

EXCLUSIVE

RELIGIOUS LEADER ENGAGEMENT

An emerging aspect of the COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

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Introduction

THERE IS AN EMERGING recognition within the international community that a more Comprehensive Approach is needed to effectively intervene in violent conflict situations that confront us globally. In addition, there is an increasing acknowledgment that in many parts of the world the religious dimension of life — in both its peaceful and conflictual manifestations — must be taken into account if efforts to resolve conflict are to be effective and lasting.

This article explores the role of Religious Leader Engagement (RLE), a capability under development in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) and operational focus of the CAF Chaplain Branch. It stands as a recent contribution to the Comprehensive Approach. The Operational Ministry of CAF Chaplain Imam Suleyman Demiray (Sunni), in collaboration with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT; French: *Ministère des Affaires étrangères et du Commerce international* or

MAECI), among the Sunni and Shia religious leadership of Kandahar, Afghanistan will be cited.

Also of note is the unprecedented work of Shah Mansoor, a Sunni Muslim working with the non-governmental organization, Social and Educational Services Organization (SESO), headquartered in Kabul, Afghanistan. As an indigenous initiative, in collaboration with the U.S. Department of State and the Ministry of Education of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, it serves as a porthole through which to view the significant peacebuilding role religion may occupy in the wider space of the Comprehensive Approach.

Religious extremism as a driver of conflict

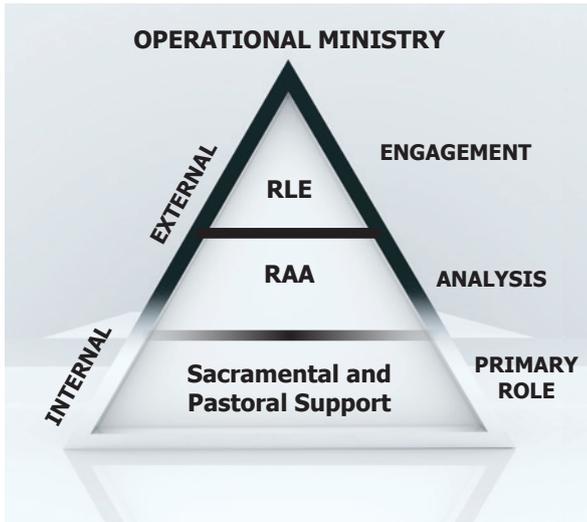
Exacerbating contemporary conflict are extreme expressions of religion. While purely religious conflict is rare, there is a rise in

hostilities with explicit reference to religion. For those implicated, the clash frequently becomes a struggle between good and evil, rendering violence a sacred duty.⁽¹⁾ Today's unprecedented co-optation of religion as a means of deepening existing cultural and political fault lines aids in fueling the justification of militancy and terrorism.⁽²⁾

Noting the role of religious leadership, anthropologist Pauletta Otis illumines, "The complexities of conflict may be compounded further when religious leaders who, with their incendiary language, contribute to the congealing of adversarial identity markers, exacerbating the polarization of communities even more."⁽³⁾

As a vehicle of influence, religion is known for its efficacy, frequently exploited by political leaders prone to supplement their anemic rhetoric with religious ideology as a means to motivate local populations to extreme patriotism and violent behaviour.⁽⁴⁾





The Operational Ministry of Chaplains © S. K. Moore, PhD



Above: Capt. Imam Demiray and Foreign Affairs Canada Political Advisor Gavin Buchan (kneeling) with Ulema Council, Kandahar PRT, 2006.

