Daniel Serwer, Director Conflict Management Program

The five months since I took over Conflict Management in July have been a real pleasure. July and August were of course quiet—I got a lot of work done on a small book I’ve prepared on the Balkans wars of the 1990s and the subsequent peace. The quiet ended in September when the students arrived: we’ve got a bumper crop of 82 Conflict Management concentrators, counting both Washington and Bologna.

The curriculum remains constant: here in DC Terry Hopmann is teaching principles and practices, Sinisa Vuković is teaching international bargaining and negotiation, Liza Patterson is teaching economic negotiations, Lynn Wagner environmental negotiations, Bill Zartman is doing PeaceKidz, and Liz McClintock and Eric Henry are teaching dispute settlement methods. Some of our Washington-based alumni joined the faculty, the Conflict Management Club leadership and Isabelle Talpain-Long for a lunch in late September. If you would like to be included in future alumni events of this sort, please let Isabelle know. We are anxious to improve communication and networking with alumni. We haven’t done enough of that in the past.

I was able to stop in Bologna to meet the enthusiastic faculty and students there in early October, where Simone Tholens is teaching the same principles and practices course that we teach in DC and Sanam Vakil is teaching a very topical course on the Gulf.

I went on to Gaziantep, Turkey after Bologna to talk with the Syrian opposition that operates from there. That was an eye opener: four years of war have generated some amazing efforts to feed, shelter, educate, protect and govern Syrians living in “liberated” parts of the country. I spent a good deal of time thinking about how negotiations might end the war and initiate a transition in Syria as well as in the other war-torn countries of the Middle East, especially Yemen and Libya.

Last month marked the 20th anniversary of the Dayton peace accords that ended the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. While concerned that the peace is still not consolidated there (or in Kosovo), I enjoyed participating in three marvelous conferences assessing the situation and the way forward: one here at SAIS hosted by the Center for Transatlantic Relations, one in Dayton, Ohio and one outside Sarajevo. The Bosnians still have a lot to do and continue to need and want American support in doing it.

While the students are wrapping up the semester with finals and papers, the program is in the midst of preparation for two field trips over winter break. Bill Zartman is taking a mixed Conflict Management/Africa Studies group to Senegal, where they will focus on the Casamance conflict. Terry Hopmann and I will accompany 16 mainly Conflict Management students to Sri Lanka, where the new government faces major issues but has opened up real possibilities for social reconciliation, political transition and economic prosperity.

Both groups will be producing volumes next semester analyzing the conflicts and proposing policy options for promoting peace. It is very gratifying to be able to send more of our students on field trips than has been possible in the past, due in part to a Starr Foundation grant for the Sri Lanka trip, Bill’s willingness lead the Senegal trip and Isabelle’s heroic efforts to make administrative arrangements to support both.

It has been an exciting few months. I look forward to next semester. The Conflict Management Club, which has been very active this fall putting on a great session on peace-building work students were able to do last summer as well as hosting several speakers, is organizing a major conference on Russia in February, including its relations with the U.S., its behavior in neighboring countries, and its more aggressive posture in the Middle East. We are also working with the Antiquities Coalition to develop a practicum for the spring in which Conflict Management and other SAIS students will undertake to analyze the legal and policy implications of the looting and destruction of cultural artifacts, with a view to preventing it in the future. If any of you are in a position to “contract” with SAIS students on a practicum project of this sort, please let me know. My one regret is that we do not yet have the resources to teach a course on countering violent extremism, a topic on which Professor Zartman produced a book four years ago. I’ll be pressing our case with the powers that be.

This newsletter is part of our effort to keep better in touch with alumni. You are doing marvelous work out there and we’d like to hear more about it. Stacia George is profiled in this edition. We plan to do others in the future. Please let me know if you want to volunteer or contribute in any other way to the program.

Financial contributions are always welcome. It is easiest to make them on the SAIS website: https://secure.jhu.edu/form/sais. If you are so moved, please designate Conflict Management as the recipient in the “comments” section at the bottom. Our top priority is funding for the field trip, hoping some day to enable all the students who want to go on one to do so. You will find more about this in the upcoming newsletter.

