

## NEUROSCIENCE AND SOCIAL CONFLICT: IDENTIFYING NEW APPROACHES FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

February 9-11, 2012  
MIT, Cambridge, MA

### Agenda – January 12 2012

After decades of conflict management efforts and 20 years after the end of the Cold War, there is frustration that current conflict resolution strategies are not effective, and first hand evidence shows that initiatives that are more in tune with human psychology have seemed to bear the best results.

*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 between forward looking experts and practitioners rather than an academic exercise.

### MODERATORS: Tim Phillips and Rebecca Saxe

#### Thursday, February 9, 2012

Arrivals

7:00 pm

*Welcome Dinner and Introduction of Program*

- **Tim Phillips\***, Co-Chair, Project on Justice in Times of Transition
- **Rebecca Saxe\***, Director, Saxelab, MIT

#### Friday, February 10, 2012

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 of 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 and a summary of cutting edge questions dominating the fields of experimental psychology and cognitive neuroscience. The panel will also include a short overview of leading conflict resolution approaches to these issues and the challenges these approaches have faced.

- **Lee Ross\***, Professor of Psychology, Stanford University
- **Rebecca Saxe\***, Director, Saxelab, MIT

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

**Roundtable Discussion**

11:00 am

*coffee/tea*

11:15 am

***The Challenge of Resolving Conflict in the 21<sup>st</sup> 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 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.

- **Roelf Meyer\***, former Chief Negotiator for DeKlerk and South African Minister of Constitutional Affairs after the end of Apartheid
- **Mohammed Bhabba\***, 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

12:15 pm

**Roundtable Discussion**

12:45 pm

*Lunch*

2:00 pm

***Shaping Perceptions and Identity Through Public Diplomacy***

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

***Presentation:***

- **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*
- **Ambassador Nicholas Burns\***, Professor of the Practice of Diplomacy and International Politics, Harvard Kennedy School; former Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, State Department

- **Matt Armstrong\***, former Executive Director of the United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy

**Analysis:**

- **Elizabeth Phelps**, Lab Director, New York University, Department of Psychology
- **Phillip Hammack\***, Professor of Psychology, University of Santa Cruz

3:00 pm

**Roundtable Discussion**

3:45 pm

*coffee/tea*

4:00 pm

***Understanding Chronic Violence and Measuring Bias***

How are people affected by conflict? What psycho-social forces come into play that are not as prevalent otherwise? How can we evaluate the impact of these forces? This panel will explore efforts in Sri Lanka and Guatemala to mediate two very different conflict situations and explore the effect of emotional trauma on resolving conflict. It will also be focusing to focus the conversation on the challenges faced when seeking to address and measure the impact mediation and conflict resolution efforts with an eye toward how one might understand changes in attitudes and bias better,

**Presentation:**

- **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

**Analysis:**

- **Jeremy Ginges\***, Professor of Psychology, New School for Social Research
- **Jamil Zaki\***, Harvard Center for Brain Science

5:00 pm

**Roundtable Discussion**

7:30 pm

*Dinner*

**Saturday, February 11 2012**

9:00 – 10:30 am

***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? This panel will examine two specific conflict resolution 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 are facilitated and identify ways of measuring change and impact.

**Presentation:**

- **Jose Maria Argueta\***, National Security Advisor, Guatemala; former Ambassador of Guatemala to Peru and Japan; founder of the Enlightened Dissent methodology
- **Paul Arthur\***, Professor for Political Science, University of Ulster, Belfast; Advisor to the Northern Irish Peace Process

**Analysis:**

- **Daniel Batson\***, Professor of Social Psychology, Kansas University
- **Mohammed Milad\*** Massachusetts General Hospital, Department of Psychiatry

10:30 am

**Discussion**

11:00 pm

*coffee/tea*

11:15 pm

**Measuring Conflict Resolution**

While theoretical and practical models of conflict resolution have been 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 quantitative methods. Presenters will discuss the current benefits and limitations of different evaluation methods.

**Presentation:**

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

**Analysis:**

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

12:30 pm

**Roundtable 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?

- **Emile Bruneau\***, Researcher, SaxLab, MIT
- **Lee Ross\***, Professor of Psychology, Stanford University
- **Tim Phillips\***, Project on Justice in Times of Transition

4:00 pm

**Roundtable Discussion**

5:00 pm

*coffee/tea and departures*

\* confirmed participants