Religious contributions to peacebuilding

A broad spectrum of individuals and organizations — external and indigenous actors, increasingly inter-religious — now collaborate in various venues on a number of levels to bring the peaceful attributes of religion to bear on conflict and violence. The impetus of this surge to include religious approaches in resolving conflict — despite the incongruous portrayal religion frequently presents — is the recognition that it possesses social and moral characteristics that often serve as constructive forces for peace and conflict transformation.⁽⁵⁾ In today’s *new wars*,⁽⁶⁾ “there is clearly now a greater imperative to dialogue not just to get to know the religious other, but to form bonds of inter-religious solidarity against the hijacking of religions to legitimate violence.”⁽⁷⁾ The role and training of religious leaders often positions them to better interpret an ongoing conflict. Due to their closeness to the situation, acquaintance with many of the actors, and ease with the language and an appreciation of the issues, religious leaders offer an invaluable perspective of the conflict at hand.⁽⁸⁾

The operational role of chaplains

Today, military leaders increasingly acknowledge the strategic merit of building rapport and establishing cooperation with

the religious segment of society as critical to the accomplishment of mission mandates. *Networking, partnering* and, in some instances, *peacebuilding* endeavours among local clerics have proven to be effective means to garnering the much-needed trust of these revered community leaders — a significant development for a more Comprehensive Approach to operations.

The term Operational Ministry describes the overall role of chaplains in operations: in support of the troops and among local indigenous populations. The primary purpose for a chaplain’s presence with a deploying contingent is to administer the sacraments and to provide pastoral support for the troops — the base of the pyramid designated as *Internal Operational Ministry* in the above diagram. Also benefiting mission mandates is the depicted *External Operational Ministry* that sees the future role of chaplains extended to the strategic realm of: (1) advising Commanders in terms of the Religious Area Analysis (RAA) of an Area of Operations (AO); and (2) engendering trust and establishing cooperation within communities by engaging local and regional religious leaders — the domain of RLE.

Religious Area Analysis (RAA)

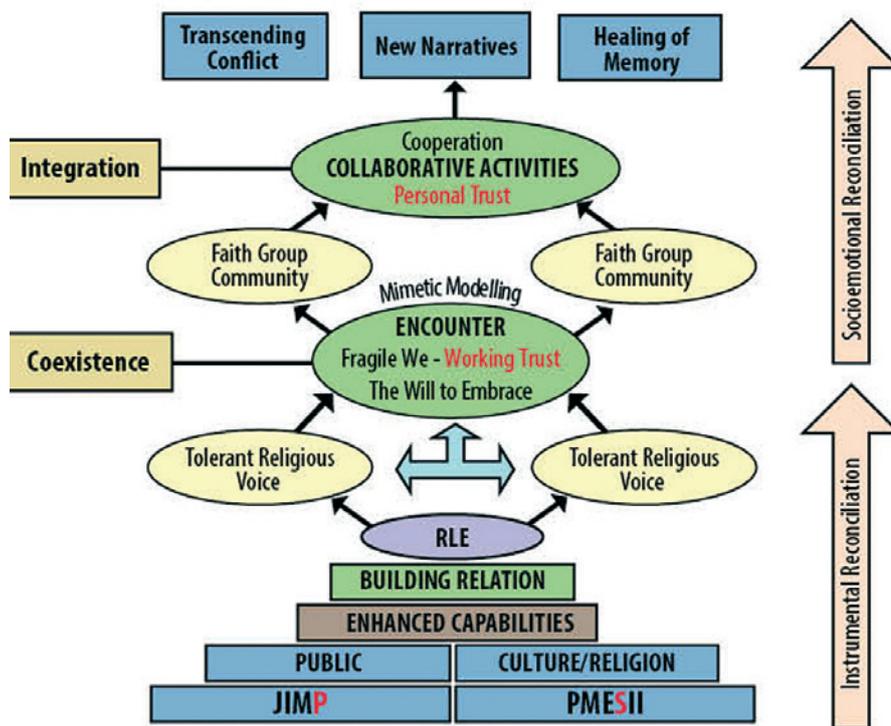
The intent of RAA in operations is to determine the basis for what people do and why they do it with respect to religion. As cre-

denialed clerics, the advanced theological training of chaplains and additional skills development positions them to better interpret the nuances of religious belief that often escape detection — something that could be very costly to a mission. In grasping something of the meaning and reality of the faith perspective, chaplains are more apt to appreciate how the belief system of the grassroots person/community may colour their response to given mission initiatives, plans of action, troop movements, etc. The nature of command often necessitates sending troops into harms way. As such, the availability of all information pertinent to the decision-making process is vital. Advising commanders of the possible pitfalls or backlashes of given courses of action with respect to religious communities is a crucial aspect of their role.⁽⁹⁾

Religious Leader Engagement (RLE)

Perhaps an imposing diagram at the outset, Figure 2, next page, unpacks in stages in actual presentation. Due to the brevity of this article the core elements of the RLE construct will be the main focus: Building Relation, JIMP, the Tolerant Voice of Religion, Encounter and Collaborative Activities. Additional aspects will be drawn upon for clarity and continuity as needed.





