers, but partly depends for its success on the world of feelings. I would argue that given the importance of understanding the emotional basis of trust, it cannot be properly accessed by a rationalist toolkit as argued by Kydd and those who seek to model trust using game theory. What is required instead is an interdisciplinary approach rooted in a fuller appreciation of the “human factor.”

Discussion

A question was posed with reference to the assertion of collective identity – how a group of people asserting a distinct identity (e.g. a separatist movement) come into the framework of trust-building where their agenda, in a positive sense, would be to assert their separate identity. Wheeler cited the example of Kosovo’s movement for independence and the negative repercussions on relations with Serbia. From a trust-building perspective, in order to address the historical memories and the inheritance of hate, it was felt that a more appropriate position would have been for Kosovo to negotiate a confederate arrangement so that the province had a significant degree of autonomy but continued to be part of the Yugoslav state. Yet, it was noted that Kosovo perhaps cannot travel to where it wants to get to without being independent. There is a thirst for vengeance among Kosovars because of the memories of oppression which have been nurtured for centuries. How do we balance the understandable aspirations of statehood for a people against the problems of mistrust that such moves for independence might provoke? So while independence might build greater community and promote a sense of “we-ness” among the Kosovars, such a move would create a relationship of mistrust vis-à-vis Serbia.

The relationship between Vladimir Putin and George Bush was cited as an example where the leaders started from a position of trusting each other. This trust however could not be sustained and the relationship has deteriorated in recent years. How would one explain this? Wheeler attributed this partly to structural factors – factors that were there in the relationship, but which the leaders were papering over. These became much more important as
the relationship progressed. Or it could also be said that there were trust-building moves that the two leaders could have made interpersonally to consolidate the relationship and develop it, and perhaps they could have taken their own “leaps in the dark.” These might have helped in ameliorating and even overcoming the structural factors that were pushing the relationship towards mistrust.

Several questions were based on the perception that trust and interests are incompatible – that somehow if parties engage in trust-building exercises, they do so at the cost of pursuing their interests. Seeing this as a misnomer, Wheeler took the view that there is an overlap between trust and interests. Sharing a more dynamic conception of interests, he saw these as being influenced by fluid identities. So as our identities change, so do our interests. Further, our decision to cooperate with other people is influenced by how we see our relationships with them in terms of our identities. For instance, the strategy that we adopt in “prisoners’ dilemma” games will vary depending on whether we are playing the game with friends or with adversaries.

Citing an example from the Cold War, Wheeler noted that the Soviet Union had a very different conception of its interests under Mikhail Gorbachev than it did under Leonid Brezhnev. This however did not imply that it had given up on national interests and was behaving altruistically. What this shift did suggest was that under Gorbachev, there was a belief that the Soviet Union could be secure only if others were secure, leading to the paradigm of shared and common security.

The discussion concluded with some ambivalence about the relationship between cooperation and trust. Without trust, is cooperation between India and Pakistan possible? While Wheeler saw trust as a prerequisite for cooperation, he invited participants to reflect on this question as they entered the role-play on trust-building.

**Role-play**

**Overcoming the Dynamics of India-Pakistan Mistrust**

Following the lecture, Prof. Nicholas Wheeler facilitated a series of role-playing exercises with Indian and Pakistani participants putting themselves in the “shoes” of the other. Participants worked together in break-out groups to devise trust-building moves that might promote peace between the two countries, exploring their desirability and feasibility as well.

The purpose of this role-playing exercise was to help participants critically reflect upon the practical application of the ideas that were shared in the lecture.
In the first role-play, participants were divided into four groups and asked to prepare a position paper for a new round of the India-Pakistan peace process. Two groups were tasked with focusing on the question of Kashmir and the other two role-played a meeting to discuss new confidence and security building measures (CSBMs) in relation to India and Pakistan’s nuclear programs. Both of these role-playing exercises took the form of a bilateral negotiation where each group presented the position of the government they were representing.

Given that empathizing with the fears, interests and positions of one’s adversary is a key prerequisite for building trust, the Indian participants played the role of the Pakistani Government and the Pakistani participants role-played the Indian Government. The hope was that such role-playing would help all participants to understand the perspectives, and crucially the fears, of the government that their own country perceives as an enemy. Such perspective taking – or what Wheeler and Booth call “security dilemma sensibility” in their book *The Security Dilemma: Fear, Cooperation and Trust in World Politics* – is crucial to overcoming the negative enemy imaging and ideological stereotyping that can lead to spiraling mistrust.

**Role-play on Kashmir**

Prior to the initiation of the role-play, the Indian and Pakistani negotiating teams were asked to reflect on the following questions:

- What are the outstanding issues between your two countries that need resolving?

*Pakistani participants role-playing the Indian Government during the simulation on Kashmir.*
• What are the other country’s motives and intentions in relation to Kashmir?
• How far does Pakistan/India pose a strategic challenge to India’s/Pakistan’s interests and values in Kashmir?
• Are there any initiatives or moves that your government could make that might build trust?
• Are there any possibilities for restructuring conventional forces across the Line of Control that might promote mutual security?
• What are the prospects for joint management of common issues like water, power, communications, and even defense?

In many ways, the opening statements of the negotiating teams mirrored the official positions of the two countries on issues such as Kashmir (plebiscite, human rights and demilitarization), cross-border terrorism, the Baglihar dam, Siachen, and third-party mediation. The teams debated the sequencing of these issues and traversed the various changes in the discourse over the last 60 years.

While the Indian team’s statement that “Kashmir is an integral part of the country” drew Pakistan’s ire, the two sides initiated a blame game over the question of human rights and terrorism. Pakistan’s concern for the human rights situation in Indian Kashmir was followed with the Indian side raising questions about the former’s human rights record in Balochistan and Wana and its alleged support for terrorism in Kashmir and Afghanistan. This led to further mud-slinging over how each country treats its minority communities.

However, once the two teams had fully vented their grievances on these issues and had come to the realization that the debate had reached a point of diminishing returns, the role-play transformed into a dialogue, generating the following insights:

• Making an effort to put themselves “in the shoes of the other,” the two teams agreed that neither side would bluntly negate the other’s position. Also, they would move beyond options that either side found unacceptable (the idea of a plebiscite, which is unacceptable to India and the conversion of the Line of Control into an international border, which is unacceptable to Pakistan).
• Both sides echoed a statement made by former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, “You can change friends, but you cannot change your neighbors.” Reflecting this sentiment in their negotiating positions, the two sides conceded that setbacks and obstacles should not stall the composite dialogue process.
• On the issue of Kashmir, the Pakistani team underscored the importance of addressing human rights violations by the Indian Army and foregrounding the voices of the Kashmiris. It saw troop reduction and demobilization as a prerequisite for conflict resolution.

• The Indian team chose to focus on the progress made through the composite dialogue process, highlighting, in particular, the agreement on the movement of people and goods across the LoC. Responding to the Pakistani team’s concern for human rights in Kashmir, it said that the government had adopted a zero tolerance approach to any sort of human rights violations in the state.

• Attempting to explore options that would benefit future generations of Indians and Pakistanis, the two sides arrived at a consensus on Siachen. Seeing it in the context of the discourse on climate change, they agreed to treat Siachen as “no-man’s land” and develop it as an environmental heritage zone.

Role Play on Nuclear CSBMs

The role play was informed by the following questions:

• What are the outstanding issues between the two countries that need resolving?
• How do you interpret the other country’s nuclear intentions?
• Are there any initiatives or moves that your government could make that might build trust?
• Are there any possibilities in terms of building mutual confidence in relation to both side’s nuclear forces?
• For the Indian Negotiating Team: How important is the US-India Nuclear Agreement? For the Pakistani Negotiating Team: How do you perceive the US-India Nuclear Agreement?
• For the Indian Negotiating Team: How does the Chinese nuclear threat influence the possibilities for India-Pakistan nuclear cooperation? For the Pakistani Negotiating Team: How do you deal with the Indian claim that China’s nuclear capabilities are an important factor in shaping India’s nuclear doctrine and strategy?

The Indian side expressed concern over the arms’ race between the two countries and the trust deficit which exacerbates the problem. Particularly worrying was the fact that Pakistan’s nuclear program was India-centric while its own program was not Pakistan-centric. Concern over the safety of Pakistan’s nuclear
technology, particularly in light of revelations about the A.Q. Khan network, was also expressed. To address these problems, the Indian side suggested reduction in defense budgets and a joint declaration of nuclear assets as CSBMs.

The Pakistan team drew attention to the fact that even though both India and Pakistan were nuclear weapon nations, the latter had been a victim of the stereotype of the “unstable, Islamic country” possessing nuclear weapons. It underscored the need for nuclear CSBMs, saying that the stakes were high since the two countries are geographically contiguous and have a shared history and culture. The Pakistan team drew attention to the threat that the Indo-US nuclear deal posed to the stability of the South Asian region. It feared that the deal would initiate an arms’ race between the two countries. Refuting India’s claim that Pakistan’s nuclear program was India-centric, it said that it was security-centric. Yet, it was acknowledged that much of Pakistan’s insecurity stemmed from actions undertaken by India.

Both sides underscored the importance of steps for coexistence and for the stability and prosperity of the other country. The Indian side was particularly careful to avoid statements that questioned the rationale for the creation and existence of Pakistan as a state.

**Reflections on the Role-plays**

The following reflections were shared by the participants on the two role-plays:

- The challenge of putting oneself in the shoes of the other was quite evident with participants, at different points of time during the negotiation, succumbing to the various factors of mistrust (that had been highlighted in the lecture). The “blame game,” which both sides engaged in, was one such factor that came into play on several occasions during the two role-plays. Despite the theoretical discussion on how this hinders trust, it was difficult for the negotiating teams to avoid this tendency altogether. The “blame game,” as Wheeler shared, derives from the interaction between “benign self-images” and “ideological fundamentalism.”

- There was a sense that even though the parties started with the intention to trust the other side and cooperate, a negative comment or misunderstanding from the other side led to a certain degree of intransigence and stereotyping towards the end of the exercise. Added to this was the feeling that “talking” was accompanied with very little “listening.”
Casting off patriotism was a challenge for many of the participants role-playing government officials. As one participant noted, “once you step into the ‘shoes’ of the government, it becomes difficult to embark on alternative thinking about the bilateral relationship.”

Participants talked about how the role-play helped them to appreciate the positions taken by the governments of the other side over the last several years. Further, the exercise enabled them to understand the enormous constraints under which politicians work. What many participants found challenging was the fact that as a representative of a government, they had to work within a domestic decision-making structure and suppress individual views which differed from the official positions they had to subscribe to. This also meant that state imperatives did not allow the negotiators to “think out of the box.” Yet, some participants felt differently on this issue of agency. Citing examples of agency shown by political leaders in different contexts (Gorbachev during the Cold War, Anwar Saddat in the context of Egypt-Israel relations), they said that political leaders can overcome the constraints imposed by the structure of track one dialogues and take “leaps in the dark” that transform the peace process.

The challenge of what Conflict Transformation scholar John Paul Lederach describes as the “interdependence gap” was evident in the role-play. While some participants felt that widening the perspectives by using a multi-track approach would help to transcend the rigid, exclusivist positions that track one actors often find themselves entrenched in, others were more critical of the role that track one has played in the context of India-Pakistan relations. Here, it is insightful to look at Lederach’s focus on the need to invest resources in building the capacity for “vertical interdependence.” Vertical capacity is the ability to develop relationships of respect and understanding between higher levels of leadership with mid-range, community and grassroots levels of peacebuilding. According to Lederach, the field of peacebuilding has concentrated more of its resources on horizontal relationships, ignoring the need to build similar relationships between track one leaders, mid-level actors and grassroots initiatives. As Lederach puts it, “The most significant gap of interdependence we face is rooted in the lack of coordinated relationships up and down the levels of leadership in a society.”

the kind of attention it deserved in the post-roleplay discussions, such interdependence is vital in order to feed the trust-building work carried out in the civil society tracks (particularly at the grassroots) into the track one process. At this juncture, Javed Jabbar, Mediaperson, Writer and Former Minister, Pakistan, reminded the participants that it is only through a track one process that various perspectives can be translated into practical policy. “People-to-people contact can only be possible if governments take the decision to allow it. The issuance of visas, the conduct of air flights or buses or trains, all these are political, official decisions. So very little credit is given to political leadership for facilitating people to people contact.”

- Commenting on the need to build both horizontal and vertical relationships, Meenakshi Gopinath reflected on her experience with the Neemrana Track Two Dialogue where, often, the perspectives shared by some of the Indian and Pakistani members, found resonance with those on the opposite team. She felt it was important to pick up on these signals and use such moments to build relationships of trust with individuals across the lines of conflict. Building such a web of one-on-one relationships with those seen as the other would help the peace process much more than a perspective that sees the negotiating teams as two homogenous groups.

**Search for New “Leaps in the Dark” in India-Pakistan Relations**

Following the role-plays on Kashmir and Nuclear CSBMs, participants worked in mixed groups to generate creative proposals for promoting trust between India and Pakistan. Their discussions were informed by the following questions: What kinds of “leaps in the dark” would build trust between India and Pakistan? What are the “leaps” that each country has taken in the past? What happened to those leaps? Can leaders in New Delhi and Islamabad find the courage and imagination to take the moves that might transform India-Pakistan relations?

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30 Comment made by Javed Jabbar at the Conflict Transformation Workshop.

31 The idea of a “leap in the dark,” which Workshop resource person, Prof. Nicholas Wheeler, discussed in his lecture, refers to a “dramatic act which seeks to express and bring about a relationship of trust.” It is a symbolic and unilateral confidence-building move designed to invite positive reciprocation from the adversary.
The emphasis was in particular on “unilateral moves” that each side could take in order to transform the conflict. Wheeler cited two examples of such unilateral “leaps in the dark.” One, the historic trip by Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat to Jerusalem in 1977 where he spoke of the need to bring down “the other walls” is often seen as a significant trust-building move. It also reflected the ability of political leaders to show agency and transcend rigid official positions. Sadat had spoken about the need to bring down those walls that constitute a “psychological barrier, a barrier of suspicion, a barrier of rejection, a barrier of fear, of deception” between Israelis and Arabs – a barrier, which he described as constituting “70% of the problem.” The second example is of former Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee’s trip to Lahore in 1999 to inaugurate the Delhi-Lahore bus service. The trip which led to the Lahore Agreement, seen as a major confidence and security building measure between the two countries, also saw Vajpayee make a powerful, symbolic statement by visiting Minar-e-Pakistan, the monument that commemorates the birth of Pakistan. It was at this site that, in 1940, the Muslim League passed the Lahore Resolution demanding the creation of Pakistan.

Participants identified the following “leaps in the dark” for India-Pakistan relations:

**Group One**
- Consolidate the existing CBMs between both countries.
- Pakistan offers a trade corridor to India through its territory.
- The two countries agree to resolve the Kashmir issue along the lines of the Northern Ireland model. Implicit in this is the assumption that India moves beyond its stated position that “Kashmir is an integral part of India” and recognizes that this is an important issue for Pakistan.
- An inter-state commission that enables the two countries to work together on improving education, employment and health facilities.
- Both countries reduce their defense budget by at least one percent every year.
- The visa process between the two countries should be simplified and city-centric restrictions removed.
- Exchange programs between the military academies of the two countries could play an important role in changing mindsets.

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When quizzed about the desirability and feasibility of these “leaps in the dark,” Group One did not express confidence in the ability of track one to implement these proposals. Two reasons were cited: the various sources of mistrust (that had been discussed in the lecture) and issues of ego, self-respect and identity. Yet, participants felt that political will can play an important role in transforming an idealistic proposal into one that looks desirable and feasible.

Pointing to the reference made to the Irish model, Wheeler quoted Senator George Mitchell, the mediator of the peace process that led to the Good Friday Agreement, who, in the context of the debate over the decommissioning of weapons said that what was instead needed was a “decommissioning of mindsets.” If Northern Ireland is seen as a model for Kashmir, a similar “decommissioning of mindsets” would first need to be initiated. This also suggests that the challenge to the implementation of the “leaps in the dark” has less to do with political obstacles and more to do with historical factors, particularly what a Workshop participant called “the inheritance of hatred” for the other side. In this context, it was felt that student and cultural exchanges can play an important role in transforming mindsets and building trust. Once this is accomplished, the generation of political will for the implementation of the above “leaps in the dark” will become desirable as well as feasible.

33 The issue of decommissioning of weapons had stalled the peace process in Northern Ireland for several years. Because of the “inherent bad faith model,” Protestant groups were hostile to cooperation with the Republicans till they had absolute proof of decommissioning. Even when such proof became evident, because of the absence of trust, they found it difficult to believe that groups such as the Irish Republican Army had decommissioned their weapons.
Group Two

Group Two looked at three categories of leaps in the dark:

1. Bilateral steps initiated by both India and Pakistan

- Relaxation of the visa regime and initiation of a process through which the SAARC region becomes a visa-free zone.
- Educational exchange programs between Indian and Pakistani students and faculty members. A reservation of seats for students and teachers from the other country was suggested so that every year, the educational institutions host a substantial number of delegates from across the border. Related to this was the proposal that Pakistan provide job opportunities for Indian professionals from other disciplines and vice-versa.
- The two countries make Kashmir (on both sides of the LoC) a nuclear weapons free zone.
- A simultaneous release of prisoners of war by both countries and the granting of amnesty, where necessary.
- Representation of Kashmiri perspectives (reflecting diversity in religion, ethnicity and political persuasion), particularly voices of dissent, in the bilateral dialogue.
- Collaboration between Indian and Pakistani educational institutions on the curriculum for the teaching of history in each country. It was suggested that an effort can be made to have greater congruence between the syllabi of history courses in the two countries.

2. The following were identified as unilateral “leaps in the dark” that India could take:

- Demilitarization of Siachen.
- Demilitarization of Jammu and Kashmir, beginning with a few districts and spreading to the entire state. Amnesty could be considered for militants operating in the Valley.

3. The following were identified as unilateral “leaps in the dark” that Pakistan could take:

- Opening of more points along the LoC.
- Steps to ease the negotiations on the gas pipeline and other trade issues.
The question of vulnerability was posed with respect to some of the unilateral leaps mentioned above. For instance, the suggestion that India demilitarizes Siachen invited questions about whether such a move would make the country vulnerable to threat. Wheeler quoted Craig Montgomery who said, “Often the moves that you need to signal that your intentions are peaceful and defensive are the moves that can place you in danger, if the trust proves misplaced.” Group Two however felt that since Siachen represented an area where the two countries were close to an agreement, the proposal for demilitarization was seen to be one that would be mutually-beneficial as well as realistic.

**Group Three**

While formulating its proposals, Group Three focused on two key qualities of a “leap in the dark.” First, the initiative should be unilateral; second, it should reflect vision, foresight and imagination.

- Demilitarization of Siachen and joint management of the region. In light of the growing concern of climate change and the region’s rich environmental heritage, the two countries could develop Siachen as a biodiversity peace park.
- The two countries collaborate in the “war on terror.” This would involve military collaboration to respond to terror attacks in Kashmir as well as in other parts of India and Pakistan. Rather than being seen as a divider – terrorism, which affects both India and Pakistan – was seen as an issue that could connect the two countries. The examples of Indian and Pakistani soldiers working together under the banner of UN Peacekeeping and the Joint-Anti Terror Mechanism were cited as models.
• Pakistan should be willing to negotiate on all issues without the conditionality of resolving the Kashmir conflict. The trust built over the course of the dialogue would help in negotiations over the more complex issue of Kashmir.

• Release of all Indian and Pakistani prisoners and fishermen languishing in the jails of the other country.

• The ban imposed on Indian films in Pakistani theaters should be withdrawn.

• Keeping in mind the psychological and socioeconomic impact of firing and shelling on the wellbeing of the populations living along the LoC, the two countries should make a more concerted effort to sustain the ceasefire.

Group Four

• History books should be rewritten to remove any kind of prejudice and hate-writing towards the other country. The books could also talk about the shared history and culture of the two countries prior to 1947.

• Scholarships should be provided to students from each side to study in the other country.

• India should begin a process of troop reduction in Kashmir.

• Kashmiri students should be allowed to travel across the LoC as well as across the border into Pakistan for higher education.

• The visa process should be relaxed for senior citizens.

• Programs that enable Indian and Pakistani students to dialogue with politicians from both sides should be initiated.

• The two countries should provide a context for exchanges between scientists and technocrats on technology cooperation.

• A major trust-building move would be for the two countries to engage in joint military exercises and increase the possibilities for interaction between Indian and Pakistani military personnel.

Closing Reflections

The Workshop concluded with participants sharing their reflections on the role-play exercises. Several commented on how they had come to realize the potent role that fear and mistrust play in exacerbating conflict and hostility. The role-play had also helped many to gain a greater appreciation of how one’s own actions can provoke fear on the part of others. With respect to the exercise on “leaps in the dark,” several commented on the enormous potential
that lay in a dramatic, unilateral, trust-building move transforming relations between the two countries.

Navina Jafa, an Expert in Development Communication through Performing Arts, New Delhi, and a Workshop participant, said: “This was one of the most challenging exercises that I have experienced both in relation to national issues as well as on a personal level. To actually think from the point of view of others, especially from the perspective of the opposing party, remains, in my view, one of the most important aspects of trust-building, creating community bonding and evolving a common identity.” Ghulam Ali, a PhD Scholar at the Quaid-e-Azam University from Islamabad said: “As a Pakistani national, I felt strange to bargain from an Indian point of view on the Kashmir issue, but I empathized and realized that both the nations are equally at stake, facing similar issues.”

Locating the WISCOMP Conflict Transformation Workshop for third generation Indians and Pakistanis in the context of the discourse on trust-building, the resource person Prof. Nicholas Wheeler noted that it is initiatives such as this, sustained over a long period of time, that generate the trust required to take the “leaps in the dark” that participants had identified during the course of the simulation. The hope was expressed that in 20 or 30 years, when Workshop participants find themselves in positions of decision-making, they will be able to transcend official, statist positions and create spaces for agency and change. Trust-building requires the initiation of many such workshops, dialogues and exchanges, sustained over an extended period of time. It is through such efforts that an environment conducive for parties to take “leaps in the dark” and to sustain a peace process can be created.
Public Diplomacy and Trust-building

As part of its efforts to promote a multi-track approach by facilitating dialogue between diplomats, policymakers, civil society actors and grassroots leaders, WISCOMP organized an interaction with T.C.A. Raghavan, Joint Secretary (Pakistan-Afghanistan-Iran), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India.

The composite dialogue between India and Pakistan, which was initiated in January 2004, has been the longest and the deepest that the two countries have engaged with. The process which has involved several new steps – whether it is the opening of the LoC or the restoration of traditional trade routes – includes a three-pronged approach. First, the creation of a violence-free environment; second, the two neighbors resolve all differences including those over Jammu and Kashmir over a period of time through peaceful negotiations; and third, they strive to develop cooperative relations by building stakes in the bilateral relationship. 34

As a growing number of Indians and Pakistanis come together through the surge in cross-border contact that the composite dialogue has facilitated, the time is perhaps ripe to explore how multi-track peacebuilding can contribute to the vitality and sustainability of the process between the two governments. Such an exploration assumes significance in light of the fact that while recent years have seen a surge in peacebuilding processes across the world, many of these have faltered and eventually collapsed. For example, according to the Human Security Report 2005, about 40% of peace accords collapse within five years of signature. Many more fail after the five-year mark.

This trend has serious implications for conflict transformation and points to the need to shift attention to the “gaps” that exist in peacebuilding practice. An important area of concern in this respect is posed by what John Paul Lederach calls the “interdependence gap”. The “interdependence gap” suggests that sustainability of peacebuilding requires both horizontal and vertical relationship-building and coordination. Horizontal capacity refers to efforts to work with counterparts across the lines of division. The focus is on improving relationships by getting counterparts to meet with each other – for example, initiatives that bring together women’s groups, community leaders, NGO workers, political leaders etc. across “enemy” lines. Vertical capacity is the

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34 Shiv Shankar Menon, Foreign Secretary, Government of India, articulated this perspective at the Fifth WISCOMP Conflict Transformation Workshop held in October 2006 in New Delhi.
ability to develop relationships of respect and understanding between higher levels of leadership and mid-range, community and grassroots levels of peacebuilding.

The field of peacebuilding has concentrated more of its resources on horizontal relationships, ignoring the need to build similar relationships between track one leaders, mid-level actors and grassroots initiatives. As Lederach puts it, “high, middle-range and grassroots levels of leadership rarely see themselves as interdependent, until they discover they need them, usually when the process is under enormous stress and time constraints. The most significant gap of interdependence we face is rooted in the lack of coordinated relationships up and down the levels of leadership in a society.”

In order to foreground this need for multi-track engagement, the session on Public Diplomacy and Trust-building with T.C.A. Raghavan looked at the interface between policymakers and civil society groups; how foreign policy practitioners see the peace process between the two countries; and the role that “public diplomacy” can play in building a more inclusive peace process. Some of the questions that he addressed in his presentation were:

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• In the context of the peace process between India and Pakistan, what are policymakers’ observations of the challenges and opportunities?

• What is the relationship between public opinion and state policy in the two countries, and how does the media influence public diplomacy?

