



Neuroscience and Social Conflict: Identifying New Approaches for the 21st Century

MIT, Cambridge, MA
February 9-11, 2012

THE PROJECT ON JUSTICE
IN TIMES OF TRANSITION

PUTTING EXPERIENCE TO WORK FOR PEACE

Saxelab 
Social Cognitive Neuroscience Laboratory



INTRODUCTION

On February 9-11, 2012, the Project on Justice in Times of Transition, in partnership with the SaxeLab at MIT, organized a two-day event entitled *Neuroscience and Social Conflict: Identifying New Approaches for the 21st Century*. This unprecedented meeting brought a high-level group of experienced leaders from the Middle East, South Africa, Northern Ireland and Central America together with conflict resolution experts, social psychologists and leading neuroscientists to survey the latest findings in neuroscience and brain research and identify new ideas for addressing conflict. The goal of this initiative was to consider some of the core challenges and problems facing public diplomacy, negotiation practices and conflict resolution efforts, and to relate these to current research findings in the field of neuroscience. Through this exchange, we began to identify questions for future research, as well as to assemble recommendations for diplomacy and negotiations based on findings in the field of neuroscience about how the human brain experiences trauma, exclusion, and threats to survival.

CONTEXT

Despite significant human, political, and financial resources deployed to ameliorate conflict in the two decades since the end of the Cold War, it often seems as if conflict has only metastasized. Since the Second World War, there have been on average about thirty armed conflicts ongoing every year and 90% of casualties in these conflicts have been civilians. At the same time 40% of all peace-treaties that are signed dissolve in the midst of new fighting. Finding peace has proven to be a difficult task, especially in deeply divided societies such as Israel / Palestine, Bosnia Herzegovina and Sri Lanka, where competing narratives and a range of structural features keep societies in constant threat of renewed violence. A key question facing conflict management practitioners, senior political negotiators, funders, and other key decision makers alike is thus: **“What are we missing?”** How can we begin to fill this gap in our collective knowledge about the human species and human tendencies toward conflict in a way that enables us to develop more effective, appropriate, and measurable approaches to these challenges?

At the Project on Justice in Times of Transition, where we have engaged in nearly seventy conflict resolution initiatives over the last two decades, we have come to the view that what is missing is a **nuanced, systematic, and scientifically advanced understanding of what it is to be human – that is, what it is about the human mind and brain which drives us into and away from conflict.** Throughout our twenty years of conflict

resolution work, we have used a methodology based on the transformative effects of sharing the practical experiences of former leaders who as once bitter enemies found a way to negotiate agreements that have ended violent conflicts and laid the foundation for long term peace and reconciliation. But while many participants in our programs have anecdotally testified to the “success” of this methodology, its effectiveness in bringing about positive socio-political change has been persistently difficult to measure. How, then, are we to ensure that the former leaders with whom we work are *productively* passing on their understanding of the factors on the ground that facilitate or obstruct significant social **change**? How are any conflict resolution practitioners, governments, or funding organizations accurately to evaluate and prioritize various approaches?

The nascent field of the **neuroscience of conflict** offers hope of finding answers. With recent access to new technology some of its leading practitioners are putting the most sophisticated tools available to the task of **scientifically understanding how the brain processes experience in ways that either exacerbate or ameliorate tendencies toward cooperation or confrontation**. Funding streams supporting work on PTSD, Alzheimer’s disease, and depression have stimulated research on core human emotions and behaviors relating to fear, trauma, bias, memory, empathy, exclusion, and humiliation; all of which are central to conflict resolution practice. In many ways this work grows out of long

standing hypotheses of social psychology, but what is revolutionary about it is that it promises eventually to give hard scientific evidence concerning which of those theories are founded on what can actually be observed happening in human brains. *Such research, as it becomes more advanced and fruitful, could lead us to better understand and quantitatively evaluate current approaches to conflict resolution and to identify effective future strategies for producing positive social change that are based on observable and measurable scientific evidence concerning universal aspects of human physiology and behavior.*

Though it is early in the development of the neuroscience of conflict, there are many areas in which experienced individuals from a variety of fields dealing with conflict – including neuroscience – could benefit from an exchange of ideas with one another. The ***Neuroscience and Social Conflict: Identifying New Approaches for the 21st Century*** initiative is a unique effort to cut across silos and create a **truly interdisciplinary discussion** that allows neuroscientists and social scientists to learn directly from those leading change and for experienced leaders and practitioners to begin to get a sense of what scientists are learning about the “human dimension” of conflict and the possible implications of their new findings for conflict resolution, public diplomacy, and public education efforts.



Roelf Meyer

Former Chief Negotiator for President De Klerk and former Minister of Constitutional Affairs, South Africa

Mohammed Bhabha

Senior official of the African National Congress (ANC) and a former Minister of State for Local Government; Chairperson of the Senate Select Committee on Constitutional Affairs and was part of the ANC team negotiating the new constitution of South Africa

THE INITIAL MEETING

The February 2012 meeting initiated this discussion and inaugurated an ongoing series of both small and large events where:

- neuroscientists explain the scope and implications of their research, share what is currently known about the human brain as it relates to conflict, and have access to experienced practitioners and opportunities to directly influence policy makers and policy;
- policy makers explain what they would find useful to know from neuroscientists;
- experienced practitioners explain what does and does not work on the ground and share the details of ongoing initiatives that seem to work but have not been scientifically tested and could begin to be assessed by the methods and tools of neuroscience;
- a productive exchange concerning key questions for research and for the field is fostered.

This first meeting, which was designed to be a brainstorm session and exchange of ideas across silos, proved to be an eye-opening discussion for all involved. In large part this had to do with the cross-disciplinary nature of the discussion that allowed each participant to look at issues of conflict and conflict management from a new and different vantage point. What also became apparent in the course of the discussion was that each grouping can play a distinct role in moving this effort forward.

PARTICIPANTS

Practitioners and leaders from transitional societies were chosen by the Project on Justice in Times of Transition and included people who had directly contributed to changes in their societies and could share stories related to that from first hand experience.

Neuroscientists and **social psychologists** were selected carefully by the SaxeLab and included scientists who are influencing discussions or working on issues relevant to this new branch of neuroscience that is studying conflict and the underlying brain processes that shape or influence how people perceive each other or behave.

Participants and observers at the first meeting included:

- **Tani Adams**, Founder, International Institute of Learning for Social Reconciliation, Guatemala
- **Elizabeth Alderman**, Peter C. Alderman Foundation
- **Stephen Alderman**, Peter C. Alderman Foundation
- **Matt Armstrong**, former Executive Director of the United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy
- **Paul Arthur**, Professor for Political Science, University of Ulster
- **Eileen Babbitt**, Fletcher School of Law and Public Diplomacy, Tufts University
- **Daniel Batson**, Professor of Social Psychology, Kansas University
- **Mohammed Bhabha**, senior official of the African National Congress (ANC) and a former Minister of State for Local Government; Chairperson of the Senate Select Committee on Constitutional

- Affairs and was part of the ANC team negotiating the new constitution of South Africa
- **Ina Breuer**, Executive Director, Project on Justice in Times of Transition
 - **Kim Brizzolara**, feature film and documentary producer and private investor.
 - **Emile Bruneau**, Researcher, SaxeLab, MIT
 - **Diana Buttu**, Fellow at the Middle East Initiative, Harvard University; former Legal Advisor to the Palestinian negotiating team in its negotiations with Israel
 - **William D. Casebeer**, DARPA/DSO, Program Manager
 - **Roxanne Cason**, Chair of the Cason Family Foundation
 - **Naomi Chazan**, former Deputy Speaker of the Knesset, Israel; Member of the Meretz Party; and Professor for Political Science, Hebrew University
 - **Cathryn Cluver**, Executive Director, The Future of Diplomacy Project, Harvard University
 - **Mary Daly**, President of Mary Daly & Associates
 - **Judith Edersheim**, Director, Center for Law, Brain and Behavior, Massachusetts General Hospital
 - **James Gilligan**, New York University
 - **Jeremy Ginges**, Professor of Psychology, New School for Social Research.
 - **Jorie Graham**, Poet; Boylston Professor, Harvard University
 - **Phillip Hammack**, Professor of Psychology, University of Santa Cruz
 - **Fergus Hanson**, Visiting Fellow in ediplomacy at The Brookings Institution
 - **Johannes Haushofer** is a Prize Fellow in Economics at Harvard, and a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) at MIT
 - **Joseph Hewitt**, Conflict Expert, Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation at USAID
 - **Daphne Holt**, Massachusetts General Hospital
 - **Rona Kiley**, Board member, Project on Justice in Times of Transition
 - **Nour Kteily**, Harvard University
 - **Jamil Mahuad**, former President of Ecuador; Co-Director of the Project on the Prevention of Global Violence; Co-founder and Senior Adviser of the Harvard International Negotiation Program, at Harvard Law School
 - **Roelf Meyer**, former Chief Negotiator for De Klerk and former Minister of Constitutional Affairs, South Africa
 - **Mohammed Milad**, Massachusetts General Hospital, Department of Psychiatry
 - **Betsy Levy Paluck**, Assistant Professor of Psychology, Princeton University
 - **Madhawa Palihapitiya**, University of Massachusetts Boston; former Director of Programs at the Foundation for Co-Existence in Sri Lanka
 - **Elizabeth Phelps**, Lab Director, Department of Psychology, New York University
 - **Tim Phillips**, Co-founder, Project on Justice in Times of Transition
 - **Lee Ross**, Professor of Psychology, Stanford University
 - **Rebecca Saxe**, Assistant Professor of Cognitive Neuroscience, MIT; Director, SaxeLab, MIT
 - **Gary Slutkin**, Executive Director, CeaseFire
 - **Jessica Stern**, member of President Clinton's National Security Council Staff and author of *Terror in the Name of God*

and Denial, A Memoir of Terror

- **Kelsi Stine**, Program Officer, Project on Justice in Times of Transition
- **Theresa Stone**, former Executive Vice President and Treasurer MIT
- **Rose Styron**, Writer, International Advisory Board member, Project on Justice in Times of Transition
- **David Taffel**, Philosopher and Writer
- **Jamil Zaki**, Postdoctoral Fellow, Harvard Center for Brain Science

CONFERENCE STRUCTURE

The meeting included an introductory panel as well as six panels that explored specific aspects of conflict resolution and public diplomacy practice that have relevance in the field of neuroscience. Practitioners and leaders from transitional settings shared lessons learned and pointed to key aspects of their experience that supported or made change possible, while scientists, because they tend to work on specialized topics within their fields (such as humiliation, fear, memory, trust, empathy), each explored specific emotions or concepts and the motivations and structures that elicit or suppress them. More specifically, the panels addressed the following themes:

- *The Psychology and Biology of Intergroup Conflict*
- *The Challenge of Resolving Conflict in the 21st Century*
- *Understanding Fear and Chronic Violence*
- *The Challenges of Consolidating Peace*
- *Shaping Narratives and Identity Through Public Diplomacy*
- *Analyzing Conflict Resolution Efforts*
- *Where Do We Go From Here?*



Eileen Babbitt
Fletcher School of Law and
Public Diplomacy,
Tufts University



Rebecca Saxe

Assistant Professor of Cognitive
Neuroscience, MIT;
Director, SaxeLab, MIT

INTRODUCTORY PANEL: THE PSYCHOLOGY AND BIOLOGY OF INTERGROUP CONFLICT

Speakers on this **opening panel provided an introduction to neuroscience and conflict resolution**. The idea was to provide an overview of the brain and what is presently known about the psychological and neural mechanisms most relevant to conflict and conflict resolution. In addition an overview of leading conflict resolution approaches and the challenges these approaches have faced was also given.

