



## Building trust among enemies: The central challenge for international conflict resolution<sup>☆</sup>

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### Abstract

The article presents an approach to the gradual building of trust among enemies, who—even when they have an interest in making peace—are afraid to extend trust to each other lest it jeopardize their own existence. Efforts to resolve the conflict, therefore, confront a basic dilemma: Parties cannot enter into a peace process without some degree of mutual trust, but they cannot build trust without entering into a peace process. The article discusses the ways in which interactive problem solving—a form of unofficial diplomacy, which the author has applied most extensively to the Israeli–Palestinian case—attempts to deal with this dilemma. It describes five concepts that have proven useful to confronting this dilemma in problem-solving workshops with politically influential Israelis and Palestinians and that should also be relevant to trust building in the larger peace process: the view of movement toward peace as a process of successive approximations, in which the level of commitment gradually increases with the level of reassurance; the role of the third party as a repository of trust, particularly in the early stages of the process; the focus on “working trust” in the other’s seriousness about peace based on their own interests (rather than interpersonal trust based on good will); the view of the relationship between participants in the peace process as an uneasy coalition; and the

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development of a systematic process of mutual reassurance, based on responsiveness and reciprocity.

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## 1. Introduction

Today is the thirty-fifth anniversary of the shootings on the Kent State University campus, which took place on May 4, 1970. The shootings at Kent State shocked the entire country and marked an important turning point in public attitudes toward the Vietnam War.

The violence at Kent State reflected the high degree of mutual distrust between university students and political authorities that had built over the course of the war years. Students increasingly lost trust in the government's policy in Vietnam and administration of the military draft. The authorities, in turn—at the state and national levels—had lost trust in universities, students, and indeed all dissenting elements (cf. Taylor, Shuntich, McGovern, & Genter, 1971, p. 150).

Trust is a central requirement for the peaceful and effective management of all relationships—between individuals, between groups, and between individuals or groups and the organizations and societies to which they belong. Trust is an essential ingredient in both communal and exchange relationships (cf. Clark & Mills, 1979). In a communal relationship, such as friendship or marriage, mutual trust is a given. The relationship is defined by the parties' responsiveness to each other's needs and concern for each other's welfare, and there is a strong normative expectation that they will not harm or deceive each other and that each will look out for the other's interests. A violation of trust precipitates a serious crisis in a communal relationship and often marks the end of it.

In an exchange relationship, mutual trust is a fundamental condition for the advancement of the parties' interests. For example, Malik (2003) lists it as one of six core principles of effective management. Trust in the relationship between managers and their subordinates and colleagues is not a given, but it must be built and tested over time. To build a relationship of mutual trust, as Malik points out, managers must extend trust to their subordinates (though not without checking against possible abuse of this trust) and they must earn the trust of their subordinates by their own trustworthy behavior (Malik, 2003, pp.149–163).

The development of mutual trust is equally essential in efforts to resolve conflict and transform the relationship between enemies into a relationship characterized by stable peace and cooperation. But, by definition, the conditions for creating trust between enemies are elusive at best—particularly in deep-rooted, protracted conflicts between identity groups, such as the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, on which much of my work has focused for more than 30 years. In such relationships, in contrast to communal relationships, mutual *distrust* is a given: Both parties believe—usually with a long history of supporting evidence—that the other is bent on frustrating their needs, on undermining their welfare, and on causing them harm. Interestingly, civil wars and intercommunal conflicts share one characteristic with communal relationships: a high degree of

interdependence between the parties. The adversaries live in close proximity of each other and their lives are inextricably intertwined. Separation is extremely difficult to achieve, as recent events in the Israeli–Palestinian relationship have demonstrated. But interdependence by itself cannot transform a relationship marked by profound mutual distrust.

