

Date: Tue, 11 Jan 2011 12:25:44 -0500

To: "Dr. Baruch Fischhoff - Chair, US National Academy of Sciences Committee on Improving Intelligence" <baruch@cmu.edu>,

From: Lloyd Etheredge <lloyd.etheredge@policyscience.net>

**Subject: 200. Vividness: Is the Middle East Peace Process Too Rational?**

Dear Dr. Fischhoff & Colleagues:

The National Academy of Sciences might want to recommend, as another follow-up, that a Red Team [perhaps, with State Department representation?] challenge conventional ideas that limit the effectiveness of the Middle East Peace Process.

Many decades ago, one of Lasswell's most compelling contributions [e.g., # 85 and # 91 at [www.policyscience.net](http://www.policyscience.net) at II. D} to political psychology was to underscore that the essential political process is to redefine an emotional consensus: Many universities are preoccupied by teaching rational policy analysis. However, for the best results, both the rational analysis processes and the emotional consensus redefinition processes must come together. A better Grand Strategy is a package - an art - that orchestrates several levels.

[For example: Members of the National Academy study group already will be aware of research that shows how vividness can "bias" (sic) rational decisions. A Red Team can think creatively about how the same mechanisms can be used and aligned to support good outcomes in an upgraded Middle East Peace Process.]

**The Specific Vividness of Enrolling (Peaceful) Futures**

One possibility is to make as vivid, specific, and enrolling as possible a new future that can begin to arrive when there are verifiable and satisfactory peace agreements nailed down. For example, what about a multinational \$100 billion+ Restitution Fund that pays restitution to the

families of Arabs who lost land, and to Israeli settlers? Give all of the participants (and at the street level on the Arab side) specific and reliable numbers with which their imaginations can begin to work. . . . What is the size of the check that they will receive when the peace settlement is signed? Is \$100 billion enough?

Permanent and quick peace between Israel and its neighbors would be cost-effective for many people in many arenas. The economic cost of the Persian Gulf War was substantially compensated (except for \$4 billion) to the United States by Saudi Arabia and other coalition members. But the (second) Gulf War already has produced a (mostly) uncompensated American cost (according to Stiglitz et al.) of \$3+ trillion (partly reflected in debt and interest payments atop the huge and growing burdens of debt and interest and social cutbacks from the global financial crisis). Even against relatively small number of *jihadists* in Afghanistan/Pakistan (e.g., there are less than 100 al Qaeda members in Afghanistan), the US is spending more than \$100 billion annually (and, by Stiglitz's sobering estimation methods, President Obama's declaration that he "is not going to spend \$1 trillion for a war in Afghanistan" already may be at risk). Great generosity is rationally justified from the rest of the world, which has its own vivid stakes in Middle East peace.

America and its allies already have deployed (with Tony Blair and George Mitchell) the maximum diplomatic and political talent that is available for the traditional, behind-closed-door processes. The Red Team's challenge is to augment this process by understanding how to capture imaginations and shift emotional consensus and motivation in a more public arena. To explore how, via clarifications by neuroscientists, we can see opportunities to bring the visual cortex and its emotional linkages into alignment with the neocortex and analytic processes.

### **Buying Peace v. Capturing Imaginations**

Lesson 3 of General Petraeus (# 63) was that, in the modern wars of the Middle East, money can substitute for violence - and that sometimes it can be more important than ammunition. However, my point is beyond a rational mechanism (alone) of paying people for peace. A breakthrough may require assistance in creating a cornucopia of specific, vivid, reliable benefits that become part of the public imagination. How generous a new Health and Development

Fund can be put on the table to encourage companies to expand in a peaceful region and provide better jobs and futures? How many multinational companies would pledge to expand in the region? How many schools and teachers, and educational opportunities to study abroad will become available as soon as the peace settlement is signed?

The political psychology of Middle East peace is not just a process of behind-closed-doors negotiations by older adult politicians and diplomats. Some of the most important actors, audiences, and demographics are young people. Vivid and specific possibilities for new and alternative narratives, identities, and idealistic futures [e.g., Korostelina, Social Identity and Conflict: Structures, Dynamics, and Implications, 2007] that call to them might be created and more thoughtfully aligned with the behind-closed-doors work of negotiators who try (in one sense, perhaps mistakenly) to increase rationality at the expense of emotion.

### **Faster Development of Neuroscience and Clarification of Imagination Processes**

It seems increasingly clear that the National Academy of Sciences should be making an even stronger case for the neurosciences and their application. Many of the seemingly intractable problems in the world might be usefully addressed by becoming more rational than to make (only) limited neocortex/rationality assumptions. For example, there are seemingly intractable problems of science and mathematics education (and other areas of K-12 educational attainment) that might be solved quickly by clarifying effects of status psychodramas that activate unrecognized followership mechanisms and inhibitions in specific sub-populations. (e.g., [www.policyscience.net](http://www.policyscience.net) at I. A. "Neuropsychology and Rapid Learning about Social Problems.")

The (more rapid) development of neuroscience and its thoughtful application to political psychology/social problems could get us to a better future, more quickly, in many areas.

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