

Dr. Vamık Volkan’s psychopolitical activities:

Dr. Volkan’s “laboratory” for psychopolitical studies—one that has taken him beyond classroom walls and think tanks to on-the-ground projects—has centered on four fields of research:

1. Observing influential opposing representatives of “enemies” in years-long unofficial diplomatic negotiations: Arabs-Israelis, Russians-Estonians, Georgians-South Ossetians, Turks-Greeks, Serbs-Croats;
2. Interviewing and working with traumatized people: in Cyprus, Romania, Kuwait, former Yugoslavia, Albania, Georgia, South Ossetia and South Africa;
3. Visiting emotionally “hot” places—such as Paldiski, Estonia; Crying Father Monument in Tskinali, South Ossetia—at times when such places induced deep emotions concerning recent societal traumas at the hand of “enemies”;
4. Interacting with political and religious leaders: Jimmy Carter, Mikhail Gorbachev, Yasser Arafat, Rauf Denktaş of Northern Cyprus, and others.

The following summary highlights some of Dr. Volkan’s international peaceful activities since 1979:

- He participated in the American Psychiatric Association-sponsored dialogues between very influential Israelis (such as General Shlomo Gazit, the former Chief of Intelligence of the Israeli Army) and Egyptians (such as Ambassador Tahseen Bashir) and Palestinians (such as the late mayor of Bethlehem, Elias Frej) for six years (1979-1986), the last three as leader of the facilitating team.
- He established the Center for the Study of Mind and Human Interaction (CSMHI) at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA in 1987 and directed this center until 2002. The Center provided a catalyst within the University community for interdisciplinary scholarship aimed at understanding the psychology of large groups, conflict between nations and ethnic or religious groups, racism, national identity, terrorism, societal trauma, leader-follower relationships and other aspects of national and international conflict. CSMHI’s interdisciplinary faculty (such as psychoanalysts, political scientists, historians, former diplomats) worked in many troubled spots of the world, with a mission to understand the psychology of international relationships and find peaceful solutions to their conflicts. CSMHI was supported by the Pew Charitable Trusts, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Massey Foundation and other charitable

organizations, as well as the United States Institute of Peace. Faculty members did not receive personal remuneration for their work in the international arena.

- With his CSMHI team, Dr. Volkan facilitated unofficial dialogues between the USA and USSR during the last two years of the USSR. (In 1987 the Soviet Duma signed a contract with the CSMHI to examine resistance that existed to developing improved understanding between Mikhail Gorbachev's USSR and the Ronald Reagan's USA.)
- With his CSMHI team, he facilitated unofficial diplomatic dialogues between Baltic Republics—especially Estonia—and Russia for two years after the collapse of the USSR (in collaboration with the Carter Center in Atlanta, Georgia). Arnold Rüütel who later became the president of Estonia participated in these dialogues, as did six other Estonian parliamentarians, members of the Russian parliament, leaders of Russian-speaking populations living in Estonia, and influential scholars from both countries. For the next four years Dr. Volkan and his CSMHI team helped Estonia develop as a democratic society, one in which a peaceful co-existence between ethnic Estonians and the Russian-speakers (mostly Russians) could be possible. (One third of Estonia's population is composed by non-ethnic Estonians.)
- For two years he was part of a team under the leadership of Joseph Montville, to investigate psychopolitical atmosphere in the post Ceausescu Romania.
- For two years he was part of the CSMHI team (under the leadership of W. Nathaniel Howell, the former US Ambassador to Kuwait) that investigated the social/political conditions in Kuwait during the post-invasion period and gave the Kuwaiti authorities suggestions for post-invasion societal adaptation.
- He was consultant for two years to PAKH, a group of German psychoanalysts and psychotherapists who opened a dialogue about German silence concerning Holocaust-related issues with a group of Jewish German psychoanalysts and psychotherapists. (PAKH has been in existence for the last 10 years and it plays a significant role in healing old wounds.)
- In late 1980 and in the 1990s, Dr. Volkan was a member of the Carter Center's International Negotiation Network (INN) under the leadership of former United States President Jimmy Carter, an organization that included a number of Nobel Laureates. Prof. Volkan provided psychopolitical insights for international problems. He visited Senegal with President Carter and, along with other members of the INN, met with the representatives of many conflicted areas in Africa.
- He was a member of a three-person team that investigated post-Enver Hodxa Albania in order to create a strategy for economic development in that country (sponsored by the Carter Center).
- He was involved in opening a dialogue between Croatian, Serbian and Bosniak mental health professionals (two years) after the collapse of the former Yugoslavia.