A peace process becomes possible when the parties conclude that it is in their own best interest to negotiate an end to the conflict—in effect, to enter into an exchange relationship. As enemies, however, the parties are severely handicapped in their ability and readiness to follow Malik's recommendations for building the trust on which a productive exchange depends. They are afraid to extend trust to the other because they consider it likely that they will be betrayed, at great cost to their own side. They are reluctant to be open, truthful, and generous in their interactions, because they consider it likely that the other side will take advantage of them. Although each party may have a genuine interest in making peace, it is unwilling to risk acting on the assumption that the enemy shares that interest. Thus, efforts to resolve international or intercommunal conflicts—particularly existential conflicts between identity groups, each of which perceives the other as a fundamental threat to its own existence—confront a difficult dilemma: The parties cannot enter into a peace process without some degree of mutual trust, but they cannot build trust without entering into a peace process. Distrust thus has a self-perpetuating quality. It keeps the parties from engaging in the kinds of interaction that could potentially help them develop trust in the other's readiness to make peace.

The conflict resolution work in which my colleagues and I have been engaged over the years, with special emphasis on the Israeli–Palestinian case, can be seen as a contribution toward overcoming that dilemma. After a brief description of interactive problem solving—my approach to conflict resolution—I shall discuss five concepts that have evolved in the course of our work and that point to ways in which we try to deal with the dilemma of building trust among enemies so as to enable them to begin and advance a productive peace process.

## **2. Interactive problem solving**

Interactive problem solving is an unofficial, academically based, third-party approach to the resolution of international and intercommunal conflicts, especially suited to protracted conflicts between identity groups (see, for example, Kelman, 1998b, 2002). Derived from the pioneering work of John Burton (e.g., 1969, 1984), the approach is anchored in social–psychological principles (Kelman, 1997a). The central (though not the sole) tool of the approach is the problem-solving workshop.

Problem-solving workshops are intensive, face-to-face meetings between politically involved and often politically influential members of their societies. Our Israeli and Palestinian workshop participants have included parliamentarians; leading figures in political parties or movements; journalists or editors; directors of think tanks; and politically involved academics, who may serve as analysts of the conflict for the public media or as advisors to political leaders. Some of our participants have been former diplomats, officials, or military officers, and many later became negotiators, ambassadors, cabinet ministers, parliamentarians, and leading figures in the media or research organizations. We look for people who are within the mainstream of their societies but, at the same time, willing to meet with members of the other side on an equal basis and explore the possibility of a negotiated solution.

The workshops are held under academic auspices and facilitated by a panel of social scientists, who are knowledgeable about international conflict, group process, and the region. Our credibility as a third party over the years has depended on our academic standing, our even-handedness, our long-term commitment to efforts to resolve the conflict, and our close familiarity with the two communities. The third party's role in our model is strictly facilitative; we do not participate in the substantive discussion or offer our own proposals, nor do we take sides, evaluate ideas presented, or try to arbitrate between conflicting interpretations of history or international law. The task of the third party is to create the conditions that allow ideas for resolving the conflict to emerge out of the interactions between the parties themselves. To this end, the third party selects and briefs the participants; sets the ground rules and monitors adherence to them; helps to keep the discussion moving in constructive directions; and intervenes as necessary with questions, observations, or even challenges, focusing on the content or the process of the interaction, and occasionally with theoretical formulations designed to clarify issues under discussion.

Workshop discussions are completely private and confidential. There is no audience, no publicity, no taping, and no formal record. One of the central ground rules stipulates that nothing said at the workshop can be cited with attribution outside of the workshop setting. These and other features of the workshop are designed to enable and encourage participants to engage in a type of interaction that is usually not available to parties involved in an intense conflict relationship. The participants are asked to engage in an open discussion, in which they address each other, rather than their constituencies, third parties, an audience, or the record, and in which they listen to one another, with the aim of understanding each other's perspective. They are encouraged to deal with the conflict analytically rather than polemically—to explore the ways in which their interaction leads to escalation and perpetuation of the conflict, instead of assigning blame to the other side while justifying their own. This analytic discussion helps the parties penetrate each other's perspective and understand each other's needs, fears, concerns, priorities, and constraints.