• How do initiatives that promote people-to-people contact and cultural exchanges impact policy? How might we develop a mutually-enriching relationship between the diverse tracks of peacebuilding?

• In order to make the peace process irreversible, how might we build a higher stake in the bilateral relationship?

Raghavan opened his presentation with a question on what constitutes public diplomacy, particularly in the context of India-Pakistan relations. Does it refer to a wider foreign policy establishment outside the government, which includes academia, media, interested observers, business, commerce and other actors? Or, in the context of India-Pakistan relations, does it point to a certain public interest and partnership?36

There are two conflicting perspectives on contemporary relations between India and Pakistan. The first perspective draws on the fact that, since the initiation of the peace process in 2004, four rounds of the composite dialogue have been completed and thousands of people have availed of the road, rail and air links to travel across the border. There has been a substantial increase in trade, with a virtual doubling every year since 2004. Significant strides have been made in strengthening the institutional dialogue – the composite dialogue and, more recently, initiatives such as the Joint Anti-Terror Mechanism. Within the institutional dialogue, there have been substantial breakthroughs. For example, the very visible transformation of the Wagah – Atari border; the initiatives between the two Kashmirs across the Line of Control; and, the revival of the Munnabao-Kokrapar train service. There has been very wide ranging people-to-people contact encompassing a diversity of professions and disciplines.

36 At a previous WISCOMP Roundtable, H.E. Nirupama Rao, currently the Indian Ambassador to the Peoples’ Republic of China, saw public diplomacy as a vehicle for the promotion of national interest which seeks to inform audiences abroad and within the country. This form of diplomacy attempts to shape the communications environment through the media and people-to-people interactions. Public diplomacy departs from the traditional practice because it requires the state to engage with diverse constituencies, such as NGOs, private citizens, the media, and foreign audiences. See Evelyn Thornton, The Changing Contours of Diplomacy (New Delhi: WISCOMP, 2003).
From this perspective flows the question: Is this a real achievement? Or has a very positive spin been put to a relatively modest and slow movement forward? Are we in a real moment of change? Or are we misreading the signs?

Elaborating on the second perspective, Raghavan said that there is a perception that the dialogue, the Joint Commissions and other inter-governmental meetings have been well-structured but largely inconsequential. The magnitude of people-to-people contact is still very small. For instance, in relative as well as in absolute terms, it is much smaller than what was witnessed in the period of 1977-1981. Noting that 1977-1981 is an important phase in the history of India-Pakistan relations, Raghavan said that a similar argument can be made for the recent increase in trade, which in absolute terms is still very small in comparison to the levels that had been reached in the above period. There has been very little attempt to explore substantive complementarities between the two economies. The issues of investment and joint ventures are being danced around rather than being seriously addressed. Links which have been forged, it can be argued, are largely superficial and, beneath them, India-Pakistan relations still very much remains a zero-sum game. This second perspective would suggest that the entire process therefore remains quite fragile.

These are the two broad views on Indo-Pak relations and both have their points of validity. The question is where and from what standpoint does one view these developments? According to Raghavan, there is a deeper and more fundamental distinction than simply saying that the difference in these two perspectives is the question of whether the glass is half-full or half-empty. The Pakistani perspective, for instance, is that without conflict resolution, progress will always be limited and fragile. Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) may help in reducing tensions but do not address or resolve the issues that lead to tensions in the first place. There are various variants of this perspective, but the crux is that the basis of the bilateral relationship will remain shallow and vulnerable to being pushed off course if Kashmir is not resolved first.

The other approach, which is to expect a “big bang solution,” is unrealistic. CBMs therefore are not incidental but are intrinsic to the problem-solving process. This perspective would suggest that measured progress on a broad front is the way to proceed. These two perspectives provide a framework and a context within which to situate public diplomacy in its broadest sense, said Raghavan.

What is the relevance of public diplomacy in the India-Pakistan context? Raghavan noted that this question assumes significance in light of the surge in

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people-to-people contact between the two countries. While some of this interaction is random, much of it is quite focused, bringing together a range of interest groups, business leaders, journalists, singers, filmmakers, doctors, poets et al. Since these dialogues are seen by the participants as more than simply a meeting with colleagues from across the border, the question to pose is this: Does this surge in people-to-people contact reflect something qualitatively new? Or are we mistaking an increase in travel (which was inevitable given that limited progress had been made after 2001 when all links were suspended) with a fundamental transformation and how people in both countries view each other and their contested histories? Are we reading too much into the renewed civil society dialogue and excessively privileging an increase in travel and interaction between two countries?

To respond to this complex question, Raghavan turned to the period of the late 1970s, which, according to him, was qualitatively similar to the current phase of Indo-Pak relations. There had been a similar expansion in travel, the Indian consulate in Karachi was open, the train service between Lahore and Delhi had been initiated, and, a number of agreements relating to trade and visas were signed. So in many ways, this period was reminiscent of the kind of progress we have witnessed since 2004. However, within a few years, an older repetitive cycle of India-Pakistan antagonism had reasserted itself. Alluding to the highly complex nature of relations between the two countries, Raghavan
cautioned against an excessive privileging of the present as being “the real moment of change.”

Yet, he also noted that there are certain specificities that make the current phase of the peace process unique:

- The nuclearization of the subcontinent in 1998.
- Technological change which has fundamentally altered communications and media in the two countries.

The emergence of Pakistan as a nuclear weapon power settled, for many in Pakistan, the issue of whether India could threaten its survival as an independent country. The expansion in telecommunications, media and the internet made demonization of the other difficult. But more profoundly, it eroded the capacity of the governments to mediate civil society interactions in the way they had previously done. While these two factors do not by themselves impart irreversibility to the peace process, it was noted that they are important in comprehending the underlying dynamics of the current efforts towards dialogue and cooperation.

Yet, even as the mass media has made demonization more difficult, it has also multiplied the scope for misunderstanding. Saying that the impact of new media technologies on India-Pakistan relations is a mixed blessing, the Joint Secretary noted that the tendency to dramatize issues, often to a highly exaggerated extent, has meant that relatively minor setbacks have been projected as major stalemates, threatening the very continuation of the dialogue process.

In this context, how does public diplomacy contribute to trust-building and what should be its role with reference to India-Pakistan relations? In this context, Raghavan drew attention to certain general axioms that require reiteration. First, the relationship between India and Pakistan is very complex. Its fundamental characteristic is that it has, within it, layer upon layer of mistrust. The best minds in the two countries have grappled with this complex relationship for over 60 years with very questionable results. The layers of mistrust, accumulated over several years, add a complexity that is difficult to respond to. It is therefore essential that we approach the issue with a certain degree of intellectual humility.

Second, the broader regional and global content to India–Pakistan relations is increasingly gaining significance. For example, issues such as Afghanistan, the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline, the Indo-US nuclear deal, international
terrorism and its cross-border ramifications, to name a few, do add a layer of complexity to bilateral relations.

Third, there are many shared elements of culture and this leads to a great deal of sentimentality. Raghavan however noted that sentiment is not the best guide in the framework of India-Pakistan issues and it would be instructive to bear this in mind as one works in support of the peace process. Within this perspective, public diplomacy, by steering clear of simplification or excessive pessimism or optimism, becomes a meaningful and productive exercise.

Discussion

Responding to a question concerning the sources of mistrust, Raghavan said that “a fear of the unknown” shapes the thinking of the two governments. Because of their tumultuous history, “there is an implicit caution in everything that is done,” from fundamental differences in the way Pakistan and India look at the world to the more specific regional context. With reference to trust-building processes, Raghavan pointed to two significant developments in the context of the domestic turmoil in Pakistan in 2007. While slow movement on the peace process in light of the domestic situation has received widespread attention, there are two developments that went unnoticed. First, in Pakistan, despite the fact that virtually all actions of the former government (led by General Pervez Musharraf) were contested, the dialogue process with India was not questioned. There was a reasonably strong political consensus within Pakistan on the need to sustain the peace process with India. Second, in India, even though the international community was commenting on the various developments in Pakistan and even criticizing the lack of democracy, the growing influence of local militant groups etc., the Indian government decided to stay out of this process. It made a concerted effort to not comment on internal developments in Pakistan. This, noted Raghavan, would not have been the case a few years ago. These were identified as important developments in light of the trust-building process between the two countries.

In the context of the trust-building idea of political leaders taking “a leap in the dark,” a question was asked about the perception in the diplomatic community about former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee’s visit to Lahore in 1999. Had Vajpayee been naïve? Later, he had been quoted as saying: “I went to Lahore in trust and Kargil followed.” Acknowledging that Kargil had left an imprint which would take some time to transform, Raghavan said that considerable work had been done in the lead up to the Lahore visit. It was a
major initiative that was interrupted by the Kargil conflict and the attack on the Indian Parliament, but the process was restarted a few years later in 2004.

Several questions on the restrictive visa regime were posed to the Joint Secretary. Concern was expressed on the sustainability of the peace process if Indians and Pakistanis were unable to travel to each others’ countries. At the outset, Raghavan acknowledged that the issue of travel between the two countries has a long and complicated history and one that cannot be transformed in a short span of time. He traced the history of travel restrictions to the 1950s when the Passport Act and visa regulations were introduced. However, the “real partition,” he stated, came about after the 1965 war when several restrictions on travel were introduced. Although there has been considerable liberalization of the visa regime since, it would be unrealistic to expect India and Pakistan to move in the direction of a civilized travel regime in the near future. “The visa agreement is being discussed and we might see a less restrictive regime in the not-too-distant future. But the liberalization is not going to be of the kind that you have with other countries,” said Raghavan.

The interaction with the seasoned diplomat concluded with the insight that various stakeholders should approach the peace process with humility and with the awareness of the deep complexity of the relationship between the two countries.
Military CBMs and Interaction on UN Peacekeeping Missions: Avenues for Trust-building between India and Pakistan

Continuing with the focus on multi-track peacebuilding as a tool for building trust, WISCOMP collaborated with The United Service Institution of India (USI), New Delhi, to organize an interaction with members of the armed forces on the subject of military CBMs between India and Pakistan. The United Service Institution of India, which was founded in 1870 by a soldier scholar, Major General Sir Charles MacGregor, has emerged as a leading international training center for United Nations Peacekeeping Missions across the world. In addition to training personnel for specialized duties while serving under the UN flag, the Institute conducts multinational peacekeeping exercises, promotes research in all facets of peacekeeping operations, and acts as a repository of the Indian experience in the field of United Nations Peacekeeping.

Titled Military CBMs and Interaction on UN Peacekeeping Missions: Avenues for Trust-building between India and Pakistan, the panel discussion explored perspectives from the armed forces on the peace process between India and Pakistan. In addition to looking at the role of military CBMs between the two countries, the discussion explored spaces for trust-building that United Nations Peacekeeping Missions have afforded to Indian and Pakistani officers. Many of the Missions to countries in Africa have comprised a sizeable contingent from India and Pakistan that have worked together under the UN banner. In light of the fact that Pakistan and India are among the five largest troop contributors to UN Peacekeeping Missions and that there has been extensive interaction between the Pakistani and Indian army officers on these missions, the session explored UN peacekeeping as a “connector” between the two countries. It looked at how the experience of working together under the UN banner might have influenced the perceptions of the soldiers about the other country. The purpose was also to focus on dialogues that have taken place between the armed forces of India and Pakistan and to provide a context for the Workshop participants to meet with individuals who have served in the armed forces in India.

Lt. Gen. Satish Nambiar, Director, United Service Institution of India, New Delhi, walked the participants through a history of the 137 year-old institution saying that the USI had seen various times – from a period when India and Pakistan were ruled as one country under the British to the 1947 partition and
to the post-independence period. This tumultuous phase saw the institution changing its identity from the “United Service Institution of India and Pakistan” (August 1947 – October 1948) to the “United Service Institution of India.”

The USI has played a commendable role in the area of United Nations reforms, drawing on India’s vast experience in the field of UN Peacekeeping. The Institute conducts International Training Capsules for UN Military Contingent Officers and Military Observers from South Asia and across the world. It is also a repository of information on India’s involvement in UN Peacekeeping and is continuing to build and update its research on peacekeeping related issues. Nambiar noted that several Pakistani experts have contributed to the USI through information exchange, resource building and peacebuilding. The South Asian contribution to UN peacekeeping is 83,000, second only to the USA. The Pakistani contribution stands at 100,000, Bangladesh 97,000, and India 93,000. Forty one percent of the peacebuilding work in regions of post-conflict is done by South Asian peacekeepers.

During the course of his presentation, Nambiar sought to convey the point that soldiers, more than any other actors, are horrified of war, because they experience it at an intimate level. “If there is one section of the society that abhors war, it is the soldiers.” Because it is able to see the repercussions of violence at such close quarters, the military is an active advocate of conflict transformation processes. Applying this to the context of India-Pakistan relations, Nambiar made two important points. He was emphatic in his assertion that irrespective of the setbacks to the official peace process, the next generation of Indians and Pakistanis (teenagers and those in their 20s and 30s) must be allowed to meet and carry the process forward. Second, with reference to interaction between Indian and Pakistani military personnel, particularly the younger officers, he urged that the problem of “reciprocity” should not come in the way of inviting people from across the border. “At least, let the youngsters meet,” said Nambiar.

Another important point pertained to the perspective that the trust-building process does not have to remain hostage to agreements on Kashmir and other complex issues. Sustained dialogue and success on the smaller issues can play an important role in building the much-needed trust and political will to tackle
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the harder issues. Nambiar cited some examples of successful conversations and agreements between the two countries: exchange of information on flights and use of air space, the 1998 assurance by India of no first nuclear offensive against Pakistan, the February 1999 Memorandum of Understanding, the agreement on advance notice regarding the use of ballistic missiles et al. Nambiar concluded his presentation with the belief that personal friendships with individuals from across the divide can influence the broader public peace process. Sharing anecdotes from some of these personal experiences, he said that such interactions had helped him to understand and appreciate the different aspects of what the two countries share while respecting the differences that lie in between.

Lt. Gen. B.S. Mallik, Former Chief of Staff Western Command, and currently President, Control Arms Foundation of India, New Delhi, made an intervention on the need to “think out of the box,” saying that sustainable solutions can be generated only when political leaders change the frames they use. He said that the most definitive phenomenon of the 21st century is the way in which the notions of “sovereignty” and “geographical possessiveness” have changed in their meaning. While these are important issues, Mallik alluded to the need for India and Pakistan to focus on issues of common interest and concern, for example, poverty, the fast depletion of natural resources et al. Saying that the focus should be on the “connectors” – those issues that can enhance cooperation and trust between the two countries – the speaker concluded with the following
assertion: “We must not be poor together, we must develop together. We must replace the balance of power with the power of interdependence.”

Lt. Gen. Randhir Mehta, who retired from the post of Military Advisor at the Department of UN Peacekeeping Operations, New York, in May 2007, shared the example of the UN Peacekeeping Mission in Somalia which had a sizeable contingent from India as well as Pakistan. There was considerable interaction between the Indian and Pakistani soldiers and Mehta felt that the friendships built during the course of this Mission had led to enormous leaps in the building of trust between the two sides. Such opportunities for interaction between soldiers from the two countries are few and far between. Therefore, the UN Missions provide a unique context for a much-needed humanization of the other. Mehta concluded with anecdotes from his experience of interacting with Pakistani soldiers serving as part of the UN mission in Somalia. Echoing Nambiar’s sentiments, he said that there is a strong desire for peacebuilding among military personnel because it is they who experience the brutality of conflict in a most intimate manner.
Coexistence and Conflict Transformation

Understanding Differences, Acting on Commonalities: Coexistence in Practice

In the multicultural societies of South Asia, there exist myriad diversities – of ideology, belief systems, faith, ethnicity, socio-cultural values and nationality, among others. Often, these differences are manifested in conflicts among communities and nations. However, in spite of the manifest differences, there are significant commonalities as well as examples of celebrating this diversity.

As Andrew Masondo, a leader of the African National Congress, South Africa, put it: “Understand the differences; act on the commonalities.” While it is important to identify commonalities, it is perhaps even more crucial to act on these commonalities to bring about sustainable peace. South Asia, with its varied cultures and traditions, different ideologies and socio-political orientations, is perhaps a good case study to understand how differences have been perceived in society, how a society continues to coexist along with its differences, and what can be done to address the violent manifestations of the implicit and explicit tensions and strains.

The principle of coexistence has been defined in numerous ways:

• To exist together (in time or place) and to exist in mutual tolerance.
• To learn to recognize and live with difference.
• To have a relationship between persons or groups in which none of the parties is trying to destroy the other.
• To interact with a commitment to mutual respect and the agreement to settle conflicts without recourse to violence.

At the core of coexistence is the awareness that individuals and groups differ in numerous ways, in terms of class, ethnicity, religion, gender and political inclination. These group identities may be the causes of conflicts, or may be solidified as conflicts develop and escalate. A policy of coexistence, however, diminishes the likelihood that identity group differences will escalate into a damaging or intractable conflict.37

The panel discussion titled Understanding Differences, Acting on Commonalities: Coexistence in Practice focused on three unique examples of coexistence:

• Coexistence in Gujarat: Stories of Courage and Compassion
• Cultural Productions for Conflict Transformation in Kashmir
• Inter-Punjab Initiatives for Coexistence

The large-scale communal carnage in the Indian state of Gujarat in 2002 saw hidden tensions and prejudices come to the forefront in brutal and inhumane ways. According to official estimates, the communal violence led to the death of at least 2000 Muslims. Thousands of Muslims were chased out of their homes and have still, as of today, not been able to return to their homes. Approximately 8,000 families continue to live in “relief colonies.” Over 200 people are still missing. As of 2007, the situation remains one of political and social polarization and the safety and security of the minority Muslim community continues to be a cause for concern.

Even as the movement for justice for the victims of the 2002 carnage must continue, the time has also come to affirm and document the stories of hope and humanism that have endured in an atmosphere of prejudice and fear. Largely eclipsed by the tragic events of 2002 and the growing segregation of communities, are the stories of exemplary human courage and compassion that transcended religious fault-lines – stories of coexistence between religious communities in Gujarat, of Hindus who risked their lives to save their Muslim neighbors, of police officers who followed their conscience and performed their duty to protect civilians, of Hindus and Muslims coming together to resist the violence and the politics of hate that engulfed most of the state.

In an effort to highlight these inspiring examples of human courage and compassion, Ms. Akanksha Joshi, an independent filmmaker based in Delhi, designed an audio-visual presentation titled **Coexistence in Gujarat: Profiles of Courage and Compassion**.

The presentation wove together different narratives from Gujarat, highlighting experiences of individuals who had resisted the growing culture of hate and violence. While the first section profiled the “stories of courage” – of survivors who continued in their struggle for justice in the face of myriad adversities – illustrating the importance of legal justice in any kind of reconciliation work, the second section brought to the fore “stories of compassion” – of individuals who transcended the religious divide to save human lives.

Using the media of photography and first-person accounts, Joshi captured several powerful stories of courage and compassion. The following section highlights some of these stories.

**I. Stories of Courage: Justice on Trial**

*The seed sprouts in the darkness of the Earth, so must the human spirit learn from the darkness and rise beyond.*

– Jallauddin Rumi

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*A DVD presentation of these stories, conceptualized and presented by Ms. Akanksha Joshi, is available at amanbiradari.delhi@gmail.com*
Aayesha Ben  
Kishangarh Village, Sabarkantha District

Hiding in a pit, Aayesha Ben saw her shop being looted and burnt. She saw each person who was looting the shop; yet on the FIR, the police clubbed each face into the often repeated phrase, “an unknown mob.”

Not one to give up easily, Aayesha Ben got her case reopened. Thirteen of the accused from her village were jailed for a week. Each day, she is threatened to take her case back. But determined to get justice, she refuses to give up.

Wali Bhai  
Nanaposeena Village, Sabarkantha District

Wali Bhai is among the few courageous survivors of the 2002 carnage who continue to stay in their own village without compromising on their demand for justice. When Nyayagrah began its work in the area, he was the first person to sign up to have his case reinstated in the courts.

His home was burned down by young men from his own village. He was offered money to stop his court battle, but Wali Bhai rejected it, saying that he would stop only if the perpetrators came to him, apologized, and asked for forgiveness. This they refused to do. So he went ahead with his case, and even though the Hindus in his village, and even some of the Muslims, boycotted him and his family, he says that he now feels restored as a human being.

On the basis of his statements, the accused were jailed for a week. They are now out on bail. Their threats, allurements or mere presence only make Wali Bhai stronger.
Niaaz Bibi
Juhapura, Ahmedabad

For the Muslim families of the village Ognaj, living in the Juhapura resettlement colony in Ahmedabad, Niaaz Bibi is known as the “Courage Woman.” She has been lured, cajoled and even threatened into compromising the case, but she is an adamant woman. She listens to her heart, and her heart wants justice.

On March 1st 2002, her neighbors looted her home. Each little bit she owned. She has known them for years. Many of the rioters were her children’s friends. She had, in her words, “…fed them when they were hungry.”

Jaan Mohammed Bhai
Bhiloda Village, Sabarkantha District

Jaan Mohammed Bhai had a huge shop in the town of Bhiloda. His success was the envy of many other shop-keepers and businessmen. During the 2002 carnage, these very shopkeepers joined the mob, looting his shop and killing his neighbor, Razzak Bhai.

In the FIR, the police clubbed the attackers as “an un-known mob.” Jaan Mohammed Bhai got the case reopened, his statement recorded.

Consequently, twelve of the accused spent almost a month in jail. This was a victory of sorts for Jaan Mohammed Bhai, but the pressure for getting justice has only increased since.
**Abdul Bhai**  
Bharkad Village, Anand District

As the violence began to engulf the areas surrounding this village, Abdul Bhai sent his family away, but decided to stay back in a Kshatriya neighbor’s house.

He was a witness to the loot, arson and destruction of the Muslim houses that took place in Bharkad. Yet his statement wasn’t recorded by the police.

It was many years later that Abdul Bhai managed to get his statement recorded and the case reopened. By then, three of the accused had fled from India.

Abdul Bhai has since received threats and has also received offers for compromise. He is under heavy debt, but he is not giving up. There is no trade off between justice and money.

**II. Stores of Compassion: The Gandhis of Gujarat**

*Human history is not only a history of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness. What we choose to emphasize in this complex history will define our lives.*

– Howard Zinn

**Dhooraji Juraji Thakore**  
Kuha Village, Ahmedabad District

Dhooraji, Babu Ben and their four sons welcomed the Muslim families seeking refuge with open arms. Babu Ben offered her clothes, her home and her hearth.

To keep the children distracted, Dhooraji Bhai arranged for a regular screening of Bollywood

Commenting on the financial costs of sheltering so many people, Dhooraji says: "The very next season we got a bumper harvest. Double! You give some...God gives you more!"
films on a borrowed VCR. At night, his 125 Muslim friends would sleep in the shelter of his home while Dhooraji and his four sons would keep guard. He provided shelter and care to them for more than 15 days.

**Rupa Bhai**
Khumapur Village, Sabarkantha District

*Rupa Bhai lives in Khumapur, a village surrounded by fields and forests in the tribal district of Sabarkantha. On the night of February 28th, 2002, Rupa Bhai found Ameena Ben hiding in his fields with other Muslims from the neighboring villages. For the next 20 days, his house provided shelter to Ameena Ben and his family provided her care.*

The Hindu right wing mob burnt Rupa Bhai’s fields and then threatened to attack his home. He along with his brothers challenged the mob. The 500 strong mob failed in front of the strength of compassion exuded by the five brothers.

**Raoji Bhai**
Bochasan Village, Anand District

*Before the rioting mobs could attack them, the 27 Muslim families from Bochasan were offered shelter in Raoji Bhai’s house. For the 150 people he took into his care, food was cooked, comfort provided.*

When the mobs came to know that Raoji was hiding the Muslims, he was immediately labeled a “betrayal.” Along with the homes of Raoji’s Muslim friends, his own crops were reduced to ashes by the fanatics. Six years since, the water supply to his fields remains shut and, in the market, his crops are bought at reduced prices.

Raoji Bhai has no regrets: “God has given me more than I ever wanted. What I did was right. I’d do it again, and again.”
Nanji Bhai
Modharee Village, Sabarkantha District

On March 1st, 2002, Nanji Bhai received a message from the Bajrang Dal: “Loot, plunder, attack Muslims. Burn their houses.” Nanji Bhai lives a few fields away from the only Muslim family in his village. He did the exact opposite. Razzak Bhai and his family were given shelter in his house. Nanji Bhai stood outside Razzak Bhai’s house guarding it day and night. “We are tribals…adivasis…we know that taking innocent lives is not religion.”

The mob, furious with Nanji Bhai, decided to burn his house with its Muslim refuge takers. Nanji Bhai fought the mob and managed to save his house, but during that time, Razzak Bhai’s house was reduced to ashes. After 10 days, Nanji Bhai took his Muslim neighbors to their relatives’ house.

Balu Singh
Choila Village, Sabarkantha District

For 25 days and nights, Balu Singh stood guarding his neighbor Babu Bhai Allauddin Bhai and his family. The mob thirsting for blood returned again and again over these 25 days. His conviction and peaceful strength weakened the fervor of the mob; no one dared to attack.

