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Journal of Peace Research 2006; 43; 181
DOI: 10.1177/0022343306060899

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The Past's Promise: Lessons from Peace Processes in Northern Ireland and the Middle East*

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Just as the Northern Ireland and Israeli–Palestinian peace processes appeared close to achieving lasting resolutions to conflict, both initiatives fell into crisis. This study combines power conflict and transaction cost approaches to analyze the strengths and the weaknesses of the Belfast Good Friday (BGF) and the Oslo peace processes. Dimensions that empower participants and increase certainty strengthen peace processes. Dimensions that are disempowering of participants and decrease certainty weaken peace processes. The two peace processes shared the strengths of including militant nationalists in negotiations and generating international pressure and support. Unlike the Oslo process, the BGF process benefited from greater constitutional certainty, minority safeguards, grass-roots legitimacy, effective responses to spoilers, and minority-supportive intervention by the US government. Unlike the BGF process, the Oslo process benefited from broad international participation in negotiations, leading to agreements that had clearly specified mechanisms for implementation. Shared weaknesses of the two processes included transgressing zero-sum game assumptions and identity boundaries, manipulation of popular fears by elites, and the marginal, if not negative, role played by civil society. In addition to pointing out ways that each peace process could benefit by appropriating the advantages of the other, the article offers several promising strategies for overcoming shared weaknesses, including challenging zero-sum assumptions, constructing more inclusive collective identities, grass-roots education regarding manipulative elites, strengthening non-sectarian segments of civil society, and breaking cycles of violence through reconciliation processes.

* We thank Patrick Coy, Lynne Woehrl, and the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments. An earlier version was presented at the 99th Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, San Francisco, CA, 14–17 August 2004. Please direct correspondence to Gregory M. Maney: socgmm@hofstra.edu.

Introduction

Just as a lasting peace settlement in the Middle East appeared tantalizingly close, the millennium ushered in a new era of political

violence. Those who have consistently opposed peace initiatives now command the bulk of the positions in the Israeli cabinet. The cabinet's decision to withdraw from some settlements has antagonized hardliners, while the fence being built around the Occupied Territories has deepened a sense of insecurity among Palestinians.¹ As intensified Israeli military operations and escalating Palestinian paramilitary attacks upon Israelis feed off one another, armed conflict spirals outward. In Northern Ireland, recent elections have given the largest bloc of Unionist votes to the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and the largest bloc of Nationalist votes to Sinn Féin. Given that the DUP has consistently opposed the Belfast Good Friday Agreement while Sinn Féin was reticent to consent to Unionist demands on the decommissioning of Republican weaponry, the most recent peace initiative has found itself in troubled waters.

To identify paths towards conflict resolution, we must understand not only the limitations but also the promise of the past. After developing a conceptual framework for analyzing peace processes, we assess the strengths and weaknesses of the Belfast Good Friday Agreement and the Oslo Accords. Future peace processes will be more likely to succeed if they build upon the strengths of past initiatives as well as developing more effective strategies to overcome the weaknesses.

A Theory of Successful Peace Processes

A consensus has emerged that, in order to be successful, a peace process must transform

¹ We define hardline nationalists as nationalists unwilling to compromise their existing course or policies. Militant nationalists vigorously pursue nationalist objectives. While hardline nationalists are, by definition, unlikely to enter peace processes, militant nationalists may do so if they believe these processes will advance their objectives better than their existing course or policies.

the underlying causes of ethnic conflict (Burton, 1990; Brand-Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2000; Darby & Mac Ginty, 2003).² Unfortunately, scholars disagree over what, in fact, constitute underlying causes. Some emphasize structural sources of conflict such as power imbalances and group-level inequalities in the distribution of resources (e.g. Ruane & Todd, 1996; Varennes, 2003). Others focus upon cultural sources such as identity formation and intercultural misunderstandings (e.g. Kelman, 1998; Ross, 2001). We see structural and cultural factors as interrelated causes that must be addressed if a peace process is to be successful. Just as power imbalances encourage negative perceptions of the 'other', negative perceptions raise doubts about the possibility of balancing power as well as fears about its consequences. Accordingly, our goal is to develop a parsimonious conceptual framework that explains the success of a peace process in terms of its ability to address *both* structural and cultural sources of ethnic conflict. We argue that to be successful, a peace process must transform power relations while creating certainty along multiple dimensions at both the elite and grass-roots levels. We now discuss both pillars of our analytical framework, starting with power relations.