Once both sets of concerns are on the table and have been understood and acknowledged, participants are asked to engage in a non-adversarial process of joint thinking, treating the conflict as a shared problem that requires joint effort to find a mutually satisfactory solution. The task is to work together in developing new ideas for resolving the conflict, or particular issues within it, that are responsive to the fundamental needs and fears of *both* sides that have been identified earlier in the workshop. If the participants generate such integrative ideas, they are asked to explore the political and psychological constraints within their societies that would be standing in the way of implementing these ideas, and then to engage in another round of joint thinking about ways of overcoming the constraints that have been identified.

Workshops are not negotiating sessions, nor are they intended to bypass negotiations or to substitute for negotiations in any way. Negotiations can be carried out only by officials, authorized to conclude binding agreements, and workshops are, by definition, unofficial and non-binding. But it is precisely their unofficial, non-binding character that represents their unique strength. They provide an opportunity for the kind of exploratory, problem-solving, trust-building, and relationship-forming interaction that is essential for conflict resolution, but difficult to achieve around the official negotiating table, where the participants are instructed, constrained, directly accountable, and primed to engage in distributive bargaining. While workshops are not negotiations, they are potentially useful complements to negotiations and an integral part of the larger peace process at all of its stages (Kelman, 2005).

One can think of problem-solving workshops as workshops in the literal sense of the term, like a carpenter's or an artisan's workshop: a specially constructed space, in which the parties can engage in a process of exploration, observation, and analysis, and in which they can create new products for export, as it were. The products in this case take the form of new insights into the dynamics of the conflict and new ideas for resolving it that can be fed into the political debate and the decision-making process in the two societies. This metaphor points to the dual purpose of workshops, which is at the heart of interactive problem solving. First, workshops are designed to produce change—new learning, in the form of new insights and new ideas—in the particular individuals who sit around the workshop table. However, these changes at the level of individual participants are not ends in themselves, but vehicles for promoting change at the policy level. Thus, the second purpose of workshops is to maximize the likelihood that the insights and ideas developed by the participants will be transferred to the political debate and the policy-making process in their respective societies.

The dual purpose of workshops creates what I have called the dialectics of interactive problem solving (Kelman, 1979): The requirements for meeting each of these purposes—for maximizing change in individual participants and for maximizing the transfer of that change to the policy process—may be not only different, but in fact contradictory to each other. A major challenge to the theory and practice of interactive problem solving is to create the proper balance between such contradictory requirements so that new ideas are likely to be both produced and transferred.

Perhaps the best example of the dialectics of interactive problem solving is provided by the selection of participants. To maximize transfer into the political process, we would seek out officials, who are part of the decision-making apparatus and thus in a position to apply directly what they have learned from their workshop interactions. But to maximize change, we would look for participants who are removed from the decision-making process and therefore less constrained in their interactions and free to play with ideas and explore hypothetical options. To balance these contradictory requirements, we select participants who are not officials, but politically influential. They are thus relatively free to engage in the process but, at the same time, their positions and credibility within their societies are such that any new ideas they develop in the course of workshops can have an impact on the thinking of decision-makers and the society at large. Another example of the dialectics of workshops concerns the degree of trust and cohesiveness that we try to engender in the group. This issue is central to the dilemma of trust building among enemies—both in the microcosm of the problem-solving workshop and in the macrocosm of the conflict system—to which the remainder of this analysis is devoted.

### **3. The dilemma of trust building**

Not surprisingly, the issue of building trust among enemies has been of central concern as my practice and my conceptualization of that practice evolved over the course of the years. In a context of profound mutual distrust, how can a process of conflict resolution begin, both at the microlevel of our workshops and at the macrolevel? How can the process be sustained in the face of inevitable setbacks and constant reminders of the other's enmity? What is the nature of the trust that must and can develop in the relationship

between enemies? Are there potential negative consequences of trust building that we must guard against?

I have found several concepts helpful in dealing with two closely intertwined issues in our work, relating to its dual purpose of change and transfer: How can we build trust in the workshop group itself, so that participants can interact productively? And how can our workshops and similar microprocesses contribute to trust building in the macrosystem? I shall proceed to discuss five trust-related concepts in order. My discussion will focus specifically on our microlevel work, but I hope that the relevance of these concepts to the larger peace process will be evident.

