

The 9/11 Peace Intention Experiment September 11-18, 2011

The 9/11 Peace Intention Experiment was devised to mark the 10th anniversary of 9/11. Instead of revisiting those terrible images we wanted our acknowledgement of the date to provide a genuine new Twin Towers of East and West in communion and solidarity for peace.

Toward that end, we invited Dr Salah Al-Rashed and his community of tens of thousands of Arabs throughout the Gulf States to join us in the West over eight days, starting September 11, to partner with us in sending intention to lower violence in two southern provinces in Afghanistan, Helmand and Kandahar.

As you may recall, the plan of this latest experiment was to replicate our September 2008 Peace Intention Experiment, which had extremely provocative results, showing a potentially strong effect in lowering violence in Sri Lanka.

With studies like this containing so many variables, our results could have been coincidental. It's only when you can get the same result a number of times in different, similarly designed studies that scientists begin to sit up and take notice.

This is why, our scientific team and I were careful to use a design for this latest study that was identical to that of the 2008 Peace Intention Experiment.

This time our 9/11 Peace Intention Experiment attracted participants from 75 countries, from Iceland to Brazil, from California to Indonesia, and also every Arab country on the planet. All of us joined hands and hearts during those eight days to jointly apologize for first, from the Arab perspective, in allowing 9/11 to happen and then, from the Western perspective, in allowing the outsize military response to 9/11, resulting in the deaths, detaining, deportment and displacement of hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians.

After our experiment ended in September 18, after which we had to embark on a patient three and half month wait, to allow events to unfold over the rest of 2011 so that we could determine whether our intention had any effects.

Official figures

In early 2012, we spent several months hounding officials inside the US State Department; UNAMA (the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan), which tallies civilian casualties; the Afghanistan government; various departments inside NATO, which referred me ultimately to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), the combined-forces mission inside Afghanistan.

This was a tortuous process. Most of the agencies would not release all of their data – ISAF had no tabulated information they were prepared to release about military casualties, but they had plenty of data about their enemy's attacks and civilian casualties. UNAMA had monthly data about individual sections of the country for 2009 and 2010 – but not for 2011.

As ISAF's official spokesman, German General Carsten Jacobson told me, any statistics on military fatalities aren't reliable, because once a soldier is wounded he usually is transferred

back to his home country, and the combined army usually doesn't get info any further feedback about whether he has lived or died.

At one point, ISAF actually referred me to the anonymously created www.icasualties.com, a website that has tracked casualties in Afghanistan and Iraq since the wars began ('They're accurate to within 10 per cent,' declared Jacobsen). Nevertheless, after I began my search, the website mysteriously appears to have shut down.

In the end we analyzed numbers from official UN and NATO reports, which provided data for civilian casualties, enemy initiated attacks in general and those in different sections of Afghanistan, including the south, the target of our intention. There were also data on improvised explosive devices (which includes mine strikes), the principle means by which Afghan insurgents execute strikes against the NATO military and the cause of more than 60 per cent of civilian casualties (at least according to ISAF).

The NATO figures come from the Afghan Mission Network Combined Information Data Network Exchange database, as of 13 January 2012. The UN figures come from UNAMA's annual report.

My source in the British army also supplied me with British casualties, fatalities and military field hospital admissions.

September onwards

For all these figures, we were looking at what happened in September and the two months afterward, as compared to what had happened in the months before our intention. In many instances, we were able to compare it to figures for the two years before.

For civilian casualties, according to NATO statistics, 440 civilians were killed in August 2011. That casualty number dropped to 340 in September and continued dropping over October (290) and November (201), representing a 22 per cent, 14 per cent and 30 per cent drop over the months before, respectively.

All three figures are well below the average death rate (374) over 28 months, from September 2009-2011, with October 23 per cent lower than average and November 46 per cent lower than average. In fact, November 2011 represented the second largest percentage decrease of civilian casualties since the beginning of 2009.

In all, our September to November 2011 represented an average 37 per cent drop in civilian casualties, as compared to the number of casualties in August 2011.

Military casualties

In terms of British casualties, although field hospital admissions (86 in the month) were up by 25 per cent in August 2011, they dropped to 74 in September (a 14 per cent drop), remained an identical figure in October and dropped an additional 5.4 per cent to 70 in November.