Religious Leader Engagement © S. K. Moore, PhD

• **JIMP: Joint, Interagency, Multinational, Public**

The RLE construct finds its origins in the Public space of the JIMP principle, "...an [Army] descriptor [of the Comprehensive Approach] that identifies the various categories of players (e.g. organizations, interest groups, institutions) that inhabit the broad environment in which military operations take place."⁽¹⁰⁾ The P, or the Public space, hosts a number of organizations and activities in operations, of which the indigenous population therein is undoubtedly the most consequential. Local religious leaders are centers of gravity within indigenous populations — middle range actors who, in non-western societies, where the lines of separation between faith and the public space are markedly less defined, enjoy elevated profiles at community and regional levels. This owes its origins to the seemingly seamless nature existing between religious communities and local culture and, at times, politics. Due to the common ground of the faith perspective, chaplains are able to contribute much as a result of their ability to move with relative ease within religious circles.

• **Building Relation**

Engaging the *other* is all about building relation. Often a prominent local religious leader is a voice of reason within their community and frequently among other faith groups, as they move across ethno-religious lines easily. John Paul Lederach writes, "The centrality of relationship provides the context and potential for breaking violence, for it brings people into the pregnant moments of the moral imagination: the space of recognition that ultimately the quality of our life is dependent on the quality of life of *others*."⁽¹¹⁾ Civic engagement of this nature is not an end in and of itself but should be viewed as one in a series of engagements over an extended period of time as relation develops. Building sufficient levels of trust will require time. The objective of such engagement is not to look for "quick fixes" or "bandage solutions" that will unravel if constant "life support" is not there. The long view must be considered as the most effective approach to achieving lasting results.

• **The Tolerant Voice**

Identifying the *tolerant voice* among reli-

gious leaders is key to initiating dialogue. These are faith group leaders — community leaders — often desirous of moving beyond conflict, thus transcending the present hostilities and intransigence that pit their respective identity groups against one another. Known as *middle-range actors*, they enjoy the confidence of the grass roots while moving freely at the higher levels of leadership within their own communities. Their ease of movement affords them relationships that are professional, institutional, some formal, while other ties are more a matter of friendship and acquaintance, hence a high degree of social capital within communities.⁽¹²⁾ More notable still, "middle-range actors tend to have pre-existing relationships with counterparts that cut across the lines of conflict within the setting... a network or relationships that cut across the identity divisions within the society."⁽¹³⁾

• **Encounter: The Fragile We of Working Trust and Coexistence**

Facilitating the bringing together of local leadership, most often religious, is the essence of *encounter*. Creating that safe space for dialogue where none has existed provides occasion for altered perspectives to emerge. It is in *encounter* that the rigidity of long held stereotypes and the constant barrage of propaganda begin to lose their strength. Here one does not simply see the *other* from one's own perspective but such exchanges facilitate viewing oneself through the eyes of the *other* — a double vision of sorts.⁽¹⁴⁾ Where the willingness to engage the *other* begins, a *re-humanizing* of the *other* has a chance to emerge — where the "us" versus "them" softens to the "fragile we."