### *3.1. Successive approximations of commitment and reassurance*

The starting point of the present analysis was the dilemma of building trust among enemies so that they can enter into a peace process: They cannot begin the process without some degree of mutual trust, but they cannot build trust without entering into the process. To begin the process, each party needs some reassurance *from* the other—but each is afraid to offer the necessary reassurance *to* the other, lest it jeopardize its own position. Unofficial diplomacy in all its varieties, including problem-solving workshops, can make a useful contribution to resolving this dilemma, because it allows the parties to interact at a relatively low level of commitment and hence reduces the risk of extending a certain degree of trust to the other.

One can think of the road to a negotiated agreement as a process of successive approximations, in which the parties initiate communication at a level and in a context that represents a relatively low degree of commitment and gradually move toward official negotiations, culminating in a binding agreement (Kelman, 1982). Our work, by its nature, provides for non-committal, non-binding interaction: The parties, including the third party, are not officials; the context is academic, with the emphasis on providing a useful learning experience for all concerned, rather than hammering out an agreement; the discussions are private and confidential and meant to remain so; there is no implication that meeting in this context constitutes recognition of the other side, nor is there an expectation that these meetings will produce a jointly agreed-upon outcome. The relatively low degree of commitment makes it possible for each party to accept a correspondingly lower degree of reassurance from the other as a condition for beginning a dialogue. Under these circumstances, each party can offer a degree of reassurance that is sufficient to draw the other into communication without unduly jeopardizing its own position.

The potential usefulness of problem-solving workshops in providing a non-committal beginning is most obvious in the pre-negotiation phase of a conflict, when the parties are not yet ready to enter into a formal peace process (Kelman, 2005). They may also contribute, however, alongside of negotiations, as a way of beginning to tackle difficult issues that are not yet on the official table, by exploring different options for resolving them and framing them in ways that make them more conducive to negotiation. And, workshops can also be useful in restarting a peace process at points when negotiations are stalemated or have broken down—as is the case in Israeli–Palestinian relations at this time (mid-2005)—and mutual distrust has risen to new heights.

According to the logic of successive approximations, communication in workshops and other unofficial, non-committal settings—if it is carried out in a problem-solving mode—should gradually facilitate both the emergence of new ideas and the development of mutual

trust, allowing the parties to offer each other increasingly greater degrees of reassurance and encouragement. At some point, these should be sufficient to enable them to enter into official negotiations (or to tackle the difficult issues that have eluded agreement, or to restart negotiations that have broken down), and proceed to produce a final agreement based on formal mutual recognition. Thus, the peace process can be conceived as a multi-level process of communication that allows the parties to move toward the recognition that each needs from the other but is afraid to give to the other by a series of successive approximations, in which levels of reassurance are continually calibrated to levels of commitment.

The Oslo talks, which culminated in the Israeli–Palestinian agreement signed in 1993, provide a good illustration of the process of successive approximations of commitment and reassurance (Kelman, 1997b). Although the links to the official level were more direct and immediate than they are in our totally unofficial efforts, the Oslo talks began with non-committal exploration of possible options under conditions of deniability and hence lowered risk. They gradually led to development of new ideas that the participants brought back to their respective leaderships, to testing of the seriousness of the other side, and to building of mutual working trust, which eventually transformed the talks into official negotiations, culminating in an agreement based on formal mutual recognition.

### *3.2. The third party as repository of trust*

Even though workshops are unofficial, non-committal, and confidential academic exercises, they are not entirely risk-free. Given the depth of the mutual distrust among parties engaged in an existential conflict, the idea of meeting with the other side may well arouse anxiety: Potential participants may worry that the discussion may be acrimonious, that they may be subjected to verbal abuse by the other side, that their confidences may be betrayed, that their participation may be exploited by the other side and cause them personal or collective damage.

One of the important roles of the third party in our work is to serve as a repository of trust, bridging the gap of mutual distrust that divides the parties and enabling them to enter into a process of direct communication. As enemies, the parties by definition cannot trust each other—certainly not at the beginning of their interaction—but they can trust the situation in which the interaction occurs. Insofar as they place trust in the third party, they can feel reassured that the situation is safe: that their interests will be protected, that their confidentiality will be respected, that they will not be subjected to personal attacks, that they will not be exploited, that their participation will not be used against them.