Balu Bhai took Babu Bhai Allauddin and 16 other members of his family to Jalod near the Rajasthan border. From there, Babu Bhai went on to stay with his relatives in Rajasthan.

Many Muslims who have suffered such trauma during the carnage have not returned to Gujarat. Babu Bhai did. Referring to Balu Singh, he says: “Tell me…how can I stay without him around? He is my elder brother.”
Ranjit, Vijay, Gopal, Vikram
Akalpura Village, Khera District

Ranjit was woken up in the middle of the night by his father and handed a sword. “We have guests who need protection. Guard the village.” Along with his friends, Vijay, Gopal and Vikram, Ranjit stood guarding the village and its 650 Muslim guests for 45 days and nights.

Each day, more people in search of refuge would find their way into Akalpura. With the support of their elders, young boys like Ranjit would not just guard their guests, but also arrange for rations which the women of the village would cook for their guests.

Continuing with the focus on stories of coexistence, this presentation was followed by a screening of the documentary film *Diya in the Dargah*. Directed by Trisha Das (and a production of the Public Service Broadcasting Trust, New Delhi), the film draws attention to the spaces for coexistence that exist in the midst of violence. In particular, it profiles a Sufi shrine, in Baroda, managed by a Hindu Brahmin who not only conducts the works of the shrine but is also readily accepted in his own community.

Shifting to another region of conflict, Jammu and Kashmir, Navina Jafa, an Expert in Development Communication through Performance Arts, New Delhi, made a presentation on the use of cultural productions, the performing arts in particular, to facilitate coexistence between alienated communities. Saying that the conflict in Kashmir has itself become a palpable culture that continues to create fissures between communities, Jafa introduced the theatrical work of M. K. Raina that seeks to reclaim the cultural space lost to the conflict and build trust between communities.

The performing arts and the creation of a cultural production from within the dynamics of the local cultural environment (such as local language and local costumes) have the potential to empower opposed groups to bond and realize a common cultural identity. The cultural production process, by involving alienated groups of people, enhances personal capacity on all levels (physical, mental and spiritual) and provides a context for individuals to change the way they perceive the other.
Jafa explained that “cultural productions, as part of conflict transformation exercises, imply that individuals are provided choices to improve their lives. This in turn presents them with hope and aspiration. The individuals accordingly also start working on increasing their capacity to fulfil these hopes. Conflict transformation then, not only incorporates hope and aspiration but also capacity-building.”

Within this framework, Jafa introduced the interventions made by theater professional M.K Raina who has been working in Jammu and Kashmir since 1992. Raina, like many other Kashmiri Pandits, left his home in the Valley in the wake of militancy. Reflecting on his return to the Valley in 1992, in an interview with Jafa, he said, “What struck me most was the frozen silence. There was no culture left; there were language crises, a loss of the ethnic Kashmiri identity. We are a region of great syncretic and secular culture. With support from Muslim friends, I started several theatrical activities to reclaim cultural space in the face of repression caused by the rule of Islamic terrorist dominance and the security forces. It was a torn social fabric; mistrust and fear reigned supreme. The support of so many people for a separate State was a dismal reality… The people realized that it was a false dream; it only brought more misery to them. I recieve silent, strong support from so many people who wanted to walk the path of reconstructing Kashmir.”

Jafa shared that one of Raina’s first attempts at a cultural production were two sets of twelve-day workshops with fifty orphan children from various camps in Jammu and the Kashmir Valley. Supported by the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, the first workshop in Jammu was held in winter while the second in the Valley the following summer.

In the first workshop, there were 20 Hindu children from migrant camps and 30 Muslim children from the Valley. Both groups of children were victims of different forms of violence. The mothers played an important role by acting as a bridge between the children and the theater professionals. There were eight Muslim mothers who traveled from the Valley to Jammu to assist with the first workshop, while three Hindu migrant mothers went back to the Valley for the workshop in Srinagar. For the Hindu women, this trip meant that they would have to confront the fear to return to their original homes for the first time after the onset of the militancy.

Quoting Raina, Jafa shared, “In one stance, during the workshop in the Valley, it was decided that the entire team will go for a ‘heritage picnic’ to revisit various parts around Srinagar. We were soon approaching Pahalgaon, 94 kilometers from Srinagar. Just as the bus was passing through the town, one of the mothers shouted and pointed to her erstwhile house. She was afraid to go in, afterall she had been forced to abandon and flee. Encouraged by me, she went and looked inside the looted residence. Neighbors came and welcomed her. Some brought tea and snacks. It was a touching scene.”

“When we first interacted with the children, they were like a group of terrified pigeons. To break the frozen silence, we introduced them to several games. For instance, in the first game, we asked the children to form a circle, and exchange names with each other. We then asked them to quickly repeat their neighbor’s name. Next, we encouraged them to hold hands. The children were all teenagers, or in pre-teen. The physical contact was an attempt to encourage intermixing of genders as well as interact with the other community. Since we wanted the children to feel wanted, we made an effort to memorize all 50 names, so that we could address them by their first name and on personal terms…Our next exercise was painting. I handed the children a chart of paper with a bare sketch of a tree painted on it. I asked them to concentrate on it and then create something out of the tree. Most of the children from the Valley

painted trees, but without fruit, while the migrant children, who had grown up with the memories of their parents, painted fruits on the trees.”

Jafa shared that these paintings led to discussions on community life and progressed as long painted scrolls reflecting group synergy of imagining and building a new world of joint community neighborhoods. The scrolls were then given a physical life, as the theater professionals assisted the now synergized members to create narratives and enact the scrolls as their new world that expressed their new found common identity.

Repression as an integral part of conflict was a recurring theme in these workshops. The passivity in the children was an embodiment of the repression. Silence had become a part of their innate nature. Jafa shared that cultural productions, if crafted inventively and dexterously, can augment creative exploration and transform such silence. In this context, empowering children to reach their fullest potential became a key objective of the workshop organizers. Sharing her conversations with Raina on the experience of conducting these workshops, Jafa concluded with the assertion that the children, who are now adults, have created a new sense of identity with each other based on the trust developed through the cultural productions. The learnings from these cultural productions have transformed into a reality in their own personal spaces.

**Ibadat Cultural Performance**

In an effort to illustrate how cultural performances can promote coexistence, Navina Jafa performed *Ibadat*, a dance choreographed on a piece of Sufi music written by Hazrat Amir Khusrau. Interpreted in the Kathak language and performed in the Lucknow *gharana* tradition, the dance was choreographed by enjoining the formal piece by Amir Khusrau with the singing in Ecstasy in the Qawalli format.

The performance drew on the shared heritage of Sufism which emerged as a syncretic force, fostering harmony and coexistence in the subcontinent. “The links between the Sufi *dargahs* in India and Pakistan promote people-to-people contact and engender cultural tolerance and understanding. *Ibadat* is a humble reminder of a cultural space that

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India and Pakistan share,” said Jafa. A disciple of Pandit Birju Maharaj, Jafa shared that Kathak is perhaps the only dance form that the two countries have in common, and drawing on this shared cultural resource would be a good way to build trust.

The performance reinstated the common cultural threads based on Sufism and the grassroots popular Islam that not only bonds non-Muslims with Muslims, but also Indians with Pakistanis. It illustrated the manner in which cross-cutting identities can play an important role in transcending the divisions created by the conflict. For example, Jafa noted that the Sufi dargahs of Salim Chishti and Nizammudin Aulia have traditionally been seen as sites of friendship and cross-cultural faith rather than religious belief.

Capturing the audience’ sentiment following the performance, Syeda Nazoora Ali, Program Officer with the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan’s Center for Democratic Development, Lahore, said, “I really wanted to visit the Dargah of Hazrat Nizammudin Aulia, and your performance brought me closer to that experience. Through your dance, I saw his spirit come alive.”

Navina Jafa (Expert in Development Communication through Performing Arts, New Delhi).
The presentation titled *Inter-Punjab Initiatives for Coexistence* by Tridivesh Singh Maini, a Delhi-based writer, focused on the convergence of interests between India and Pakistan. In recent years, there has been a discernible change in the dynamics of the relationship with a focus on collaborations across borders. At the forefront of this change are the two Punjabs, divided by the partition of 1947, now engaging in unconventional means of diplomacy to improve ties. Moving beyond the legacy of violence that characterized post-partition Punjab, the notion of *Punjabiyan* has been reemphasized to build a new and improved relationship between the two sides. While initially led by civil society groups, the governments in the two Punjabs, now more involved, are talking of potential trade and joint developmental projects.

Advocating that border regions (Punjab, Kashmir, Rajasthan-Sindh) be viewed as corridors and places of interface between the two countries, Maini explored initiatives undertaken by the two Punjabs to build cross-border trust and cooperation. In the context of the growing influence of economic blocks like the European Union, he felt that the Punjabs could serve as halfway houses between their two countries, Central Asia, and West Asia and emerge as a model for South Asian cooperation.

Despite the violence of 1947 and the bitter memories of the wars of 1965 and 1971, Maini asserted that the people of the two Punjabs are one cultural community. They speak the same language and worship the same Rab or Raba (God). Guru Nanak Dev, the founder of the Sikh religion, is also revered by Hindus and Muslims. Sufi poets such as Waris Shah and Baba Bulleh Shah of Kasur are respected by all. The geographical location of the two Punjabs is such that cooperation between them can bring India and Pakistan closer to each other. Maini acknowledged that, like other parts of India and Pakistan, animosity did shape the relationship between the two Punjabs. While at an individual level, Punjabis from both sides got along very well in foreign lands, at a collective level, this “bonhomie” was missing. A significant reason for this was the concern that the bonhomie should not become a threat to the nation-state.

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The presentation was based on Maini’s recently published book *South Asian Cooperation and the Role of the Punjabs* (New Delhi: Siddharth Publications, 2007).
However, over the last decade, three groups of civil society actors have transformed this relationship of animosity: artists, writers and members of the Punjabi Diaspora. Maini highlighted in particular the work of groups such as the World Punjabi Congress, Academy of the Punjab in North America, and the Punjab Research Group in the United Kingdom.

At the political level, Maini noted that the transformation began in 1997 with interactions between then Prime Ministers Nawaz Sharif and I.K. Gujral. While it would be naïve to think that their Punjabi identity was the only reason for the bonhomie between the two leaders, it did play a role in improving the relationship at the track one level. At the provincial level, Captain Amarinder Singh and Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi cemented the relationship. While Captain Singh visited Pakistani Punjab thrice, the latter visited Indian Punjab for the All Punjab Games held at Patiala in 2005. Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi also responded positively to the requests made by Indian Sikh pilgrims to visit their shrines in Pakistan. Pakistan has also given its nod to the demand for a religious corridor between Narowal (Pakistani Punjab) and Dera Baba Nanak (Indian Punjab). This would enable Sikh pilgrims to cross the border to pay obeisance at the historic Kartarpur Sahib, a shrine where the first Guru of the Sikhs spent the last 18 years of his life.

The Singh-Elahi model of cooperation included cultural exchanges (between writers, artists, and other civil society actors) and sports events (All Punjab Games where informal interactions between business groups from the two sides also took place). Good bus connectivity (Amritsar – Lahore and Amritsar – Nankana Sahib) gave these initiatives a further impetus.

The proposition of the two Punjabs serving as a “trade corridor” becomes more attractive in light of the fact that direct trade between India and Pakistan is one billion dollars and has the potential to go up to USD 10 billion if trade routes are opened up and infrastructure improved at the borders. For example, Maini shared that because of the current restrictions, a scooter, which costs Rs. 25,000 in Amritsar, could be sold for more than Rs. 70,000 in Pakistan. The case with other commodities such as blankets and tractors is no different. Things however are improving. For instance, farmers in Pakistan Punjab have begun to buy potato seeds from Indian Punjab, rather than from Holland as they previously did.

Concluding with the assertion that a stronger Punjab-Punjab relationship (in various areas such as trade, cultural exchanges, and academic collaborations)
will enhance the bilateral relationship at the national level, Maini made the following recommendations:

- Relax visa restrictions for at least some categories of people, such as artists, business entrepreneurs, and individuals above the age of 65 years.
- Visas should not be city-specific.
- Visa counters should be set up at Wagah so that people do not have to travel long distances.
- Partnerships between educational institutions all over India and Pakistan should be encouraged. There lies tremendous potential for the same between agricultural institutions in the two Punjabs. However, recently, the External Affairs Ministry objected to such exchanges citing security concerns.
- The South Asian Diaspora should think in terms of a “Joint Research Fund” where studies on different aspects of cooperation between the two countries can be carried out.
- Trade corridors should be opened between important places in the Punjabs. For example, the Kartarpur corridor between the Baba Nanak Gurudwara in Gurdaspur (East Punjab) and Kartarpur Sahib (Norwal) in West Punjab. The distance between these two Sikh holy places is only three kilometers. They were connected by a bridge over the river Ravi, which was bombed in the 1965 war and has not yet been repaired. If the bridge is repaired and Sikhs are allowed to visit Kartarpur Sahib in Pakistan, it will create a great deal of goodwill between the two Punjabs.

**Stereotypes and Coexistence in Multicultural Societies**

Continuing with the exploration of approaches to build active coexistence in situations of conflict, the panel discussion titled Stereotypes and Coexistence in Multicultural Societies focused to the role of the popular media in addressing issues of prejudice, identity and coexistence.

There is a growing recognition of the role that the popular media (films, television, posters, et al) can play in building an environment conducive for the resolution of protracted conflicts. Whether it is an Indo-Pak music video on interfaith dialogue or a feature film that seeks to address prejudices, the potential of such media to transform “enemy images” is enormous. They have the ability to strengthen bilateral relations by transforming attitudes and prejudices about the other.
Facilitated by Sabina Kidwai, Associate Professor at the AJK Mass Communication Research Center, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, the session opened with a visual presentation of the feature film *Ramchand Pakistani*. Directed by Mehreen Jabbar and produced by Javed Jabbar, *Ramchand Pakistani* is the first film from Pakistan in whose story the main characters are from the country’s minority Hindu community. Adapted from actual events, the story depicts how an accidental crossing of the India-Pakistan border at a time of war-like tension (2002) dramatically changes the lives of a Pakistani Hindu Dalit peasant family. Seeking to emphasize the commonality in the experiences of ordinary people in the two countries, the film represents a unique joint venture between Indian and Pakistani actors, musicians, editors and artists, and in this sense, is a good example of cooperation between India and Pakistan at a non-official level.

Saying that the film addresses the particular challenge of negative stereotypes in the two countries, Javed Jabbar, a filmmaker, writer and former Minister, based in Karachi, Pakistan, noted that in times of violent conflict, stereotypes assume full command in both countries. “This begins with explicit insinuations about the other as ‘the enemy’. Both ruling party leaders and opposition leaders rally around the flag of patriotism – the first frontline bunker. The armed forces are required to destroy and kill. Hype and hysteria magnify and distort reality. In times of peace, stereotypes become less malevolent. But they hang around close by in the wings: known as ISI, as RAW, or ‘agents’ of these two distinguished bodies.”

Added to this is the problem of limited contact between the peoples of the two countries. While the experience of traveling to the other country and gaining first-hand knowledge about the other’s friendliness and warmth plays an important role in weakening negative stereotypes, Jabbar felt that due to a variety of factors (visa restrictions and a fear of the unknown, for example), this experience is limited to a small percentage of people in the two countries. Yet, only such travel and interaction can transform negative stereotypes about the other.

With such cross-border travel limited to a small number of Indians and Pakistanis, access to each other’s mass media becomes an important source of information about the other country. However, despite the growing reach of the internet and the electronic media, Jabbar shared that, “there is an almost

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43 Comments made by Javed Jabbar at the WISCOMP Conflict Transformation Workshop.
bizarre blank screen of ignorance in both India and Pakistan about each other. Despite the fact that Indian movies and songs are seen in millions of Pakistani households through cable TV, the same households do not watch a single Indian TV news channel. Unless, as in a few hundred cases, they also use satellite dishes…On the Indian side, there is reportedly no official ban on the cable distribution of Pakistani TV channels. Yet, only in some cities in India – very few – are PTV or Geo TV or any other Pakistani channel distributed through cable TV. As a result, on a day-to-day basis, the larger parts of the populations of both countries learn about the events and trends of the other country through the tinted prisms of their own country’s media. Most people remain unaware that many aspects of the realities in the other country are quite different from what they presume these realities to be.”

In this context, *Ramchand Pakistani* is an invitation to Indians and Pakistanis to rethink some of their presumptions and erase at least some of the long-held stereotypes about the other country. Jabbar concluded with the assertion that there is an urgent need to promote, in both countries, the stereotype that “each human being, Indian or Pakistani, possesses an irreducible dignity which deserves respect and recognition regardless of religion, gender, class or ethnicity.”

Exploring stereotypes perpetuated by a different form of media – religious posters and calendars depicting deities, saints, and places of worship – the
presentation by Yousuf Saeed, an independent filmmaker and researcher based in New Delhi, looked at the Stereotypes of Indian Muslims in Popular Indian Media.

Exploring the content of posters with Muslim themes, Saeed noted that these typically portray the shrines at Mecca and Medina, verses from the Qur’an, and, the portraits of local Sufi saints, their tombs, miracles, and other folklore. Since a poster or calendar is meant to decorate the walls of a home, its imagery is always bright and attractive.45

Such forms of popular media are also often the repositories of stereotypes and prejudices about different communities. Drawing attention to some of these stereotypes, Saeed contrasted posters that depict Hindu and Muslim themes. “Most Hindu posters portray deities, gods, and goddesses, their attributes and myths – utilizing narratives that have been followed since the ancient times, even though the painting/art styles may have changed. In practice, a two-dimensional image of a Hindu god or deity serves the same purpose for an average devotee which an idol or statue does, that is, the worship or dhyana. There are specific day-to-day purposes – Goddess Lakshmi associated with wealth, Saraswati with knowledge, and so on. In a Hindu devotional image, there is no hesitation about the use of figurative icons as well as the plurality of gods.”46

India’s Muslim iconography on the other hand, noted Saeed, carries some distinct differences from the Hindu images – even though some of it does seem to be entering the realm of polytheism and icon-worship. “While some artists/producers of the Muslim posters are extremely sensitive about Islam’s iconoclasm, and consider it a taboo to portray any figurative image (humans, living organisms), some others have less inhibition and draw freely the portraits of saints and holy men. But on the whole, one does notice a sense of reluctance in the iconography in most Muslim devotional images,” said Saeed.

Further, he noted that when a Muslim iconographer (not necessarily a Muslim by faith), explores new subject matters to draw a poster, or to make innovative

45 Yousuf Saeed, “This is What they Look Like: Stereotypes of Muslim Piety in Calendar Art and Hindi Cinema”, http://www.tasveerghar.net/mstereo/
46 Comments made by Yousuf Saeed at the WISCOMP Conflict Transformation Workshop.
variations of Mecca, Medina or the Qur’an, the first thing he/she recalls are the clichéd images of the community itself: little girls with scarves reading the Qur’an, boys in skullcaps hugging each other after the Eid prayers, beautiful and pious young women with raised hands from which a translucent dupatta (scarf) cascades down. All of this has the essential backdrop of Kaaba and the green dome of Medina. One poster that epitomizes the typecast image of the community in the popular parlance has a little boy sitting cross-legged, about to turn a page of the Qur’an, wearing a white sleeveless vest (Sandow banian), a green check lungi or mundu (printed loin-cloth), a little metallic talisman case in a necklace, and the embroidered skullcap.

The posters offer interesting insights into how women are perceived. According to Saeed, the image of the “pious woman” depicted in some posters comes from the community stereotypes that were sowed in public memory by Hindi cinema (through films such as Mughal-e-Azam, Chaudhvin-ka-chand, and Mere Mehboob). “Some (amongst Muslims) who may have hesitated putting up the poster of a film actress on their wall due to family or social pressure found legitimacy in a picture that combined the Kaaba or the Qur’an with an attractive lady who looks like Madhubala or Surayya. This twin purpose of providing the religious devotion with the sensuous pleasure seems to be a selling point of most successful popular and folk art.”

Drawing attention to contemporary TV serials, Saeed noted that many of these depict an unfavorable image of Muslims (in roles such as terrorists, underworld dons, and generally “unpatriotic” Indians). Such a large-scale portrayal of extremist Muslims in the media influences the perception of the audience, especially youngsters, about that community, and hinders efforts for building trust and respect between communities.

47 Comments made by Yousuf Saeed at the WISCOMP Conflict Transformation Workshop.
Film Screening and Discussion
*The Lightening Testimonies*

WISCOMP screened the documentary film *The Lightening Testimonies*, directed by award-winning filmmaker Mr. Amar Kanwar. The film explores the theme of sexual violence and traces its occurrence in the South Asian region. It reveals how in situations of armed conflict, the bodies of women become the site on which other battles are fought, and, in so doing, it brings to light the intersections between the patriarchies of family, community and the state.

Addressing the relationship between the politics of power, sexuality and justice, the film brings forth the multiple submerged narratives that stand as silent but surviving witness to the violence. In all these narratives – cutting across regions, religions and periods of time – the body becomes central as a site of honor, hatred and humiliation, and also for dignity and protest. An attempt is made to understand how such violence is resisted, remembered and recorded by individuals and communities. Using a range of visual vocabularies, the film moves beyond suffering into a space of quiet contemplation where resilience creates a potential for transformation.
“Education is peacebuilding by another name...We have a mission to stimulate large numbers of students on every continent to reflect seriously on human conflict, its causes and its consequences, and ways to prevent its deadly outcome.”

– Kofi Annan
Former UN Secretary General & Nobel Peace Laureate

The panel discussion on Education for a Culture of Peace highlighted the work that educators and civil society groups have initiated to promote the ideas of communal harmony, coexistence and multiculturalism in India and Pakistan. Providing a context for dialogue on how education can be used as a tool for peacebuilding, the session addressed diverse education for peace methodologies that have been employed to address issues of identity and prejudice.

Over the last eight years, WISCOMP has built capacities for peace among the next generation of leaders in India and in the South Asian region. However, our experience has shown that there is an urgent need to foreground Education for Peace in the curricula of schools and colleges in order to cultivate a culture of coexistence in our society. The WISCOMP Education for Peace initiative seeks to accomplish this through the following approaches:

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48 The United Nations, which declared 2001-2010 as the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World, defines a culture of peace as “a set of values, attitudes, modes of behavior and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes and solving problems through dialogue and negotiation among individuals, groups and nations.”
• Teach nonviolent communication skills.
• Introduce theoretical knowledge from the evolving discipline of peace and conflict studies using the methodology of experiential learning.
• Promote values such as human dignity, human rights, compassion, empathy and partnership.
• Motivate individuals to make lifelong commitments to peacebuilding at multiple levels – within the home, in their communities and in society.

Education for Peace seeks to “transform consciousness and worldviews towards a culture of peace and nonviolence. It rests on developing a critical understanding of root causes of conflicts and violence, and empowering learners to take personal and societal action to dismantle a culture of violence and to build a peaceful self and world.” Such education can play an important role in preventing the transfer of mistrust and fear from one generation to the next by:

* addressing the horrors of past violence.
* promoting the values of human dignity, nonviolence and pluralism.
* developing the skills necessary to rebuild fractured relationships.
* developing a respect for the differences in faith and political perspectives.

Although the notion of peace connotes a variety of meanings in different social, political and geographical contexts, it can be said with certainty that “peace without justice is only a symbolic peace.” Peace as cessation of physical and direct violence – often defined as “negative peace” – is incomplete without an accompanying commitment to justice and to processes of cultural and structural transformation. Peace scholar Johan Galtung introduces the notion of “positive peace” as one that moves beyond the absence of war to include the transformation of all forms of violence, including structural and cultural violence. While structural violence refers to societal built-in inequalities and injustices (unjust laws, inequitable political and legal institutions and policies), cultural violence denotes unjust cultural norms and traditions that discriminate against members of a cultural group. Positive peace requires not only that all

50 This assertion was made by Nobel Peace Laureate, Rigoberta Menchu, in the context of the civil war in Guatemala. Phil Gunsen, “Guatemala’s ‘Peace without Justice’”, Guardian (December 28, 1996).
types of violence are minimal or non-existent, but also that the potential causes of future conflict are removed. Feminist scholar Donna Pankhurst introduces the notion of “positive peace” as one that includes social justice, gender equity, economic equality and ecological balance, with an emphasis on human relationships. Crucial here are issues of democratic participation, human rights and gender equality.52

Responding to a much-felt need to use education to promote this notion of peace, the UNESCO Commission on Education developed an approach titled *Learning to Live Together*. This approach involves developing an understanding of, and respect for, different cultures and their history and “on this basis, create a new spirit which, guided by recognition of our interdependence, would induce people to manage inevitable conflict in a peaceful way.”53

It is now widely acknowledged that Education for a Culture of Peace must be a central ingredient in any long-term approach to peacebuilding. It is only through such education that we can empower children and young adults with the skills to embrace the 6000 diverse cultures that make up our world.

Informed by these perspectives, WISCOMP seeks to weave Education for Peace into school and college curricula through capacity building modules for educators, prejudice reduction and coexistence workshops for students, and partnerships with educators and educational institutions to develop syllabi and course material in peacebuilding. There is a growing recognition in the field of peacebuilding that without such education, it is highly unlikely that the leaders of tomorrow will be able to transform the current culture of mistrust, prejudice and violence or approach issues of peace and security any differently from the way previous generations have dealt with them.