• **Collaborative Activities: Towards Personal Trust and Integration**

In circumstances where security and opportunity have been favorable, commanders have authorized chaplains to undertake more intentional *peacebuilding* activities among religious communities. Dialogue and, in some instances, collaborative activities have resulted. Social psychologists currently focusing on the dynamics of intergroup reconciliation note the saliency of *supra-ordinate* goals to such processes. These are jointly agreed-upon objectives



that benefit both communities, yet neither group can accomplish alone, achievable only through inter-communal cooperation. With thorough needs analysis — an evaluation process facilitated by the chaplain involving the local religious leadership and military/civilian programme developers (Comprehensive Approach) — a shared project with the right fit may be introduced. As such, nascent integration takes root. Through cooperation of this nature, an identity more inclusive of the *other* begins to develop. It is in such an atmosphere that conflict is transcended, new narratives are written and the healing of memory begins.⁽¹⁵⁾

Extended seasons of collaboration create opportunities for building trust. Whereas some contend that trust is a prerequisite for cooperation, field research suggests that it may also be a product of collaborative activity — representing a cross-section of people joining together in common cause.⁽¹⁶⁾ Establishing trust may also be a way of beginning emotional healing, a level of reconciliation necessitating a higher level of trust: it moves beyond the stage of monitoring if commitments are being honoured (co-existence), to “resembl[ing] the trust of friends or family,” commonly referred to as *inter-personal* or simply *personal trust* (integration). Through continued interaction old attitudes are eclipsed by new perceptions of the *other*, an internalization that “over time” leaves its mark on identity. Although old frictions may rear its head — eventualities over which one has no control — the ties forged through such inter-communal collaboration leaves those involved less vulnerable to such situational changes.⁽¹⁷⁾

The Comprehensive Approach: RLE and the Kandahar PRT— bridging Sunni and Shia isolation

A cogent operational example of RLE as an aspect of the Comprehensive Approach is the External Operational Ministry of a Sunni Canadian Forces Chaplain, Imam Suleyman Demiray at the Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), Afghanistan (2006-2007).⁽¹⁸⁾ Upon arriving, Imam Demiray immediately began to collaborate with Political Advisor Gavin Buchan of Foreign Affairs Canada in engaging the local religious leadership, something that had been impossible up to that point. Initially, Demiray chaired a

shura in the PRT compound for the Ulema Council of Kandahar Province — a government-appointed body of Islamic scholars mandated to advise the Provincial Director of Religious Affairs on matters pertaining to Koranic interpretation and public practice.

Following this first meeting with the leading Mullahs, the Imam began attending local shuras with both Sunni and Shia faith groups. During these encounters he learned that 15 per cent of the population of greater Kandahar City were Shia Muslim. A picture began to form as to the relations between the Kandahar Sunni and Shia religious leadership.

More than two years prior to Imam Demiray’s arrival, the Taliban assassinated the senior Mullah of the Ulema Council. The demographics dictated that the majority of Mullahs be Sunni with a Shia Mullah serving as their representative on the Council. Shia participation had not occurred since the loss of the former Senior Mullah. Communication at the highest religious levels between these two faith communities had ceased. Gavin Buchan readily recognized that the continued isolation of Shia leadership was ill advised. He and Demiray began strategizing how the senior Shia Mullah (the Ayatollah) might be reunited with the Ulema Council, thus ending the alienation of his community from the majority Sunni population. The Sunni-Shia sectarian violence of Iraq held many lessons for ISAF leadership, sectarian violence to be avoided at all costs.

With continued consultation with the Political Advisor and regular meetings with the local religious leadership of both the Sunni and Shia faith communities, a strategy began to emerge. Demiray learned that both faith groups shared similar concerns: (1) numerous young males continued to stream to the territories in south-western Pakistan where they came under the influence of the radical teachings of the Taliban; and, (2) both groups were desirous of help in building more madrassas in Kandahar Province where their youth could be taught the more moderate teachings of Islam. Over a period of months, and with much dialogue, Sunni and Shia leadership agreed that their interests were indeed similar, concurring that to present their concerns, as a united body (*superordinate goal*) would be the wisest move forward. In early 2007, at the Governor’s Palace in Kandahar City, Shia representatives re-joined the Ulema Council to discuss how

they may best present their shared concerns.