Rebecca Saxe, Assistant Professor of Cognitive Neuroscience at MIT and Director of MIT's SaxeLab, began her presentation by stating that it would be impossible to provide a full overview but that she intended to cover some of the most salient concerns and methods of neuroscience in order to give the non-scientists present a sense of the field's scope and practice. She began by calling attention to some very general assumptions that she thought most scientists in the room would share:

- ***People respond to conflict as human beings, and thus scientists tend to approach questions related to conflict with the belief that there is some generalized experience that can be captured.***
- ***People don't know their own minds, meaning their behaviors reflect emotions, associations, norms and narratives that are not accessible to cognition through introspection.***
- ***People resist changing their minds and***

simple persuasion is almost never sufficient to make them change. *There is an urgent need for research to figure out what interventions are effective in changing people's minds.*

Saxe then raised an issue that would prove to be central to the discussions that followed over the next two days: *How do you change norms so behavior follows suit?* She challenged the scientists to say something about what science can contribute to understanding the barriers and roadblocks to social conflict: *How do we learn who the main individuals to target are? Can we identify psychological tipping points? What are the physiological mechanisms for change and how can they be leveraged for violent conflict moderation?* She ended this broader part of her talk with the observation that all scientific inquiries require an intuition – about what to study, what questions are important to ask, what knowledge would be useful – in order to get them started. In other words, the non-scientists should not feel out of place because the hope of the scientists assembled is that the non-scientists will make a key contribution to science by stimulating such intuitions.

Dr. Saxe then turned more explicitly to neuroscience, a field that has existed for about 100 years, but that only recently (in the last 20 years) possessed neuro-imaging tools that enabled it non-invasively to look inside the human brain. This enabled the science to move from drawing analogies from what could be seen in animal and human cadaver brains to real time studies of human brains directly (enabling the study of higher order cognitive functions such as

morality, persuasion and narrative processing). One of the most sweeping and surprising things Saxe mentioned was that through neuro-imaging, neuroscience has learned that *every thought you've ever had is a pattern of electricity in your brain* and is stored permanently somewhere in the brain as such. What is observed with neuro-imaging is that neuro-activity consists of patterns of firing electricity across synapses, or the gaps between neurons (brain cells). This activity can be tracked by observing the shifting movement of blood flow in the brain across time. This enables scientists to observe and measure the flow of oxygen to regions of the brain responsible for different functions: the more oxygen flowing to a region, the more activated that region is assumed to be during the activity in which the individual under study is engaged. Rebecca used this technology to establish that a specific region of the brain becomes activated when one thinks about what others are thinking. This function had been assumed to be too complex to be located primarily in only one region of the brain. This offers hope that if science can measure relevant changes in people's brains before a conflict erupts into violence, targeted interventions to mediate such an eruption may be able to be designed and deployed.

Dr. Saxe concluded by pointing to the current limits of brain imaging: scientists using this technology are limited by the size and expense of the equipment to working in a lab rather than in the real world; most studies are done with certain kinds of people who you can talk into going into machines (i.e., psychology

undergraduates at US universities); the machines cannot always measure what we want them to measure because those things often happen too slowly or too quickly for the equipment to capture anything meaningful about them; and lastly, there are limits in interpretation. Just because something is discovered here and now in this person's brain does not mean it's inherent in the human brain *per se*. Saxe ended her presentation with some challenging questions: *What kinds of changes in thinking happen and which of them matter most in the present context? What patterns of thinking are important to recognize and intervene with early? What patterns of thinking are most puzzling, most irritating, and most in need of explanation? What information from science could have been useful to real conflict management practitioners, and when would it have been important to have had it?*

Eileen Babbitt, Professor at the Fletcher School of Law and Public Diplomacy at Tufts University presented what she referred to as "Conflict Resolution 101" to bring the non-conflict resolution participants up to speed with "a few of the salient features of how conflict resolution is being thought of." She defined conflict resolution as: *processes or activities that create capacity in institutions, groups, and individuals to manage differences of interests, values, or needs without resorting to violence*. The big question for the field right now, she asserted, is "What change is required to create capacity and political will?" She then presented the three most common ways of categorizing conflicts and obstacles to conflict management as:

- **Strategic**, which involves cost-benefit calculations on the part of parties to a conflict. Here what is key is getting parties to change seeing conflict only as a zero sum game to seeing it as a positive sum game.
- **Structural**, in which institutions and decision-making processes are set up to meet one group's set of interests or needs at the expense of other groups. Here the change that is needed is inclusion and tolerance of multiple interests and the empowering of weaker or excluded groups.
- **Psychological**, which means involving cognitive and affective processes at both the individual and the group levels.

Prof. Babbitt then focused on the psychological conflicts and summarized some of the key psychological causes of conflict. She concluded that *the role of conflict resolution interventions is to create change, which entails shifting attitudes and perceptions to allow for more complexity, to expand horizons, to end stereotyping and dehumanization; to decrease prejudice and fear; to increase contact and knowledge of the other; and to focus on basic human needs that we all share.*

Dr. Babbitt next pointed to some of the prevalent challenges conflict resolution practitioners face in their efforts, such as demonstrating the impact they are having to funders who often work with shorter timelines than real change requires. Similarly, sensitive political environments make measuring impact with traditional tools difficult to do without undermining the trust that needs to be built in order to

achieve change. Another central challenge in the field is scaling up interventions and generalizing change. Many conflict resolution approaches work with small groups (elites, youth, target groups) but produce diminishing returns as they are scaled up.

Both speakers identified core issues that would be discussed in more detail in the sessions to come. Key questions they raised included: How does one generate change in perceptions and how does one make that change stick?; How do core human emotions play into these behaviors and how do we go about better understanding them?; And finally, how do we better evaluate the impact of conflict resolution and peacebuilding and can neuroscience play a role in refining that process?

PANEL ONE: THE CHALLENGE OF RESOLVING CONFLICT IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Since World War II the world has witnessed over 60 civil wars. Some of the most intractable conflicts have been resolved, while others have remained in a continual state of violent struggle. These conflicts share many characteristics, such as ethnic and religious divides between separate communities, different experiences of exclusion and discrimination, and, for some communities, a belief that violence is a justifiable response to perceived threats to their fundamental survival (“existential threat”). In all cases, human reactions to conflict and insecurity, as well as deep-seated trauma, need to be managed and addressed. **This panel featured presentations by leaders who have played a significant and important role in addressing conflict in their own countries. They spoke about the emotional challenges they faced, how their own perceptions of “the other” changed over time and how these paradigm shifts affected their decisions and actions.** The panel also featured practitioners from a success story (South Africa) and a perpetually intractable conflict (Israel/Palestine), and members from both the dominant and non-dominant group in both contexts.

Roelf Meyer, former Chief Negotiator for F.W. De Klerk, told the group about his own involvement in changing the Apartheid regime in South Africa and how he, as a beneficiary of the Apartheid system, came to realize that it had to

change. As he explained, the paradigm shift that had to occur was that white South Africans had to stop believing that they were better than black Africans, a comfortable truth they had lived with since 1652. This change was not easy, but many white South Africans have stayed in Africa because they were actively part of changing the system.

Mr. Meyer referred to four experiences that contributed to his personal transformation: (1) As a young lawyer he was asked by a client to give advice on “black laws” for urban black South Africans living without constitutional rights. In the course of giving his opinion on this issue he began to realize that this situation was not in accord with his deepest personal values. (2) As a young adult he was elected to a parliamentary seat in the South African government, but the moment he first sat down as a “representative” of the people he realized that he was in no way a representative of the people, as he and all his representative colleagues were only acting on behalf of a tiny minority of South Africans. (3) As a parliamentary member of the defense committee, Meyer visited Namibia to survey South African military activities on the border of Angola, and there he met a young insurgent POW who spoke to him in Afrikaans. Meyer asked the boy how he became an insurgent, ‘the enemy,’ despite being an Afrikaner. And the boy related a potent story of how he worked for a farmer in Namibia at the age of 15 but was influenced to join the ‘terrorist’ movement when he and a dog were riding on the back of the farmer’s truck, and when it started to rain, the white farmer took the



Naomi Chazan

Former Deputy Speaker of
the Knesset, Israel; Member
of the Meretz Party; and
Professor for Political Science,
Hebrew University

dog into the front seat, leaving him – a non-person – out in the rain. (4) During a national state of emergency, Meyer was instructed by the president to manage the internal security of the country. He was the chair of a committee staffed with military generals, officers, and intelligence personnel. His task was to go to every black township, to learn why there was unrest, and to understand and ameliorate it through social means and interventions. For 18 months Meyer traveled around the country and visited townships, learning the details of the reality of black life in South Africa. In those years there was a lot of talk about “negotiations” with black members of the ANC and the thinking was that there could be moderates in the ANC with whom whites could negotiate. Meyer’s experience led him to conclude that real negotiations could only happen between the government and the real black South African leaders, Mandela and his colleagues.

Roelf Meyer noted at the end of his presentation that from his experience a paradigm shift is much deeper than the pragmatic realization of the need for change. “To change from the idea that ‘I am better than the next person’ to ‘We are all equal’ is a fundamental process involving emotion more than intellectual understanding. It involves deeply personal values and passions and has to come from the soul.”