- For two months in 1995, he chaired a Select Advisory Commission for the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Critical Incident Response Group. The committee gave suggestions to the FBI about how to avoid repeating deadly mistakes such as the one that had occurred at Waco, Texas. These suggestions were accepted.
- He and his CSMHI team consulted with the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs concerning Turkish workers and their families and European Turks in general.
- As a temporary consultant to the World Health Organization (WHO), he investigated conditions in Albania and Macedonia following the collapse of the former Yugoslavia and assisted mental health workers who were dealing with violence in that part of the world.
- As an Inaugural Yitzak Rabin Fellow at the Rabin Center of Israeli Studies in Tel Aviv, Israel he further studied the Israeli-Arab relationship (2000-2001- four months).
- He was a member of the CSMHI team that brought high-level Turks and Greeks together for unofficial diplomatic dialogues (two years).
- He was a member of Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commission (TARC) for three years.
- Over a five-year period, beginning in 1998, he worked at the IDP Camp at the Tbilisi Sea near Tbilisi, Republic of Georgia in an attempt to improve the refugees' lives and come up with new methods for dealing with refugee issues.
- Beginning in 1998, he and his team from CSMHI became consultants for Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)-supported dialogues between the Georgian Foundation of Human Development (FDHR) and their South Ossetian counterparts (five years). During this time, he was consulted by the Georgian Foreign Ministry about the resettlement of Meshketians in Georgia.
- He led an interdisciplinary research team from the USA, Georgia, Turkey, South Ossetia, Armenia and Abkhazia to conduct the IREX Black and Caspian Sea Collaborative Research Program on gender issues, family violence, and public awareness (2000-2002).
- He attended many meetings dealing with psychopolitical problems in various parts of the world, sharing his insights on the causes and solutions for human conflict.
- He spent time in the township Langa in Cape Town, South Africa in order to understand the continuing effects of apartheid (2006) and consulted with authorities about prevalent psychological issues, such as giving bones or other body parts of victims to their relatives.

- After September 11, 2001 he attended meetings on the prevention of terrorism in the United States and other locations and studied the causes of extreme religious terrorism and its relation to massive violence.
- In 2007 he began making attempts to start an initial Western- Islamic dialogue.

Through activities such as those listed above:

- He illustrated how certain universal elements of human nature converge to create an atmosphere that gives rise to violent aggressive acts and allows the smothering of individual rights and freedoms.
- He expanded our understanding of large-group (i.e., ethnic, national, religious, ideological) identity and provided a new theory about its development.
- He targeted twenty signs and symptoms of large-group regression and explored large-groups' need to have enemies and allies. He also came up with a list of signs and symptoms for societal progression.
- He researched large-group rituals and political leaders' influence on taming or inflaming large-group processes, and described the interactions between reparative or destructive narcissistic leaders and their followers.
- He studied the role of massive trauma and the process of complicated group mourning on societal/political issues and on the development of "entitlement ideologies" after the traumatizing events are removed.
- His concepts such as "chosen trauma," "chosen glory," "accordion phenomenon," "echo phenomenon" and others are now widely used in the literature on international relations.
- He developed a working method (The Tree Model) for "unofficial diplomacy."

Dr. Volkan and his team's work was carried out quietly without involving the media. He, however, has described his psychopolitical activities and theories in many of his 400 published papers or book chapters and in many of his over 40 books. (See this website for a list of Dr. Volkan's books) Dr. Volkan was also the founder and the editor of the quarterly journal *Mind and Human Interaction* (1987-2003), which opened meaningful dialogues between the disciplines of history, culture, politics, and psychoanalysis. His work has been translated into Dutch, Finnish, German, Greek, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Spanish, and Turkish. He has been or is on the editorial boards of 16 scientific journals.

More than 20 years ago Prof. Dr. Vamik Volkan was a founder of the International Society of Political Psychology (ISSPP) and served as one of its presidents. Today many members of this organization from different fields are contributing to peace and are involved in conflict resolution activities.

