



Our Alumni conference, which happens every three years, was held during the week before graduation. This conference also marked the end of the program's first year in Heller. This new affiliation was immediately appreciated by returning Alumni, not least of which is because they now have a network of over 1,500 alumni throughout the world, most of whom are growing in responsibilities and influence and thus, their connections have multiplied exponentially.

The event brought together 70 people from all over the world including alumni who had returned to be with us for a few days, many of our current students who were heading out to do their field project, and faculty and staff from the program as well as visitors from other universities. The attendance of alumni was facilitated by a generous Slifka gift, which offered assistance in travel expenses for alumni attending the conference.

The conference included a workshop for current students and alumni, followed by a conference which included speakers Ambassador Wolpe, an envoy for President Bill Clinton, and more recently for Hilary Clinton, to the Great Lakes region, and Neil Levine, who is the current Director of the Conflict Mitigation Unit at USAID, the major aid agency for the US.

The session began with Mari Fitzduff, the Coexistence Program Director, who explained the main focus of the conference was the need for an integrated approach to coexistence. This approach includes a safe and secure environment, rule of law, stable governance, a sustainable economy and social well-being, all of which are requirements identified by the U.S. State department for Stabilization and Reconstruction as necessary for sustainable peace in 2005.

These frameworks had subsequently been simplified into what is now called the 3D approach, Defense, Diplomacy and Development, all of which should be worked in tandem for peacebuilding. The Director pointed out that this reframing was not just important for the U.S., but also for the many countries that are aided by the U.S., as well as those countries who received military training from the U.S. How to respond to this was therefore seen as a critical issue for all agencies involved in peacebuilding, including governmental, intergovernmental and NGO institutions.

Ambassador Wolpe started off the debate by talking about his work in war-torn societies, particularly Burundi, but also, subsequently, in the DRC and Timor Leste. He expressed his concern about peace processes that were based on questionable rational and structural assumptions. The ideas behind such models were:

- a) If you can get people to think rationally about win/win strategies, and build the proper institutions, peace will follow;
- b) If you can get people to value democracy, such a process would provide a prime and sufficient infrastructure for their future; however it is often forgotten that democracy processes promote competition, which is particularly problematic among people who are and have been fighting one another;
- c) Moral/legislative bodies such as the International Court, which was hoped to be a deterrent to further violence, show little evidence that it was successful in this regard.

Ambassador Wolpe's main concern was that all of the above processes increased the likelihood of competition and further hostilities between the leaders and politicians, and in no way assisted in the development of collaborative possibilities which was really what was needed for leaders to take their countries forward.

Thus, this need to develop collaborative capacity was what became known as The Project on Leadership, the focus of Ambassador Wolpe's work over the last five years, and before he was more recently called to be Hilary Clinton's representative to the Great Lakes region. The project that he had been involved in was designed to:

- a) Transform the framework of conflict by ensuring an acknowledgment of interdependence by participating leaders, who had been chosen from all levels of society including paramilitary and military communities;
- b) Build consensus on the rules of the game, e.g. how to share power;
- c) Increase the negotiating capacity of the parties so that each would learn how to put themselves in the shoes of the other and how better to make agreements.

The approach involved leaders from many aspects of society, and focused in a very holistic way on the needs of the future which was key to the success of the project. It brought together the needs of people involved in various aspects of defense and security to ensure that their interdependence was recognized, as well as their need to increase their collective societal capacity to build peace. The work groups were very inclusive, and used a variety of learning methods including the SIMSOC model, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simulated_Society, which is used by universities and other groups to teach various aspects of societal, political, and communications skills. By the end of the project, many of the participants had learned to appreciate and respect each other's views, and had learned a variety of ways in which to respond to each other's personal and community needs.

Mr. Neil Levine began by outlining the work of the Conflict and Mitigation Unit that works alongside USAID in assisting its work on conflict prevention and mitigation. He talked about the new consciousness at both the State Department and the Defense Department and the need to work in a more integrated manner across all three fields of Security/Defense, Development and Diplomacy/Peacebuilding on many of the complex situations in which USAID is currently working. In doing so, they face three problems:

- a) How to truly prioritize conflict prevention and mitigation work, ensuring there are sufficient resources to execute their programs around the world;
- b) How to bolster capacity and leadership in both State and Defense departments in developing a whole of society approach, especially when defense gets the most money. (He acknowledged the work of SoS Bob Gates in suggesting that funding should be moved from Defense to State for the purposes of more development and peacebuilding work).
- c) How to learn what works, and doesn't. In USAID there is now a return to a focus on policy work, and on Lessons Learned/Evaluation work and on the important of Theories of Change work, a better identification of why we think certain strategies will work, and others won't, and a willingness to test them.

Mr. Levine said that it was a good time for students and alumni to consider joining USAID as they were about to double their foreign assignment staff from 1,200 to 2,400 in recognition of this new need. He also praised and recommended the work of the Presidential Fellows, who spent two years rotating around different government departments and who have been very instrumental in facilitating inter-agency dialogue on the issues involved in developing a more integrated approach on the part of the US to issues of development, security, and peacebuilding.