Mohammed Bhabha, senior official of the African National Congress and a member of the ANC team negotiating the new constitution of South Africa, talked about what it took from his perspective to produce change in South Africa.

Apartheid’s perverse success, he noted, was in demonizing and dehumanizing people. This was effective even with the oppressed side. As Bhabha described, when his side initially met with Apartheid representatives it felt like a meeting with monsters. But he also commented that this made it easier for little gestures of humanity to go a long way. And he pointed out that this was true for both sides and was critical to enabling the necessary emotional paradigm shift and facilitating dialogue. Mandela’s own radical transformation was symbolically powerful; after all, he was once one of the most sought after terrorists and he became a hero to everyone. Bhabha also noted that the ANC had to compromise, because its enemy clearly had no intention of ever leaving. Thus, he said, the ANC was forced to compromise from the heart and to push toward a positive-sum outcome for whites and blacks. This became even more the case once ANC leaders realized that white South Africans were also acting out of fear rooted in their national history of repression by the English. Bhabha highlighted that developing full and equal ownership of the process of constitutional change was the *sine qua non* driving change forward and giving it sound roots. It took two years to fill in the content of that constitutional change, but the key to success was having full ownership of the process equally distributed. The opposing parties were put at ease when the language surrounding the constitutional process highlighted the independence of the constitution from partisan interests and ownership. And while the ANC feared being made into a marginalized party by the constitution, Bhabha had similar

concerns *within* the ANC as a member of South Africa's Muslim minority. But in the end, he stressed, true equality before the constitutional court has afforded even the Muslim community some important protections even against some barbaric uses of *Sharia* (Islamic law). This is the glue that has made change stick. Today Bhabha tells his wife and daughters they are fortunate to live in South Africa, one of the safest, most egalitarian societies in the world.

Naomi Chazan, former Deputy Speaker of the Knesset in Israel, addressed the Israeli side of the Israel/Palestine conflict and set forth three principles that any resolution to the conflict must honor: (1) we must share the land, nobody is going away; (2) Israeli Jews and all others must have equal rights before the law; (3) any negotiations must be just, based on equality and pluralism, and, as such, in accordance with the founding ideals of the founding fathers and mothers of Israel. Chazan then provided the group with an overview of the evolution of the Israel/Palestine conflict. As she pointed out the conflict keeps evolving and transforming itself, becoming more complicated in each phase. According to Naomi there have been four phases: The initial, or "nationalist," stage started in the late 60s and led up to the Oslo process. During that phase Palestinians and Israelis did a lot of talking with each other and came to view each other as human beings. Trust was built through a deliberate focus on getting to know each other. The core issues were rarely addressed. The second, or "colonialist," phase encompassed the Oslo process and, in hindsight, there were some

structural issues (such as the Israeli lack of willingness to discuss a Palestinian state) that made the process fail. The inherent asymmetry and the persistent lack of readiness to address the core issues also proved problematic. The third, or "religious," phase began with the second intifada and the building of walls. During this period there was a total lack of empathy, and empathy also became hard to engender because Palestinians and Israelis could no longer easily have direct contact with one another. As a result fear grew on both sides. The final, or "regional," phase is the present one – which Naomi characterized as a phase in which a regional approach to the conflict at first seemed promising, but has in the meanwhile proven chimerical, and in which the conflict has also filtered down into Israeli society, pitting liberal and conservative Israelis against each other. "The inability to resolve the conflict in a fair and just way is undermining Israeli democracy," she said in a matter of fact way, "and Israel will not survive if it cannot resolve this conflict." She described a mass media driven personal assault on her as President of the New Israel Fund to illustrate how this internecine struggle has manifested itself. Her final question and challenge to the group was: "*What does one do when one has run out of options, when change is going in the wrong direction?*"

Diana Buttu, former Legal Advisor to the Palestinian negotiating team, shared her perspective with the changes that have taken place in Israel/Palestine. Although she had visited Israel/Palestine many times as a child, and experienced the routine contact that had once taken place

between peoples from both sides, her direct and ongoing experience began in 2000, just as the second intifada began. This was the beginning of the norm of separation of which Naomi spoke and as Buttu recounted it, it was suddenly difficult for Palestinians and Israelis to be in contact with each other, even casually. Buttu made it her well-intentioned mission to change this situation and spent a year talking to Israelis about what life was like on the other side of the wall and what was going on in the negotiation process. Though consensus among Israelis is high for the idea of a two-state solution, the details of that solution divide Israelis in countless directions. Explaining to Israelis what it is like to live under military occupation, to see soldiers, to go through checkpoints, to see settlements – this was what Buttu thought was most important. Israelis can have a fairly normal life without ever thinking about the other side, while the Palestinians have this conflict as the number one priority on their list because it is the overriding presence in their lives. So long as Israelis do not prioritize (or feel that they have to prioritize) the conflict, a solution may be impossible. Palestinians, moreover, do not want to clamor for victimhood. Buttu's impression is that Palestinians want to take ownership of their situation and their future. Moreover, by the year 2000, the formerly obscure Israeli settlements had become physically and cognitively part of Palestinian and Israeli life. It is no longer a challenge to get to settlements. There are even highways that will take you to the Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Buttu's educational outreach came to an abrupt end in 2002 due to "an elephant in the room that couldn't be ignored:

violence." Her "clinical" way of dealing with conflict resolution - using power-points, detailed explanations, etc. - was at odds with the intense emotionality of the Israelis experiencing the second Intifada. But according to Buttu exposing each side to the other is essential to reversing the current, pessimistic trend. She believes that the politics of separation has led to a great deal of demonization and that this will be hard to ever get over.

Lee Ross, Professor of Psychology, Stanford University began his talk by looking at the social-psychological explanations for obstacles and barriers to progress toward peace. The idea of solving the relationship between two conflicting parties by concluding an agreement is wrong, he stated. You must build trust and cooperative relations before getting to the detailed struggle to find a negotiated agreement. The first barrier he addressed was "naive realism," that is, the "assumption of isomorphism between subjective experience and objective reality." This is the sense that things are as I perceive them to be and as I experience them. When you perceive them differently, the thing I think needs to be understood is why you perceive them erroneously. Ross then moved on to "unreasonable failures to reach agreement" in which parties who have a positive-sum outcome in front of them still fail to reach agreement. What needs to be explained here is why, even if there is a good outcome for all parties, you still can't get there. In that case you need to undertake what Ross called a "barrier analysis" of the blocks to reaching that mutually desirable outcome and an investigation of what can be done about



Lee Ross
(*facing camera*)
Professor of Psychology,
Stanford University



Gary Slutkin
Executive Director, CeaseFire

Rebecca Saxe
Assistant Professor of Cognitive
Neuroscience, MIT;
Director, SaxeLab, MIT

them. Because such a barrier indicates not just that the parties disagree but that the fundamental meaning they attribute to that disagreement is exacerbating the conflict.

Among the psychological barriers to dispute resolution Prof. Ross discussed were false polarization (the perception that there is no evidence of or prospect for finding common ground); dissonance (people maintain a struggle by reducing cognitive dissonance, i.e., by rationalizing their maintenance of the conflict); reactive devaluation, (where people will devalue proposals or compromise terms as a consequence of their having been *offered*). The effects of emotions like hatred, anger, lack of compassion, and absence of moral sentiments of guilt and shame are also massive obstacles in a conflict situation. Lastly Prof. Ross mentioned fear as a critical emotion to be understood because it plays a decisive role in all aspects and phases of a violent conflict. His research has suggested the primacy of dealing with these root sentiments over the surface political issues in conflict resolution interventions and negotiations.

So what can we do? Creating optimism and promoting a sense of the inevitability of success is critical. Ross pointed to the example of negotiating over the election of a Pope. The negotiations are incredibly consequential and heated but negotiators approach the negotiation knowing that for the last 600 years a new Pope has always been chosen and it will stay that way in this instance. In this context Ross would like to know what changes occur in the neurology and the neural signatures of

people who experience positive negotiations versus those who experience failed negotiations. He ended by stressing the importance of violating expectations and stereotypes in order to “unfreeze” a frozen situation. The real world example he gave was the visit of Anwar Sadat to Jerusalem. He made no concessions, but nevertheless it was a moving event and led to great optimism, because people felt that “if this is possible, then our notion of what’s possible is wrong.”

The presentations in this panel all sought to explain “change” – how it happens, what the barriers are and how to consolidate it. As Mr. Meyer pointed out, change does not happen overnight and requires more than rational decision-making. It requires emotional urgency. Similarly Mr. Bhabha pointed to the importance of creating ownership if change is going to stick. Naomi Chazan and Diana Buttu described the challenges Israel and Palestine have faced and how the obstacles and increased separation have prevented change from occurring despite a growing public recognition that change is needed. Prof. Ross contextualized this discussion by pointing to key needs for change and issues that neuroscience might examine. This includes whether there is a neurological signature for what we might think about as an open or closed mind, and whether we can use neuro-imaging to better understand how and why some particular kinds of interventions are successful and others are not.

PANEL TWO: UNDERSTANDING FEAR AND CHRONIC VIOLENCE

How are people affected by conflict and long-term violence? What psycho-social forces come into play that are not as prevalent otherwise? How can we address the humiliation and fear that are so pervasive in these contexts and that often create a cycle of violence perpetuating the conflict? **This panel explored efforts to mediate conflict situations and address violence, and the challenges that emotional trauma and humiliation pose to resolving conflict.**

Elizabeth Phelps, Lab Director, Department of Psychology, New York University, shared with the group some of the findings she and her lab have made studying fear and biases. She began her presentation by talking about her work on fear and fears that are acquired through social learning versus those that are encoded in our brains as part of evolution (e.g., fear of snakes) and are much harder to ameliorate. Phelps' lab research clearly demonstrated that fears can easily be instilled in individuals and thus socially communicated and learned. As Prof. Phelps explained, there are two ways of expressing attitudes – implicitly (pulse rate, behavior) and explicitly. She and her team was interested in looking at whether the fear learning model can be applied to how we learn about others, which meant, more specifically, testing and measuring race biases and whether they can be changed. This research identified the circuitry in the brain responsible for fear versus trust and then tested for implicit (as opposed to explicit) attitudes toward

race in America. The findings showed that biases are more easily erased or changed in dominant groups than in non-dominant ones. Her research on race and biases has also indicated that race bias may also be a fear “prepared” by evolution and not purely contextual. In-group versus out-group could be related to physical similarity. She and her team have also found that perspective shifting manipulations can alter neural circuits of race. As she concluded, all these findings have profound implications for how we address race issues in the future, but more research needs to be done before it can be used.