The potent role that school textbooks and institutions of primary, mid-level and higher education have played in conflict generation in South Asia has received considerable attention in recent years. These institutions, to a great extent, shape the thinking and behavior of young people about the others (distinguished on the basis of their religion, gender, caste, ethnicity and/or class). Through hate writing and the distorted teaching of history, many of these institutions have generated deep-rooted prejudices about other

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communities. For example, History textbooks of the Gujarat State Board (in use till the academic year 2005-06) contained material that exacerbates tensions between Hindus and Muslims. Studies conducted in the context of the India-Pakistan conflict reveal a similar trend of demonization of the other country. The WISCOMP panel discussion highlighted efforts underway to reverse this process of polarization and negative stereotyping in the context of tensions in Gujarat and also between India and Pakistan.

The discussion opened with a comment from the Chair Prof. Neeladri Bhattacharya, Professor, Center for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, on the rationale and need for Education for Peace initiatives. There is now a wide-spread acknowledgment of the fact that peace between and within nations cannot be forged only through “top-down” government initiatives. There needs to be a groundswell of opinion and motivation from the “bottom-up” to build relationships of trust between communities. Young people, through textbooks, are socialized into ways of thinking which sustain these notions and apprehensions. Bhattacharya suggested an interrogation of school textbooks, teaching pedagogy and other modes of literary and social interaction in order to overcome inter-community and inter-state mistrust and forge genuine bonds of trust and respect among youth from diverse backgrounds. Saying that efforts are now being undertaken by some universities and institutions to address these issues, Bhattacharya introduced the first speaker Prof. Narayani Gupta, Consultant, INTACH, and Advisor, Textbook Development Committee, National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), New Delhi.

The current focus of Gupta’s work is the teaching of local history. Speaking about her experience of teaching children about local history, Gupta shared a conversation that she had initiated with her students following the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992: “I was talking to them about how they feel at the loss of a building which had architectural and historical relevance. One boy responded: ‘I have listened to you and heard you out, but you cannot change me…I hate Muslims!’ I looked at the girl seated next to him who was a Muslim.
He quickly retorted: ‘I don’t mean Lara, I mean Muslims.’ This went on and my own sense at the end of this discussion was that it is not familiarity that breeds contempt but unfamiliarity.” When you don’t know a person, it is easy to hate him/her. The minute people begin to realize that they are not terribly different from one another, a respect for the other does develop. This is why it is extremely important that some section of history teaching be rooted in the area that children live in. This is also where the connection between history and geography becomes more visible. The more you know the place and its history, the more you understand its people and languages. Related to this is also a need to teach young people to not only see monuments, but to read them as well. Such an exercise would encourage a respect for languages, scripts and cultures different from our own. For example, Gupta pointed to the inscriptions on the Qutab Minar in Delhi and how most residents of Delhi, because of their inability to read the script, are unable to capture the full breadth of this magnificent structure.

Gupta pointed to the challenge of a class-based construction of history, where Dalits, the so-called Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, artisans and other less privileged groups do not find mention in textbooks. The example of the depiction of the Taj Mahal was cited. While history books focus on the Mughal king Shahjahan who commissioned the monument, there is no mention of the thousands of artisans who actually built it! If looked at as a piece of social engineering and as a community activity, our understanding of Taj Ganj – the entire complex – will be more nuanced and holistic. The purpose of teaching history in such a manner was to move beyond rote learning (that focused primarily on the royalty in whose memory these monuments were built) towards an awareness of how the building of such structures were community activities where people came together to display their skills.

To facilitate the value of coexistence and to make history more exciting for students, Gupta suggested that teachers encourage children to trace their genealogies. More often than not, such an exercise leads to an awareness of our diverse roots, cutting across ethnicity, religion and class. Gupta shared the example of a student who was “anti-Muslim” in his views till, through this class exercise, he discovered that his ancestors had been Muslims. From then on, there was a transformation in his attitude towards those seen as the other.

To make the teaching of history more interesting for students, Gupta suggested that textbooks should be written with the knowledge that the subject needs to be explained to the students. There should be an explanation of the process of history-making and of the tools of history construction used by archaeologists.
Sixth Annual CT Workshop

A comparative approach to the teaching of history was also articulated in order to facilitate a more holistic understanding of the different ways in which a specific historical event is interpreted.

**Doing History Together: Multi-vocal Texts for Peace** was the title of the presentation by Prof. Anil Sethi, Professor of History at the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), New Delhi. Sethi touched on two themes: the reception of the NCERT history textbooks in Pakistan, and a joint South Asian history writing project for schools in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Sethi advocated multi-vocality as a hallmark for history projects that seek to facilitate mutual understanding and coexistence. He shared the example of the recently revised NCERT history textbooks which were appreciated by faculty at the Punjab University, Lahore, for their multi-vocality. For instance, the chapter on the 1947 partition highlights the plight of ordinary people and how they coped with this adversity, rather than examining the high politics and official positions of the two countries. The chapter foregrounds the testimonies of three Pakistanis caught in the midst of the violence. This facilitates the awareness among Indian students that Pakistani Muslims were also victims of the violence as opposed to the widely-held perception that Pakistan was the “perpetrator.” The chapter also highlights acts of courage and compassion shown by ordinary Hindus and Muslims through their efforts to save members of the other community. The effort throughout is to create room for diverse voices, to narrate the story from multiple points of view, and to juxtapose the experiences and perspectives of ordinary people with the official views in the two countries.

In order to facilitate such processes, Sethi shared that efforts are underway to bring out a joint textbook for school students in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. Introduced as a supplementary reader for students in the age group of 16 – 18 years, the textbook will carry essays on topics such as shared religious, cultural and social history. Employing an interactive methodology, it will seek to foreground coexistence in the South Asian context by providing a forum for South Asian youth to understand each other better and develop a respect for the diverse histories that they represent. The hope, articulated Sethi, is that such an initiative will help to promote a more inclusive and holistic South Asian identity in the three countries. While its significance cannot be emphasized enough, equally valuable is what such a venture symbolizes: the ability of scholars from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan to co-author textbooks that address controversial and contested historical events.
The presentation *Transforming Enemy Images through Peace Education: Insights from Gujarat* by Gazala Paul highlighted the ongoing efforts of Samerth (a Gujarat-based NGO) that she founded following the communal carnage of 2002. Seeking to transform enemy images among Hindu and Muslim children in the state, Samerth focuses not only on the content of concepts such as peace and coexistence, but also on pedagogy, which is participatory and learner-centered. While acknowledging the importance of texts and the lecture-format, the peace education curriculum developed by Samerth relies on role-plays, games, group activities and collaborative learning projects.

Listing some of the methodologies that have been employed to address issues of prejudice, identity and the teaching of history, Paul highlighted the practice of celebrating festivals together, encouraging email communication among adolescents of different faiths, community consultations and religious dialogues.

The processes of communal polarization that have engulfed Gujarat have impacted children as much as they have adults. At a very young age, children have witnessed gruesome acts of violence, looting, and destruction. The trauma that the events of 2002 have generated is still very real with many reporting symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. Added to this is the problem of negative stereotyping, encouraged by a segregated system of education.

It is in this context that Samerth developed the peace education program and offered it to schools across the state. Currently, the organization works in 46
schools in the Juhapura locality of Ahmedabad. The area has a mixed population of Dalits and Muslims. The purpose of this program is to sensitize children and youth (target age group is 12–17 years) and to also work with the teachers who bring their own prejudices to the classroom. In the context of Gujarat, there is an urgent need to educate teachers on how to address the issue of communal violence in the classroom. For instance, Paul shared that many teachers would articulate their prejudices in the classroom and these were absorbed by the children as “the truth.” OFTEN, students would ask questions about the 2002 violence and some teachers would openly admit that they were happy about what happened. On some occasions, as Muslim students entered the classroom, the teachers asked them, “How is it that you are still alive?”

Paul shared that through exposure to the peace education modules introduced by Samerth, many of these teachers have expressed regret at their prejudiced behavior in the classroom and have begun to think more critically about the events of 2002. Perhaps the most significant yardstick of the program’s success is that the teachers believe in the worth of introducing peace education in the classroom and are willing to take on the additional responsibility that this entails. They are ready to bear the extra burden (in terms of time and energy) to change the communal mindset of the children.

Sharing some of Samerth’s experiences in operationalizing peace education programs in schools across Gujarat, Paul said that while it should be spread across the curriculum rather than as a separate subject, owing to various constraints (such as the school administration’s skepticism), Samerth’s approach was to start with a particular subject so that teachers and students get a flavor of the types of skills and knowledge needed for such a program.

In conclusion, Paul identified the following as some of the accomplishments of this initiative:

- Friendship among children of different faiths. The program has succeeded in arresting the process of “demonization” of the other that has been underway in several schools across the state.
- The modules have been able to reach out to those displaced by the riots.
- Many myths and prejudices about the other community were transformed.
- In program evaluation sessions, children have talked about finding internal peace and how this has enhanced their listening skills and performance in studies. They have also talked about the importance of using nonviolence when in conflict.
Shifting focus to another unique Education for Peace model, Mubarika Aijazuddin, Assistant Manager, Vice Chancellor’s Office, Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS), Lahore, made a presentation on educational exchanges and collaborative research projects initiated by LUMS as part of its efforts to build trust between the next generation of Indian and Pakistani leaders.

Saying that “academic exchange” has been one of the most successful methodologies for conflict resolution, Aijazuddin introduced the LUMS model which focuses on academic collaborations and student exchange programs for graduate MBA students in India and Pakistan.

LUMS has established student exchange programs with three business schools in India: The Indian School of Business, Hyderabad, Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore, and Management Development Institute, Gurgaon. After completing the first year of their MBA degrees at LUMS, students enrol for a semester at one of these three partner institutes in India. Simultaneously, MBA students from any of the three Indian institutes enrol at LUMS for a semester. The program also provides an opportunity for faculty members to spend a semester with the partner institute.

The exchange program gives Indian and Pakistani students the opportunity to live in close proximity, engage in each others’ lives, and gain a better
understanding of different perspectives. “This understanding is integral to the revision of incorrect and unsubstantiated perceptions that the students might carry about each other, having lived as citizens of enemy states throughout their lives,” said Aijazuddin. Another unique aspect of the program is that the relationship between the partner institutions in India and Pakistan is not in any way moulded or influenced by a third party or the two governments.

Aijazuddin drew attention to the growing interest among Indian and Pakistani business school students to explore ties of cooperation for trade and business development with a region that is in closest proximity and where language and cultural differences are not barriers. As part of its efforts to increase the number of students exposed to such cross-border contact, LUMS also organizes “study tours” that enable students to spend about a fortnight in the other country.

In a short span of three years, this unique initiative has been able to accomplish an important goal – building personal and professional relationships of trust between young Indians and Pakistanis. Investment in these relationships will inevitably translate into conflict resolution in the long run through the generation of political goodwill and establishment of social, cultural and economic ties. In conclusion, Aijazuddin shared that over the next few years, LUMS plans to expand the program to accommodate other disciplines and universities (for example, Delhi University) and include undergraduate students as well.

Discussion

Several comments were made about the vested interests in the perpetuation of conflict, be it in the context of India-Pakistan relations or in Gujarat. For example, how do we respond to the strong forces of the market that often compel media companies to conceptualize serials and cover events in an us-versus-them framework? How do educators respond to these vested interests? In a context such as Gujarat where different forms of structural violence and discrimination against the Muslim community continue even today, how do we “hook” students to the idea of peace and coexistence?

Responding to the questions on Gujarat, Paul said that there had been a growing demand from the parents to extend this school-based initiative to the larger community and society. Since there now is evidence of the positive influence that the initiative has had on the psychosocial well-being of the children as well as on their attitudes, there is a move to extend the program to other sectors
of society. This would help address the challenge presented by structural violence.

Many of the hurdles that the peace education initiative in Gujarat encountered were procedural and administrative in nature. For instance, it took more than a month to acquire the necessary permissions for Samerth to work in the schools. Paul also drew attention to the fact that just arriving at a common understanding of the “root causes” of the violence is a complex process, and one that political parties seek to prevent. In this context, dealing with opposition from the political parties does serve as a challenge.

With reference to Sethi’s proposal of a “joint South Asian history project,” questions were asked about how the authors would deal with the hard issues? How would such an initiative receive permission from the three governments? Responding to these questions, Sethi brought forth the need to be comfortable with complexities and the messiness of writing multi-vocal histories. “Even if there are strong diversions in the interpretation of an issue and even where we cannot reconcile differences, we can at least have one understanding on one page and another on another page. We could synthesize the different interpretations. This is the historian’s craft. Where ever things remain untidy, we expose the untidiness.” Sethi however noted that the textbook’s introduction does depend on relations between the three countries; but it was his hope that the education systems in these countries were moving in a direction where syllabi and textbooks could be drawn from different regions of South Asia.

With reference to Sethi’s advocacy for multi-vocality in education processes, Gupta shared the example of a practice from a museum in Australia where students are divided into two groups. As the first group of students walk through the museum, they are narrated the history of migration from the perspective of the Aborigines. The same history is narrated to the second batch, but from the perspective of the immigrants. At the conclusion of the tour, the two groups engage in a discussion on the different histories they have just heard. This is a good example of pursuing multi-vocality in education.

Gupta reiterated the need to bring together people from across different classes, cultures and religions in order to develop a deeper understanding of those seen as the other. An example of this is the “heritage walk” conducted in different parts of Delhi that enables people to transcend the boundaries of class, religion and caste. For example, a walk through a ghetto in Shahajahanabad and conversations with its inhabitants would arrest the general tendency to see the ghetto as a threatening and unfamiliar space.
In conclusion, the session Chair, Prof. Neeladri Bhattacharya, summed up the key points of the discussion:

- Education plays an important role in building bridges between communities by familiarizing children with, and imbibing in them a respect for, lifestyle practices and cultures different from their own. The language of hate can spread only when there is a social base for it. This is where education can play a vital role by transforming attitudes and beliefs from the ground-up. Writers of school textbooks must be sensitive to this role that education can play.

- In our efforts to promote peace, there has been a trend in the recent past to repress histories of conflict. Saying that this is counterproductive, Bhattacharya advocated a need to address violence more holistically, looking at its various complexities, causes and manifestations. Parallel to this must be an effort to look at the diverse ways of responding to conflict and how these have to adapt to the ground realities – to the needs of those affected by the violence.

- Linked to this was also the point about writing histories “from the ground up” that reflect how historical events affected the lives of ordinary people. As articulated by Sethi through the example of the way in which the 1947 partition has been introduced in the NCERT history textbook, the idea is to move beyond a homogenous “top down” perspective to understand the myriad ways in which ordinary people were affected by the violence and how these very people displayed exemplary courage and compassion in their efforts to save human lives. This brings out the contrast between multivocal histories and a monolithic history. For example, a study of the 1947 partition through the experiences of women, Dalits and minority communities in India and Pakistan would be more holistic and insightful than one that articulates a monolithic, state-centric view of the events of 1947.

- The significance of writing different kinds of history where scholars do not attempt to have one neat narrative was underscored. This facilitates a process whereby people are able to coexist peacefully while respecting the differences that lie between them.

- The presentation from Gujarat brought out the challenges of educating for peace in a context of structural violence. While in many post-violence regions, there is a need to move on, how do we do this in a situation where social and structural violence permeate daily life? In the absence of justice
and with survivors continuing to live in ghettos and relief colonies, how do we discuss the concept of peace and coexistence?

- In the context of the presentation from LUMS, it was felt that such initiatives should be extended beyond the management schools to include **social science departments at universities** in the two countries.

*Participants of the Sixth Annual WISCOMP Conflict Transformation Workshop.*
Role of the Media in Conflict Generation and Conflict Transformation

The panel discussion on the Role of the Media in Conflict Generation and Conflict Transformation brought together experts from the print, electronic and online media to address various issues such as India’s “embedded” journalism, the internet and the blog as new tools for conflict reportage, the role of the vernacular media, and representation of Indo-Pak conflicts in Hindi journalism.

The Chair, Sumona DasGupta, Assistant Director, WISCOMP, opened the discussion with a comment on the role of the media in situations of conflict. While there has been a flurry of studies debating its dual role, DasGupta noted that at one end of the spectrum of opinions is the view that “journalism is a profession of violence whose basic thesis equates reality with war and news with conflict.” The role of the media in contributing to the reproduction or even the direct instigation of violence, either through direct bias or silent acquiescence, has been empirically documented in recent years. Studies from Bosnia and Rwanda, for instance, have highlighted the role that the media can play in exacerbating conflict. In India and Pakistan, the electronic media’s coverage of Kargil saw the glamorization of war and generated a media fuelled militarized patriotism in both the countries that foreclosed possibilities of discussions around the rationale for the war or its long term consequences and impact on the lives of people.

DasGupta also pointed to studies that reflect a different reality – that the media can play constructive role in peacebuilding. She cited a SAFHR study on Reporting Conflict, which notes that this was evident in the way Geo Television,
Pakistan’s first 24-hour news channel, was launched in August 2002 when tensions were at their peak between India and Pakistan. In the midst of this scenario, Geo reporters interviewed the rare Indian visitor to Pakistan, and covered people-to-people interactions in a manner that indicated a clear desire for peace. The heavy commercial sponsorship of some of these programs is also indicative of the desire for peaceful coexistence.54

Attention was also drawn to the growing importance of the internet in the way conflicts are covered around the world. “The internet has opened up a borderless space, which makes democratic dialogue possible. Like the print and TV media, this too is a double-edged sword, but the possibilities it opens up as a liberating space cannot be denied,” said DasGupta. Mass media technologies, institutions, professional norms and practices constitute one of the most powerful forces shaping the lives of individuals, communities and nations today. However, the role that the media can play or is willing to play will depend on where it positions itself.55 Several factors, noted DasGupta, are responsible for the manner in which the media positions itself, particularly when it reports civil strife or war-like situations. The most important is perhaps the political economy that operates behind the media coverage of such conflicts. The ownership of media, and the linkages between the owners, the government and business

54 Laxmi Murthy, Reporting Conflict (Kathmandu: South Asian Forum for Human Rights, 2004).
interests, impacts the content and form of news. This may not necessarily be by conscious design; it is simply the product of market selection and considerations of advertising revenue. With media barons around the world maintaining a close understanding with political forces in the government as well as with large business houses, it is not surprising that news invariably gets framed in a certain way.

In discussing the role of the media in reporting conflict in South Asia, the role of the vernacular media also needs to be addressed. The extent to which the language press can add fresh insights and contribute to peacebuilding, especially when reporting on rural and regional conflicts, will depend on the degree to which they can resist being absorbed into the rat race of the “metro media” and continue to present their own ideas and realities, telling stories and problems of the so-called peripheral areas, and making it a part of our consciousness, said DasGupta.

In this context, the discussion was informed by the following questions:

- How does the ownership of media impact news output?
- To what extent can the media emerge as a resource that can help in the process of peacebuilding and, in this context, what is the role of the alternate media, the vernacular press, the airwaves, the private television and the internet?
- What are some of the moral and professional dilemmas faced by the journalists while covering interstate and internal conflicts in the region?
- Does “peace partisanship” create a dent in the journalist’s standards of fairness and objectivity?

Elaborating on the title of his presentation, India’s Embedded Journalism, Sumanta Banerjee, Correspondent, Economic and Political Weekly, currently based in Dehradun, articulated the view that, in post-independence India, the mainstream media has embedded itself in the State and in the corporate sector. This trend can be traced back to 1969 when Indira Gandhi undertook measures such as bank nationalization and ban on privy purses and the uproar in the media over this decision. Mainstream newspapers such as The Statesmen, where Banerjee worked during that period, were owned by companies that were major players in the private sector. Journalists working for such newspapers were “instructed” to criticize the government’s measures as these posed a threat to the corporate sector, which also owned many of the newspapers. Today, the same corporate media supports the Manmohan Singh government for its liberal
policies. This example was highlighted to illuminate how the mainstream media, depending on where its corporate interests lie, clashes with the State or works in partnership with it.

Tied to these interests, the roles played by the mainstream media are also influenced by the nature of the conflicts they cover. They collaborate with the State in their reportage of external conflicts, for example, those with Pakistan, Bangladesh and China. Here, the media takes a nationalistic, even aggressive, position and contributes to the process of conflict aggravation. Banerjee cited the example of an editorial in The Indian Express on December 17, 2007, which talked about Chinese incursions into India, even though the Indian Army had refuted such a claim. Yet the editorial was carried with the title “Dragon Breath,” leading to a further stereotyping of the other. The relationship with Pakistan, particularly with reference to the Kargil conflict, is another example of the manner in which the Government and the people of Pakistan were demonized in the media. While the role of the media in negatively impacting bilateral relations is alarming, equally disturbing is its influence on the rights of citizens, as seen in the cases following the attacks on the Indian Parliament and the Red Fort where innocent Indians were labeled as “terrorists.”

Yet, the role of the mainstream media has been considerably different if we look at other types of conflict, communal violence for example. In the case of the communal carnage in Gujarat in 2002, the mainstream English Media, compared to the Hindi and the Urdu press, played a positive role. It tried to
explore the “root causes” of the violence and made efforts to reduce tension between Hindus and Muslims. Why is this so? According to Banerjee, more than altruism, this has to do with media ownership patterns since much of the English media is owned by the corporate sector. The security of its business investments in the state made the corporate sector come out strongly against the Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi. The nature of the reportage on Gujarat was therefore influenced by the interests of business houses in the country.

The media has also played a complex role in its reportage of other types of conflicts, for example those concerning class, caste and ethnicity. Firstly, there is a tendency to lump all these conflicts together, attributing to them similar goals and characteristics. For example, there is an attempt to paint the entire Maoist movement with the same brush of terrorism, equating it to the insurrectionary movements in the North East and in Kashmir. The fundamental differences in the character and goals of the two types of conflicts remain unnoticed. The ethnic and linguistic conflicts, in the North East for example, are based on sectarian, community-based demands, while the Maoist movement is based on issues arising out of class – differences in access to resources between the rich and the poor. Further, while the former might be defined as secessionist in the sense that they want to assert their separate identity through the creation of an independent State, the Maoist Movement – although one may not agree with their methods – is committed to the goals of socialism, secularism and democracy, espoused by the Indian Constitution. Yet, the mainstream media makes little distinction between its coverage of the Maoist movement and other struggles for self-determination, such as those in the North East. On the contrary, there is a tendency to encourage a “one size fits all” approach in the treatment of domestic armed conflicts.

According to Banerjee, related to this is also the tendency to trivialize conflicts concerning very serious issues, such as those of livelihood. How do the mainstream media cover movements such as those against big dam projects, the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and those concerning the environment? By labeling leaders such as Medha Patkar and Arundhati Roy as “jhollawalas,” newspaper editorials not only trivialize the conflict, they also speak out against issues that threaten the corporate sector and/or the neo-liberal agenda of the Government.

Banerjee concluded his presentation with two ethics that professional journalists must never dispense with. First, they must provide a rigorous accounting of
people in power and people who want to be in power, in both the public and private sectors. Second, they must give space to a wide range of informed opinions on social and political issues. In such a context, journalism can become an agent of education.

Seema Mustafa, Political Editor and Delhi Bureau Chief with The Asian Age, New Delhi, opened her presentation titled Reporting Conflict: Choosing the Frame with reflections on her reportage of some of the most gruesome incidents of violence that India has witnessed over the last three decades – from caste wars in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh to ethnic and religious violence in Assam, Punjab and Kashmir.

Reporting conflict before the advent of the 24-hour news channels meant that reporters went into these pockets of violence with limited organizational back-up and without any romanticized notion of reporting from a war zone. While stating that she did not enter these zones with a “conscious frame,” at a subconscious level, it came from a certain ethos that surrounded the reporters and from the kind of editors that inspired them. It came from the training that journalists had to “go to the source,” to the core of the issue. The yardstick of good reporting was that it should be factual and that it should reflect the perspectives of a cross-section of stakeholders, particularly those of the victims of conflict.

Recounting her experiences of reporting on the violence in Assam, Mustafa said that perhaps the most shocking revelation pertained to the role played by the State. Whether it was complicit with those carrying out the killing or simply
did not have the will to intervene to save lives, the State allowed the violence and the conflict to continue unabated. In the midst of such mindless violence where the State fails to perform its duty, what is the role of the journalist? As Mustafa reflected, “Should I try to save the village that is being attacked? Or shall I cover it? And through the coverage, hope to save it? Each of these is a very proactive action.” Finally, with the State failing in its duty to stop the violence, the reporters became spectators, writing down everything that they witnessed and trying to inform people about the tragedy that was unfolding in Assam.

From Assam to other regions witnessing ethnic, religious and caste-based violence, emerged a frame – that the State, in some form or the other, was complicit in the violence. In such a context, journalists adopted an adversarial role and covered these conflicts with the belief that they were the “watchdogs of society.” As Mustafa put it, “We are there to question the State. We are there to tell what the truth is, and the truth is always on the side of the people and the victims.” Across the various regions of conflict in India – from Kashmir and Gujarat to the states in the North East – this fact has remained unchanged.