To serve as a repository of trust, of course, the third party must prove itself trustworthy. It must never violate confidentiality; our record in this regard has significantly contributed to our ability to maintain credibility over the years. It must not use the situation for extraneous purposes—which is the reason I have avoided any form of intrusive research in the workshop setting. It must be scrupulously even-handed; this does not imply that it is disinterested or neutral in all respects, nor does it deter the third party from empowering one or the other party when it is suffering from a power deficiency in a given context. At all times, the third party must demonstrate commitment to the integrity of the process.

The role of the third party as a repository of trust is particularly important at the beginning of an interaction process, but it continues to be called upon even in an experienced workshop group, in which a fair degree of trust has developed over a period of

collaborative work. As long as the conflict persists, there will be moments when the third party's role as a repository of trust will be called upon to help the parties take a further step that entails considerable risk.

### 3.3. *Working trust*

Trust takes different forms in different relationships. In a communal relationship, it is based on the assumption that each party is committed to the welfare of the other and acts in ways that will advance the other's interests. In exchange relationships, each party acts out of her or his own interest, but—under normal circumstances—both can assume that their partners, like themselves, have an interest in maintaining the relationship and making it work, and can be expected, therefore, to act in a trustworthy fashion. In the relationship between manager and subordinates, for example, a degree of good will can be taken for granted, unless there is evidence to the contrary.

In the relationship between enemies, by contrast, what is taken for granted is the other's ill will, unless there is clear evidence to the contrary. To accept too readily an enemy's claims of good will or of an interest in making peace is not only considered naïve, but also represents a violation of the norms that govern intense conflict relationships (Kelman, 1997a, pp.209–210).

This does not mean, however, that it is impossible to build trust between enemies, once the parties have become convinced that making peace is in their own best interest. As Pelzmann (2005) points out, trust does not presuppose good will, sympathy, or friendship between the parties: It can develop among competitors, adversaries, and even mortal enemies if the proper conditions are put in place. It is important, however, to be clear about the kind of trust that one has in mind.

In our work, I have found it useful to stress that we aim to foster *working trust* among workshop participants (and, by extension, between their societies), in contrast to trust based on interpersonal closeness. In the relationship between parties caught in an existential conflict, it is neither possible, nor necessary, nor even entirely desirable (in view of the dialectics of interactive problem solving) to promote the kind of trust that develops from personal encounters, shared values, friendship, or even stable exchange relationships. The working trust that we aim for is trust in the other side's seriousness and sincerity in the quest for peace—in its genuine commitment, largely out of its own interests, to finding a mutually acceptable accommodation. It is important to stress that working trust increases to the extent each side is convinced that the other is moving in a conciliatory direction *out of its own interests*. This contrasts with communal relationships, in which trust is a function of our belief that the other is acting out of a commitment to protecting and promoting *our* interests. It also contrasts with the common finding in research on persuasive communication that the trustworthiness of communicators declines if they are perceived as having a personal interest in promoting a particular product or point of view. In our situation, self-interest provides the strongest evidence of the seriousness and sincerity of the other's intentions and hence the basis for working trust.

Working trust, however, can develop only if each party is convinced that the other has a genuine interest in making peace—in other words, that the other's search for accommodation, though interest-driven, represents a strategic choice, not just a tactical maneuver. This is the basis on which, in my view, working trust developed between Rabin and Arafat after the Oslo agreement—a trust that eroded after Rabin's assassination



(Kelman, 1998a, pp.38–39). The parties are most likely to be convinced that peace is a strategic choice for the other if they can see that and how peace promotes the other's long-term interests and is integral to the other's vision of the future.