Jeremy Ginges, Professor of Psychology, New School for Social Research, talked to the group about his research on humiliation. The question he was interested in studying was humiliation's role in conflict and conflict resolution efforts, especially because one often hears of humiliation as an emotion that has radicalized or motivated terrorists. What his research in Israel/Palestine uncovered was that those who had been humiliated were actually less likely to support violence. This was not the expected result and thus Ginges had to explain the somewhat less than straightforward connection between humiliation and conflict. According to his research, people who commit violence are “agents” – actors in the sense of being active. Such people are less susceptible to humiliation. Contrariwise, to suffer humiliation, one has to be largely passive, someone who is acted upon. Such individuals are less prone to action, especially high-risk action like violence. And these tendencies are exacerbated by the experience of

potentially humiliating actions.

Prof. Ginges continued his presentation by stating that humiliation is related to a different area of his research that has to do with *sacred values*. These are values that are held so deeply that people are not willing to compromise on them. What his research into sacred values found was that attempts to induce compromise with material incentives are either not effective or counterproductive, while strong symbolic gestures – such as the opposing side compromising one of its sacred values – are generally effective in promoting a willingness to compromise. Professor Ginges presented research demonstrating that such symbolic gestures were successful because they reduced the humiliation people felt when asked to compromise over their own sacred values. One of the goals of research should thus be to understand more about transcendental moral commitments that influence the trajectory of intergroup conflict.

Jessica Stern, member of President Clinton's National Security Council Staff, has done extensive interviews with terrorists globally, and began her talk by confirming that many terrorists start out talking about ideology, but when researchers investigated prisoners at the US Guantanamo Prison they found that knowing someone in al-Qaeda was a far greater predictor of their joining jihad than ideology, humiliation, or anything else. Still, in her opinion humiliation does play a role, creating situations in which there is a search to heal a wound to pride, and a terrorist group provides a certain shelter and safety net.

She continued her presentation by pointing out that in her experience there are three ways for governments to deal with terrorists: (1) kill them (2) de-radicalize them (as is being done in Saudi Arabia), and (3) prevention (e.g., by creating incentives for people not to join insurgencies at key moments). Stern then related the story of having interviewed one prominent member of a South Asian terrorist organization. He started his interview with a grievance story, but Stern quickly shifted to unexpected personal questions and asked specifically about his wife. He said he had just gotten remarried and was now living with his second wife, who was living with his parents on their farm. Stern asked to meet her and he agreed. She was brought to his home, a few blocks walk away, and walking with some Mujahedeen she was offered cool soft drinks and fresh fruit unlike anything found at the training camp. She found this leader's wife living in a lavish mansion, fluently speaking English, and revealing herself to be extremely sophisticated. Stern then described how she later encountered a young man who had left the group because he discovered how ostentatiously the leader of the organization was living, and he could not reconcile the professed ideals of "the struggle" and the lucrative "business" of the organization. Stern pointed out that in her opinion this could be a significant leverage point: a narrative of jihadist-disillusionment that could counter the popularity of jihad.

Tani Adams, founder of the International Institute of Learning for Social Reconciliation in Guatemala, talked about

her own research on violence which looks at what happens to people who have lived under chronic violence for a long time. The 'chronic' nature of violence is measured by its intensity, the space within which it may occur, and its duration. In these terms, about a quarter of the world's population today lives with chronic violence. As Ms. Adams pointed out, for people who live with chronic violence "fear is lived individually, created socially, and constructed and reproduced as part of a society," to the extreme extent that those living in a context of chronic violence can no longer proclaim moral clarity. She pointed to three factors that reproduce violence in a society: (1) social inequality and the perception of that inequality; (2) relative deprivation and the "new poverty"; and (3) the destruction of traditional family and community structures. In Latin America, social inequalities, urbanization, and high levels of illiteracy combine to perpetuate the violence that makes democratic practice so difficult to attain and distribute evenly. Exposure to, but at the same time lack of access to, the globalized world (via television, the Internet, and social media) creates a sort of humiliation. Everything is right in front of you yet infinitely out of reach.

At the end of her talk Ms. Adams set forth the proposition that "chronic violence provokes perverse social effects." First there is the destruction of social relations; this leads to experiences of being a "social zero" and "social death" that provoke a perverse search for respect; then strategic thinking weakens, resulting in social silence, forgetting, avoidance, and the generation of adverse physical

and psychological effects. The net result is exclusionary practices. The combination of these conditions generates a vicious circle and a sense of victimhood that are difficult to reverse. Victims seek rights, but in light of their self-identification as victims – and thus primarily passive – they possess little sense of responsibility for securing and defending the wider health of society and democratic politics. Thus the tendency toward violent solutions to problems is further perpetuated and the cycle continues.

Madhawa 'Mads' Palihapitiya, former Director of Programs at the Foundation for Co-Existence in Sri Lanka, talked about his experiences addressing violence in Sri Lanka. As he explained, Sri Lanka has experienced many different types of violence including communal violence, ethnic conflict, and suicide bombings. The decades long civil war has seeped into every aspect of life and everyone is affected by violence and the fear of violence. There are also specific patterns of behavior that manifest when violence is on the upswing, and conflict resolution practitioners have been able to measure these in order to predict and prevent rising violence. He used Donald L. Horowitz's (The Deadly Ethnic Riot, 2001) classification scheme for describing phases of violence in Sri Lanka. There were historically significant "riots," which are less about political ideology than terrorism is. Unskilled rioters unexpectedly turn into killers; violence is civilian on civilian. Counter to general perception, however, there is a lot of organizing that happens *before* a riot. For example, voter lists are collected and



Elizabeth Phelps

Lab Director, Department of
Psychology, New York University

studied, and blacksmiths can be observed busily making machetes before the first violent incidents take place. These are “precipitants” to an “unsettling event,” such as a fight, burning, or insult. The latter give way to a “lull” which yields to “sporadic and isolated attacks” that culminate in a “massive deadly attack.” Finally “diminishing stray attacks” continue until there is an “abrupt end” to the violence. In closing Mads noted that one technique that has been used successfully to prevent violence is texting to counter rumors.

This panel considered how biases and radicalization are formed and how one might go about reversing them. The role of humiliation came up repeatedly as a factor in producing violence, but contrary to general assumptions, Ginges’ research had found that humiliation plays a role primarily among more passive individuals that are less inclined to act as a result of their humiliation. The group discussed whether structural or environmental (as opposed to emotional) factors were propelling violence and if so what role psychology and neuroscience can play in assessing the situation. Several participants felt that there was an urgent need to better understand the psychological and neurological motivations for violent behavior and reiterated the need for more research.

PANEL THREE: THE CHALLENGES OF CONSOLIDATING PEACE

Once a peace process is underway, how does one ensure that changes take place and the society does not fall back into conflict? How do we create a situation where former enemies have enough empathy toward each other to agree to live together? **This panel sought to better understand how change is best consolidated once peace is achieved and the emotional processes and motivations that underlie the sort of behavior that is desired during this period.**

Paul Arthur, Professor for Political Science, University of Ulster, recounted his experiences in Northern Ireland as part of his presentation to underline how empathy and humanization of the other as well as of the self are keys to consolidating a peace once peace agreements have been signed. He described how in many war torn societies, there is often an accumulation of many small, daily, humiliating experiences that deepen the war’s lasting impact. Referring back to the “terrorist” debate from the preceding Q&A, he noted that as soon as you say “discussion of terrorists” you end the discussion by pigeonholing and stereotyping people. You need to start diffusing the pent up humiliation and demonization by starting with a show of reciprocity and recognition. As he explained “you start with prejudices about the other, and then you start to realize that you need to revise your own ideas about the other.” Similarly, symbolic gestures toward key leaders, such as President Clinton’s granting of a US visa to Gerry

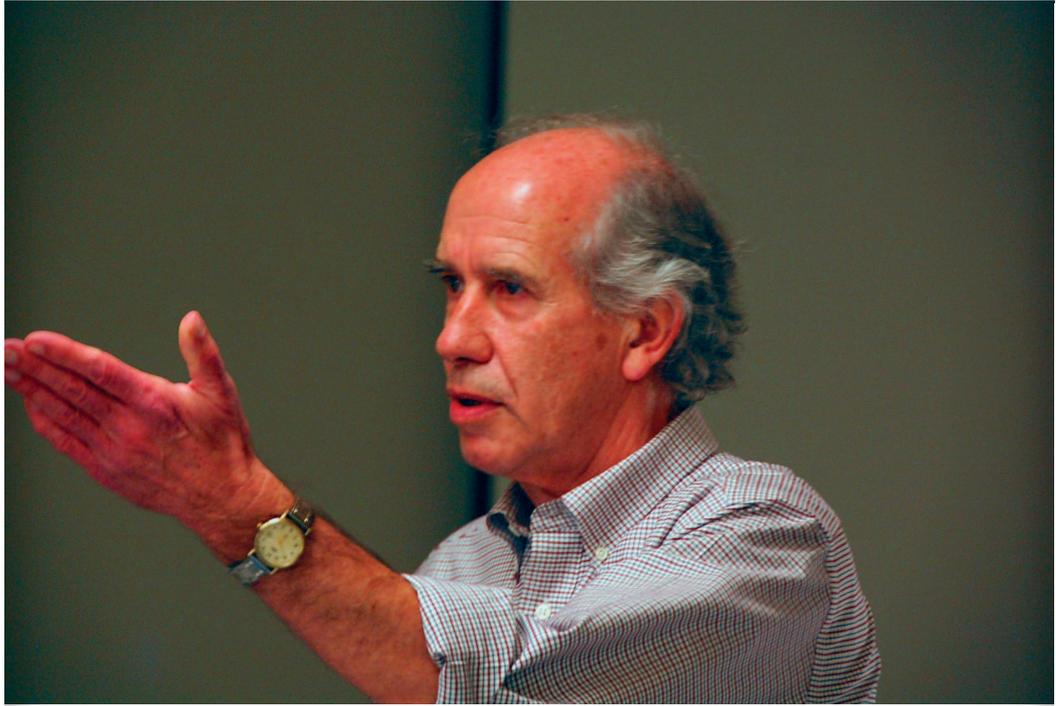
Adams, go a long way toward establishing trust and creating healing processes in such situations. Suddenly being recognized, as Gerry Adams and Sinn Fein were by Clinton's symbolic gesture, forced them to address an international as well as an internal audience, and this forced them to at least present themselves and their demands and grievances as reasonable.