Yet, with globalization and the growing influence of the market, the contemporary landscape has changed drastically for the Indian media. The Indian mainstream media has increasingly been co-opted, particularly with reference to the coverage of conflict. Mustafa attributed this also to the onset of the 24-hour news channel, which brought in a breed of journalism low on ethics, preparation and commitment. The focus now is on the TRP ratings and the “sensational bites” that will get you those ratings. Linked to this is the changing role of the editor who now is a business entrepreneur driven by market forces. For example, Mustafa shared that the two newspapers in India with the largest circulation do not have editors. They are run by the proprietor.

Commenting on the Indian media coverage of Pakistan, Mustafa stated that it is in the reportage of this country that the media has contributed greatly to the creation and demonization of the other. Today, the media supports the ongoing peace process because the government has endorsed it and so it is good business for the corporate sector to support it as well. Since the media has not set any yardsticks of its own, its support of the peace process is influenced by corporate interests and the views of the government. Yet, if it wants to, the media can play a significant role in building peace. As Mustafa put it, “If I am able to report the truth, if I have a newspaper which is able to respect the truth, and if I work in a milieu which cares for the poor and the victimized of this country, then peace itself is a natural corollary, by default.”
Mustafa concluded her presentation with the problem of the “blacking out of news.” Because of various vested interests, there is a conscious attempt to not report certain types of news. Said Mustafa, “the journalist knows what’s happening, but where does he write it? The newspaper will not print it, the corporate house doesn’t want it, and the government gets to the editor before he can. So, we are up against several odds.” Mustafa cited the example of several young people who were arrested and tortured following the Mecca Masjid blasts in Hyderabad. Apart from a few Urdu newspapers that covered it, the mainstream media in Delhi did not carry the story. It was only after a few NGOs circulated a fact-finding report on the subject that the story was picked up by media organizations, and now the Minority Commission has taken up the issue.

Exploring the role of the electronic media, Alpana Kishore, a WISCOMP Scholar of Peace Fellow based in New Delhi, recounted her experiences of reporting the Kashmir conflict (between 1990 and 1996) for the television program Newstrack. Due to the monthly nature of the program, the journalist had some time to observe and analyze the ground reality before filing his/her story. In fact, the very nature of the coverage was qualitatively different from the treatment that 24-hour news channels give the conflict today. This could be attributed to the relative luxury of time that a program such as Newstrack afforded.

Saying that a journalist’s gut instinct and the ability to take “small chances” play an important role when reporting violence, Kishore pointed to several complex factors that come into play: What do reporters do with footage that they know will inflame passions and possibly exacerbate violence? In the interest of getting the truth out, do they carry such footage in their story? Or do they choose not to show it in the interest of violence prevention? Also, how does the media report change in a conflict situation? Clearly, in any context of conflict, change – negative and positive – is inevitable. Is the media able to capture the evolving nature of conflict – its progression and de-escalation? Or, does it get trapped in old stereotypes and prejudices?

For instance, Kishore felt that it is difficult for Kashmiri journalists, living inside Kashmir, to look at the conflict from different perspectives, particularly those that they may not agree with. While the views of local journalists are critical because they represent the grassroots’ perspectives, there is also the
fear of getting trapped in presenting only that point of view, thereby excluding other types of coverage. In such a situation, even when the ground realities begin to change, there is a tendency to perpetuate the old stereotypes in the reportage of conflict. For example, shared Kishore, there is the stereotype of the Indian Army as a “brutal, colonial and oppressive force.” While this might have been the case in the early 1990s, things have changed considerably over the last decade. Yet this stereotype finds space in much of the coverage coming out of Kashmir. Second, there is the “us-versus-them” prejudice, which continues to color the entire conflict as one of Hindus-versus-Muslims, even though considerable progress has been made to transcend these faultlines. Third, there is a tendency in the Indian media to focus on the political side of the conflict and exclude other positive developments that are underway in the state. Kishore gave the example of the huge investment in educational infrastructure, which is visible only if journalists visit the rural areas in Kashmir and interview the local residents.

Kishore shared excerpts from an article titled *Kala Kutta* in the newspaper *Greater Kashmir* on the stereotypical view of India and Kashmir: “She instructs her forces to act as the innumerable arms of Goddess Kali, riding on a hungry and vicious tiger, a chain of bleeding heads around her neck, tongue hanging out of her blood dripping mouth, one foot raised gracefully like a *Bharatnatyam* dancer, the other firmly digging into a blood soaked body of a dying Kashmiri, a young white skinned Kashmiri, his head half-severed, his dark eyes still recounting the visions of illusive freedom before death.”

Kishore noted that while the central location of these stereotypes in the media is problematic, also of significant concern are the exclusions – the complex dialogues and realities that the media chooses not to cover. An example of this is the subliminal mental battle between the *Wahabi* interpretation of Islam and *Sufi* Islam (and *Kashmiriyat*). The complex and very important battle between the two is not an issue that the media likes to reflect on. What has the radicalization of Islam meant for the heritage of *Kashmiriyat*? How has the conflict influenced this battle between the two interpretations of Islam in the Valley? What is the perspective of communities such as the *Gujjars* and *Shias*? These are questions, which rarely find space in the mainstream media, be it electronic or print. Elaborating further on the distorted and one-sided coverage of Kashmir, Kishore shared a conversation she had with some participants from Pakistan at the WISCOMP Workshop who asked her about how people live in Srinagar. The reportage has been such that it is difficult to imagine that people can live a normal life in the city. How do people live on a daily basis
when the guns are silent? There is very little coverage of this complex reality of life in Kashmir.

However, is this perspective reflective of the way the Kashmir conflict, and India-Pakistan relations in general, are covered in the vernacular media, the Hindi language press for instance? Is the vernacular media, like the English press, hostage to the forces of market, State and globalization? Workshop participant Arvind Das, a journalist with the BBC Hindi Service and currently pursuing a PhD on the “Impact of Globalization on Hindi Journalism” at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, shared his views on this subject.

Tracing the history of Hindi journalism in India (which is 180 years old), Das shared that Oodunta Martand (The Rising Sun) was the first Hindi publication, printed in 1826. In the pre-independence era, Hindi journalism played an important role in the Indian freedom struggle. Journalism was thought to be a mission and many of its pioneers were also leaders of the freedom movement. However, after independence, Das noted that this missionary zeal waned. Although Hindi was given national language status by the Constituent Assembly in 1950, the Hindi press lacked in confidence, vigor and quality.

Between the 1970s and the 1990s, technology and economic change transformed the Hindi newspaper business. The steady increase in literacy and expanding purchasing power of people, and the growing political volatility in the Hindi belt, led to a rise in the circulation and influence of Hindi newspapers.
According to the National Readership Study 2006, the largest growth in readership has been in the Hindi belt. Indian language dailies as a whole have grown substantially in the year 2006 from 191 million in 2005 to 203.6 million readers. The readership of English dailies has stagnated at around 21 million. Hindi dailies Dainik Jagran (with 21.2 million readers) and Dainik Bhaskar (with 21 million readers) are in the lead with the Times of India emerging as the only English daily with a readership of over five million (7.4 million). Of the 18 dailies that are in the “five million club,” six are in Hindi, three in Tamil, two each in Gujarati, Malayalam and Marathi, and one each in Bengali, Telugu and English. These figures highlight the important role that the vernacular media and especially the Hindi print media play in shaping public opinion in India.

Turning to the representation of India-Pakistan conflicts in Hindi Journalism, Das shared that the adage “only news concerned with decay and destruction is worthy to be published in a newspaper” aptly sums up the coverage of India-Pakistan relations. An analysis of Hindi newspapers by Das has revealed a stereotypical image of Pakistani people and society. “We get the picture of a state which is decayed, fundamentalist and rogue. People living there are either ‘bearded mullahs or burqa clad women’.” Das cited the following as reasons for the prevalence of this stereotype. Although Hindi newspapers have a wider reach, their content is abysmal. Proprietors are mostly concerned with enhancing readership rather than giving credible, objective news to their readers. Most of the news items concerning Pakistan are taken from either Reuters or news agencies like the Press Trust of India (PTI). None of the Hindi newspapers have their own correspondents in Pakistan who can give them a first-hand account of the news story. Further, a major source of news concerning Indo-Pak conflicts is the Government of India. More often than not, Hindi newspapers take this information at face value without any verification.

Das cited the example of the 2001 attack on the Indian Parliament. The Government of India declared that the attack was carried out at the behest of the Pakistani Government and the Indian media bought this story without attempting to independently verify its authenticity. Most of the coverage pertaining to India-Pakistan relations in the Hindi media legitimizes the Government’s position, whatever it may be.

With reference to the growing influence of the market, Das said that global technologies have opened up new vistas for Hindi journalism to flourish in the

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56 Comments made by Arvind Das at the WISCOMP Conflict Transformation Workshop.
liberalized economy. Facsimile transmission via satellite makes it possible for newspapers to be published from various regional centers simultaneously. *Dainik Bhaskar, Dainik Jagran,* and *Amar Ujala* have made inroads into the remote areas of the Hindi heartland thanks to this technology. Yet, on the flipside, the Hindi press has also become more market-driven. Content is determined by the prevailing forces of the market and the advertising departments. This has also influenced the coverage of India-Pakistan conflicts, with the press mirroring the positions taken by the State or the market on various issues concerning the bilateral relationship.

Raheel Khursheed, Correspondent and Assistant News Editor with CNN-IBN, New Delhi, spoke about the **internet and the blog as new tools of conflict reportage.** The internet has had a huge impact on the way the media covers conflicts. For one, it has enabled multiple stakeholders – particularly those living in the midst of the violence – to influence the way a particular conflict is projected to audiences. Two, it has broadened our definitions of conflict. Saying that the murder of children on school campuses was as important as the killing of civilians in Kashmir, Khursheed drew attention to the unique role that the internet has played in bringing into the public domain multiple voices and perspectives.

The case study of the Yahoo! program “Kevin Sites: In the Hot Zone” was introduced to explore how the experiment of using the internet as a tool for reporting conflict was received by audiences. The mission statement of the
Sixth Annual CT Workshop

program read: “News reporting for the new millennium: a nexus of backpack journalism, narrative story-telling techniques, and the internet, designed to reach a global audience hungry for information.” The emphasis on reaching a “global audience” was particularly important because it suggested a transcendence of borders. For example, an Indian as well as a Pakistani had equal access to the coverage of the Kashmir conflict. They were not limited to Indian or Pakistani news channels for information. They were not bound by the constraint imposed by the inability to access news channels in each other’s countries. Some of the “hot zones” that Sites covered were Afghanistan, Chechnya, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Palestine, Kashmir, Myanmar, Nepal, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Uganda and Lebanon.

Did this experiment work? Yahoo! felt that it did. The company said: “It was a serious journalistic endeavor that provided a service to our consumers and was a boost to the Yahoo! brand.” The Asia Media saw it as “one of the most innovative responses yet to the changing face of international journalism.” From the time Sites posted his first stories from Somalia in September 2005, the Hot Zone grew to have two million readers per month. This case study is an indicator of how seriously people are taking this medium across the world, particularly in developing countries where the internet is increasingly being used as a tool for advocacy on issues of governance, corruption etc.

In recent years, blogging has also emerged as an important internet tool. In this context, Khursheed highlighted the case study of the popular Iraqi blog “Baghdad Burning,” which received such appreciation worldwide that the author – a young woman from Iraq – published the entries in two books, which have been translated into several languages. The blog describes itself in the following words: “Let’s talk war, politics, and occupation. I’ll meet you round the bend my friend, where hearts can heal and souls can mend.”

Riverbend, a pseudonym used by the author, launched the blog on August 17, 2003. In March 2006, her website received the Bloggie Award for Best Middle East and Africa blog. It combines political statements with large doses information about Iraqi culture. An excerpt from one of the blog entries reads, “It’s amazing how as things get worse, you begin to require less and less. We have a saying for that in Iraq. ‘If you see death, you settle for a fever.’ We’ve given up on democracy, security and even electricity. Just bring back the water.” Commenting on the influence of this blog on readers wanting to learn more about events in Iraq, The New York Times wrote, “Riverbend is a thoughtful writer whose articulate, even poetic, prose packs an emotional punch while exhibiting a journalist’s eye for detail.”
Closer home, “Emergency Times” and “Emergency Telegraph” have drawn attention to the unique window that the internet has opened up for Indians and Pakistanis to understand each other better. Providing space for debate and dissent, the blogs gained in popularity when many sections of the Pakistani media were gagged during the Emergency imposed by President Pervez Musharraf. “Emergency Times” describes itself as an “independent Pakistani student initiative against injustice and oppression…providing regular updates on the Emergency situation.” “Letters from Pakistan” – a blog started by Aasim Khan, a Special Features Correspondent at CNN-IBN, New Delhi, who visited Pakistan as part of a media delegation – documents an Indian journalists’ perspective on the domestic turmoil in the country. In one of his entries from Pakistan, Khan wrote, “A journalists’ visa is required to report from Pakistan…but one doesn’t require a visa to blog from there.” In another entry titled “Once a Commando, always a Commando”, he wrote, “Back home, it’s not uncommon for people to tease me about my ‘loyalties’ every time there is an India-Pakistan match. I often reply with a great deal of artistic creativity, using the choicest of curses that I have collected, especially to be savored on such occasions. But in Pakistan, my hosts have no doubt about my ‘loyalties’, and every time the match turns away from their team, they don’t mind showing me who I am, an Indian…”

Journalists in India, and across the world, are increasingly turning to blogging to share perspectives that they are unable to articulate, for various reasons, through mediums such as newspapers and television channels. Suhasini Haider, Deputy Foreign Editor at CNN-IBN, New Delhi, feels that “blogging has opened new doors for journalism. In the old days, you filed stories about the news, about events, about what you saw – but you never wrote about what you felt. Even now, conflict reporters are shy to speak about their fears, the horror of witnessing dead bodies, the sadness of talking to victims, and the guilt of being able to leave the conflict zone while so many are left behind. That’s where blogs come in. They have opened the floodgates for journalists to express much more than just ‘the story’.”

The recent kidnapping (and later release) of the BBC’s Gaza correspondent, Allen Johnson, has brought in an interesting perspective to the question “why blog.” Johnson and many other reporters, who live in regions of conflict for long periods of time, have been advised by therapists to blog as a way to prevent or reduce post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

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57 Suhasini Haider quoted by Raheel Khursheed at the WISCOMP Conflict Transformation Workshop.
Sagarika Ghose, Senior Editor, CNN–IBN, New Delhi, and author of the blog “Bloody Mary,” says, “I blog because I can’t say a lot of things on air, but I can say them on my blog. It also gives me a chance to interact with viewers and the bloggers. Blogging and the internet are vital aspects of ‘public diplomacy’. For lasting peace, I believe diplomacy must move out of elite official circles and into the public realm…and contacts on the internet and through blogs are crucial to this.”

Blogging has also led to considerable transparency and openness in the area of conflict reportage. Anderson Cooper, a journalist with CNN, writes, “I think it’s a good thing that there are bloggers out there watching very closely and holding people accountable. Everyone in the news should be able to hold up to that kind of scrutiny. I’m for as much transparency in the newsgathering process as possible.” CNN in fact took interactivity to a new level by using YouTube in the recent Presidential debates in the USA.

Saying that such internet tools open up a liberating space for readers/viewers, Khursheed summed up some of the advantages and disadvantages of this medium as a tool for conflict reporting. First, it is an unmediated space where the information flows directly from the journalist to the reader without the intervention of an editor or a business interest. However, some of this might change in the coming years, particularly with media barons such as Rupert Murdoch buying sites such as MySpace.com. Second, it is an interactive space where the reader can participate in the process and share his/her views on the subject. Yet, like all other mass media, the internet is a double-edged sword. It can become an easily accessible platform for negative propaganda as a new cartoon film portraying a suicide bomber as a hero has revealed (http://memritv.org). The internet clip was reportedly played on an Iranian television channel. Further, the scope of the internet remains limited, particularly in countries such as Pakistan, India and Bangladesh where vernacular and mainstream newspapers and television channels have a wider reach.

Discussion

In response to a question about the popularity of blogging among Hindi readers, Das, who himself has a blog, shared that there are about 1000 bloggers in Hindi and the phenomenon which started in 2004-2005, is growing exponentially in India.
In response to a query about an ombudsman that drafts laws for media organizations, Mustafa shared that there is the Press Council, which is supposed to play a mediative role and serve as a watchdog. However, it loses much of its credibility because it is a government-supported organization. Further, the Indian media has been resistant to the notion of a code of ethics imposed from the outside because it fears that this will open up a context for the Government to intervene in editorial policy. Such a code, shared Mustafa, came from within the media organization, from the example set by the editor and other senior journalists. For example, it was considered a violation of the code to identify the victim of a rape or to name the communities in a riot situation. Since these ethics came from the editor, what happens when the proprietor becomes the editor and brings in his/her business interests?

With reference to a question concerning how communal violence is covered, Mustafa asserted that the media has an important role to play, particularly in quelling rumors, which usually start such riots. She cited the example of the anti-Sikh riots in 1984. The media had received information that trains coming into Delhi from Punjab were filled with Hindu dead bodies. Yet, Mustafa’s investigations revealed that all the bodies pulled out of the trains were those of Sikhs. Because there was a rumor that Hindus were being killed, the Hindu mobs went to the outskirts of the city, stopped the trains, and killed the Sikh passengers. This posed a challenge with reference to the editorial decision that The Telegraph, where Mustafa worked at the time, had to take on whether to carry the name of the community that was massacred. “Do we say 250 Sikhs killed or 250 people killed,” asked Mustafa. At that time, it was part of the journalistic code of ethics not to identify communities in a situation of violence. Although the intention of such a rule was to douse communal tension and prevent further violence, The Telegraph took an editorial decision to name the community that had been massacred because if it did not do so, the rumor would continue and more Sikhs would be killed. While this decision of the newspaper was questioned in several quarters, including the Government, the killings stopped. Similarly, Banerjee drew attention to a context such as Gujarat where genocide was carried out against the Muslim community. Should the media, in its reportage, not identify the community that has been victimized? In light of what the Muslim community experienced in Gujarat in 2002, such an action would have been counterproductive.

Bringing in an interesting dimension to the discussion on a code of ethics in the media, Banerjee said that such a code is implemented according to the dictates of newspaper owners. He cited the example of a report on human
rights violations in Kashmir in 1989, released by a fact-finding team of human rights workers that Banerjee was a member of. He recounted that not only was the report boycotted by the mainstream press, but that the members of the team were accused of serving the interests of Pakistan. The Press Council was unable to play a mediative role in this context.

With reference to the relationship between India and Pakistan, Banerjee took the view that media support for the ongoing peace process is influenced by corporate interests. He cited the example of civil society initiatives undertaken in the early 1990s – such as the initiation of the Pakistan India Peoples’ Forum for Peace and Democracy – which received little or no coverage in the media. The Forum was the first initiative to bring together more than 100 people from the two countries. Yet, the initiative was blacked out in the media. It was therefore felt that corporate and political interests influence the media’s current support for the peace process.

In conclusion, Sumona DasGupta, the session facilitator, flagged the following points:

- **The notion of an “alternate” media:** While the definition of what constitutes the “mainstream” media remains contested, it is being increasingly recognized that new voices and dissenting ideologies are often echoed by the so-called “alternate” media which is relatively free of the stranglehold of state and market forces that drive the commercial media. The alternate media can consequently be a powerful resource for peacebuilding. In India, leading this group are publications such as *Tehelka* and *Civil Society*.

- **Peace Journalism:** Although this perspective was not reflected in the discussion, DasGupta drew attention to some important ideas that the framework of peace journalism offers. Introduced by peace scholar Johan Galtung and journalist Jake Lynch, peace journalism is essentially a dialogue on the ethics of journalistic intervention. It strives to report “all truths” of the conflict, making a choice on not just what to report but how to report it, humanizing all sides of the dispute, fostering constructive communication between conflicting parties and giving voice to possible solutions to the conflict, no matter who suggests them.58

Intra-Kashmir Dialogue: Participant Perspectives

The various perspectives on the vexed issue of Jammu and Kashmir have been debated at several fora around the world for more than six decades now. Initially seen as a bilateral issue between India and Pakistan, over the last decade, the armed conflict in Indian Kashmir has highlighted two realities. One, the peace talks cannot be held exclusively around the issue of “territory.” They must include issues related to the security and wellbeing of the people who inhabit that territory. Two, for sustainable peace, multiple stakeholders should be brought into the process. The voices of the women and men of Jammu and Kashmir, representing different regions, ethnicities, religions and political beliefs, must receive attention if the process is to be inclusive and plural.59

Through the platform of the Conflict Transformation Workshops, WISCOMP has made a sustained effort to provide a context for young Indians, Pakistanis and Kashmiris to explore diverse perspectives for the transformation of the Kashmir conflict. Of the firm belief that there is a need for the next generation of leaders to “think out of the box,” WISCOMP has supported multi-track dialogues on Kashmir even when official channels of communication were blocked. While the first and second Conflict Transformation Workshops (held in 2001 and 2003) addressed the Kashmir issue through negotiation simulations, the 2004 Workshop provided a context for participants to examine proposals from across the world that have a resonance for Kashmir (for example, those from South Tyrol, Northern Ireland, Aland and Aceh). Also discussed were

proposals designed specifically to address the Kashmir conflict: the Chenab Formula, the Kashmir Study Group Proposal, the Kashmiri American Council Proposal, et al.

The 2005 Workshop added new dimensions to this dialogue. Participants were encouraged to move beyond discussing the above proposals to generating their own solutions. The discussions were structured around the following thematic rubrics: territory, security, sovereignty, democracy and autonomy. Out of these discussions emerged a Joint Statement drafted by the Indian, Pakistani and Kashmiri participants.60

The 2006 Workshop injected several new modules into the dialogue on Kashmir. These included a quiz on Jammu and Kashmir that focused on the land and its people; a series of films that looked at contemporary realities in the region; a visual presentation of paintings that captured the experiences of homelessness; presentations by the WISCOMP team on the conceptual vocabulary of peacebuilding that permeates the literature on Kashmir; an introduction to the field of Futures Studies that enabled participants to image a new future for Kashmir; and, a participant-led discussion that analyzed different proposals offered over the years on the question of Jammu and Kashmir.

The goal of the 2007 Workshop module titled **Intra-Kashmir Dialogue: Participant Perspectives** was to foreground the voices of the next generation of state and civil society leadership in the region. Bringing together Kashmiris from both sides of the LoC, this session addressed the following topics:

- Intra-Kashmir Dialogue and Perspectives from across the LoC
- Perspectives on Politics, Law and Governance in Jammu and Kashmir
- The Role of Cultural Initiatives in the Peace Process
- Perspectives on Health and Psychosocial Healing

The operationalization of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service in April 2005 and the collaborative relief work undertaken in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake of October 2005 heightened interest in contact across the LoC. The renewed contact between Kashmiris on both sides of the LoC since 2005 has added new dimensions to the relationship between India and Pakistan. Exploring this, Tahir Aziz, Program Associate, Conciliation Resources, London, and previously Director of the Human Rights Commission for the Government

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of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Muzaffarabad, spoke on the possibilities that the **Intra-Kashmir Dialogue opens up for the peace process between India and Pakistan**.

The notion of an intra-Kashmiri dialogue gained currency in the mid-1990s when a few external, third party voices mooted the idea that Kashmiris from both sides of the LoC – the political leadership as well as civil society actors – should establish contact in order to understand each other better and jointly develop political solutions. While the situation at the time did not provide the space for such a dialogue, the idea gained support in the context of the peace process, initiated in 2004, between the two countries. There was also an awareness that, in addition to cross-LoC dialogues, there was a need for intra-regional dialogues within the two Kashmirs, for instance between the leadership in Jammu, Ladakh and the Valley on the Indian side.

According to Aziz, an intra-Kashmiri dialogue can help to improve understanding of different positions and grievances across Kashmir and provide a useful ancillary to the formal track one process. The peoples of Kashmir are neither completely homogeneous nor completely heterogeneous. The politics of the two parts of Kashmir has evolved differently since 1947. The complex and protracted nature of the Kashmir conflict has also limited the space for a real dialogue between various political groups on either side of the LoC.

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**Participants at the panel discussion on Intra-Kashmir Dialogue:**
Nida Sheikh (Undergraduate Student, Women’s College, Srinagar),
Javed Iqbal (A native of Kargil, currently Consultant, Amnesty International, New Delhi),
Tahir Aziz (A native of Muzaffarabad, currently Program Associate, Conciliation Resources, London), Ahsan ul-Haq Chisti (A native of Srinagar, currently pursuing Doctoral Studies at the University of Pune, Pune).
The principle of an intra-Kashmir dialogue has attracted widespread support among Kashmiris. New Delhi and Islamabad, recognizing the need for such contact, have also shown openness for this interaction to take place. However, neither India nor Pakistan has formally endorsed any of the meetings so far. This interaction is not meant to be limited to the political leadership alone. The engagement of civil society actors is crucial to the process.