Mr. Levine also offered nine pointers to the COEX and SIDCO students and alumni:

- a) Make yourself competitive e.g. a degree in conflict resolution/coexistence work, along with fieldwork, and experience.
- b) Network and network, as much as possible.
- c) Go to DC. To get a job you need to go there – come back if you will – but go there. There is little to beat being adjacent to the action in DC to find out which posts are in the offing.
- d) Draw on a wide net of possibilities – e.g. governments. NGO's, think tanks etc. Don't put all your eggs in one basket.
- e) Never turn down a job you haven't been offered.
- f) Don't accept a job you can't be passionate about.
- g) Be confident but not cocky.
- h) Play to your strengths – youth, energy, tech savyness, different national and cultural backgrounds, etc.
- i) Realize you have considerable inter-cultural experience, and use it.

- j) Do not get discouraged – you may think you need a job – but remember that we (USAID, etc) need you.

In finishing, Mr. Levine read aloud part of an email that he had received from Moussokoro Kane '07, who was in charge of USAID's conflict mitigation program in West Africa. Mr. Levine was just about to visit her and the program in Ghana, and had written to Moussokoro, telling her that he was coming to the conference. In return he received these comments:

'The Coexistence and Conflict program was an exciting program that greatly helped to develop my analytical skills to do my job at USAID. I also met many interesting students, professors and presenters. The program offered critical conflict elements, tools and knowledge that greatly improved the quality of my analysis and my understanding of conflict at every level. As a practitioner I became more passionate about working on and in conflict, and more critical about how to do it.'

Mr. Levine then encouraged all students and alumni to look to his office as possibilities for their future career.

Jessie Babcock, a Heller alumnus, opened the discussions on Friday morning, May 19th. Jessie is a Presidential Management Fellowship in a two-year program designed to train the next generation of US government leaders. During her period as a fellow, she has worked throughout government, from Department of State and USAID to Department of Homeland Security, Commerce, Education and others.

In her first rotation she worked for the Office of the Under-Secretary of Defense for Policy, in the Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief directorate. She participated in an interagency task force in Washington to determine how to identify, retrieve and transport deceased American citizens from Haiti to the U.S., as well as communicating about the status of various aspects of the Haitian crisis. Jessie's second rotation was at the Department of State, in the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) where she served as a program officer for the Central Africa/Great Lakes region, comprising Burundi, DRC, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. Her third rotation was again at the State Department with the Embassy in Kigali in Rwanda where she served as a political officer for 3 1/2 months covering a range of topics, from refugees to conflict minerals, entrepreneurship, peacekeeping, multilateral relations, media freedom and freedom of speech, democracy and governance.

Jessie talked about the 3D issues that had arisen in relation to her work. She pointed out that there was an unclear scope/definition of the concepts of 3D's. Academics, policymakers and practitioners all disagree about concept and what it means, including, what their roles and responsibilities should be in relation to it. While the literature often talks about 3D's as part of "smart power" toolbox, others say the concept furthers misperceptions about aims of development.

In implementing the initiative there were significant tensions between theory and practice. While it was critical to get the “right” people in the room to implement it, this was not always possible, and there was often a lack of time among individuals and institutions to dig into complex issues. In addition the turnover of USG personnel meant that there is not always enough trust between people working at different levels and in different agencies, as well as a lack of expertise/experience, for implementing 3D initiatives. In addition, such initiatives were hampered by organizational culture clashes as well as lack of buy-in from middle-management. High-level leaders such as the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State may advocate for a “3Ds” approach, but implementers don’t necessarily put this into practice. In particular there was the tension between “budget-poor” vs. “budget-rich” agencies and organizations, and a misalignment between resources (money/people) and authorities and mission. The Department of State budget is 1/10th that of the Department of Defense budget. In addition, priorities are often not aligned to need, but rather to national security interests. Jessie outlined the Lessons Learned so far:

- a) The Challenges are real and won’t be solved easily – the current goal is conversation, discussion and understanding of the issues & tensions involved in implementing 3D successfully;
- b) There is a need for more education and cross training between NGOs and government, and a need for more people with expertise (like Heller students!) working for government to develop and sustain a successful debate, and implementation possibilities;
- c) We also need to explore and identify more clearly the constraints and challenges posed by the concepts so we can learn what needs to be done because or in spite of them.

Jessie’s presentation was followed by a lively debate facilitated by inputs from an alumni panel consisting of Philip Gamaghelyan (Armenia), Keren Hendin (Israel), Madhawa Palihapitaya (Sri Lanka) and Christian Mani (Sierra Leone), all of whom had been involved in their national militaries at some stage. It was agreed that while the overall approach of an integrated strategy to sustainable peaceful coexistence was vital, there were many cultural and value differences that needed to be addressed and worked upon in order for such an approach to be successful.