Actual deaths of British soldiers (a handful every month) are too few to have much statistical power. Nevertheless, there was a downward trend from August through October.

In terms of attacks by the insurgents, NATO figures show that attacks with explosive devices dropped from 750 in August to 610 in September (a percentage change of 19 per cent) and

stayed steady in October and continued to fall another 9 per cent to 560 in November and 21 per cent more in December (440).

This final figure is 16 per cent lower than the average attack rate from Sept 2009-December 2011.

Downward trend on attacks

Perhaps the most interesting downward trend was in overall initiated attacks by the Taliban. The monthly figures for 2010 showed a steady upward trend of attacks (up 80 per cent overall in 2010), but then this trend flattened to very little change until the beginning of 2011, when they began climbing relentlessly upward climbing up until August. From September, the numbers began a steep downward trend, falling drastically from October to December of 2011.

As the ISAF noted, overall enemy-initiated attacks over the last three months of 2011 are 12 per cent lower compared to the same period in 2010.’ And about the second half of the year: ‘This is the longest sustained downward trend in enemy-initiated attacks recorded by ISAF,’ the report noted.

The overall figures of casualties bounced upward in December after two suicide attacks during the Ashura celebrations in Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif; Taliban initiated attacks increased by 19 per cent in the East from 2010 to 2011. Nevertheless, these occurred elsewhere in the provinces, and not in our target provinces in the south.

The Southwest, recorded the largest decrease over the year before in September, the month of our intention, with nearly a 790 per cent decrease over the month before and a 29 per cent overall decrease compared to 2010. In October the figures, compared to the years before were 500 per cent lower, 400 per cent lower (November and 300 per cent lower in December.

Furthermore, despite the suicide bombing in December, enemy-initiated attacks across the whole of Afghanistan for the whole of 2011 are 9 per cent lower than they were in 2010.

So, in summary:

- Civilian casualties dropped to an average of 37 per cent after our September intention
- Attacks with explosive devices dropped 16 per cent after our intention, compared to the average attack rate for the two plus years before
- Overall enemy attacks dropped 12 per cent from October-December 2011, compared to levels in 2010
- Attacks in the Southwest dropped overall by 29 per cent over the year before and drastically dropped by 790 per cent in September
- Attacks across the whole of Afghanistan for the whole of 2011 were 9 per cent lower than they were in 2010.

So what does this mean? It’s important to remember, from the point of view of science, one study like this doesn’t prove anything definitive. You have to repeat this experiment a number of times for show you have something that can be replicated.

Nevertheless, the results seem compelling, particularly when you consider that quantified our intention request – as we had in our 2008 Peace Intention Experiment for Sri Lanka. We asked that violence be lowered by at least 10 per cent. It's worth bearing that in mind when you look at the data, which consistently shows changes somewhere around the 10 per cent mark.

Measuring the world 'mind'

Besides a straightforward analysis of casualties, I also asked Roger Nelson, director of the Global Consciousness Project, to see if there was a demonstration of any effect on random event generators (REGs) during the eight days of our collective intention.

REGs, you may recall, perform the electronic, twenty-first century equivalent of a toss of a coin.

The output of these machines (the computerized equivalent of heads or tails) is controlled by a randomly alternating frequency of positive and negative pulses. Because their activity is utterly random, they produce heads and tails each roughly 50 per cent of the time, according to the laws of probability.

Nelson, formerly chief coordinator of the PEAR lab, came up with the idea of running REG machines continuously all over the world to examine whether the focused attention of loads of people has any effect on the random output of the machines, particularly during moments of global events with the greatest emotional impact.

Nelson organized a centralized computer program, so that REGs located in 50 places around the globe could pour their continuous stream of random bits of data into one vast central hub through the Internet.

Periodically, Nelson and his colleagues study these outpourings and compare them with the biggest breaking news stories, attempting to ferret out any sort of statistical connection. Standardized methods and analysis reveal any demonstration of order – a moment when the machine output displays less randomness than usual either in a positive or negative direction – and whether the time that it is generated corresponds with that of a major world event.

The global mind shudders

Since the beginning of the project, Nelson has studied hundreds of top news events: the death of the Princess of Wales; the millennium celebrations; the death of John F. Kennedy, Jr, and his wife; the attempted Clinton impeachment; the events of 9/11; the start of the Iraqi war.

