



# THE EVOLUTION INSTITUTE

UNDERSTANDING AND IMPROVING THE HUMAN CONDITION

## *Agenda*

### **An Evolutionary Approach to the Twin Problems of Failed States and Nation-Building**

December 3–5, 2011; Palo Alto, CA

#### *Friday, Dec. 2*

**5:30 Ice-breaker reception at the Sheraton, poolside (Cypress I Flow Through if raining)**

**6:30 Dinner at the Sheraton for all participants (Cypress I)**

#### *Saturday, Dec. 3*

**8 – 8:45 Shuttle to campus (Encina Hall West, Graham Stuart Lounge, Room 400)**

**8:15 – 9:00 Breakfast (outside of the conference room)**

**9:00 – 12:30 A Dialogue between Diplomats and Scientists**

(15-min coffee break @11:00)

*General questions:* How differently do diplomats and scientists see the world? What are the main obstacles to building effective state institutions in post-conflict societies? Does evolutionary science research have a potential to address the issues of peace- and nation-building?

The discussion will be motivated by Carl Coon's article, *Processes Too Complicated to Explain*. It will be structured by alternating between diplomats and scientists, each speaking for c.10 min, with general discussion both between talks and at the end. Speakers: Carleton Coon, Peter Turchin, Ronald Neumann, Jerry Lieberman, Michael Malinowski. Discussants: Murray Gell-Mann and David Sloan Wilson

**12:30 Lunch**

**2:00 – 5:00 Human Nature and the Nature of Human Societies: An Evolutionary View**

(15-min coffee break @3:30)

*General question:* What new knowledge about human nature, group dynamics, and the functioning of large-scale human societies relevant to peace issues has been recently gained?

This discussion will be structured around three papers:

- Peter Richerson on *What Cultural Evolution Can Teach Us About How To Build Better Institutions*
- Ober et al. on *Dispersed and Centralized Authority Systems*
- Jenna Bednar on *Federal Constitutions and Cultural Evolution*

Speakers: Francis Fukuyama, Peter Richerson, Ian Morris, Steven LeBlanc, Josiah Ober, Walter Scheidel, Jenna Bednar. Discussants: David Laitin and David Sloan Wilson

**5:15 Charter bus to hotel**

**7:00 Dinner at MacArthur Park**

*Sunday, Dec. 4*

**8 – 8:45 Shuttle to campus (Encina Hall West, Graham Stuart Lounge, Room 400)**

**8:15 – 9:00 Breakfast (outside of the conference room)**

**9:00 – 12:30 Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the Broader South- Asian Context**

(15-min coffee break @11:00)

*General question:* Can general insights from evolutionary science coupled together with region-specific historical and ethnological knowledge of Afghanistan help us avoid mistakes and inform a better policy there? Is Pakistan a “failing state”? What social processes underly the growing political instability in Pakistan over the last several years? What can comparative social research on different sociopolitical trajectories within the South Asian subcontinent tell us about general processes underlying nation building and failed states?

This discussion will be motivated by two papers on Afghanistan, then expand to include Pakistan and South Asia in general.

- Thomas Barfield on *Centralization/Decentralization in the Dynamics of Afghan History*
- Antonio Giustozzi on *The Taliban's “Struggle for Survival”*

Speakers: Thomas Barfield, Suzanne Olds, Moeed Yusuf, Francis Fukuyama, David Laitin.

Discussants: Ronald Neumann, Michael Malinowski, Carl Coon

**12:30 Lunch**

**2:00 – 5:00 Where do we go from here?**

(15-min coffee break @3:30)

*General questions:* What are the products and outcomes resulting from this workshop, including publications in scholarly and popular press? Should we continue with this project? If yes, what are the main issues that need to be resolved in the next iteration? How do we obtain support for further activities? How do we make sure that any future results we obtain are transmitted to the “user community”?

Format: a moderated roundtable discussion

**5:15 Charter bus to hotel**

**7:00 Dinner at Scott’s Seafood**

*Monday, Dec. 5*

**Participants use the regular shuttles to campus from the Train Station**

**8:30 Workshop Evaluation (Encina Hall West, Graham Stuart Lounge, Room 400)**

The Evolution Institute’s directors, members of the Executive Advisory Board, and other interested parties will provide an evaluation of the workshop. All participants are welcome.

**12:00 Lunch**