Understanding this new reality, however, depends on the quality of leadership. In any attempt to address a conflict, parties need first to identify and engage the opposing leaders who really have the capacity to bring along their constituents. Only then does it make sense to try to pursue a negotiated agreement. The lifetime of most peace agreements, Arthur stated, is three to five years. Why? Because in order to survive, it cannot be an agreement only between the elites, which it all too often is. In fact, he said, the key to success is how effectively you do the job of bringing everyone (i.e., each groups' constituents) along. In Northern Ireland, the IRA was able to undergo dramatic change because of its organizational structure: it was set up so that all key issues were regularly communicated to and weighed by members at all levels. Its leaders truly acted on behalf of those they claimed to represent. Arthur lastly stated that empathy was critical to bringing the extremes into the middle. There were a few core people that eventually, and after long resistance, played this role for the DUP; and once these leaders felt their cause was understood, they were able to change and move toward conciliation.

Jamil Zaki, Postdoctoral Fellow, Harvard Center for Brain Science, talked to the group about "Cognitive and Neural Sources of Prosociality," that is, the human tendency to be nice to one another and to act seemingly altruistically. The working assumption here is that this sort of behavior is desired after peace processes have been established and should be encouraged. Dr. Zaki has found in his research that motivations toward pro-sociality can be extrinsic (social pressure) and/or intrinsic (experienced as valuable in itself). In fact, he said, there is especially strong evidence for the efficacy of the latter. The dominant view has been that prosocial behavior is motivated by exogenous factors: reputation, perceived justness, etc. But recent evidence is showing that humans are prosocial from a very early age, without prompting or external motivation to be so. In fact, offers of material rewards for pro-sociality tend to be counterproductive with otherwise prosocial children. One of the motivators for pro-sociality is empathy, which Zaki defined as "overlapping, shared experience, where one person perceives the pain or other experience of another." He has found two regions of the front brain (the anterior cingulate cortex and the insula), allow us to experience pain and to experience somebody else's pain. But, as Zaki acknowledged, people are not prosocial all the time. His research has shown that pro-sociality is less commonly exhibited by individuals toward people from different groups. If one observes a person from another group experiencing pain, or if one just happens to dislike that person, the brain regions mentioned exhibit less activity.

Dan Batson, Professor of Social Psychology at Kansas University, talked to the group about a specific variety of altruism associated with a specific kind of empathy and the potential cultivation of the former for use during transitions to peace or democracy. Altruism, Batson suggested, can be a motivation, not just a behavior, and its ultimate goal is to increase the welfare of the other. But if it is true that empathetic concern can produce altruistic motivation, Batson asked, how is it possible to elicit empathetic concern? As he explained, there are two components to this: (1) the perception of the other as in need, and (2) valuing the welfare of the other. Maybe, Batson suggested, if we can induce empathy and can promote an increased perception of need and valuing for one or a few members of a party to a conflict, these perceptions would generalize to other group members. If successful, observers should discover more positive feelings among group members toward others as a whole. Batson concluded by asserting that creative artists, specifically authors are very adept at eliciting the emotions they desire in their audiences, at very low risk and low cost, with very wide possible distribution and effect. In closing he asked whether their works couldn't be harnessed strategically to open or increase the opening for "empathic altruism" in a conflict situation? Though this is only one piece of the puzzle of conflict resolution, Batson suggested that if it could be made to transpire at precisely the right moment, it could have a multiplier effect in the direction of producing a more benevolent orientation toward the other side and third party negotiation facilitators.

These three presentations, although offered from very different perspectives and disciplines, all touched on the issue of empathy, and the scientists in particular suggested the motivations and conditions required to generate empathic behavior. As they pointed out, other people's behaviors and an individual's perception of those behaviors and the values underlying them play a role in shaping actions. Paul Arthur's presentation underlined the need for empathy and how changing perceptions of "the other" and oneself are key to stabilizing a peace process. He also pointed to the important role leadership plays in this process. Together the presentations suggested a need to consider this issue in more detail. How do attitudes change among individuals and groups after a peace treaty is signed? Can we learn more about the role leaders play in these key moments? How can we better understand how things unfold?



Daniel Batson
Professor of Social Psychology,
Kansas University



Betsy Levy Paluck
Assistant Professor of
Psychology and
Woodrow Wilson School of
Public and International Affairs,
Princeton University

PANEL FOUR: SHAPING NARRATIVES AND IDENTITY THROUGH PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

This panel looked at how public diplomacy or conflict resolution efforts attempt to change narratives of “the other.” What are the current assumptions in public diplomacy about how to elicit such change and whether interventions of this sort work? Panelists also considered if there are different approaches to making individuals versus groups or publics behave differently and how we measure and evaluate the effectiveness of efforts to change perceptions of broad populations versus efforts to facilitate more targeted change.

Matt Armstrong, former Executive Director of the United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, shared some ideas from his work on public diplomacy and described the changing global media landscape and the influence it has on how we view each other. In contrast to the situation in the 1970s, globalization and the Internet have connected us all, and as a result barriers of language and culture seem gone. As he argued, the result is a democratization of influence: you can bypass or coopt hierarchies, gatekeepers and other traditional barriers or filters. Nonetheless, we can't just lob information at populations and hope it sticks. We still need to think about how people perceive each other, and according to Mr. Armstrong the US government thinks a lot (for better or worse) about what others are thinking about it, in order to shape public opinion on certain matters. At its

core, this is also based on the idea that if we do not understand what others are thinking about themselves and about us, we cannot effectively approach and solve problems we are having together. So while all peoples and groups have become more media savvy and are fighting online for hearts and minds, it is also essential to understand the media structures we and they are using in order to better understand each other. He spoke of “fragmentification” of identity, meaning the simultaneously ongoing processes of fragmentation and identification. People can now opt in or out of membership in many different groups: a German-American can now decide to be that, or German, or American, or something unrelated to nationality or ethnicity (e.g. Punk or Goth). Armstrong put up a slide of a famous image of the Boston Massacre, then he exposed the propagandistic elements of the image that have become incorporated into the collectively accepted narrative about this historical event. This, he said, demonstrates the need to understand what the other side is thinking and what messages they are hearing. What are their truths? What are your truths? What is truth? In closing Armstrong noted the tailoring of Internet search engine results to match each user's browsing history and stated that if you search “US” in the English language version of YouTube the results you get are primarily positive but with the same search in the Arabic language YouTube you get results that are primarily negative. So what we are doing needs to fit a complex media/information context. Do we understand what we are doing and why?

Fergus Hanson, Visiting Fellow in eDiplomacy at The Brookings Institution, underlined some similar ideas from his perspective as an eDiplomacy expert. As he highlighted in his presentation, the US government has a bigger media presence than the New York Times. Interestingly, however, most of these US media outlets downplay the fact that they are operated by the US State Department. Through the Center for Strategic Counter-terrorism Communication, the US government is shaping all kinds of messages about the US in the Arab world and seeking to combat extremism online. Since 2008, Hanson noted, the US has spent \$70 million helping activists in authoritarian states circumvent their governments' blocks. The Internet, and social media in particular, are also used as listening tools. "We are always seeking to expand the ways we can inform and engage, and social media allows us to do this instantly around the world." In closing Mr. Hanson pointed out that we have no idea what impact social media is having. We know that because search engines adapt to each person's interests, that they are segregating audiences and reinforcing ideas we have about each other and ourselves. But in fact, there are few ways to measure the impact of online media, and we don't know, for example, what sort of impact soft media (indirect messaging) is having versus hard media (direct presentation of a position or idea). Nor do we know which messages are more effective or are being heard.

Betsy Levy Paluck, Professor of Psychology, Princeton University, talked about social norms and behavior in her presentation. She related that she has

found in her research that most behavior of individuals is driven by perceptions of certain norms. Put more explicitly, individuals rarely behave in a manner that makes them stick out in a crowd. Instead of thinking of people as inherently prejudiced, Paluck holds that they are often living in environments that require or value prejudice. In such cases conflict and prejudice can be described as norms. What Dr. Paluck's research is focused on is how group behavior can be changed or influenced by interventions aimed at changing the norms of the group. In her presentation she emphasized two things: (1) "understanding conflict behavior as driven by perceived social norms rather than by beliefs, attitudes, cognitive styles, or values." Her argument was that interventions shouldn't be targeting deeply held values, rather that they should focus on social or group norms. (2) "The value of keeping a "pointy-head" (i.e., academic) around for a conflict reduction intervention (to address issues of theory and evaluation)." In other words, it is fruitful to maintain a distinction between the interveners and the people who are immersed in the theory, measurement, and evaluation of the intervention.

Dr. Paluck illustrated both points with reference to her work in Rwanda, where she evaluated an experiment that used radio shows to try to improve perceptions between groups. She chose radio precisely because radio had played such a negative role in inciting violence in Rwanda. Describing the primary hate radio station in Rwanda during the 1990s, she related how in hilly Rwanda, only some communities received the radio

signal, in which cases listening did not often lead to violence. But when a community knew that the entire opposing community was listening (or able to listen) to the radio, there was generally a spike in violence. As she pointed out this underlines and demonstrates how what we think or know other people think or know can be critical to shaping behavior. In her Rwanda intervention, she used randomized trials with a real reconciliation program and a 'placebo' program about health broadcast across the country. She then sought to measure perceived norms about whether dissent to authority is appropriate if you think something wrong is happening (something that is socially discouraged by the country's culture). These norms did significantly change in the reconciliation program, and Dr. Paluck emphasized that this is a "perceived change" in the social norm, not a personal change. And this further confirms the intuition that people change their individual preferences to accord with the social norm, so if they perceive that a social norm has changed then they themselves might have changed as well.

Dr. Paluck also shared a story from her work at a local high school, where she was asked to intervene to combat bullying. As teachers pointed out, at school, harassment is both descriptive, because "everybody is doing it," and prescriptive, because "no one feels licensed to stop." In order to combat this toxic culture, her team mapped out the entire school's student groupings and networks and identified who was most likely to be able to influence and change the school's social norms. They then used social media with the intervention group

to create awareness of a social consensus against bullying and it being "cool" to get into trouble. To date, Paluck's team has been finding that behaviors of the intervention receiving populations are improving, as evaluated by the measures of time spent in the principal's office and reports from teachers. A final point Paluck made was that many social awareness campaigns (fighting rape or teen pregnancy) have the opposite of their intended effect because by reinforcing perceptions of the bad behavior as common, they reinforce its normative status.