When people reacted with great joy or horror to a major event, the machines seem to react as well. Furthermore, the degree of 'order' in the machine's output seems to match the emotional intensity of the event, particularly those that had been tragic: the greater the horror, the greater the order.

Strong emotion, positive or negative – even to presidential decisions – seems to produce order on the random machines – a pattern of output that was more heads than tails or more tails than heads (which Nelson speaks about as a more 'positive' or 'negative' direction).

Nelson and three independent analysts take apart the data using a variety of statistical methods, but primarily through the chi-square distribution method, a statistical technique that

plots the square of each of the machine's runs, so that any deviation from chance easily shows up.

Each day of each experiment took 20 minutes: five minutes to sign in and Power Up, five minutes to read about the intention target; and 10 minutes to send the intention.

I asked Roger to look closely at the GCP figures just during the 20-minute window of time on each of the days of the eight-day experiment, just as he did for our 2008 experiment.

Nelson linked together the eight days of data to make a sequence that included all of output during all the 20-minute time periods of the eight days, paying particular attention to the 10-minute windows of intention each day.

A compelling, steady trend

After the third day, he found a very steady trend – a general tendency for the outputs that accumulate during each second of the time period we are looking at to be similar - that is, either heads or tails.

As Nelson wrote me, 'most of the deviations are negative (the mean is less than the expected 100).

In other words, it's like tossing a coin and having it constantly come up tails.

When you string the deviations together, the graphic line tends to go in the negative direction. 'A persistent or 'steady' trend reflects consistency, says Nelson, 'and that in turn suggests an effect that isn't just chance.'

You can see Dr. Nelson's full report on: <http://teillard.global-mind.org/intention.110911-18.html>

The power of replication

Nevertheless, he has a caveat: the effect size is very small compared to inherent 'noise' – or chance data.

'Deviations which appear in our graphic displays are a combination of possible effects and ordinary random fluctuation,' says Nelson. 'Consequently, one single experiment like this one can't be reliably interpreted on its own.

'To gain useful perspective and greater statistical leverage,' he continues, 'it is valuable to look at other events with a similar nature. In this case, the previous Peace Intention Experiment shows virtually the same negative trend in the cumulative deviation graph.

He concludes: 'This similarity across the two experiments helps support an interpretation of the negative deviations shown in the current dataset as an effect linked to the Intention.'

An experiment that changed lives

For months after the experiment, we ran a survey among the participants to find out what happened to them, during and in the months after our experiment. This time we ran the survey in both English and Arabic.

People participated in all sorts of ingenious ways, from wherever they were during the eight days — some from one of the gatherings held for 9/11, others from remote mountaintops. One group of friends who were holding a special ceremony for the tenth anniversary of the Twin Towers did a Native American peace pipe ceremony.

Another participant who was driving during the time of the experiment, pulled each time over to participate. ‘I could always feel an energy shift about 10 minutes past the hour when the experiment began.’

Yet another person who was at work during the actual experiment used the power of quantum time: ‘I participated an hour or two before and sent the healing, light and energies forward to 1pm EST.’

During the experiment, the most common experience was feeling inner peace, felt by 70 per cent of the English respondents, followed by a sense of compassionate love; more than half felt an overwhelming sense of unity with other participants and nearly as many felt a profound connection with the people of Afghanistan. These results were largely mirrored in the responses of the Arab participants.

As one intender wrote: ‘I felt love flow all around the world.’

People wrote about being moved to floods of tears:

- ‘Tears of compassion streamed the entire time, which has never occurred before during a meditation. I’ve have felt moved to a tear or two before, but not like this.’
- ‘I was overwhelmed with tears each time I participated. I seemed to tap into a global pain body that created pain in my chest and caused me to cry out for the children. I experienced this during our group intentions during Lynne's class on The Healing Power of Intention as well.’

For others, the experience was cathartic: ‘On Monday a lot of anger came up around issues in my life, as though I was clearing something.’

A greater peace

There were some slight differences in the longer-term effect of the experiment on the lives of our Easterners and Westerners. The largest percentage (nearly two-thirds) of Western participants felt more peaceful than usual, while the largest percentage of Arabs (56 per cent) felt more optimistic that world peace is achievable.