Wishing you the very best for the holidays and the new year to come!
Daniel Serwer
- Trainer, Facilitating Dialogue on Refugee Issues, International Republican Institute, December 16-17, Amman, Jordan
- Rapporteur, Dialogue on New Political and Security Dynamics Shaping the Arab Region Beirut, December 11-13
- Speaker, “Political Reforms,” Conference on 2020 Vision for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, December 3, 2015
- Keynote Speaker, “Bosnia: the Way Forward,” Conference on Twenty Years after Dayton: Prospects for Progress in Reforms in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Center for Transatlantic Relations, Johns Hopkins/SAIS, November 16, 2015
- Speaker, “Kurdistan Under Pressure,” with Bayan Sami Abdul Rahman, Nusseibeh Younes and Yael Mizrahi, Center for Transatlantic Relations and the Mediterranean Initiative, Johns Hopkins/SAIS, November 9, 2015
- Moderator, “Albania’s Route to the EU: Opportunities and Challenges,” with Parliament Speaker Ilir Meta, Center for Transatlantic Relations, Johns Hopkins/SAIS, October 29, 2015
- Moderator, “Smart Power of Small States: Kosovo’s Foreign Policy,” with former Kosovo Foreign Minister Enver Hoxhaj, Center for Transatlantic Relations, Johns Hopkins/SAIS, October 22, 2015
- Invited participant, Foreign Policy encounter with Republika Srpska Prime Minister Zeljka Cvijanovic to discuss the Dayton Peace Accords, October 14, 2015.
- Consultations with the Syrian opposition and Syrian Interim Government, Gaziantep, Turkey, October 4-8

I. William Zartman
- Preventing Deadly Conflict, Polity
- Arab Spring: Negotiating in the Shadow of the Intifada, U of GA press

P. Terrence Hopmann
- “Minsk Group Mediation of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: Confronting an ‘Intractable Conflict’” in Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg (ed.), OSCE Yearbook 2014 (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2015) [Also in German and Russian]

Conference Papers in 2015:
- “From Helsinki I to Helsinki II: The Role of the Neutral and Non-aligned States,” presentation to a conference on “Neutrality: From the Cold War to Engaged Neutrality," Austrian Institute for International Affairs and Austrian National Defence Academy, Vienna, Austria, October 2, 2015

Sinisa Vuković

Lynn Wagner

Edward Joseph
- Foreign Affairs, ‘Putin and Obama go head to head’ https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/syria/2015-09-29/putin-and-obama-go-head-head-0

Elizabeth McClintock
The Global Security and Conflict Management Club at SAIS is the student association associated with the Conflict Management concentration and has as its aim the promotion of academic discourse, peer collaboration and engagement, and career opportunities in the field of global security and conflict management for students of the discipline. The club provides a platform for students to enhance their technical skills, network and socialize with peers, professionals, and alumni, and facilitate meetings or events with academics, policy makers, and potential employers in the field of conflict management.

The club has long been a strength of the Conflict Management program at SAIS, providing students an opportunity to collaborate and engage with policy makers and practitioners in their areas of interest. While created in 2008, the club truly began to take an active role in programming under the leadership of Nathalie Al-Zyoud, MIPP ’13, then in 2013-14 by Anis Chouchane and his leadership team, followed in the 2014-2015 academic year with Mohamed Raouda as president, when the club had its most active year to date, contributing to the academic and professional development opportunities at SAIS by organizing conferences, speakers, and a phenomenal career trek to New York City.

This year the Conflict Management club leadership team headed by Eric Rahman and Alexandra Martin has been working hard to bring conflict management students a mix of academically engaging speakers and workshops that focus on skill development. Below is a list of the club’s programs during the first semester of the 2015-2016 academic year:

- Understanding Elections to Design Effective Democracy and Governance Assistance: Professional Development Course conducted by IFES
- Professional Skills for the Field of Conflict Management: Brown Bag with Jeffrey Krentel
- GSCM Internship Snapshot: Presentations by second year students about their summer internship experiences
- The State Department’s Role in Managing and Resolving Conflict: Discussion with Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations
- New Media in Crisis Management Training: Full day open source training with Sanjana Hattotuwa
- Multiparty Mediation and Syrian Case: Brown Bag with Professor Vuković
- Russian Foreign Policy and BuzzFeed’s Approach to Reporting Abroad: Brown Bag with Miriam Elder, Foreign and National Security Editor for BuzzFeed
- Co-hosting: Artists Discuss a Divided Cyprus and The Role of the Arts in Peace: Co-hosted by The Embassy of Cyprus, The European American Cultural Center, and The GSCM Club
- Co-hosting: After the Elections: Analysis of the Elections and Turkey’s Future
- Co-hosting: Kurdistan Under Pressure: An event in association with the Council on Transatlantic Relations
- Myanmar After the Election: A Brown Bag discussion with Jennifer Quigley, President of the US Campaign for Burma
- Project Amal ou Salam Fundraiser: The GSCM partnered with graduate students from American University’s SIS, to hold a fundraiser that raised $4000 to support Syrian refugees
The Global Security and Conflict Management Club
Conflict Management Program Bulletin #1, December 2015

What I did last summer
[students’ experiences in conflict areas]

"During my summer internship in Liberia I learned to let go of my reservations, and that my actions are my true belongings."
DaQuan Lawrence

"I spent three months working as Project Coordinator for Meta-Culture, a conflict mediation consulting company based in Bangalore, India. A fulfilling and multi-faceted experience, as I was able to work in research, report writing, business development, event management, and client-facing services, along with my senior consultants."
Sneha Thayil