While it is necessary to stress on the need for an intra-Kashmir dialogue, it is equally important to design an effective structure and just process under which a meaningful dialogue can take place. Aziz suggested that such a process would benefit enormously from looking at the successes and failures of previous and ongoing efforts. Listed below are some of the international, national, local and diaspora organizations that have facilitated some level of interaction between Kashmiris on the two sides of the LoC:

**External third parties:** Institute of Multi Track Diplomacy (IMTD), International Center for Religion and Diplomacy (ICRD), Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES)

**South Asian regional organizations:** South Asian Forum for Human Rights (SAFHR), Regional Center for Strategic Studies (RCSS)

**Indian organizations:** Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace (WISCOMP), Center for Dialogue and Reconciliation (CDR), AMAN Trust, Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS), Delhi Policy Group, Strategic Foresight Group, Nelson Mandela Center for Peace and Conflict Resolution (NMCPCR)

**Pakistani organizations:** Institute for Policy Studies (IPS), Institute for Regional Studies (IRS), Institute for Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), Islamabad Policy and Research Institute (IPRI), Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI)

**Kashmiri diaspora organizations:** Justice Foundation/Kashmir Center (London), Kashmiri American Council (Washington D.C.), International Human Rights Council/Kashmir EU Center (Brussels), World Kashmir Freedom Movement (London), Kashmir Scandinavian Council, Kashmir Canadian Council (Canada)

Aziz shared the following list of conferences that have facilitated some level of dialogue among Kashmiris across the LoC:
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>Organizers</th>
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<tr>
<td>July 2003</td>
<td>Beyond the Blame Game: Grounds for Peace and Justice in Kashmir,</td>
<td>The Association of Humanitarian Lawyers and the Kashmiri American Council (Ghulam Nabi Fai)</td>
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<td>Washington DC</td>
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<td>April 2004</td>
<td>Discourse on Kashmir, Brussels</td>
<td>International Commission for Human Rights (Majid Tramboo)</td>
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<td>Kathmandu</td>
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<td>February 2005</td>
<td>Peace Initiative in South Asia: Exploring Possible Options for Kashmir,</td>
<td>The International Educational Development and the Kashmiri American Council</td>
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<td>New York</td>
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<td>November 2005</td>
<td>Kashmir Bridge-building Meeting, Kathmandu</td>
<td>International Center for Religion &amp; Diplomacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 2006</td>
<td>Kashmir Conference, Islamabad</td>
<td>Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs</td>
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<td>March 2007</td>
<td>Intra-Kashmir Dialogue, Islamabad</td>
<td>ISS &amp; KIIR</td>
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<td>September 2007</td>
<td>Intra-Kashmir Dialogue, Geneva</td>
<td>Kashmir Center, Brussels</td>
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<td>July 2007</td>
<td>Kashmir Conference, Colombo</td>
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Exploring the **gaps in the intra-Kashmir dialogue process**, Aziz said that due to a variety of reasons – lack of time, an agenda/expected outcome being presented as a *fait accompli*, no follow up, etc. – participants are put on the spot, often resulting in extremely rhetorical speeches rather than efforts to understand the depth of the different perspectives on Kashmir. Moreover, there is a lack of coordination and follow up after these conferences and meetings. The exclusivity of the process also presents a significant challenge. Most of the dialogues involve Kashmiris representing similar political perspectives and usually from one geographical side of the conflict. Cross-LoC dialogues, designed with a purpose to listen and learn, are a rare occurrence. “As a result, you end up talking to yourself at these conferences without listening to anything different on the conflict,” shared Aziz. While these dialogues are important to the peacebuilding process, they fall short of what could be a true conversation. The absence of a gender perspective in these discussions is another constraint. The dialogues have failed to look at the conflict through the lens of gender – how it affects women and men differently and the implications of this for conflict resolution. Because of these diverse factors, many intra-Kashmir dialogues are seen as “talking shops” with participants leaving the meeting unchanged or unwilling to think differently.

In this context, Aziz felt that the intra-Kashmir dialogue should be approached differently. It should be seen as a way of dealing with differences and not just agreeing or opposing something that is predetermined. “Dialogue means that we sit and talk with each other, especially those with whom we may think we have the greatest differences. The purpose is not to advocate, but to inquire; not to argue, but to explore; not to convince but to discover.”61 He identified the following principles for a sustainable and fruitful intra-Kashmir dialogue:

- Create a safe space and a neutral environment that enables all participants to experience physical and psychological safety.
- Participants should agree that the purpose of the dialogue is to learn: It should be a process of inquiry, discovery and understanding, not debate or advocacy.
- Use of appropriate communication skills: We should tell the truth of our experience and listen to the truth of other peoples’ experience.
- Bring to the surface what is hidden: There are usually conscious or unconscious beliefs, perceptions, assumptions, judgments, values, attitudes,

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61 Comments made by Tahir Aziz at the WISCOMP Conflict Transformation Workshop.
opinions, stereotypes, needs, emotions, expectations, and fears that influence dialogue. These need to be acknowledged and processed.

- Rather than searching for outcomes, the dialogue should focus on the relationship.
- Stay through the hard places: The dialogue process goes through many stages where participants, at times, experience confusion, anger, fragmentation or distress.
- Be willing to be changed by the experience: We must be open to change within ourselves based on new information and new experiences.

Aziz concluded with the assertion that cross-LoC dialogue is vital in order to remove misconceptions and stereotypes that both sides hold about each other. Saying that Pakistan and India should not be intimidated by cross-LoC dialogues, he felt that such interaction would be more productive if participants approached it with a purpose to listen and learn and with some degree of creativity. An inclusive approach, involving diverse civil society actors, armed groups, and track one and track two, is crucial to the success of such a dialogue.

Continuing with the emphasis on facilitating a deeper understanding of views between the two Kashmirs, Luv Puri, Staff Reporter, *The Hindu*, and a native of Jammu, made a presentation titled *Exploring Perspectives from Across the LoC*.

Tracing the political history of Jammu and Kashmir, Puri made a reference to the British imperial conquest of 1846. A treaty between the Dogra ruler Gulab Singh and the British led to the creation of what is today known as Jammu and Kashmir. How did Pakistan Administered Jammu and Kashmir (PAJK) come into existence? While the Indian narrative refers to the raid by Pashtun tribal groups in 1947, the Pakistani narrative says that there was a revolt against the Dogra rulers. Puri felt that the truth perhaps lies somewhere in between. With reference to the demographics of the two Kashmirs, he noted that, culturally and ethnically, PAJK is closer to the Jammu region on the Indian side of Jammu and Kashmir. PAJK has a largely non-Kashmiri speaking population, and is culturally different from the Indian side of Kashmir.

Commenting on PAJK’s relations with Pakistan, Puri pointed to the period post-1974 as an important marker of the changed relationship between the two. The Azad Jammu and Kashmir Council was formed during this period in Islamabad. Headed by the Prime Minister of Pakistan as its Chairman and the Prime Minister of PAJK as its Vice-Chairman, the Council includes six elected
members from PAJK, an ex-officio member who is the Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and five members nominated from the Pakistan National Assembly. The Council has 52 subjects under it, including tourism, with members from the Pakistan federal government forming a majority in the Council. Puri noted that there are contradictions between the constitutions of Pakistan and PAJK. For instance, Article 257 of the Pakistan constitution holds that the “people of Jammu and Kashmir will define their relationship with Pakistan after obtaining freedom.” However, part 2 of section 7 of the 1974 PAJK constitution says that “no person or political party in Azad Jammu and Kashmir shall be permitted to propagate against or take part in activities prejudicial or detrimental to the ideology of the state’s accession to Pakistan.” Anybody who is aspiring for elections for the PAJK legislative assembly will have to sign an oath of allegiance to the fact that final accession of Jammu and Kashmir will be with Pakistan.

Echoing Prime Minister Manmohan Singh’s perspective that boundaries cannot be changed and yet, borders can be made irrelevant, Puri made the following recommendations:

- The softening of the LoC in order to facilitate travel is an important concern for divided families. Although the process was initiated with the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service in 2005, it has moved at a slow pace.
- There is a need for institutional links between the political leadership in Muzaffarabaad and in Srinagar and Jammu. Only such linkages can facilitate movement on common issues such as water, tourism and the environment.
Devolution of powers from Islamabad to Muzaffarabaad and from Muzaffarabaad to other districts was suggested. This would help in addressing problems such as the distribution of royalty for the use of water resources.

A Map of Pakistan Administered Jammu and Kashmir

Focusing on Cultural Initiatives for Peace in Kashmir, Nida Rafiq Sheikh, Graduate Student, Women’s College, Srinagar, revisited the notion of Kashmiriyat with the hope that it could be revitalized as a tool for peacebuilding. Defining Kashmiriyat as the ethno-national consciousness and cultural values of the Kashmiri people, Sheikh traced its origin to the 16th century when it was
characterized by religious and cultural harmony among Kashmiris. It reflected the ethnic and religious diversity of the region, which has been an important center for Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Sikhism. The concept received a further boost under the governance of Ain-ul-Aabideen and Akbar who gave equal protection, importance and patronage to Kashmir’s different religious communities. Saying that it is an expression of solidarity, resilience and patriotism, Sheikh drew attention to historical literature, the Raj Tarangini by Kalhana for example, which refers to an entire era in Kashmir when there were more than fifty rulers, reflecting the cultural diversity of the region.

However, a crucial question for young Kashmiris today is this: How is Kashmiriyat seen today after two decades of armed conflict? Has it lost its essence in present-day Kashmir? For young leaders like Sheikh, while the philosophy might still be present, its practice needs to be seriously interrogated, particularly in light of the fissures between various communities and the displacement of the Kashmiri Pandits. She suggested the following steps to rebuild the notion of Kashmiriyat: The introduction of school textbooks that focus on the multicultural ethos and shared heritage of Kashmir; and, a student exchange program between various communities in Jammu and Kashmir. The crucial role that literature, music and the arts can play in promoting coexistence was also emphasized. Such media have the potential to transform long-held stereotypes about the other and rebuild trust torn apart by decades of conflict.

Sheikh concluded with a point about the alienation that Kashmiri youth feel towards the Indian state. She gave the example of her experience with the bureaucracy when applying for a passport. For three years, her passport application was stalled and the unofficial communication to her was this: “We don’t give passports to Kashmiri students since they are going to Pakistan to study medical sciences.” In order to get her passport, Sheikh had to finally submit a letter saying that she will not visit Pakistan for higher education.

Bringing into the dialogue on Kashmir another important issue – psychosocial health and healing – Ahsan Chishti, Research Scholar, University of Pune, Pune, drew attention to the growing prevalence of trauma and incidence of specific disorders such as depression, drug abuse and suicide among Kashmiris.
While the health infrastructure in the state was unable to meet the enormous demand for psychosocial care at the onset of the conflict in 1990, the situation worsened over the next decade with more and more Kashmiris exhibiting symptoms of trauma and not knowing where to turn to for help. Chishti noted that due to the armed conflict, there has been a growing deterioration of existing infrastructure. For example, previously well-staffed and well-equipped district hospitals in the state have crumbled as a result of the conflict.

Taking cognizance of the alarming rise in illnesses relating to psychosocial health, the Jammu and Kashmir State Assembly House Committee had recommended the construction of additional hospitals to meet the needs of Kashmiris suffering from trauma. Currently, there is only one psychiatry diseases’ hospital in the Valley. The international organization Médecins Sans Frontiers (Doctors without Borders) has played an important role by setting up counseling centers at the hospital and specifically addressing the needs of patients experiencing post-traumatic stress syndrome.

Chishti cited the following figures to highlight the enormity of the challenge presented by the lack of psychosocial care in Kashmir. In 1989, the psychiatry diseases’ hospital in Srinagar received 1762 patients. By 1995, the figure had gone up to 34,000 patients; and in 2005, it stood at 50,000. According to doctors at this hospital, 10% of the patients they examine daily are diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorders. A key factor in the sustenance of these disorders is the constant fear and insecurity (physical and psychological) that the patient experiences on a daily basis.

The rates of depression are also on the increase. For example, in the mid-80s, eighty percent of all patients visiting the psychiatry diseases hospital were diagnosed with depression. This figure increased to 12% in 1989 and to 30% in 1995. In 2005, depression accounted for 50% of the cases at the psychiatry diseases hospital. Suicide is another pattern, which has been observed in Kashmir as a result of the armed conflict. Chishti noted that every two days, close to 50 people commit suicide. The majority of them are women. Rampant drug abuse is also on the rise in the state. According to a study conducted by the psychiatry diseases hospital in Srinagar, since 2001, 50% of Kashmiris, in the age group of 16 to 25 years, were indulging in an overdose of self-medication.

Highlighting the differing nature of the trauma experienced in the Valley and in the areas along the LoC, Javed Iqbal, a native of Kargil, and presently working as a Consultant with Amnesty International, New Delhi, felt that the
psychological impact of the armed conflict between people living in the Valley and those living along the LoC is qualitatively different.

The impact is more severe for the border population because of the absence of any kind of psychosocial care facilities in areas along the LoC. The absence of health infrastructure has also meant that the government is unable to collect data on the prevalence of psychosocial problems in the region. Further, due to sporadic shelling along the LoC, the border population is more vulnerable and unable to feel any sense of safety even within their homes. In the Valley, Iqbal felt that due to the use of small arms, the physical and psychological impact of the conflict is more prevalent among those who are direct victims or visible target groups. However, in the areas close to the LoC, no one is safe. People live in the constant fear that their homes could be shelled. This sense of constant threat has a debilitating impact on the traumatic stress levels of the people living close to the LoC. Further, due to the geographical isolation and harsh weather conditions, skilled professionals are hesitant to work in these areas. Also, due to various restrictions imposed by the government, it is difficult for civil society groups to make a sustained intervention. These factors, together, have made the task of psychosocial health and trauma healing in the areas close to the LoC insurmountable.

Iqbal concluded with the following observations. First, civil society in Jammu and Kashmir has the potential to act as an agent for change and can play a useful role in providing the much-needed services for trauma healing. Second, demilitarization is extremely important. The large scale deployment of armed police and soldiers in the region, the imposition of security checks, curfews and other restrictions, occupation of agricultural lands by the military, and the enforced use of identity cards, have led to widespread alienation in the state. In this context, demilitarization becomes an important step in the process of building trust. Third, Iqbal felt that various stakeholders – the Indian government as well as civil society groups in Jammu and Kashmir – have neglected the aspirations of the people of Ladakh. While the region makes up for nearly 70% of the territory of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, it has largely been sidelined in dialogues on the resolution of the conflict. There is a need to recognize the Ladakhis as independent players whose aspirations must be taken into consideration in any initiative to build peace in the state.

The presentation by Sameer Suryakant Patil, Research Scholar, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, focused on Politics, Law and Governance in the context of the Working Groups set up by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in 2006 to address the conflict in Jammu and Kashmir.
The idea to formulate the Working Groups, envisioned as part of the process of engaging with diverse stakeholders in Jammu and Kashmir, can be traced back to Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh’s closing remarks at the Roundtable Conference on Jammu and Kashmir, in Srinagar, in May 2006.

In his speech, the Prime Minister highlighted various issues:

- “We need to have a mechanism which can give concrete shape to the ideas expressed (at this Roundtable), a mechanism which can provide opportunities for meeting more frequently in smaller groups, a mechanism which can focus on the specific issues, one at a time, and find a common ground and forge a consensus in this diversity.”

- He also “instructed the security forces to be more mindful of human rights and be sensitive to the liberties and self-respect of ordinary people. If this requires strengthening the State police – both in numbers and materially – the Central Government will be willing to support that.”

Through these statements, the Prime Minister laid the foundation for the establishment of five Working Groups, each addressing a specific issue:62

Group 1: Confidence-building measures across segments of society in the State
Group 2: Strengthening relations across the Line of Control
Group 3: Economic Development
Group 4: Ensuring Good Governance
Group 5: Strengthening relations between the State and the Center63

The Working Group on confidence-building measures across segments of society in the State suggested the following:

- Measures to improve the condition of victims of militancy (for example, the provision of relief assistance through a government job, if available, or a one-time compensation of five lakh rupees).
- Schemes to rehabilitate all orphans and widows affected by militancy.
- For those who have foresworn the militancy, a definite relief package was envisaged.

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63 A summary of the reports of the five working groups, instituted by the Prime Minister, is available on the online edition of The Hindu www.hinduonnet.com/nic/jk/index.htm
• An effective rehabilitation policy, including employment, for Kashmiri Pandit migrants.

• Measures to protect and preserve the unique cultural and religious heritage of the State.

• Repeal of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act.

• Strengthen the State Human Rights Commission along the lines of the National Human Rights Commission and also set up an empowered committee to monitor the Action Taken Report on its recommendations.

The Working Group on strengthening relations across the Line of Control recommended the following measures:

• Simplify procedures to facilitate travel across the LoC.

• Enhancement of infrastructure for sustained transport across the LoC.

• Expand people-to-people contact, including promotion of pilgrimage and group tourism.

• Open up new travel routes, for example the Kargil-Skardu road.

• Expand the category of people eligible for travel and visit across the LoC.

• Traders should be given multiple entry/exit visas valid for one year.

• Formation of a mechanism that enables officials from the respective Ministries of Trade and Commerce to jointly work on issues of trade.

• Exchange visits between students and faculty members of the Universities on both the sides of the LoC.

The Working Group on economic development suggested the evolution of a strategy to ensure:

• Balanced economic development and employment generation.

• Balanced regional and sub-regional development within the State.

The Working Group on good governance suggested:

• Increase responsiveness, accountability and transparency of the administration.

• Formation of independent committees to assess the performance of Police, Municipalities and Revenue departments once in three years.

• Strengthen local self-government.
• Effectively monitor developmental programs.
• Measures to institute zero-tolerance to human rights violations.
• Effective implementation of the Right to Information.
• Provide adequate security to all segments of society, particularly the minority communities.
• Formulation and implementation of the Citizens Charter and review of that implementation.

The Working Group on **strengthening relations between the State and the Center** deliberated on:

• Matters relating to the special status of Jammu and Kashmir within the Indian Union.
• Methods of strengthening democracy, secularism and the rule of law in the State.

Commenting on the efficacy of these recommendations, Patil made the following observations:

- While it is encouraging that there is a realization in the government that human rights violations at the hands of the Army and Police are a key source of alienation, the situation on the ground does not reflect this sense of commitment of the Prime Minister. Fake encounters and other forms of violations against innocent civilians continue.

- With regard to zero-tolerance for fake encounters, the intricacies of the law are such that the State government has to obtain permission from the Central government to initiate criminal proceedings against Army personnel involved in human rights violations. However, such permission is seldom given.

- With reference to suggestions to strengthen the State Police, it should be noted that the Police has also committed human rights violations. There have been reports of fake encounters orchestrated by the State Police for rewards and other benefits.

- The recommendation to strengthen the State Human Rights Commission will not be helpful because, over the last few years, there has been a visible decline in its effectiveness and financial resources. It has become less active with even the State government ignoring its recommendations. The way forward is to make the Commission autonomous with legal powers so that it can carry out its mandate with greater efficacy.
While mainstream parties are represented in the Working Groups, pro-separatist and pro-Pakistani voices (such as the Hurriyat Conference) are absent. Inclusion of all the political groups in the region is extremely important in order to instill confidence among the Kashmiri people in the mandate of the Working Groups.

Although there is a reference to widows and children, the deliberations and recommendations of the Working Groups lack a gender perspective.

The Chief Information Commissioner of India, Wajahat Habibullah’s roadmap for grassroots democracy which involves the institutionalization of an elected Zila Shoura (District Advisory Councils), an Election Commission, regional councils for Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh, and measures to strengthen the Panchayats, should be implemented in good faith.

In conclusion, Patil suggested the following “leaps in the dark” that the Indian government could take:

- Scholarships to Kashmiri students, pursuing graduation and post-graduation studies, can be provided by the University Grants Commission, along the lines of the Rajiv Gandhi and Maulana Azad Fellowships.
- Greater interaction between human rights activists, especially those working on woman’s issues, should be facilitated within and between the two Kashmiris.

Commenting on the clubbing of “politics”, “law” and “governance” in this session, Ms. Swapna Kona, Associate Fellow, Center for Land and Warfare Studies, New Delhi, said that law enforcement in a region of militarized conflict such as Kashmir, is an under-researched area. The Judiciary in Kashmir is seldom talked about: what is their role in this conflict? What is their role in distinguishing law and order as different from war? The notion of neutrality becomes extremely complex in a situation of protracted conflict. In this context, Kona quoted Archbishop Desmond Tutu who once said, “When the foot of an elephant is on the tail of the mouse and you have to decide whether he is right or wrong, if you decide that you’re neutral, the mouse isn’t going to appreciate your neutrality.” It was felt that the notion of neutrality and the role of the Judiciary in Jammu and Kashmir required serious interrogation.

The session concluded with the facilitator, Mr. Tahir Aziz, reiterating the significance of this dialogue which brought together Kashmiri participants from either side of the LoC as well as from the diverse regions within Indian
Kashmir. He concluded with a suggestion that WISCOMP initiate a process whereby such intra-Kashmir dialogues that bring together people from diverse ethnicities, religions and political perspectives in the two Kashmirs be facilitated and sustained on a regular basis.
The phenomenon of ethnoreligious violence poses a complex challenge for the peacebuilding community in South Asia. The experience of violent conflicts in the South Asian region reveals that religion touches the lives of individuals and communities in immediate, intimate and possibly dangerous and inflammable ways. Any engagements with approaches to Conflict Transformation must therefore address the role that religion plays in conflict and in peace processes and the valuable contributions that the religious leadership, the political elite and conflict transformation practitioners can make to preventing violence driven by hatred (and ignorance) of other faith groups.64

The panel discussion on Religion, Conflict and Peace, facilitated by Prof. Gurpreet Mahajan, Center for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, sought to facilitate a deeper understanding of the complexities involved in the interface between religion, violence and peace, through an examination of the principles of peacebuilding inherent in faith and cultural traditions, and the use of inter-faith dialogue to counter the scourge of emerging religious fundamentalism in the region.

The session opened with a presentation by Prof. Vinay Lal, Professor of History, University of California, Los Angeles, USA, and currently Director of the University of California Education Abroad Program – India, New Delhi, titled The Pakistan Within and Without: A Gandhian Perspective on Kashmir and the Transgression of Borders.

Lal began his presentation with three narratives.

The first story revolved around a visit that Swami Vivekananda made to Kashmir in 1897. During this visit, which lasted nearly a year, he was anguished at seeing the desecration and destruction of images of Hindu Gods and Goddesses. So he approaches the Divine Mother in a temple of Kali, bows down at her feet and asks in a troubled voice, “How could you let this happen, Mother? Why did you permit this desecration?” In response, Kali said to him, “What is it to you Vivekananda if the invader breaks my images? Do you protect me? Or do I protect you?”

The second narrative relates to how Mahatma Gandhi came to be seen towards the end of his life. Many of his critics, including his assassin Nathuram Godse, described him as the “Father of Pakistan”. Saying that while Gandhi may very well have been the “Father of Pakistan” if one accepts the Hindutva narrative, Lal drew attention to the phrase “Father of the Nation” – whether he was the Father of India or Pakistan or of both – as one that disguises a lot more than it reveals. Given that Gandhi tried, in many ways, to feminize the Indian political realm, Lal noted that the Mother in the Father of the Nation is much more interesting than the Father in the Father of the Nation.

The third narrative revolves around Gandhi’s seminal text Hind Swaraj. Encouraging deeper reflection on the word Swaraj, Lal noted that Gandhi spoke about Swaraj in two different ways: liberation of India from British
rule, but more importantly, he meant liberation from rule over one’s “self.” The reference was to how deeply we truly understand ourselves and have control over our own desires and wants.

Drawing inference from the three anecdotes, Lal said that while the first story points to our liberation from history, the second tells us about our liberation from the idea of the nation-state, and the third, about liberation from ourselves. He then made the submission that in order to transform the Kashmir conflict, we have to be liberated from the Idea of History and the Idea of the Nation-State, but most importantly, we have to be liberated from ourselves.

Relating these ideas to the notion of “borders,” Lal noted that, without discounting the importance of the physical borders in the context of India-Pakistan relations, the more serious problem concerns the borders in the minds of people in the two countries. While physical borders do matter, in the long run, the divisions and partitions created in the minds of people are a far more serious problem. In the context of the title of his presentation “Pakistan Without,” Lal posed the question: What is the kind of Pakistan that middle class Indians have imagined? Pakistan is viewed by most middle-class Indians as a theocratic state and the epicenter of jehadi fundamentalism. However, detailed studies have shown that the actual support base of militant Islamic parties and formations in Pakistan, in terms of a certain percentage of the national vote, is smaller than the support given to the BJP and militant Hindutva organizations in India. This, noted Lal, is an important point for Indians to bear in mind.