Personal relations and their symbolic manifestations do play a role in the development of trust. For example, in an Israeli–Palestinian joint working group that Nadim Rouhana and I convened between 1993 and 1999, the willingness of Israeli participants to meet and stay overnight in Ramallah for some of the sessions made a big difference to their Palestinian colleagues. They took it as an indication of the Israelis' seriousness and it enhanced the level of working trust and the productivity of the group. Indeed, over time, as a set of shared interests become defined, working trust and interpersonal trust may merge. But at earlier stages, the attempt to go beyond working trust is not only unrealistic, but it is also counternormative and may be counterproductive: It may undermine the credibility of participants in their own community and thus their ability to transfer their learnings to the larger process and to influence public opinion and policy decisions. Working trust provides a balance between the requirements of maximizing change within the group, and the requirements of maximizing transfer of change to the policy process, which stand in dialectical relationship to one another.

### *3.4. The uneasy coalition*

The question of the kind of trust we seek to foster among workshop participants raises the closely related question of the degree of cohesiveness we seek to encourage in the workshop group.

Problem-solving workshops and related activities can be conceived as part of a process of building a coalition across conflict lines—a coalition between those elements on the two sides that are interested in finding an accommodation, in exploring the possibilities of a negotiated solution (Kelman, 1993). Because this coalition cuts across a very basic conflict line—a line that divides people along their core identities—it is almost by definition an uneasy coalition. The uneasiness of the coalition has the consequence of feeding mutual distrust and often complicating coalition work. This uneasiness, however, is not only an inevitable reality (insofar as coalition members are bona fide representatives of their national groups, as they must be to contribute to change), but also a necessity—primarily because of the problem of the participants' "reentry" into their societies and hence the transfer of change.

A workshop group that becomes overly cohesive—whose members across the conflict line develop too much interpersonal trust—undermines the ultimate purpose of the enterprise: to have an impact on the political process within the two societies. In protracted conflicts, expressing trust in the enemy is viewed as a serious—indeed, a dangerous—violation of a powerful group norm. Thus, workshop participants (and, of course, negotiators) who become closely identified with their counterparts on the other side run the risk of becoming alienated from their own co-nationals, losing their credibility at home, and hence forfeiting their political effectiveness and their ability to promote a new consensus within their own communities.

Under the circumstances, the uneasy coalition that naturally develops in a group that cuts across a basic conflict line probably represents the most effective relationship between the two sides: sufficiently cohesive so that the members can interact productively (which is a requirement for maximizing change), but not so cohesive that they lose credibility and

political effectiveness in their own communities (which is a requirement for maximizing transfer). One of the challenges for our work, therefore, is to create an atmosphere in which participants can begin to humanize and trust each other and to develop an effective collaborative relationship, without losing sight of their separate group identities and the conflict between their communities.

### 3.5. *Mutual reassurance*

Parties engaged in an existential conflict are afraid to move to the negotiating table and make concessions at the table, even when the status quo has become increasingly painful and they recognize that a negotiated agreement is in their interest. They are afraid that negotiations may lead to a series of ever more costly concessions that will ultimately jeopardize their security, their national identity, and their very existence. At the early stages of a peace process in an existential conflict, even the act of sitting down with the enemy is perceived as a dangerous concession because it implies recognition of the other's national identity and political rights—and, in these conflicts, identity, rights, and national existence itself are perceived in zero-sum terms (Kelman, 1987, p. 354).

Under these circumstances, mutual reassurance is a key element in inducing the parties to come to the table and, once there, to make the concessions necessary to reach an agreement. Given the depth of the initial distrust, the need for reassurance persists throughout the peace process. Each party needs continuing evidence of the other's trustworthiness as it faces new risks and finds new reasons for suspicion (cf. Pelzmann, 2005). Such evidence may take the form of acknowledgments, symbolic gestures, or confidence-building measures.

Mutual reassurance is a central feature of problem-solving workshops in two respects. First, it may contribute significantly to advancing the workshop *process*. For example, Tamra Pearson d'Estrée (Pearson, 1990) found that symbolic gestures or acknowledgments—such as acknowledgment of some responsibility for the other side's suffering—often serve as turning points in a workshop, leading to more productive exchange and the generation of new, constructive ideas. Such events may also provide useful learning experiences by illustrating some of the dynamics of the conflict and possibilities for resolving it.