Emile Bruneau, Researcher, SaxeLab at MIT, talked about some of the research he has been doing at the SaxeLab on conflict resolution approaches and agreed with Betsy that there is a need to evaluate them and to use well thought out evaluation strategies to better understand whether, how, and how well they work. In recent conflict resolution efforts he and SaxeLab have been conducting in Israel/Palestine, he has observed how some interventions work better with some individuals than others. His own current work is based on an idea Dr. Batson touched on in his talk: namely, that if you can take the perspective of one person in a group, it will improve your perception of the group as a whole. His study tests a hunch he had that such "perspective taking" efforts work better with dominant groups than with disempowered groups. Emile described his perspective taking study in Ramallah between Palestinians and Israelis in which participants engaged via Skype as either a perspective-giver (describing one or two of the most difficult aspects of life in their country and

explaining the psychological effect these difficulties have on the people who live there) or perspective-taker (just summarizing what the speaker said and not adding their own thoughts or opinions). The results confirmed his hunch as among Israelis, the greatest positive change came from the perspective-taking activity. Palestinians had no change in attitudes when they were in the perspective-taking role, but had significant positive changes when they were perspective-givers and were allowed “to vent” about their problems. Dr. Bruneau speculated that this was due to power asymmetry and noted that the results had been replicated in a similar study between white Americans and Mexican immigrants.

The presentations in this panel highlighted the assumptions of conflict resolution and public diplomacy approaches in relation to perceptions and ways we think of others. While social media and the Internet have enabled listening to and understanding the other, they have also become tools used by governments to influence publics, both close by and far away. But the assumption of governments that use these tools seems to be that through social media they can influence individual values rather than group norms or individual behavior. It was the latter – group norms and how changes in them influence behavior that was emphasized by the scientists. As Betsy and Emile’s presentations showed, neuroscience is studying how “we perceive others” and how those perceptual processes influence behavior. Both speakers underlined and expanded upon an issue that had come up in the

previous panel relating to how our behavior is shaped by how we think others think of us. Betsy’s presentation highlighted the importance of influencing group norms while Emile’s presentation demonstrated how interventions in perspective taking work better for dominant groups and that power dynamics need to be taken into account. All underlined the need to better evaluate programming that seeks to influence public and individual behavior and to better understand the processes that shape emotions and corresponding behavior in these situations.



Phillip Hammack
Professor of Psychology,
University of Santa Cruz

PANEL FIVE: ANALYZING CONFLICT RESOLUTION EFFORTS

While theoretical and practical models of conflict resolution have developed rapidly over the past 50 years, much less effort has been put into evaluating these models. How can we know if these efforts to improve attitudes between groups are effective? How do we know what works, what doesn't, and for whom? **This panel considered how better to evaluate conflict resolution efforts and what factors should be considered primary in the process.** Presenters were also asked to discuss the benefits and limitations of current evaluation methods.

Phillip Hammack, Professor of Psychology, University of Santa Cruz spoke about social-psychology's "contact hypothesis" which holds that under certain conditions, contact between members of rival groups may effectively reduce prejudice and improve intergroup relation. Hammack shared with the group research he had done on an organization that promoted contact and dialogue between Israeli and Palestinian youth. This approach has become an "industry" in Israel/Palestine. But what Prof. Hammack found was that its impact was not necessarily what was intended. He followed a random group of 83 youths from a contact program for four years to see whether the program improved group members' perceptions of members of the other group and found that, more often than not, it actually reified existing assumptions about members of the other group.

As Professor Hammack explained, there are two paradigms for contact theory; one, typical of US contact interventions, seeks to create a larger supra-identity for participants, creating a set of common values and a more globalized mindset. The other, developed in Israel, emphasizes mutual recognition as apposed to development of consensus or a common set of values. From Hammack's research, it appeared that in Israel, where there is significant separation of the sides from one another and where an unequal power dynamic exists, the second approach is more effective in promoting peace-building activity (i.e., it promotes people actually doing something to achieve change). Hammack also addressed two types of contact intervention styles: "recategorization" versus "facilitator intervention." The former focuses individuals on stories about individuals in the hope that a change on this level with spread to the group level. The latter focuses individuals on stories about what groups – including their own – do or have done to other groups. Such trials involve more significant mediation – in Hammack's example, an Israeli mediator challenged the dominant Israeli perspective in front of a group of Israelis. This in-group challenge was observed to have a greater impact when used with the dominant group than with the non-dominant group. Prof. Hammack stressed that in all of these approaches what is most important to consider is whether they result in changes in behavior toward the other as well as in perception of the other. In closing he emphasized that underlying assumptions about the path from intervention to structural change must be

made explicit and specific, and they must be subject to empirical scrutiny.

Joseph Hewitt, Conflict Expert at the Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation at USAID, gave a short presentation in which he postulated that the greatest problem with many conflict resolution approaches is that they try to do too many things in response to the complexity that shapes so many conflict situations. The more successful interventions are those that develop narrow and explicit theories of change as their underlying assumption. Organized violent conflict rarely arises from one cause. Rather, they are usually a result of multiple causes that all contribute and mix together. Hewitt argued that focus and narrowing of the change one was seeking to make was key to reporting success.

Gary Slutkin, Director of Ceasefire, talked about his work on the streets of Chicago. From the outset he drew on the analogy between the epidemiological work he used to do at the World Health Organization and his current approach to stopping gang violence which he described as “a data driven and evidence based approach to reducing violence.” In the history of man, he said, there have really only been two things that have killed hundreds of millions of people: disease and violent epidemics. The first one is in the past because we understand it. It was caused by “invisible” organisms that once discovered made it possible to control the spread of disease. Likewise invisible brain processes can hopefully be understood sufficiently to eradicate epidemics of violence. As he explained, the problems are very similar when you

look at them scientifically. With both problems, three things are required to prevent or reverse an epidemic: (1) prevent the spread from one person to another; (2) find out who is most likely to do something next (an individual or a group); (3) change group norms.

What CeaseFire tries to do is “interrupt” the “epidemic” of violence in US inner cities, and the epidemiological approach ultimately led it to get involved in changing the norms of acceptable behavior in high violence neighborhoods as well as in changing individual and group behavior. Interrupters are targeted for their “rolodex” among the target populations and then are “trained like crazy, like emergency room doctors, in persuasion techniques.” Then there are also outreach workers that work on the long-term with target populations to change their thinking about whether they would do violence. And all this concerns modeling behavior and also helping at risk individuals with their daily lives, which is essential to outreach work. The way CeaseFire measures its success rate is by tracking changes in behavior. In many ways similar to the approach Betsy described for dealing with bullying in high schools, CeaseFire sends workers into a neighborhood, assesses who are the people that are in a position to influence behavior, and then hires them. This facilitates CeaseFire’s work on both the short-term level (stopping violent behavior) and on the long-term level (modeling non-violent behavior to encourage a new norm and helping individuals at risk for “doing violence” into jobs and with life skills). The process works because others begin to follow the

leaders, to become admirers of them and to want to imitate them. In conclusion, Mr. Slutkin stressed that the identity of gangs in America is as strong as religion or ethnicity. It is a multi-generational identity, and therefore the lessons CeaseFire has learned are highly relevant to the majority of international conflict situations as well.

This panel sought to create recommendations on how better to evaluate conflict resolution approaches and the presentations mainly argued for the need to find improved ways of evaluating those approaches. There was agreement that neuroscience could play a role. Prof. Hammack's research demonstrated that commonly successful approaches – while appealing to funders – may not always be effective and should be refined to be so. Mr. Hewitt argued for focus and a narrow theory of change in order to demonstrate successful outcomes, while Mr. Slutkin provided an example where integrated evaluation has been successfully put to the test. His approach also argued for the need to look at what drives behavior and not just changes in deeply held values and norms.

The discussion that followed also brought up many issues and questions that had been present in the course of discussions throughout the event. What influences change more: addressing the underlying root causes and context of a conflict or seeking to change behavior of opposing individuals and groups through other means? Does change come from the top (elites or leadership) or must it be rooted in values and decisions made at the grassroots? Is change created by individuals or does it come from changing

group values and thus group behavior? These and many related questions suggested important gray areas of knowledge and potential opportunities for research.



Gary Slutkin
(standing)
Executive Director, CeaseFire



Emile Bruneau
Researcher, SaxeLab, MIT

PANEL SIX: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Tim Phillips kicked off the final panel by asking: if people need to feel their identity is recognized in order to feel safe and in turn to think rationally about their true interests and about negotiations, will neuroscience be able to measure how far in this direction people have moved? Violence is also a social construct, something that is internalized by an individual from external sources including his/her own group, the out-group, the larger socio-political context of their whole society, and finally the regional and global contexts. Can neuroscience construct experiments in which the shifting impact of these extrinsic forces on the individual's brain can be measured? And can this knowledge then be translated into an understanding of where and when certain interventions will be likely to have their most promising effect? Mr. Phillips then turned the floor over to Roelf Meyer and encouraged him to explain the principles Meyer and Bhabha have developed based on their personal experiences negotiating South Africa's way out of Apartheid and have ever since been refining and employing in conflict situations in which they have been asked to offer their assistance.

Roelf Meyer began with the observation that that day it was 22 years since Nelson Mandela was released from prison. He will now be on the South African bank notes. Meyer's presentation then consisted of a series of bullet points that encompass the essential lessons about ending conflict that he and Bhabha have

learned through their many years of work with ending violent conflict:

- **Process comes before content.** Sometimes it's more important to put in all the effort at the beginning to get the process going. Talks about talks must precede talks about substance, and the former prepare the negotiators for the latter.
- **Building trust is critical to the process.** "We wouldn't have been able to speak with Mandela and make progress if we did not build trust with him before the talks."
- **Ownership over the process is critical.** Collaboratively building the communications processes that enabled the opposing sides to talk to each other was the most important thing they did. Building the process took a lot of time, but in the end it stuck, because the parties built it themselves, together.

Mr. Meyer also underlined several other drivers required to engender a successful resolution in his experience: (1) *Leadership is critical.* Without a Nelson Mandela, in the absence of leadership, progress is frequently impossible. (2) *The sense of destiny is critical:* it justifies a sense of ambition and of history being made. (3) *Reaching a point of irreversibility in a process* (in a good way) means that from that moment onwards you have to find an answer, there is absolutely no turning back. Mandela's release from prison was the South African moment of irreversibility. (4) *Finding chemistry between parties' elites is also critical.* A successful process requires the elites to undertake many steps with the trust of their constituents, but without

their explicit knowledge. While this is occurring symbolic gestures by the other side or by both sides together are key to maintaining the credibility of the process in the public's mind.