Turning to the “Pakistan Within,” Lal drew attention to the theme of Islam in South Asia. Citing the writings of several Western scholars (Earnest Gellar, University of Cambridge, Stephen Humphreys, University of California, for example) who have worked on Islam around the world, Lal revealed that “Islam in South Asia” does not find a mention in any of these scholarly publications. This is because these scholars hold the view that Islam in South Asia is not the authentic version of Islam. This view, noted Lal, is becoming increasingly common in Pakistan with the country attempting to disown its relationship with its Indic past. In South Asia, a unique relationship developed between Islam and other religions and cultural formations. And this lent to it an ethos and a practice different from interpretations of Islam in other parts of the world. This version of Islam – a central part of the history of the Indian subcontinent – is one that is increasingly being disowned in Pakistan, and, as Lal pointed out, is extremely important to how we address the complex question of Kashmir.
Developing this point further, Lal introduced Sigmund Freud’s concept of the “narcissism of minor differences” in the context of the frames that India and Pakistan use for the Kashmir conflict. In *Civilization and its Discontents*, Freud looked at the history of violence around the world and found that the most violent conflicts involved people who were extraordinarily close to each other, not people who were very different one another. The “narcissism of minor differences” suggests that one of the reasons people fight with each other is because they are similar to each other. “It is precisely the minor differences in people who are otherwise alike that form the basis of feelings of strangeness and hostility between them.” As an example, Lal cited the conflict between the Hutus and the Tutsis in Rwanda, which led to the genocide of more than eight hundred thousand people in the spring of 1994. The Hutus and Tutsis are, ethnically and linguistically, extraordinarily close. There are no religious differences, and yet they massacred each other. Lal urged serious reflection on this concept in the context of India-Pakistan relations.

Concluding with a Gandhian perspective to the question of Kashmir, Lal reiterated the need for Indians and Pakistanis to “transgress” the borders and divisions of the mind. “The only way to transgress the paranoia over the notion of a border is for every Muslim in the subcontinent to understand that there is something of a Hindu within himself or herself, and for every Hindu to understand conversely that there is something of the Muslim within himself or herself. This is a possible road to conflict resolution in Kashmir.”

Although there is considerable scholarship on the role of religion as a resource for coexistence and nonviolence, a key goal of this panel discussion was to address the worrying trend of growing prejudice, violence and division in the name of religion. Situating his presentation in the context of present-day Gujarat, Father Cedric Prakash, Director, Prashant: The Jesuit Center for Human Rights, Justice and Peace, Ahmedabad, India, spoke on the patterns of religious fundamentalism in the South Asian region.

Prakash opened his presentation with the question “what is religious fundamentalism?” The American Heritage Dictionary defines “fundamentalism” as “a religious movement or point of view characterized by a return to fundamental principles, by rigid adherence to those principles, and often by intolerance of other views and opposition to secularism.”

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Three elements constitute this definition: a so-called return to basics; a rigidity or intolerance towards anything that is different or opposed to one’s thinking or ideology, and an opposition to anything that is secular. In the Indian context, Prakash noted that “secularism” is a positive concept which emphasizes one’s ability to be open, accepting and adjusting to another’s beliefs, ideologies, cultures. It is neither anti-religion nor anti-person. In the best sense of the word, a secularist can be deeply religious and simultaneously have the ability to work with diverse people on a variety of issues without allowing the narrow confines of one’s own religion to be a hindrance.

In a Special Report on Religion and Public life titled “In God’s Name,” The Economist states that religion will play a key role in this century’s politics. It asks the question: How do we deal with the growing role of religion in politics and in armed conflicts? In the section on India, the Report states: “Today’s India is a test-tube for religious politics. The birthplace of four big religions (Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and Hinduism), it has remained religious even as it has modernized. It was founded in the throes of a religious conflict: partition between Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan. Religion informs three different political conflicts: the external one with Pakistan; an internal one between the Hindu majority and the sizeable Muslim minority; and a rip-roaring

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debate about religion in the public square.”67 Analyzing the role of Hinduism and Islam in India and Pakistan, the Report makes one very strong assertion: religion, in the two countries, plays a very significant role in the lives of people and in exacerbating conflict.

While the Indian context is replete with examples of communal violence between Hindus and Muslims, the 2002 carnage in Gujarat highlighted the magnitude of the problem of religious fundamentalism in the country. To describe the uniqueness of the situation in Gujarat, Prakash referred to a report titled “Crimes Against Humanity,” which was brought out by the Concerned Citizens’ Tribunal, headed by Justice V. Krishna Iyer, in November 2002. Drawing on more than 2000 oral and written testimonies from survivors, independent human rights groups, women’s groups, academics, and others, the Tribunal clearly indicts the Government of Gujarat as an active participant in the 2002 carnage. Reports of the National Human Rights Commission of India, Human Rights Watch, and other organizations corroborate these findings.

From these reports, Prakash identified the following features:

- What took place in Gujarat was not merely communal violence or riots; it was a state-sponsored genocide designed to ostracize a community. The Citizens’ Tribunal indicted several high-ranking bureaucrats and police officials alongwith the Chief Minister, Narendra Modi & other politicians. The Sangh Parivar was given a free hand to do what they wanted while the police was given instructions not to take any action. In fact, some leaders of the Parivar were seen leading the mobs.

- The carnage was well-planned and well-executed. It was not a “spontaneous” reaction to the killing of Hindu activists on the Sabarmati Express. The preparations took several months. For example, in 2001, a widely circulated Gujarati daily listed several hotels run by the Chilya community which had non-Islamic names. During the carnage, most of them were razed to the ground. In spite of a suo moto by Justice Calla of the Gujarat High Court, an anti-Constitutional census was conducted on the Muslims and Christians of Gujarat in 1999. The data was sufficient to help rampaging mobs know exactly whom to attack and where.

Prakash added that while the violence of 2002 was genocidal, what is even more alarming is that six years after the carnage, the situation has only worsened.

67 Ibid.
The following reality was highlighted:

- A Muslim in Ahmedabad cannot buy a house or own a shop in the western up-market part of the city. A majority of the Muslims now live in the eastern part of the city, mostly in ghettos.
- Most Muslims in Gujarat continue to live in fear and insecurity.
- Over the last few years, several Muslim youth have been killed in “police encounters.” Recently, senior IPS officers were arrested for stage managing such encounters and killing Muslim youth.
- In the Central Jail in Ahmedabad, there are 200 detainees under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. All of them happen to be Muslims.
- Some of those politicians accused of committing violence against the Muslims have been elected as MLAs and some have even become State Ministers.
- The neutrality of the judiciary has been tampered with. There are public prosecutors appointed by the Government who are members of the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh) or the VHP (Vishwa Hindu Parishad). It was not without reason that the Supreme Court of India said that it had little faith in the Gujarat judiciary.
- The textbooks brought out by the Gujarat State Textbook Board are replete with untruths, inaccuracies and with prejudicial statements against Muslims, Christians, women, Scheduled Castes, and Scheduled Tribes.
- The right to freedom of expression has been curtailed to such an extent that films which present views different from those of the Government are banned, *Fanaa* and *Parzania* for example. In 2007, in Baroda, students of Fine Arts and their exhibits were attacked by right-wing Hindu mobs.
- In May 2006, the Dargah of Rashiduddin Chisthi in the Fatehpura area of Baroda was razed to the ground by the local administration, sparking off another round of communal violence which claimed six lives and leaving many others injured and homeless. The Dargah was frequented by both Muslims and Hindus and was believed to be more than two hundred years old.
- In the years since the carnage, civil society groups have had limited success in narrowing the divide between Hindus and Muslims. Speaking about his efforts to reach out to middle-class Hindu families in his efforts to bridge the communal divide in Gujarat, Prakash shared that while a few of them supported the cause but were hesitant to take a public stand for reasons of
security, the majority responded with the statement: “But didn’t they deserve it? After all, look at what they did to the World Trade Center.” This, said Prakash, is an example of how religion has been manipulated to build deeply-entrenched prejudices about “other” communities, in this case, the Muslim community.

In order to respond to the threat of religious fundamentalism and to build a society based on trust, Prakash made the following suggestions:

- Religious leaders must ensure that the teaching of religion is influenced by a justice theology, rather than by hate and violence.
- In order to counteract the way religious fundamentalism grips unsuspecting and naïve minds, appropriate alternatives and responses need to be formulated. This is possible only when the space is created for serious study, research and reflection. Those who propagate one-sided religious perspectives often manipulate data and illustrations. There is a need to systematically analyze such teachings and offer a more holistic view of one’s own religion through research and scholarship. The religious leadership can play a crucial role here.
- Civil society interventions that are able to connect people across myriad faultlines and engage in advocacy for human rights can play an important role in arresting the growth of religious fundamentalism.
- Inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogues are no longer an option, but a vital necessity to curb the growth of fundamentalism. Dialogue presumes that we move out of the narrow confines of our own religiosity and reach out to people of other faiths.
- Religious fundamentalism can be addressed only if people stand up in public for what is just and speak out against violence. Civil society movements have never been formed in the silent sanctity and safety of peoples’ homes. They require individuals to stand up and speak out in solidarity with the victims of violence. In Gujarat, for instance, people have been able to kill and maim with impunity because of the silence of the majority. Public demonstrations, dharnas and satyagrahas are manifestations of the vibrancy of civil society.

Inviting the Indian and Pakistani youth leaders to “be the change” in their communities by practicing what all religions propagate – compassion, justice, mercy and nonviolence – Prakash concluded with a prayer by Rabindranath Tagore:
Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high
Where knowledge is free
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls
Where words come out from the depth of truth
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sands of dead habit
Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever widening thought and action
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

The presentation by Raheel Raza, an Interfaith Advocate based in Ontario, Canada, looked at the role of interfaith dialogue in peacebuilding. Quoting Martin Luther King Jr. who said, “We have two choices, violent annihilation or peaceful coexistence,” Raza said that interfaith dialogue is now a necessity in regions torn apart by ethnoreligious conflict. Only with such dialogue can the growing divisions between the religions of the world be transformed whether between Christianity and Islam in the West, or Hinduism and Islam in India.

In the context of the Workshop theme – trust-building – Raza pointed to the importance of addressing the layers of religious mistrust between Indians and Pakistanis. While religious leaders in the two countries can play their part by advocating inclusivity and pluralism from the pulpit and by visiting each others’ places of worship and pilgrimage, there is a need to work with children and youth so that the cycle of mistrust does not manifest itself in subsequent generations. In this context, Raza suggested the following:

- Children can be taken on visits to places of worship different from their own. Raza noted that while Muslim Pakistani youth are very familiar with Bollywood films and Indian malls, most have not set foot inside a Hindu temple. Similarly, what percentage of young Hindu Indians would have visited a mosque?
- “When you pray together, you stay together:” Encouraging instruction on different religions in schools, Raza shared that if children and youth engage in interfaith prayer and dialogue, it will go a long way in removing the fear of the unknown and in building religious trust.
• Indian, Pakistani and Kashmiri youth leaders could come together to organize a Day of Commemoration for all victims of violence.

In order to initiate and sustain interfaith dialogue, Raza suggested the following principles and guidelines:

• Be politically incorrect, put the hard issues on the table, make space for awkwardness and discomfort in the dialogue.

• Compassion, understanding and good listening skills are the foundation of interfaith dialogue.

• Equality and mutual respect are important principles in interfaith dialogue. For such dialogue to succeed, it must be a dialogue among equals. If participants enter the dialogue with differing levels of power, they will be unable to make any headway.

• The purpose of such dialogue should not be to search for solutions, but rather to understand the other’s perspective and, if possible, empathize with his/her pain.

• Suspend judgment and use respectful language.

• Interfaith dialogue goes beyond “tolerance” to facilitate “active coexistence” by embracing other religions and cultures. In fact, in the Arabic language, there is no direct translation for the English word “tolerance.” Raza however cautioned that unity should not be mistaken for uniformity. In interfaith dialogue, it is important to retain one’s own religious identity even while embracing the other.

• The dialogue must be informed by the principle of justice – justice for one self as well as for the other. This means that when there are atrocities committed against those belonging to a different faith, we must walk with them in their struggle for validation and justice.

• Often, the need for intrafaith dialogue is far greater than interfaith dialogue. Before we learn to talk to those in another faith community, we have to learn to dialogue with members of our own community. Raza pointed out that the dialogue between the fundamentalists in different faiths is far easier than the dialogue between the progressive-liberal and fundamentalists within a certain faith. In this context, self-reflection on the challenges posed by one’s own faith tradition, before we address those of other religions, becomes extremely important.

• Knowledge of one’s own faith traditions as well as of other religions is important for the sustenance of interfaith dialogue.
• Forgiveness is a central principle in interfaith dialogue. Seeking forgiveness is an important step in the process of building trust and transforming prejudice and hate.

Raza concluded in the words of the Persian poet Saadi:

Human beings are like members of one body
Created from one and the same essence
When one member feels pain
The rest are distraught
You – unmoved by the suffering of others –
Are unworthy of the name human.

Drawing on his experiences with the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy (ICRD), Washington DC, Tahir Aziz, Program Associate, Conciliation Resources, London, and previously Director of the Human Rights Commission for the Government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Muzaffarabad, introduced the concept of faith-based diplomacy as a tool to address conflicts involving ethnoreligious identity. Such conflicts exceed the grasp of traditional diplomacy and often require an approach that combines religious concerns with the practice of international politics.

Faith-based diplomacy, while engaging with track one and civil society actors, draws on religious faith as an important tool for peacebuilding. According to Aziz, the following are the fundamental bases of faith-based diplomacy:

• Spirituality: Faith-based diplomacy can be primarily understood in terms of spirituality, which involves a transformation of the hearts and minds of the participants. In responding to a conflict, FBD believes in first providing the parties with the opportunities to learn and engage spiritually. Without this background work, conflictants tend to hold on to their exclusivist, entrenched opinions. While it does not ask people to change their political positions before coming to the table, FBD seeks to create space for the inclusion of different points of view.

• Moral Vision: FBD is built on eight core values – pluralism, inclusion, peacemaking, social justice, forgiveness, healing wounds (acknowledging suffering and injustice), sovereignty (God’s supreme authority/providence), and, atonement.
Aziz shared that faith-based diplomacy has been pursued in Kashmir by the ICRD since 2000. “By displacing militant religious beliefs and ensuing violence, ICRD is working to build long-lasting peace in Kashmir. Through its faith-based approach, it is reconciling longstanding, deeply-seated animosities and, in the process, breaking the cycle of revenge that typically accompanies identity-based conflicts. Rather than promoting any preconceived political settlement in Kashmir, ICRD seeks to knit the torn fabric of Kashmiri society by bringing the transcendent aspects of personal religious faith to bear in overcoming the secular obstacles to peace. At a broader level, the work of healing and reconciliation in Kashmir will help restore relationships across the political and religious divides between the West and the Islamic world and will establish the much-needed cooperative spirit between them.”

ICRD’s faith-based initiative in Kashmir has accomplished the following:

- It has pioneered a religious framework for peacebuilding in Kashmir, which is complementing the official peace process.
- It has built a constituency for reconciliation on both sides of Kashmir.
- Simultaneously, it has focused on building relationships with the top political leadership in Kashmir.
- So far, ICRD’s main activities in Kashmir have included nine seminars, various civil society forums and one bridge-building meeting between Kashmiris.

Aziz identified the following as some challenges that ICRD has encountered in its work in Kashmir:

- Its approach to faith-based reconciliation uses religious concepts of the Abrahamic traditions, which makes it difficult to engage fully with the followers of non-Abrahamic religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism.
- In regions of protracted conflict such as Kashmir, faith-based diplomacy requires patience and perseverance over a long period of time. It therefore becomes difficult to measure the immediate impact of such an approach to peacebuilding, particularly if compared with the impact of violence.

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68 Comments made by Workshop resource person, Tahir Aziz.

69 This meeting was held in Kathmandu, Nepal, on November 15-20, 2005, between the alumni of the faith-based seminars from both sides of Kashmir.
Like any externally supported initiative, a key challenge is the sustenance of ICRD’s work in Kashmir. While there now are a significant number of Kashmiris trained in faith-based reconciliation skills on both sides of the LoC, a locally driven process is absent.

Faith-based reconciliation may, at times, exclude secular approaches to peacebuilding and as a result, it can find itself pitted against secularism, which can slow down or even hinder positive change.

In conclusion, Aziz noted that despite these gaps in faith-based diplomacy, ICRD’s initiative is one of the few peacebuilding interventions in Kashmir that is being sustained on a regular basis on both sides of the LoC. For many years now, it has facilitated thoroughly structured and sustained intra – and inter-Kashmir dialogue processes between mid-level political and civil society leaders on Kashmir. There is a dire need for long-term strategies for peacebuilding in Kashmir, and as Aziz shared, ICRD’s approach of focusing on faith-based reconciliation will go a long way in transforming the political, social, and spiritual dynamics of the region.

Workshop participants Noorali Surani (Market Risk Analyst, MCB Bank, Karachi), Arvind Kumar Das (Journalist, BBC Hindi Service, New Delhi), Katha Kartiki (Graduate Student, English Literature, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi) and Swati Arora, (The Times of India, New Delhi).
Workshop Evaluation

The Workshop closed with a session on evaluation and feedback to explore possibilities for follow up, partnerships and networks that could be sustained after the weeklong dialogue. Listed below are reflections from some of the participants and resource persons:

• “The WISCOMP experience made me realize the importance of trust-building and also the importance of higher education (in this area) to be able to influence change. It is in this context that I have decided to pursue a Masters’ degree in Peace Studies.”

  Amina Afzal, Research Fellow, Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad

• “I am privileged to be part of WISCOMP’s CT Workshop and learnt a lot from a dynamic and professional team of resource persons. It was a good opportunity for committed young professionals who want to bridge the gap between the two countries while respecting their sovereignty. Our residence near the Lodhi Gardens speaks volumes for our shared culture and history.”

  Nazoora Ali, Program Officer, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Rawalpindi

• “It was an old dream of visiting India which was finally fulfilled because of WISCOMP. Thank you very much for this rare and rewarding opportunity. I must say that the workshop was organized very well. I say it from the core of my heart that WISCOMP is doing a noble cause for peace. I am hopeful that our region would acquire peace eventually.”

  Ghulam Ali, Research Fellow, Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad
• “I never had a chance to meet as many people from the Kashmir Valley as I did at this Workshop. It has been so enriching for me to listen to them, particularly those from the border regions such as Kargil…because the only way I, as a Pakistani, can learn about them is through the media. It was very enlightening to listen to the experiences of people who have actually lived near the LoC.”

*Mubarika Aijazuddin, Assistant Manager, Vice Chancellor’s Office, Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS), Lahore*

• “My basic conviction was reaffirmed at this Workshop. If you have a good process design, then you actually achieve an outcome. I think what we saw here was a microcosm of what we are all hoping for – that we can live with difference, we can deal with difference.”

*Tahir Aziz, Program Associate, Conciliation Resources, London*

• “It was an excellent gathering of people from diverse backgrounds, which provided us with an opportunity to interact. This event also exposed us to the atmosphere of trust-building and gave us the notion of “leap in the dark,” which is applicable from the very personal to the thoroughly diplomatic spheres of life. Here, I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate WISCOMP and all those who were involved in organizing such a wonderful event.”

*Humera Hussain, Program Manager, Voluntary Service Overseas, Islamabad*

• “Thank you for creating and leading with such grace, insight and sensitivity the unique process of conflict transformation. The experience this year was truly fulsome and enriching. A very carefully and extremely relevant program agenda was broadened and refreshed by the presence and the alert engagement of the young participants from India and Pakistan. It was truly a pleasure for me to share and witness the sincerity and the enthusiasm of the young. From such small groups will grow a small but catalytic critical mass that will, God willing, one day make us better able to cope with the duality of human nature, and the dual dimensions of our inter-state relationship.”

*Javed Jabbar, Mediaperson, Writer & Former Minister, Pakistan*

• “I feel privileged to have participated in an initiative that is becoming so very important in the crucial days to come. I must also take this opportunity to compliment WISCOMP on its brave and graceful attempt to provide a
platform to young people. I have gained much from this workshop, and as events in the political reality unfold, this workshop has opened my eyes to new aspects of the complex fabric of social and political relations.”

*Navina Jafa, Expert on Performing Arts in Development Programs, New Delhi*

- “To say that I benefited from the workshop would be a gross understatement. All academic discourse ought to be tinted with a touch of humanity. It gives me hope that WISCOMP provides the space for us academics to be able to celebrate that sentiment.”

*Swapna Kona Nayudu, Associate Fellow, Center for Land Warfare Studies, New Delhi*

- “It’s wonderful how the trust deficit has been overcome over the last few days between the participants (Indians and Pakistanis). I think this is a great tribute to WISCOMP. This has been one of the best workshops I have attended, one of the best organized, and also one of the most intellectually stimulating ones.”

*Prof. Nicholas Wheeler, Department of International Politics, Aberystwyth University, Aberystwyth*

**Feedback on Workshop Themes & Organization**

- The dialogues with T.C.A. Raghavan, Joint Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, and political leaders such as Javed Jabbar, were widely appreciated. Participants requested more interactions with policymakers.

- It was suggested that WISCOMP organize a session on how India-Pakistan relations are represented in the Urdu print media and compare this with coverage in the English language print media.

- One-on-one, interpersonal interaction and relationship-building was considered as important as intellectual exchange.

- The participation of young women and men from diverse regions in Jammu and Kashmir on both sides of the LoC was widely appreciated.

- The interactions outside of the Workshop sessions were seen to be important as well. In this context, participants asked that more time be given for informal and recreational activities so that the in-session dialogues could be continued at a deeper level.
• Over the course of the five days, the gradual shift in discussion towards the collective – “we-ness” – was highlighted as one of the key outcomes of the Workshop. Another important outcome was the recognition that “Indians and Pakistanis can coexist in spite of the differences.”

• It was suggested that WISCOMP organize an inter-generational dialogue (between first and third generation Indians and Pakistanis) on the subject of Partition. Participants felt that different generations of Indians and Pakistanis have diverse and sometimes contradictory perceptions of the 1947 Partition. Addressing perceptions about what different generations think would be an important step in the trust-building process.

• An interaction with former Prisoners of War from the 1965 and 1971 wars was also suggested.

• As in previous years, a request was made that a WISCOMP Chapter be started in Pakistan.

• The methodology of Lecture – Q&A – Group Discussion – Simulation – Report to Plenary – Reflections & Feedback was widely appreciated. It was suggested that this model of learning, which strikes a balance between theory, reflection and practice, could be used for more sessions at the Workshop.

• The unconventional formats of dance, film discussions and simulations were well-received and should be retained.

• Participants said that the Workshop had given them a new vocabulary for peace. This, they felt, was an important achievement.

• The selection of Workshop themes and topics and the overall organization of the weeklong dialogue were widely appreciated.
Workshop Resource Persons

Tahir Aziz (London, UK) is Program Associate with Conciliation Resources, London, UK. Previously, he was Director of the Human Rights Commission for the Government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. He completed his Masters in International Peace and Conflict Studies from the University of Notre Dame, USA. He has worked extensively on Political Violence, Human Rights and Peace in Kashmir.

Sumanta Banerjee (Dehradun, India) was born and educated in Kolkata. He was a journalist with The Statesman in Kolkata and New Delhi from 1962 to 1973, after which he worked as a freelance correspondent and columnist, writing for newspapers in India and abroad. Based in Dehradun now, he is engaged in research on popular culture and social history of colonial Bengal. His published works include The Parlour and the Streets: Elite and Popular Culture in Nineteenth Century Calcutta, and The Dangerous Outcast: the Prostitute in Nineteenth Century Bengal.

Neeladri Bhattacharya (New Delhi, India) is Professor, Center for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University. His research and publications have been on the making of the colonial rural order, on custom, law and colonialism, and on colonial power and discourse. He is co-editor of Themes in Indian History (Oxford University Press) and Studies in History (a journal published by Sage), and editor of Tracts for the Times (Orient Longman), a series on issues of contemporary concern. Prof. Bhattacharya has participated in public debates on the writing of history and interpretations of the past, and the debates on the politics of communal histories. He is the Chief Advisor of the new NCERT History textbooks for schools.

Jyotirmoy Chaudhuri (New Delhi, India) is associated with the Society for Aerospace Studies, New Delhi. Previously, he was Assistant Editor with Down to Earth, an environment and science fortnightly of the Center for Science and Environment, New Delhi. Chaudhuri has been a Research Fellow with the History section of the United Services Institution of India. He has a Masters in English Literature from Delhi University and has freelanced extensively with scholars and publishers, researching and editing.

Meenakshi Chhabra (Boston, USA) is a Faculty in the International Relations Program at Lesley University, Cambridge, USA. As a Fulbright
Scholar, she spent three months on a teaching assignment at Lady Shri Ram College, New Delhi. She has been actively involved in the field of conflict transformation since 2001. Chhabra is currently engaged in research on Forgiveness and Reconciliation. As a scholar and a practitioner in the field, she has conducted several dialogue workshops between women and youth from India and Pakistan around the issue of the conflict between the two countries. She is a Consultant with Seeds of Peace and with Open Circle. For her work with the youth, Chhabra was nominated for the Indian New England Woman of the Year Award in 2006.

Narayani Gupta (New Delhi, India) was previously Professor, Department of History at Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, and is currently a Consultant with INTACH. Prof. Gupta has been associated with the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) as an Advisor for the Textbook Development Committee that has been instrumental in introducing significant changes into school History textbooks in India. She has written on the history of Delhi, Indian urban history and architectural conservation. Her publications include Beato’s Delhi 1857 (co-authored) and Delhi Between Two Empires: 1803-1931.