This documented case study underscores how Chaplain Imam Demiray and Political Advisor Gavin Buchan succeeded in creating the necessary intellectual space whereby a different vision of relation between the Sunni and Shia religious leadership of Kandahar Province was brought forward. It demonstrates how religious leaders — a chaplain in this instance — are able to work integratively with their interagency colleagues to aid the collective effort in creating a different reality for civil society where the influence of the religious sector cuts across all facets of society— **the Comprehensive Approach**.

■ RLE and the wider space of the Comprehensive Approach: indigenous initiatives – Shah Mansoor and the Afghan NGO, the Social Education Services Organization (SESO)

RELIGIOUS LEADERS (MULLAHS) are the most influential group of people in Afghanistan. Via a network of mosques, madrassas and religious institutions throughout the country, their traditional/historical role and close connection with ordinary citizens make them key allies to curbing extremist efforts to co-opting religion as a means of instigating hatred and violence against their own people and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Due to their prominent role in Afghan society, their support is deemed integral in encouraging citizens to promoting a moderate and tolerant Islam in cooperation with the government of Afghanistan.

“Religious leaders and scholars are effectively present in areas and parts of the country that are virtually inaccessible to security forces and the international community. They speak from the mosque podium and condemn corruption and narcotics,” said Mawlawi Hayatullah, Director of Hajj and Endowments in Balkh province. “Without the support of religious scholars the government cannot succeed, as they serve as a bridge between the government and the people. Empowering religious leaders will contribute to the elimination of narcotics, the decline of poverty, and a reduction of violence against women.”

This has not always been the case. Fol-



Following the fall of the Taliban in 2001, the strategic value of partnering with the religious sector was underestimated as an effective means of countering the extreme rhetoric of insurgents and educating the people, therefore, underutilized by the government and the international community. The Taliban and insurgents from other regions have successfully exploited the political situation by persuading significant numbers of religious leaders to turn many against the government, thus furthering their subversive agenda. Their radical message is one of fighting under the banner of Islam against the *infidels* and *occupiers* in a *holy war*. With little resistance to the contrary, insurgents infiltrate and co-opt religious centers, especially in more remote rural areas where the government's influence is limited, in an effort to undermine its legitimacy and credibility.

Garnering the support of the nation's religious scholars is essential to depriving the insurgents of their support base in villages and districts — a strategic blow to their agenda. Empowering religious scholars to speak out against them and condemn their brutal acts delegitimizes their message and reduces their ability to recruit young men.

The Deputy Ministry of Islamic Education comes under the Ministry of Education of the Government of Afghanistan. Their mandate is to oversee the affairs of religious education, madrasas and Darul Ulooms⁽¹⁹⁾ of the entire nation. With the support of the U.S. Department of State and in collaboration with the Afghan government, the NGO — Social and Educational Service Organization (SESO) — was mandated to offer a series of national peacebuilding seminars. These three-day conferences were delivered regionally throughout Afghanistan, reaching all 34 provinces in 2012-2013. Nearly 3,000 religious leaders took part in this historically precedent setting initiative.

The seminars were designed to bring together religious leaders to explore ways of confronting the challenges Afghanistan presently faces, especially countering extremist voices by strengthening traditional voices and extending the reach of the Kabul Government. A number of topics pertinent to the nation's present state of affairs were discussed. Chief among them was the aim to engage these Mullahs and educators in promoting the moderate message of Islam to their followers through its religious in-

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stitutions (mosques, madrasas) and in their interactions with the citizenry. The following eleven seminar topics focused on the role of madrasas, religious scholars and institutions:

- Countering extremist voices and alienating extremist false narrative and violent ideology;
- Promoting religious tolerance and understanding;
- Promoting peaceful means of expressing ideas and opinions among the people of Afghanistan;
- Promoting good governance and services to the people;
- Promoting upcoming elections, including women's participation;
- Encouraging women and children to seek education;
- The transition process and their constructive role beyond 2014;
- Raising awareness concerning the risks of IEDs, roadside bombs and other explosive ordinances;
- Countering narcotics in Afghanistan;
- Conflict resolution and the key role of religious scholars in resolving conflicts in communities and villages.