Mohammed Milad, researcher at Massachusetts General Hospital, is a practicing neuroscientist that studies fear and fear regulation or "extinction." He bucked the general consensus of the group by asserting that we already have plenty of knowledge to integrate into our understandings of fear and conflict, from cognitive neuroscience, from social psychology and from conflict resolution. Milad described his neuro-electric manipulations of fear and fear extinction in both animals and humans. He showed images of a mouse receiving an electric shock paired with a certain tone, and then described de-conditioning the mouse to fear of that tone ("fear-extinction"). Milad's main research is on that period during which fear extinction occurs. He asserts that when the fear is extinguished, the fear memory is not erased, but a new 'extinction memory' is produced that counterbalances the fear memory. Can this be replicated in humans? Milad has used the blue light-shock, blue light-no shock test method and he stated that using Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) he and his colleagues are starting to replicate in humans the original single-cell neuron stimulation study he first described in rats. So can we prevent fear learning? Pairing a shock with TMS has allowed Milad to significantly reduce fear response in humans. In conclusion Milad optimistically emphasized that "the brain is plastic. It can change. It can be re-wired." This fact offers hope to those

working to change hearts and minds in transitional settings.

Emile Bruneau began his concluding comments by echoing one of Rebecca Saxe's opening themes: respect for intuition. Intuition has led to the idea of intergroup dialogues, some of which have been quite effective, as well as to many well-meaning but ultimately flawed interventions. So intuition is fine to start off with, but you have to test your intuition. It can be biased – dominant group members have very different intuitions about what will work to ameliorate conflict than do subjugated groups – and it can be ironic, producing the exact opposite of what the initial intuition posited. This is true also in social psychology, where most social psychologists are white and American university educated. As Gary Slutkin so aptly showed in his presentation, using evidence-based practices that are the norm in medicine is effective. But we need to know what we are measuring; there must be tangible, measurable elements of an intervention or experiment.

Bruneau then argued that in conflict resolution programming, there should and could be control groups and both quantitative and qualitative evaluative structures in place from the start. Practitioners should be involving scientists in intervention design for evaluative purposes from the outset, because once a program has been running for 20 years, the designers and many others have staked their careers on its efficacy, and it can be very threatening, as well as logistically near impossible, to do a thoroughgoing evaluation.

Collaboration between conflict resolution practitioners and scientists requires that they ask of each other, "How do you do your work?" Practitioners need to be asked, "What do you need to make measureable in order to make your work more effective?" Practitioners can often see a change clearly, but they can't measure it. This is where imaginative scientists can peek out of their silos and help them out. For Bruneau, perhaps the most important concrete outcome of the weekend's event was the fostering of conversation between scientists and practitioners. He concluded by stating his belief that it is practical to increase conversations across these groups because, as scientists like Betsy and Gary showed, with a little imagination, science can evaluate conflict resolution programs very effectively.

Lee Ross alluded in his concluding comments to a long history of interaction between scientists and practitioners and commented that when he has dealt with practitioners, the best thing he can do for them is to take their experience and intuition and translate it into the different vocabulary of social science. This may at first seem trivial, but the step of translation is what allows people to see phenomena in terms of what human beings are like not just what they are like *in a specific context*. He next spoke to the issue of the concepts that had been discussed: social norms; fundamental attributes; zero/positive sum games, etc. These become analytic tools for a broader and more general understanding of what is presented to you in a particular situation. But tools alone don't let you build anything. You must learn how to use

them, by training, by watching those already skilled in their use, and finally by practice. What conflict resolution practitioners have done here is to make it clear that the task is not figuring out what the right deal is. One must build trust and cultivate altruistic instincts. One must investigate what it is that makes people turn against their altruistic instincts and willingness to forgive. This kind of conversation will contribute to neuroscience. It will prove inspiring and challenging, and through such engagements the field will evolve to ask much more interesting questions. Collaboration between and among scientists will be beneficial too, leading to better understandings of phenomena and processes. In the future Ross hopes to learn from neuroscientists: Can we better understand processes of change? People sometimes change and sometimes they don't? Why? When are certain interventions most effective? On whom?

CONCLUDING SUMMARY

During the two-day meeting, the group discussed the issue of **change** and how to generate change in attitudes, values, norms, and behavior in deeply divided societies. Participants heard from leaders directly involved in negotiating an end to Apartheid in South Africa and learned from them that change in perceptions of the other (or **humanization**) comes slowly rather than suddenly and that it involves not only a cognitive recognition of the need for change but a deep, emotional commitment as well. These same South African leaders also underlined the role that open democratic institutions play in keeping change in place and emphasized that universal **ownership of the processes** of creating these institutions is critical to maintaining the peace. Leaders from Palestine and Israel talked about how physical separation has strengthened **mental barriers**, thereby impeding positive change.

The meeting also brought together leading conflict resolution practitioners from Northern Ireland and Guatemala. The participant from Northern Ireland emphasized the role of **leadership** in generating a new paradigm and the importance of leaders “**bringing their public along**” if a long-term peace is to be firmly established. He also addressed the issue of humanization and how it involves **empathizing with the other** as well as revising one’s own deeply held assumptions and values. Guatemala was discussed as an example of a situation in which elites are not able to foster significant socio-political or economic change because they are disconnected

from the base. One of the pervasive forces influencing conditions in Guatemala is **chronic violence**, which strongly inhibits people’s capacity to change. Participants also discussed the extent to which structural and/or environmental (as opposed to affective or psychological) factors were propelling violence in places such as Guatemala or Sri Lanka. They debated how social psychology and neuroscience can foster an understanding of the vicious cycle of violence in such contexts and help identify auspicious points of intervention.

Neuroscientists interested in conflict approach these issues through precisely formulated questions about tightly defined areas of brain function and behavior. During the event, they addressed the challenges to producing predictable, positive change by focusing on what motivates change in relation to specific emotions and behaviors. Early panels addressed the role of **humiliation** in perpetuating war. One presenter suggested that humiliation is, in fact, less a driver of conflict than is commonly presumed, primarily because his research found that humiliation is more likely to be experienced by individuals who are passive, by inclination or situation, and are therefore unlikely to act out. The motivations for “**prosocial**” and **empathetic behavior** were also discussed in several presentations. One participant argued that, if better understood, unique moments of empathy could be cultivated and/or identified and then positively leveraged at key moments of a transition.

Evaluation was a major focus topic on the second day of the event. One presenter



Jamil Zaki

(far left)

Postdoctoral Fellow, Harvard
Center for Brain Science

Jessica Stern

(center)

Member of President Clinton's
National Security Council Staff
and author of *Terror in the Name
of God and Denial, A Memoir
of Terror*

Matt Armstrong

(second right)

Former Executive Director of the
United States Advisory
Commission on Public Diplomacy

discussed the evaluation of “contact hypothesis” based dialogue programs, such as one that sought to improve perceptions Palestinian and Israeli youth had of each other. Another presented her study of why behavior change toward “the other” is more likely to result from a changed perception of **group norms**, than a personal change in attitude or belief. As these presentations revealed, the impact was not always what program designers desired, and peacebuilding programs can have very different effects on **dominant** versus **non-dominant** group members. Finally, the later portion of the meeting was devoted to a discussion of how people view “others,” how they perceive themselves to be understood by “others,” and how this influences behavior in typical as well as transitional settings. What was particularly interesting about this discussion for conflict resolution practitioners was the focus on group norms and the scientists’ emphasis on trying to change these rather than on attempting to change the deeply held values of individuals. As Gary Slutkin stated at the end of his presentation: *“A lot of people to think that you can’t solve problem “x” if you don’t address root cause “y”, such as poverty. But I learned that you can affect problems if you go at them at their most vulnerable points... Thinking that you won’t get rid of a problem until the root causes or the condition-creating causes of the problem are addressed is unhelpful, and problems get stuck because of this thinking. This goes against a lot of conventional thinking but it works.”*

The conversation left many in the room with the desire to learn more. In the

course of the two-day meeting, a variety of areas for future joint discussion and research were suggested by participants. These follow up ideas included:

- **Holding a second meeting that digs deeper and is designed to create a full inventory of the key areas of research relevant to conflict resolution.** The event would bring together 20 leading neuroscientists and social psychologists who are experts on different aspects of trauma, memory, fear, empathy, humiliation, and trust to discuss their latest research findings and jointly investigate experiences and emotions that are deeply connected to conflict. Practitioners would be invited to listen and provide feedback on how the scientific findings have practical implications and uses. The goal would be to gain a better understanding of what is and is not known in neuroscience, allowing for a more precise articulation of questions that still require urgent future research.
- **Studying specific conflict resolution approaches in order to test the assumptions that underlie various established methodologies** so that we can come to a better understanding of what works and what does not in conflict management efforts. Several participants at the event argued for the need to better evaluate the theories of change that underlie approaches, but scientists need opportunities to do so with the tools they have available to them.
- **Exposing leading neuroscientists to active conflict resolution and negotiation situations in order to generate ideas for future research** in the

budding field of neuroscience of conflict. As **intuition** underlies so many research efforts, direct exposure to negotiation processes or active dialogue situations in transitional settings would enable scientists to better identify the right questions to ask and the key assumptions to test.

- **Generating opportunities for concrete research on conflict resolution practitioners and perpetrators of violence who have been de-radicalized.** This would entail for example, opportunities to study the brains of former terrorists who are being de-radicalized in Saudi Arabia to better understand changes on the level of brain circuitry. A number of participants at the meeting argued that there is still a need to better understand the motivations and psychology of those that act violently and of what moves them to stop doing so.
- **Evaluating the impact of social media-based public diplomacy efforts made by the US government** to ameliorate the divide between the West and the Islamic world. One of the panels at the meeting explored efforts by the US government to control messaging both about the US and on radical issues. Speakers emphasized that currently there is little evaluation of the actual impact of these efforts or whether they achieve their desired purposes.
- **Creating a multi-disciplinary study and research program that investigates core questions related to conflict resolution,** such as whether one can discern via fMRI if people have inclinations toward an open or closed mind.