"I spent my last summer interning at International IDEA in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. It helped me realize that after graduation I would like to work in Sub-Saharan Africa, specializing in the cross-roads between the rule of law and development in fragile states."
Wout Van Eylen

"This past summer I volunteered with a Kurdish NGO based out of Erbil, where I was helping out in camp coordination and capacity building within IDP/refugee camp management, as now more than 1.2 million Iraqi IDPs are living in the Kurdistan autonomous region. During my spare time I helped out in a Syrian Refugee camp. I was shocked by the resilience and optimism these children showed, despite having endured such difficult circumstances."
Yael Mizrahi
Stacia George

What was your professional trajectory after graduation?
SG: I graduated from the CM program in 2001 and went on to serve as a Presidential Management Fellow at USAID. My career path has led me to serve in the federal government, the legislative branch in Senator Coon’s office, the think tank world as a fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, and the private sector. Most importantly, it has allowed for me to work on addressing some of the most difficult conflicts in the world including serving in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Colombia, and Sudan. I currently have the privilege of serving as the Deputy Director of USAID’s Office of Transition Initiatives where I oversee programs to rapidly address complex political crises in places such as Syria, Ukraine, Libya, Nigeria, Burma, Colombia, and Pakistan.

How did the CM Program help you in your professional development?
SG: CM does an excellent job of preparing students to analyze complex issues from various perspectives and to know and understand how to use various conflict management tools. I use my negotiation skills every day. I regularly analyze conflict negotiations using the analytical tools with which SAIS provided me. The CM program courses made me analyze real life cases of conflicts around the world in order to understand what worked or did not work in addressing them and why. I routinely reflect on these lessons when designing the right approach to addressing one of the conflicts on which I am working.

How can the CM program better prepare the students for the labor market transition?
SG: SAIS’ CM program prepares students well for the technical skills of understanding conflict management and undertaking political analysis. More can be done to prepare students to be able to and demonstrate that they can manage projects, budgets, and people because even when you have the right approach to managing a conflict, you must be able to manage people, in particular, to be successful in achieving that approach. Also, personal impressions and the ability to communicate are key for conflict management. Students must prioritize their ability to present data and information in a succinct and professional ways in ways that are tailored for their audience. This includes writing and through presentation skills. One of my SAIS professors taught us one of the most valuable lessons once by cutting off a student presentation five minutes after the time limit with no end in sight. They said, “Stop. If you were in the real world, you’d be fired.” It was a great reminder that you can have great things to say but if you don’t present them in a professional or appropriate manner, you will not be heard. Someone can have great knowledge of conflict management, but it is these management and professional skills that will set them apart and determine their ability to be selected for more advanced assignments.

What are the 3 things you took with you from SAIS and are still valid today?
SG: 1. I have an incredible network of talented individuals who work on various aspects of conflict management from which I can draw. I regularly run into fellow SAIS grads, and there is an instant bond and desire to help each other.

2. SAIS provides an excellent comprehensive global world-view. To be successful in conflict management, you must be able to analyze a problem set from multiple viewpoints (economic, political, social, and geographic in addition to being able to step into the viewpoints of different countries and political groups around the world). SAIS ensured that I was well-rounded enough in my knowledge that I could comfortably jump into a variety of problem sets and cultural settings. The requirement to take various types of classes, including economics and security studies, has prepared me to do that.

3. SAIS’ strong language requirements ensured that I could be professionally successful even in an environment where I am not speaking my first language. It is remarkably hard to find people who speak Spanish or French and know conflict management. SAIS’ language requirements provide students with the skills to easily take advantage of professional opportunities that would have been out of their reach without their language skills.
Did you know?

For the academic year 2015-2016, the Conflict Management Program has a total number of 85 1st and 2nd year concentrators at both SAIS DC and SAIS EUROPE, coming from 14 different countries. Their previous backgrounds and current professional focus within the concentration cover a full spectrum of regions of the world and specialized areas of interest.

CM Concentrators

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Would you like to be timely informed about the CM events and activities, receive newsletter and invitations? If yes, please access the link below and fill the data:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1wkYOW_-u_aSGy6Sqm0-bc93tEByhbSQujqlqvlEVUhvC-tk/viewform

Would you like to help us improve the program? Please share your views here:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1r4mXTXT6ojyi_lB4O2hT6YIiDWSHmxwCXSMOg5m2i0/viewform

Help us make more for our students. Financial contributions are always welcome. It is easiest to make them on the SAIS website: https://secure.jhu.edu/form/sais. If you are so moved, please designate Conflict Management as the recipient in the "comments" section at the bottom.

We hope you enjoyed our first bulletin. Look out for our next edition featuring:

- Professor Spotlight
- Student Spotlight
- ‘Russia’s Foreign Policy: New Spheres of Influence?’ Conference
- Study trips to Senegal and Sri Lanka