“Religious scholars are the true leaders, instructors, and teachers of the society. Due to the significant influence and authority that religious scholars have in Afghan society, they can solve problems, bring peace and improve education in Afghanistan,” said Gul Agha Shirzai, Governor of Nengarhar province during his opening remarks at the seminar held in his region by SESO.

In addition to their sacred role as religious leaders, religious educators often act as community decision makers, mediators, and dispute resolution experts whose authority rests with mosques and madrasas

and other religious institutions. Religious leaders are well respected in Afghan society and are seen by local populations as trustworthy, credible, and legitimate community leaders. It is the first time in the history of Afghanistan that the government has reached out to religious leaders in a systematic and organized manner. This programme has been received well by local officials and their communities, providing the government an opportunity to reach out to some of Afghanistan's more remote areas, where the central government's presence is less of a force. Underscored has been the much-needed narrative of tolerance and coexistence, essential to countering the ubiquitous and extreme rhetoric of insurgents with the true message of Islam to the next generation of Afghans — a key prerequisite for lasting peace and stability.

These are early days and results from enterprises of this nature take time to emerge. That said, Dr. Shafiq Samim, Deputy Minister for Islamic Education recently stated that “participating religious leaders have begun to speak about their role in reducing violence, promoting education, encouraging people to take part in the 2014 presidential elections and spreading a more balanced message of Islam — tolerance and coexistence.”

Conclusion

Support for adoption of a Comprehensive Approach stems from a growing consensus that outward-focused, integrated, and multi-disciplinary approaches to security threats and challenges must become the new norm, given the complex problems and challenges posed by a multi-dimensional security environment.⁽²⁰⁾ Religious Leader Engagement at tactical and operational levels represents an added dimension of mission effectiveness now recognized by leadership at strategic levels. As government departments and agencies move toward incorporating a religious element within their approach to peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts, serious reflection must be given to the unique contribution chaplains bring as an operational resource.

More poignant still to this discussion is the collaboration of an indigenous NGO, supported by both external and internal governments in engaging the religious leadership of the nation, a totally national ini-



tiative in its execution. Where western intervention occurs in the global south, more intentional effort is warranted among strategic planners to view such societies through their lens, lessening an overdependence on our own. In so doing, peacebuilding mechanisms from within indigenous cultures will come to the fore, religious or otherwise, that will be theirs, effective and long lasting — an essential element of the Comprehensive Approach that sees a nation restored to an enduring peace. †



Above: Madrasas and Religious Scholars Educational Seminar, Kabul, 2012.

END NOTES:

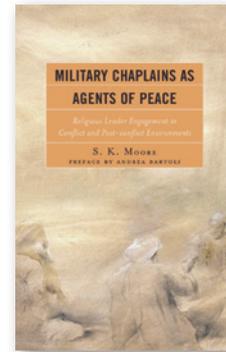
- (1) Katrien Hertog, *The Complex Reality of Religious Peacebuilding: Conceptual Contributions and Critical Analysis* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2010), 10-11.
- (2) R. Scott Appleby and Richard Cizik, *Engaging Religious Communities Abroad: A New Imperative for U.S. Foreign Policy* (Chicago: The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 2010), 17.
- (3) Pauletta Otis, "Religion and War in the Twenty-first Century," in *Religion and Security: The New Nexus in International Relations*, eds. R. A. Seiple & D. R. Hoover (Lanham, Maryland: Rowan and Littlefield Publishers, 2004), 20.
- (4) Marc Gopin, *To Make the Earth Whole: The Art of Citizen Diplomacy in an Age of Religious Militancy* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowan and Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 37-38.
- (5) Cynthia Sampson, "Religion and Peacebuilding," in *Peacemaking in International Conflict*, eds. I. William Zartman and J. Lewis Rasmussen (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1997), 275.
- (6) Mary Kaldor states that today's new wars are generated more around identity issues. The claim to power on the basis of a particular identity is among the principal drivers of today's conflicts: national, clan, religious or linguistic. Such claims often hearken to the past, which leans towards identity politics becoming more exclusive and fragmented—
- (7) Robert Schreiter, "The Theology of Reconciliation and Peacemaking for Mission," in *Mission – Violence and Reconciliation*, eds., H. Mellor & T. Yates (Sheffield, 2004), 25 cited in *Peace and Reconciliation: In Search of Shared Identity*, eds. Sebastian C. H. Kim, Pauline Kollontai and Greg Hoyland (Hampshire, England and Burlington, VT: 2008), 37.
- (8) Andrea Bartoli, *Christianity and Peace in Howard Coward and Gordon S. Smith eds., Religion and Peacebuilding* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2004), 158.
- (9) For a more exhaustive presentation of Religious Area Analysis, see Chapter Four of S.K. Moore. *Military Chaplains as Agents of Peace: Religious Leader Engagement in Conflict and Post-conflict Environments* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2013).
- (10) Peter Gizewski (Strategic Analyst), LCD OR Team, and Lt Col Michael Rostek (DLCD- Land Futures), "Toward A Comprehensive Approach To CF Operations: The Land Force JIMP Concept" in *Defence R&D Canada: Centre for Operational Research and Analysis, DRCD CORA TM 2007-60*, September 2007, 8.
- (11) John Paul Lederach, *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 35.
- (12) Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies (Washington, D.C.: United Institute of Peace Press, 1997), 41-42.
- (13) 1997, 42.
- (14) For more on Volf's "double vision" see Chapter Three, Part 3 "Reconciliation as Embrace," dissertation of Major S.K. Moore entitled, *Military Chaplains as Agents of Peace: The Theology and Praxis of Reconciliation in Stability Operations* (Ottawa, Canada: Saint Paul University, 2008), 117-143.
- (15) See Ruben M. Baron, "Reconciliation, Trust, and Cooperation: Using Bottom-Up and Top-Down Strategies to Achieve Peace in Israeli-Palestinian Conflict" in *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Reconciliation*, eds. Arie Nadler, Thomas E. Malloy and Jeffery D. Fisher (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 275-98.
- (16) R.M. Kramer and P.J. Carnevale, "Trust and Intergroup Negotiation" in *Intergroup Processes*, eds. R. Brown and S Gaertner (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 432-450 cited in Baron, 2008, 287.
- (17) Herbert C. Kelman, "Reconciliation from a Social-Psychological Perspective" in *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Reconciliation*, eds. Arie Nadler, Thomas E. Malloy and Jeffrey D. Fisher (New

York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 25.

(18) To see this case study in its entirety, see S.K. Moore, *Military Chaplains as Agents of Peace: Religious Leader Engagement in Conflict and Post-conflict Environments* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2013), 144-163.

(19) A house of knowledge generally referred to as an Islamic seminary or educational institution.

(20) Lieutenant Colonel (ret'd) Mike Rostek, excerpt from an unpublished article.



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

S.K. MOORE, PHD served as a chaplain in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) for 22 years. It was while with the United Nations in Bosnia (1992-93) during the war that the experience of engaging the religious leaders of greater Sarajevo left an indelible mark on his life. Subsequently, Dr. Moore conducted research at the Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team, Afghanistan (2006), contributing to his doctoral studies in the development of a practical theology emphasizing the role of chaplains engaging local religious leaders in an environment of deep-rooted conflict.

In 2011, the CAF Army endorsed Religious Leader Engagement (RLE) as a capability under development, presently used at the United Nations Training School, Ireland in Dublin. He is currently developing a 10-month, five-module, online program at Saint Paul University in Integrative Peacebuilding. His most recent publication is **Military Chaplains as Agents of Peace: Religious Leader Engagement in Conflict and Post-conflict Environments** (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2013) (Above).

SHAH MANSOOR, MBA is the head of Social and Educational Services Organization (SESO), an Afghan non profit organization. Prior to this, Mansoor was Director of the Information Resource Center at the U.S. Embassy, Kabul, Afghanistan, overseeing operations of provincial community centers and libraries throughout Afghanistan. Mansoor received a Bachelor of Information Technology from Preston University in Islamabad and a Master of Business Administration degree, with specialization in management from Schiller International University in Florida, U.S.