Large percentages of both East and West felt more compassionate than usual and more connected with others. For many the experience offered a glimpse of possibility of breaching ideological divides for the greater good.

For one participant, a big shift occurred in attitude to the Middle East: ‘Forever will Afghanistan be synonymous with Peace for me. It is a wonderful gift to me.’

Many thousands had tuned into Beautiful Exchange, a little internet TV station I’d teamed up with to do a daily live stream update on the event.

During the daily broadcasts, they enjoyed the ability to instant message with people from the East – and vice versa. As one Westerner wrote: ‘The experience of IMing with people from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and many other Middle-Eastern countries—during the IM messages, we wished each other peace and expressed love—made me cry. It was wonderful! And, it was very therapeutic for me—a citizen of the USA.’

Relationships shift

Most interesting of all was the long-term effect of the experiments on our participants—and these changes were even more profound than those of our 2008 Sri Lankan experiment.

Three-quarters our participants noticed changes in their relationships with others during the experiment (58 per cent of Arabs did). People reported in getting along better with clients, ex-husbands, siblings, neighbours, even ‘not-so-nice bosses.’ They noticed more awareness in their relationships with others, and more clarity in their relationships with themselves.

Others made resolutions to resolve lingering conflicts with others, to heal rifts, even with those who’d caused pain. ‘I feel like I am really ‘seeing’ into people’s hearts more, feeling them. Feeling their goodness and tenderness,’ wrote one.

Relationships came to a head: one of our participants found his relationship with his brother was stickier, but only because he was attempting communication at a ‘more heartfelt level.’

Workplace issues shifted for many. One found it difficult to agree with the commercial attitudes of his co-workers or to go along what the boss said, but found it ‘easier to love them.’ Another got let go from a job that was very negative and was immediately hired for two other jobs ‘with very positive people.’

In love with strangers

In the West, the greatest change in relationships was not simply between partners and spouses, but friends and indeed ‘everyone with whom they came into contact with’ (56 per cent). Our Arab participants found the biggest changes in their love with their loved ones, followed closely by everyone come into contact with and those they normally dislike or argue with, but once again a large percentage—a sixth of Westerners and more than a quarter of Arabs—found they were getting along more with strangers.

For most people, the experience opened them up to universal love — permanently. ‘I feel more interested in conversing with strangers,’ wrote one. ‘People seem more attracted to talking with me.’

‘I see myself in everyone I meet, experiencing their feelings, finding compassion,’ wrote another.

Once again, the experience of working together with thousands of strangers gave many people the ability to bond with or be more accepting of people they don’t personally know – and this ability to be more connected and accepting appeared to carry on.

A third of our respondents found they were getting along better with people they normally dislike or argue with. Intention apparently helped them to feel more love in general, whether they knew the recipient or not.

As one wrote in: ‘On the first day, I was holding hand with a friend I just made peace with, after along time of not talking to one another. We held hands throughout the experiment, and when we were done, we hugged.’

Love for the entire world

The experiment had a long-term profound effect on most of our participants – as though they had been touched by something very profound.

Some find themselves acting more peaceably in the world in every regard:

- ‘My life has been consistently changing toward a more peaceful me lately.’
- ‘I am less angry in general.’
- ‘I look at people I pass by —look them in the eyes and smile—it's energizing.’
- ‘A particular ongoing conflict with my husband came finally to full confrontation, but then moved quickly into resolution and solutions.’
- ‘Sounds weird but I have been picking up litter - so must be more love for the planet!’

Many reported that they'd completely changed the way they related to other people.

- ‘I am more compassionate and less committed to specific outcomes. I am more flexible and easy-going in situations, less triggered.’
- ‘I noticed those areas within myself where I was judgmental of both others and myself. I'm more accepting and understanding... more apt to apologize.’

One of our respondents, feeling challenged by some people who didn't agree with him, apologized for not sharing their point of view—at which point they became more accepting of him.

Perhaps the most moving experience came from one participant, who'd lost her sister and whose children had been murdered by their father just a few weeks before 9/11. In her eyes, the Peace Experiment saved her.

‘Change happened that for a second destroyed all my faith until the love of the community and signs from the universe restored it and made me more grateful than ever,’ she wrote. ‘I poured a more intense Love than anyone else out into the universe that day as my heart shattered and soared simultaneously. The world remembered while we mourned. And many lives were changed forever.’