Javed Jabbar (Karachi, Pakistan), a writer, mediaperson and former Minister, has diverse interests in mass media, international and national affairs, the environment, voluntary development work, and social and cultural issues. He is Chairman and Chief Executive of J.J Media (Pvt.) Ltd. in Pakistan and has written and produced a feature film titled Ramchand Pakistani, released in 2008. As part of his voluntary work, Mr. Jabbar is one of the four elected global Vice Presidents of IUCN – The World Conservation Union. He is founder of the Citizen’s Media Commission of Pakistan, the South Asian Media Association and several research centers and grassroots development organizations. Jabbar has served as Minister in three Federal Cabinets of Pakistan and as a Senator. The Ministries he has headed include Information & Media Development, Petroleum & Natural Resources, and Science & Technology. He has drafted several progressive laws and policies including the PEMRA law for private electronic media.

Shreya Jani (New Delhi, India) holds a Bachelors’ degree in Political Science from Lady Shri Ram College, New Delhi, and a Bachelors’ of Education from Delhi University. She recently completed her Masters’ in Peace Education from the University of Peace (UPEACE) in Costa Rica. Prior to UPEACE, she worked as a Program Coordinator for the Indian NGO Samanvay
Saath-Saath, setting up a non-formal education center for economically challenged children in the National Capital Region. Sherya has also worked as a social science teacher for the Krishnamurti Foundation India School in Varanasi, and has interned and worked with organizations such as: International Network of Engaged Buddhists (Thailand), Bija Vidyapeeth/Navadanya (New Delhi), and Consumer Association Penang (Malaysia).

Akanksha Joshi (New Delhi, India) is a filmmaker and photographer. She is at present working on two films: while the first celebrates one hundred years of the Satyagraha Movement in India, the second titled Chilika Banks, supported by the Public Service Broadcasting Trust, examines the irreversible transformations in the ecosystem of the Chilika Lake and the lives of people in the surrounding agricultural villages since the initiation of the export of prawns two decades ago. In 2003, Akanksha co-directed a film with Nooh Nizami titled Passengers: A Video Journey in Gujarat. The film documents the genocide of 2002 through the lives of a Hindu and a Muslim family. Filmed over a year and a half, it captures the politics of division through the two families’ experiences in Gujarat.

Amar Kanwar (New Delhi, India) is a filmmaker whose work maps a journey of exploration revealing the relationship between the politics of power, violence, sexuality and justice. Kanwar is the recipient of the following: First Edvard Munch Award for Contemporary Art (Norway); an Honorary Doctorate in Fine Arts from Maine College of Art, USA; the MacArthur Fellowship in India, the Golden Gate Award (San Francisco International Film Festival); Golden Conch (Mumbai International Film Festival); The First Prize (Torino International Film Festival, Italy); Jury’s Award (Film South Asia, Nepal); Grand Prix at EnviroFilm (Slovak Republic) and the Golden Tree at the First National Environment and Wildlife Film Festival (Vatavaran, Delhi).

Raheel Khursheed (New Delhi, India) is Correspondent and Assistant News Editor (Assignment) with CNN-IBN, New Delhi. He covers Kashmir and the Delhi metro beat with a special focus on youth issues, online trends and human rights. Khursheed was born and raised in the Anantnag district of the Kashmir valley. He holds a Master’s degree in Journalism, specializing in Broadcast Media, from the Symbiosis Institute of Mass Communication, Pune. He is also a regular contributor to CNN-IBN’s website www.ibnlive.com, writing on a range of issues.

Sabina Kidwai (New Delhi, India) is an Associate Professor at the AJK Mass Communication Research Center, Jamia Millia Islamia. She has done
considerable work in the area of representation and has been a recipient of the Scholar of Peace fellowship from WISCOMP. She has been involved in many research projects on women’s issues, articles of which have been published in different journals and books. Sabina is also a documentary filmmaker and an editor by profession. Her work includes a film on issues of Identity for the Public Service Broadcasting Trust, and a film on the environment under the UK Environment Film Fellowship program.

Alpana Kishore (New Delhi, India) has extensive reporting experience on Jammu & Kashmir and Pakistan in the 1990s. She was a Reporter and Anchor with Newstrack till 1996. She has extensively researched on Partition dealing with post-1947 Muslim choices to stay with India or migrate to Pakistan. Awarded the WISCOMP Scholar of Peace Fellowship in 2006, her project is based in Kashmir and focuses on the effects of the armed conflict on Kashmiri nationality and identity and maps its shifts therein.

Vinay Lal (New Delhi, India), currently Director of the University of California Education Abroad Program (India), was born in Delhi and raised in India, Indonesia, Japan, and the United States. He studied literature, history, and philosophy as an undergraduate, and earned his B.A. from the Humanities Center at Johns Hopkins University in 1982. He received an M.A. from the same institution for a thesis on Emerson and Indian Philosophy. He then studied film in Australia and India on a Thomas J. Watson Fellowship before commencing his graduate studies at the Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago, where he was awarded his Ph.D. with Distinction in 1992. Prof. Lal teaches a broad range of courses in Indian history, comparative colonial histories, and subaltern history and Indian historiography. Among other subjects, he has written on various aspects of the political and legal history of colonial India, sexuality in modern India, the popular Hindi film, the Indian diaspora, Indian documentaries, dissent in the Gandhian mode, contemporary American politics, the politics of culture, genocide, and the global politics of knowledge systems.

Gurpreet Mahajan (New Delhi, India) is Professor, Center for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Her teaching and research is in the area of political and social theory, and philosophy of social science. She is the author of The Multicultural Path: Issues of Diversity and Discrimination, Identities and Rights: Aspects of Liberal Democracy in India and Explanation and Understanding in the Human Sciences. She has edited Democracy, Difference and Social Justice, and Minorities and the Nation-
State. Prof. Mahajan is closely associated with the WISCOMP Fellowship Program in an advisory capacity.

Seema Mustafa (New Delhi, India) is Political Editor and Delhi Bureau Chief with the Asian Age. She has previously been 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 Bhindranwale. Seema 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.

Satish Nambiar (New Delhi, India) has served in operational assignments including counter-insurgency operations and in the 1965 and 1971 wars on the sub-continent. A graduate of the Australian Staff College (1968), he was with a training team in Iraq (1977-79); he was also on the faculty of the Defense Services Staff College (1980-81); and has served as Military Adviser at the High Commission of India in London (1984-87). As Director General of Military Operations (1991), he led two defense delegations for discussions with Pakistan. Lt. Gen. Nambiar was appointed the first Force Commander and Head of the United Nations forces in the former Yugoslavia, where he set up and ran the mission from March 1992 to March 1993. At present, he serves as Director of the United Service Institution of India. Lt. Gen. Nambiar was Advisor to the Government of Sri Lanka on certain aspects of the peace process in 2002/03. He is also a member of an Expert Legal Inquiry set up by the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) to ascertain whether there have been violations of International Humanitarian Law during the conflict in Lebanon in July/August 2006. Lt. Gen. Nambiar retired as the Deputy Chief of the Army Staff in August 1994. He is a recipient of the Vir Chakra for bravery in battle, and the Ati Vishist Seva Medal and Param Vishist Seva Medal for distinguished service.

Gazala Paul (Ahmedabad, India) is the Founder of the Samerth Trust, a Gujarat based NGO, which works towards designing and implementing various projects for livelihood promotion and peace education. Currently, Gazala Paul is also working as a part-time consultant advisor for west India with the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, U.K. She holds a Masters degree in Coexistence and Conflict Management from Brandeis University, Massachusetts, and has also studied Peace and Conflict Management at INCORE, University of Ulster, Northern Ireland. Paul’s primary focus is on education, especially on issues of war, peace,
tolerance and reconciliation. Working at the grassroots, her focus remains people-to-people contact, and helping communities (in Gujarat, Sri Lanka and the North-East) to overcome entrenched attitudes of prejudice and hatred. Gazala Paul is the recipient of the Mellon-MIT Fellowship.

**Fr. Cedric Prakash** (Ahmedabad, India) is the director of PRASHANT, a Center for Human Rights, Justice and Peace in Gujarat, India. He is also the Director of the Province Office for Integral Social Development of the Gujarat Jesuits. For the last several years, he has been deeply engaged in issues related to human rights, justice, communal harmony and peace. He is the recipient of several awards and honors which include *Chevalier de la Legion d’Honneur* by the President of France in July 2006 for lifetime commitment to the defense and promotion of Human Rights in India and *The Kabir Puraskar*, which is India’s highest civilian award for social harmony and peace, given by the President of India. Fr. Prakash holds degrees in economics, philosophy and theology.

**Luv Puri** (Jammu, India) is currently working as the Jammu and Kashmir Staff Reporter for *The Hindu*, an Indian national daily. Puri holds a Post Graduate Diploma in English Journalism. His area of research is the militancy to the south of Pir Panjal (a mountain range in North India). In 2006, Puri received an award from the European Commission for reportage in the field of Human Rights. He has also received commendation from the International Federation of Journalists for promoting the importance of tolerance. Puri also writes for political journals and magazines such as *The Economic and Political Weekly, Mainstream*, and *The Frontline*. He is also a WISCOMP Scholar of Peace Fellow and is working on a Media Project titled *Exploring the Reality across the Line of Control*.

**TCA Raghavan** (New Delhi, India) is currently 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, Raghavan was posted in Pakistan as the Deputy High Commissioner of India.

**Raheel Raza** (Ontario, Canada) is the author of the book *Their Jihad...Not My Jihad*. She is an award winning writer, public speaker, media consultant and interfaith advocate. She has spoken in places of worship, educational
institutions and addressed various civic groups since 9/11, promoting interfaith relations. On International Women’s Day, Raheel received the Women’s Intercultural Network Award for “Making a Difference” and has been the recipient of the City of Toronto’s Constance Hamilton Award for working towards the empowerment of women. Quoted in Canadian Living magazine, Raheel says “one can opt to spend a lifetime talking about differences, I opt to talk about similarities.” She works towards bridging the gap between East and West and promoting cultural and religious diversity through her writing and speaking.

Yousuf Saeed (New Delhi, India) is an independent filmmaker and researcher. He is also the Project Director of Tasveer Ghar, an international initiative to archive South Asia’s popular culture and arts. Saeed completed his Masters in Mass Communication from the AJK Mass Communication Research Centre, Jamia Millia Islamia. He holds a research fellowship awarded by the Centre for Studies in Developing Societies, New Delhi. The title of his research is *Syncretism in the Popular Art of Muslim Religious Posters in North India*.

Anil Sethi (New Delhi, India) is Professor of History at the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), New Delhi. He has been a Commonwealth Scholar at St. Catharine’s College, University of Cambridge, UK. He has also been a Center of Excellence Fellow at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Japan. Prof. Sethi has researched the history of communalism, especially its linkages with everyday life. He has also helped develop an oral archive on the Partition of India. His interests include the social and religious history of modern South Asia and History Education. At the NCERT, Prof. Sethi has helped develop various History textbooks and has written for them. He has lectured and imparted training on the interplay between the Social Sciences and Education including Education for Peace. His publications include *School, Society, Nation: Popular Essays in Education* (Delhi, Orient Longman, 2005) which he co-edited with Rajni Kumar and Shalini Sikka.

Anupama Sekhar (Chennai, India) is currently Senior Program Officer at the Dakshina Chitra Heritage Museum near Chennai, where she works on issues surrounding art, politics, and identity in contemporary museum practice, developing scholarship into programs, resources, policy and civic engagement. Her area of specific interest is the poetics and politics of performance, a subject she researched for her Master’s thesis on *The Politics of Music Censorship in Pakistan: A Case Study of Junoon* and a monograph on *Women in Natya Shastra* under a fellowship awarded by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations,
Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India in 2006. She has worked in development and media and previously served as a Program Associate, Workers’ Education Project (Tamil Nadu & Madhya Pradesh) with the International Labor Organization. She holds a Masters’ degree in International Studies (Stella Maris College, Chennai) and English Literature (University of Madras).

Seema Sridhar (New Delhi, India) is pursuing a Ph.D at the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. She recently completed her M. Phil dissertation on “Post-conflict Reconstruction and State –building: U.S Policy towards Afghanistan.” Her areas of interest include India-Pakistan relations (water disputes and the peace process), Kashmir, conflict resolution and peacebuilding. After a stint as a Research Officer at the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, New Delhi, Seema is currently working with the Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi.

Participants’ Profile

Amina Afzal (Islamabad, Pakistan) works with the Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad. Previously, she was with the International Atomic Energy Agency. She completed her Masters in Defense and Strategic Studies from Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, and graduated from F.G. College for Women in Sociology and Political Science. She has contributed research papers to various journals on Strategic Studies.

Ishrat Afshan Abbasi (Hyderabad, Pakistan) is a Lecturer in the Department of International Relations at the University of Sindh, Jamshoro, where she previously worked as Research Associate. Abbasi has participated in several national and international seminars, conferences and workshops such as International Visitors Leadership Program organized by the US Department of State and Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (June- July 2006) and the RCSS Summer Workshop (February 2005).

Mubarika Aijazuddin (Lahore, Pakistan) is presently working as an Assistant Manager at the Vice Chancellor’s Office, Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS). Previously, she has worked as a Consultant with the Asian Development Bank and as a Communications and Project Officer with the Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (PILDAT). She has a Masters degree in Communication, Culture and Technology from Georgetown University, Washington DC.

Syeda Nazoora Ali (Rawalpindi, Pakistan) is associated with the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan’s Centre for Democratic Development in Islamabad as Program Officer. She completed her Masters in Defense and Strategic Studies from Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, and also has a graduate degree in Persian and Applied Psychology.

Ghulam Ali (Islamabad, Pakistan) is a Ph.D Scholar at the Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, from where he also completed his M. Phil and Masters degrees in History and Political Science. He is currently a Research Fellow at Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad, and a Visiting Fellow at Fatima Jinnah Womens’ University and has previously been associated with the Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI). Ali has also completed a Diploma in Conflict Resolution from Uppsala University, Sweden, and a certificate course on Peace Research from the University of Oslo, Norway. He is an alumnus of RCSS, Wilton Park and Japan South Asia Invitation Program.

Swati Arora (New Delhi, India) is currently working as a Copy Editor with The Times of India. She has worked with numerous other media houses as a Content Writer and Editor. She has also taught at the British School of
Languages, New Delhi. Swati Arora completed her Masters in English Literature from Kirori Mal College, Delhi University. Presently, she is also a student of the Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding Diploma Program at the Lady Shri Ram College for Women.

**MonAmi Bannerjee** (New Delhi, India) is a Senior Research Fellow at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. She is presently working on her Ph.D thesis on Political Ramifications of Ethnicity in Pakistan. She is also a Human Rights Education Associate Coordinator with Amnesty International India and has worked as a Research Associate with ActionAid International – Asia and UNESCAP.

**Sahar Gul Bhatti** (Hyderabad, Pakistan) recently completed a Masters’ degree in Anthropology of Development and Social Transformation from the University of Sussex, UK. She has a Masters in Philosophy and History of Ideas from the University of Sindh, Jamshoro, and Hamdard University, Islamabad. Bhatti has been associated with social development and has worked with Oxfam GB, Sahil, Aga Khan Education Service, and National Commission for Human Development. Currently, she is working as a Freelance Consultant with World Wide Fund, Pakistan.

**Ahsan-ul-Haq Chisti** (Srinagar, India) is pursuing a Ph.D from the University of Pune on Current Trends in Cross Media Ownership. Previously, he was Press Officer for the Chief Minister, Jammu and Kashmir. He was also a News Editor with the Kashmiri daily *Greater Kashmir* and has worked with many Urdu and English publications in Kashmir.

**Jayalakshmi Gopalan** (Chennai, India) is a Research Fellow at Prajnya Initiatives for Peace, Justice and Security. Her areas of interest include women in politics and international development. She is also a Consultant at the Centre for Social Initiatives and Management, Chennai. She completed her Bachelors in Economics and Masters in International Studies from the University of Madras, Chennai. She has also attained a second Masters degree in International Affairs from Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA.

**Triveni Goswami** (Guwahati, India) is a Research Associate, Peace Studies, at the Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development, Guwahati, Assam. She has worked as a Counselor with Vidyasagar Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (VIMHANS), New Delhi. She has represented Asia as a UNESCO Fellow at the *Bibliotheca Alexandrina* in Alexandria, Egypt. Triveni has authored the book *Gender and Conflict Transformation: Nagaland and Egypt*. She has recently been selected for a certificate course of the Rotary Peace and Conflict Studies Program at Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok.
**Nabiha Gul** (Karachi, Pakistan) is a Senior Research Officer with the Pakistan Institute of International Affairs in Karachi. Previously, she worked as a Research Assistant at Karachi University from where she also completed her Masters in International Relations. She has contributed a number of articles on Indo-Pak relations to the *Pakistan Horizon*, a research journal.

**Arshi Saleem Hashmi** (Islamabad, Pakistan) is a Research Analyst with the Institute of Regional Studies, Islamabad, and is a Visiting Faculty at Quaid-i-Azam University where she teaches a course on peace movements. She has worked as a Lecturer in the Department of International Relations at Karachi University and as an Assistant Editor with the *Thirdworld Magazine* in Karachi. In addition, she has been associated as a Researcher with the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) in the USA. Hashmi has published research papers on: *Use of Religion in Violent Conflicts by Authoritarian Regimes, Role and Relevance of CBMs in Post Nuclear South Asia* and *Middle East Peace Process: Lessons for South Asia*. She was also an Election Observer during the 1993 elections in Pakistan.

**Humera Hussain** (Islamabad, Pakistan) is a trained project management professional. She is presently working as a Program Manager – Education at Voluntary Service Overseas (Islamabad), an International Federation with headquarters in the UK. Previously, she worked as a Program Manager with Sahil, an NGO working against Child Sexual Abuse and as a Community Development Officer with PLAN International, Pakistan. She is also a trained Educationist.

**Javed M. Iqbal** (Kargil, India) is presently working with Amnesty International as a Consultant. He is also pursuing his Ph.D in International Politics from the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Iqbal has interned with Amnesty International and worked as a Volunteer with the Salaam Balak Trust on its HIV/AIDS Program. He was awarded the Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship in 2006. In addition, Iqbal worked as a Special Correspondent with *Kashmir Insight* (Weekly) in Srinagar from February 2004 to March 2005.

**Navina Jafa** (New Delhi, India) is an Expert in Development Communication through Performance Arts. As a Feldman Scholar, she has worked as a Visiting Professor at the Heller School for Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University, USA. Previously, she was a Research Scholar at the Indira Gandhi National Center for Arts and Kathak Kendra, Sangit Natak Akademi, New Delhi. She completed her Ph.D from Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, in Cultural and Historical Studies and has a Masters degree in Modern History, Subaltern Studies from the University of Delhi.
Katha Kartiki (New Delhi, India) is pursuing her Masters in English Literature from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. She has worked for the Indian Express, Navbharat Times and the Prayas Institute of Juvenile Justice. Kartiki is simultaneously pursuing a Diploma Program in Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding from Lady Shri Ram College for Women. She holds a graduate degree in English Literature from the same college.

Jamaluddin Khan (Quetta, Pakistan) is a Program Manager with Mercy Corps and is currently leading their Flood and Emergency Programs in Sindh and Balochistan. Previously, he worked on their project on ‘Legal Aid and Vocational Training for Afghan Refugees and Support to the Hosting Communities in Pakistan’. He has worked as an Assistant Consultant with the World Bank, Election Commission of Pakistan and UNDP. Additionally, he has served as Visiting Faculty at Iqra University, Quetta, where he taught Entrepreneurship and Business Studies.

Swapna Kona Nayudu (New Delhi, India) is Associate Fellow at the Center for Land Warfare Studies, New Delhi. Previously, she was a Research Officer at the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, New Delhi. Her area of interest is Afghanistan and Nuclear Non-Proliferation in the Indian context. She completed her Masters in International Relations from the University of Bristol, UK. She is also a member of the World Bank Discussion Forum.

Arvind Kumar Das (New Delhi, India) is pursuing a Ph.D on the ‘Impact of Globalization on Hindi Journalism’ from the School of Language, Literature and Cultural Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He graduated in Economics from Delhi University and has completed his Masters and M. Phil degrees in Hindi Language & Literature from JNU. He holds a degree in Journalism from the Indian Institute of Mass Communication, New Delhi, and is a freelance journalist presently working for BBC Hindi Service.

Chakraverti Mahajan (Chandigarh, India) is working as a Research Officer on a project of the National Commission for Women, focusing on the conditions of mothers living in prison with their children. He is a Doctoral Research Scholar at the Department of Anthropology, Punjab University, Chandigarh. He has conducted research on Inter-Community Relations in the Doda District in J & K. His academic specialization is in areas of social/cultural anthropology, and he takes keen interest in issues of anthropology of religion and peace and conflict studies.

Tridivesh Singh Maini (New Delhi, India) was until recently Project Associate on the Agribusiness and Rural Projects with the Reliance Group of Industries, New Delhi. He has published a book, South Asian Cooperation and the Role of the Punjabs. He has been exploring the scope for cooperation between the
two Punjabs in India and Pakistan as a model for peacebuilding between the two nations. Maini holds a Masters degree in International Development from the American University, Washington DC.

Qurrat-ul-Ann Malik (Islamabad, Pakistan) is a Lecturer with the International Islamic University, Islamabad. She is presently designing a new scheme for the Bachelors in Media and Communication for the University. Malik has also worked as an Assistant Registrar at Greenwich University, Pakistan. She attained her Masters in Communication Sciences from the Fatima Jinnah University in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. She is interested in exploring the role of media as a peacebuilder between India and Pakistan.

Faiza Mir (Quetta, Pakistan) is a Lecturer at the Department of International Relations, University of Balochistan, Quetta. She is also working as a Research Analyst with the Ministry of Women’s Development and Social Welfare, Government of Pakistan. In addition, she is associated with the Women Political Participation Project. Mir is also a resource person for the UNICEF in Balochistan for ‘Child Protection’ and the ‘Juvenile Justice System’.

Sarmad Raza Nayak (Gujranwala, Pakistan) is the Joint Director of Bargad, a Gujranwala based NGO and Youth Forum which works in the areas of Peace, Democracy, Gender and Alternative Education. In addition, he is also the Assistant Editor of Bargad’s quarterly publication. He is associated with various community initiatives in Gujranwala. He envisions the bringing together of the youth from India and Pakistan to promote peace and cooperation between the two nations.

Sameer Suryakant Patil (New Delhi, India) is a Ph.D Research Scholar at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. During his M. Phil, he worked on ‘India’s China Policy in the 1950s’. He completed his Masters in International Politics from the same university. Patil has contributed articles to the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies’ journal, IPCS Strategic Review, New Delhi. He has also written on issues related to Jammu and Kashmir in Epilogue, a magazine published from Jammu.

Muhammad Khalid Qasmi (Mumbai, India) is Assistant Editor with the Eastern Crescent, an English monthly, working for a more inclusive society. He holds a Masters degree in Islamic Studies from Darul-Uloom in Deoband, Uttar Pradesh. He also holds a Diploma in English Language and Literature and a Diploma in Comparative Study of Religion from Markazul Ma’arif Education and Research Centre (MMERC), New Delhi. Mr. Qasmi is currently working on a book on Human Rights in Islam.

Aamir Riaz (Rawalpindi, Pakistan) is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Defense and Diplomatic Studies at the Fatima Jinnah Women University,
Rawalpindi. He is also a Consultant at Apex Human Resource Solutions, a Consultancy Company. He completed his Masters in International Studies from the University of Sydney, Australia, and also holds a Master’s degree in Defense and Strategic Studies from Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad.

Mariam Safi (Ontario, Canada) completed her Masters in International Peace Studies from the United Nations mandated University for Peace, San Jose, Costa Rica. Her research thesis was on ‘National Unity: The Re-construction of Afghan Unity through Application of Traditional and Contemporary Models of Good Governance’. She has also been a part of the Daniel Pearl Dialogue for Muslim-Jewish Understanding. Mariam is currently working at the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies in New Delhi as an Intern.

Gulrukh Sial (Islamabad, Pakistan) is currently pursuing her Masters in Psychology from the Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad. She completed her graduation from Campion College, Kathmandu, Nepal. Sial is interested in the field of stress and trauma healing.

Kanika Sharma (New Delhi, India) is pursuing a Masters degree in Political Science from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. She is also working as a Research Assistant for the Charkha Development Communication Network. She holds a Diploma in Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding from Lady Shri Ram College, New Delhi. She has worked with the UNICEF on a project to decrease infant mortality rates in Bihar. In addition, Sharma has worked as a Research Assistant for Kali for Women on a Cultural Reader on India. She also worked as a reporter for The Indian Express, Tehelka and CAM News Network.

Nida Rafiq Shiekh (Srinagar, India) is pursuing a Bachelor’s degree in Science from Women’s College in Srinagar, Kashmir. She takes keen interest in debates and seminars at the university level and also writes articles for Greater Kashmir, a local newspaper.

Noorali Surani (Karachi, Pakistan) is a Market Risk Analyst with the MCB Bank Ltd., Karachi. He completed his MBA from the Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Karachi and is training to be a chartered financial analyst from CFA institute. He graduated in Computer Sciences from the National University of Computers and Emerging Sciences, Pakistan. Surani is interested in research on financial and professional cooperation between India and Pakistan as a medium for conflict transformation.

Penpa Tsering (Dharamsala, India) is working with the Central Tibetan Administration in Dharamsala, and is currently researching Tibetan history. He holds a graduate degree in History from the Himachal Pradesh University.