The organizers of this event are working to identify the most appropriate follow up and have formed a working group of scientists, practitioners and academics to help them do so. This group includes:

- **Matt Armstrong**, former Director, US Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy
- **Eileen Babbitt**, Fletcher School of Law and Public Diplomacy, Tufts University
- **Dan Batson**, Professor of Social Psychology, Kansas University
- **Kim Brizzolara**, feature film and documentary Producer
- **Emile Bruneau**, Researcher, SaxeLab, MIT
- **William Casebeer**, Program Officer, DARPA
- **Betsy Levy Paluck**, Professor of Psychology, Princeton University
- **Mohammed Milad**, Massachusetts General Hospital, Department of Psychiatry
- **Tim Phillips**, Co-founder, Project on Justice in Times of Transition
- **Lee Ross**, Professor of Psychology, Stanford University
- **Rebecca Saxe**, Professor of Cognitive Neuroscience; Director, SaxeLab, MIT
- **Gary Slutkin**, Executive Director, CeaseFire
- **Jessica Stern**, former member of President Clinton's National Security Council Staff
- **David Taffel**, Philosopher and Writer

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Project on Justice in Times of Transition and the SaxeLab at MIT would like to thank a number of people for their on-going support and encouragement as we planned and carried out this initiative. Our thanks go especially to Kim Brizzolara, Mary Daly, Robert Deutsch, Judith Edersheim, Lauren Fealey, Melanie Greenberg, Mark Fuller, Donna Hicks, Daphne Holt, Rona Kiley, Adam Levy, Mike Niconchuk, Mohamed Milad, Stephen Kennedy Smith, Jillian Slutzker, David Taffel, Sherman Teichman, Cody Valdes and Jonathan Wolff.

Funding and support for this program was provided by Kim Brizzolara, Paul Buttenwieser and Tim Phillips.

This report was written by David Taffel, Ph.D.



Tani Adams

Founder, International
Institute of Learning
for Social Reconciliation,
Guatemala

Paul Arthur

Professor for Political Science,
University of Ulster

AGENDA

After decades of conflict management efforts and 20 years after the end of the Cold War, current conflict resolution strategies have not proven themselves to be consistently effective in creating sustainable peace. Too often former enemies will return a country to violence or low levels of conflict may persist many years after a peace treaty has been signed.

This initiative will bring together social neuroscientists, social psychologists, experienced leaders from conflict affected societies, and conflict management experts to join forces in understanding what has worked and not worked to manage violent conflict. It is designed to leverage and contribute to the growth of the emerging and cutting edge scientific field of the “neuroscience of conflict” and is intended to be a conversation (rather than an academic exercise) between forward looking experts and practitioners.

Moderators: Tim Phillips and Rebecca Saxe

Thursday, February 9, 2012

Arrivals

7:00 pm ***Welcome Dinner and Introduction of Program***

Location: Sandrines, 8 Holyoke Street, Cambridge

- **Tim Phillips**, Co-Chair, Project on Justice in Times of Transition
- **Rebecca Saxe**, Director, Saxelab, MIT; Associate, McGovern Institute for Brain Research at MIT

Friday, February 10, 2012

*Location: Robert and William Kaufmann room (6th floor)
at MIT's Sloan Business School*

9:00 am ***The Psychology and Biology of Intergroup Conflict***

Humans are susceptible to a number of psychological biases – what are some of the biases that help drive intergroup conflict? How might a better understanding of the biology of conflict help us to understand how to resolve it? Speakers on this panel will provide an introduction to neuroscience and the brain and then provide an overview of what is presently known about the psychological and neural mechanisms most relevant to conflict and conflict resolution. They will also summarize questions that are dominating the fields of experimental psychology and cognitive neuroscience. Finally, the panel will include a short overview of leading conflict resolution approaches to these issues and the challenges

these approaches have faced.

Scientist:

- **Rebecca Saxe**, Director, Saxelab, MIT; Associate, McGovern Institute for Brain Research at MIT

Practitioner:

- **Eileen Babbitt**, Fletcher School of Law and Public Diplomacy, Tufts University

Discussion

10:15 am

Coffee/tea

10:30 am

The Challenge of Resolving Conflict in the 21st Century

Since World War II the world has witnessed over 60 civil wars. Some of the most intractable situations have been resolved, while others have remained in a continual state of war. These conflicts share many characteristics, such as ethnic and religious divides between separate communities, different experiences of exclusion and discrimination, and for some communities, a belief that violence is a justifiable response to perceived threats to their fundamental survival. In all cases, human reactions to conflict and insecurity, as well as deep-seated trauma, need to be managed and addressed. This panel will feature presentations by leaders who have played a significant and important role in addressing conflict in their own countries. They will speak about the emotional challenges they faced, how their own perceptions of “the other” changed over time and how these paradigm shifts affected their decisions and actions.

Practitioners:

- **Roelf Meyer**, former Chief Negotiator for DeKlerk and South African Minister of Constitutional Affairs after the end of Apartheid
- **Mohammed Bhabha**, former African National Congress leader and lawyer and Constitutional Negotiator
- **Naomi Chazan**, former Deputy Speaker of the Knesset, Israel; Member of the Meretz Party; and Professor for Political Science, Hebrew University
- **Diana Buttu**, Fellow at the Middle East Initiative, Harvard University; former Legal Advisor to the Palestinian negotiating team in its negotiations with Israel

Practitioner/Scientist:

- **Lee Ross**, Professor of Psychology, Stanford University

12:15 pm

Discussion

12:45 pm

Lunch

2:15 pm

Understanding Fear and Chronic Violence

How are people affected by conflict? What psycho-social forces come into play that are not as prevalent otherwise? How can we address humiliation and fear that are so pervasive in these contexts and often create a cycle of violence that perpetuates conflict? This panel will explore efforts to mediate conflict situations and address violence and the challenges that emotional trauma pose to resolving conflict.

Scientists:

- **Elizabeth Phelps**, Lab Director, New York University, Department of Psychology
- **Jeremy Ginges**, Professor of Psychology, New School for Social Research

Practitioners:

- **Madhawa Palihapitiya**, University of Massachusetts Boston; former Director of Programs at the Foundation for Co-Existence in Sri Lanka
- **Tani Adams**, Founder, International Institute of Learning for Social Reconciliation, Guatemala
- **Jessica Stern**, member of President Clinton's National Security Council Staff and author of *Terror in the Name of God and Denial, A Memoir of Terror*

3:30 pm

Discussion

4:00 pm

Coffee/tea

4:15 pm

The Challenges of Consolidating Peace

Once a peace process is underway, how does one ensure that changes take place and the society does not fall back into conflict? How do we create a situation where former enemies have enough empathy toward each other to agree to live together? This panel will examine different approaches that sought to help key decision makers involved in consolidating a peace process manage the changes society was facing. The discussion will further explore how changes can be facilitated and identify ways of measuring change and impact.

Practitioners:

- **Mohammed Bhabha**, former African National Congress leader and lawyer and Constitutional Negotiator
- **Paul Arthur**, Professor for Political Science, University of Ulster, Belfast; Advisor to the Northern Ireland Peace Process

Scientists:

- **Daniel Batson**, Professor of Social Psychology, Kansas University
- **Jamil Zaki**, Harvard Center for Brain Science



Daphne Holt
Massachusetts General Hospital

Mohammed Milad
Massachusetts General Hospital,
Department of Psychiatry

5:30 pm **Discussion**

7:30 pm **Dinner**

Location: Catalyst Restaurant (300 Technology Square, Cambridge)

Saturday, February 11 2012

Location: Skyline Room, 6th Floor, MIT's Media Lab

9:00 am **Shaping Narratives and Identity Through Public Diplomacy**

How do public diplomacy efforts shape our perception of experience and help change narratives we have of “the other”? What are current assumptions in public diplomacy about how best to shape public narratives and what impact do they have? Do public efforts vary from more targeted conflict resolution efforts? Which is more effective? How do we measure public efforts to change perceptions as opposed to targeted efforts to facilitate change?

Practitioners:

- **Fergus Hanson**, Visiting Fellow in ediplomacy at The Brookings Institution
- **Matt Armstrong**, former Executive Director of the United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy

Scientists:

- **Betsy Levy Paluck**, Professor of Psychology, Princeton University
- **Emile Bruneau**, Researcher, SaxeLab, MIT

10:30 am **Discussion**

11:00 am **Coffee/tea**

11:15 am **Analyzing Conflict Resolution Efforts**

While theoretical and practical models of conflict resolution have developed rapidly over the past 50 years, much less effort has been made to evaluate these efforts. How can we know if these efforts to improve attitudes between groups are effective? How do we know what works, what doesn't, and for whom? This panel will consider ways in which conflict resolution efforts may be evaluated using multiple methods. Presenters will discuss the current benefits and limitations of different evaluation methods.

Scientists:

- **Phillip Hammack**, Professor of Psychology, University of Santa Cruz

Practitioners:

- **Joseph Hewitt**, Conflict Specialist, USAID's Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation
- **Gary Slutkin**, Executive Director, CeaseFire

12:30 pm

Discussion

1:00 pm

Lunch

2:30 pm

Where Do We Go From Here?

Based on the preceding discussion, we expect that at least the following two questions will require consideration in conclusion: 1) how can the fields of conflict resolution and public diplomacy benefit from a better understanding of the neuro-psychological bases of intergroup conflict and 2) what kinds of new avenues for neuroscientific research do the experiences and strategies described by the practitioners who presented here offer?

- **Lee Ross**, Professor of Psychology, Stanford University
- **Emile Bruneau**, Researcher, SaxeLab, MIT
- **Mohammed Milad**, Massachusetts General Hospital, Department of Psychiatry
- **Tim Phillips**, Project on Justice in Times of Transition

4:00 pm

Roundtable Discussion

5:00 pm

Coffee/tea and departures

PROGRAM ORGANIZERS

THE PROJECT ON JUSTICE
IN TIMES OF TRANSITION

PUTTING EXPERIENCE TO WORK FOR PEACE

Saxelab 
Social Cognitive Neuroscience Laboratory

The Project on Justice in Times of Transition is a non-profit organization based in Cambridge, MA that acts as a neutral, non-partisan facilitator to bring leaders in countries undergoing transition together with individuals from other states who have previously stood in their shoes in order to share critical knowledge, insight, and support on sustaining peace through political turmoil. With more than 58 initiatives in 21 nations, bringing together senior leaders from 55 countries, the Project is a driving force in the field of conflict resolution and plays a primary role on “experience driven” approaches to reconciliation.

The SaxeLab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is a leading neuroscience research lab that specializes in studying how human beings infer and reason about one another.

The Project on Justice in Times of Transition
2 Canal Park, 5th Fl., Cambridge, MA 02141, USA
Telephone: +1-617-252-2378
Email: info@pjtt.org