Second, identification of steps of mutual reassurance is a major part of the *content* of workshop discussions. In business relationships, people reassure themselves about the trustworthiness of their partners by recourse to a set of heuristics for assessing social situations, along with intuition based on past experience—and this approach generally serves them well (Eschenbach, 2003). In a tentative peace process between enemies, however, the experience and the social cues for justifying trust in the other are not readily available. Identifying appropriate acknowledgments, symbolic gestures, or confidence-building measures that would offer reassurance requires deliberate efforts and an interactive process. Only through joint thinking can the parties come up with ideas for steps that simultaneously meet two requirements: to be meaningful to the receiver yet affordable to the giver—in other words, steps they can take without exposing themselves to excessive risk that would, nevertheless, provide the other side with the kind of reassurance it needs. The core agenda of problem-solving workshops, focusing on presentation and analysis of both sides' needs, followed by joint efforts to devise solutions that would address both sets of needs, is well suited to identifying such steps of mutual reassurance.

Workshops can also help the parties develop a non-threatening, deescalatory language and a shared vision of a desirable future in which steps of mutual reassurance can be most effectively framed.

To be maximally effective, such steps must address the other's central needs and fears as directly as possible. President Anwar Sadat's historic trip to Jerusalem in 1977 provided many illustrations of effective reassurance (Kelman, 1985). His controversial decision to make the trip in itself—a highly public and irrevocable step, which was clearly risky and costly to Sadat—persuaded Israelis of the sincerity of his intentions. Sadat's round of cordial handshakes with Israeli officials as he stepped off the plane had an electrifying effect on Israelis because this gesture dramatically reversed the past denial of Israel's legitimacy and of the very humanity of its people. Sadat's speech in the Knesset, in which he acknowledged Egypt's past hostility toward Israel, further reassured Israelis of the genuineness of his offer to change the relationship.

Acknowledgment of what was heretofore denied signals the other side's readiness to negotiate an agreement that addresses your fundamental concerns. As a result, parties are likely to feel safer about entering negotiations with an uncertain outcome and to take the risks entailed by significant concessions. Acknowledgments are particularly reassuring insofar as they imply a degree of validation by the other of each party's own national narrative.

Mutual reassurance at its best is an influence strategy based on responsiveness to the other's needs and fears and on the principle of reciprocity (Kelman, 1997a, pp.202–208). The elements of responsiveness and reciprocity not only build trust in the negotiating process, as one that is safe to pursue despite its inevitable risks, but they help to create a working trust between the negotiating partners, based on acceptance of the other's seriousness and sincerity in pursuing peace and readiness to enter into a mutually beneficial partnership.

#### **4. Conclusion**

My approach to building trust among enemies is modest and cautious, as exemplified by the five concepts that I have described. I start with the assumption that parties caught up in a conflict between identity groups necessarily enter a peace process with deep suspicion of one another. The roots and dimensions of that suspicion can be readily understood. I do not urge them to take a leap of faith into trusting one another or to transcend their profound mutual distrust by forging personal bonds of friendship. Our program is not based—as some of its detractors or even some of its supporters have mistakenly assumed—on the proposition that peace between groups engaged in a deep-rooted conflict can be achieved through personal contact and the establishment of personal relationships among their members. To the contrary, our starting point is the assumption that distrust among enemies is inherent in the relationship, understandable, and even necessary. It must be reduced slowly, gradually, and on the basis of persuasive evidence that the reality is changing.

Thus, I propose that movement toward peace entails a process of successive approximations, in which commitments made are commensurate with assurances received; that the conflicting parties need a third party as a repository of trust to be able to begin exploring a new relationship; that they must start out by developing working trust in each other's seriousness about making peace out of their own interests, rather than

interpersonal trust based on good will; that they must be cautious about forming excessively cohesive coalitions across the conflict lines, lest they lose credibility in their own communities; and that they must engage in a systematic process of mutual reassurance, based on responsiveness and reciprocity, in order to build and maintain trust in the peace process and the peace partner. Responsiveness and reciprocity at the core of mutual influence represent the means for weaving interests and justice into a common framework for conflict resolution and ultimate reconciliation.

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