Transforming Power Relations

A successful peace process transforms group power relations from the dynamics of domination and resistance, or 'power over', towards cooperation and mutual empowerment, or 'power to'. A skewed distribution of group power results in unequal life chances that create latent if not open conflict (Galtung, 1969; Curle, 1971). Rebellion, in part, constitutes an effort to increase minority group power. In turn, repression by

² Drawing from Lederach (1995: 11–23), we define a successful peace process as an intergroup process that increases social justice, reduces violence, and restores broken relationships.

the dominant group, in part, represents an effort to maintain existing power relations. A sustainable reduction in violence, therefore, requires increasing the power of less powerful groups (Lederach, 1995). Hartzell (1999) identifies three areas where balancing power has been crucial to the stability of negotiated settlements: control of coercive apparatus, allocation of political power, and allocation of economic advantage.

Eroding the privileges of the dominant group, however, is likely to arouse zero-sum fears of being disempowered and oppressed by the previous minority group. Accordingly, successful peace processes must offer significant opportunities for *all* participants to increase their ability to achieve key objectives through cooperation with other participants (Ross, 2000). The process must demonstrate that group interests can be more effectively realized through cooperation than by domination (Brand-Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2000). The zero-sum logic of win/lose that accompanies domination must be replaced by the problem-solving logic of win/win that accompanies cooperation. By creating a structural context of interdependence, balancing group power is a necessary condition for mutual empowerment among participants.

In intractable conflicts, peace processes are confronted by spoilers who assert their will over the resistance of participants (Stedman, 1997). The more a peace process mutually empowers its participants, the more difficult it becomes for opponents to undermine the process and the more enticing participation becomes to the naysayer. Moreover, inclusive strategies aimed at persuading dissenters to join the process build the power base for peace, while heavy-handed exclusive responses that antagonize bystanders drain support away. The actions of peace process participants must, to the fullest extent possible, signal their commitment to transforming intergroup dynamics from

dominance to empowerment. While repression may be necessary to prevent political destabilization, highly targeted, restrained repression carried out by members of the same ethnic group helps to hedge against reversion to previous power dynamics that underpinned intergroup conflict.

We envision peace processes as multi-dimensional, encompassing several key issues (e.g. amnesty for and reintegration of political prisoners, policing, economic development, fair employment, return of refugees, cultural recognition, restructuring of political institutions, redrawing territorial boundaries, decommissioning of weapons) as well as several types of activities (e.g. Track I and Track II diplomacy, agreeing to a ceasefire, negotiating a settlement, ratifying and implementing an agreement, third-party interventions, holding truth and reconciliation hearings). The greater the number of dimensions that empower members of both ethnic groups, the higher the levels of support that will exist for the process. Peace processes can sputter or reverse on certain dimensions while moving forward rapidly in other areas. It is mainly when the sputtering or reversal on one key dimension halts progress on other dimensions that peace processes run the serious risk of stalling. This is most likely to occur when the interests of both parties are not being met through cooperation.

Part of the difficulty in meeting the interests of the other ethnic group is grass-roots opposition. Without consulting the rank and file, political elites make concessions in negotiations that are often perceived as strengthening the position of the enemy at the expense of the represented group. As a result, ordinary people feel less powerful than they did before the peace process began. Just as a peace process must be empowering on a range of issues and activities, it must also have a depth of empowerment that extends to the grass-roots level. Vertically, this means

that political leaders actively consult with their constituents and mobilize support for their initiatives. Horizontally, this means transforming intergroup power dynamics in local communities. Without firm roots that positively connect ordinary people to their leaders and across communities, peace processes are likely to wither. Unfortunately, mistrust and uncertainty can get in the way of processes reaching these roots and flourishing.

Creating Certainty

A successful peace process also transforms perceptions from uncertainty into certainty. Strong identity boundaries and cultural differences in norms and styles of communication breed mistrust and misunderstanding (Kelman, 1998; Ross, 2000). Without trust and understanding, cooperation for mutual empowerment is unlikely to occur. The transaction cost approach to analyzing corporate relations offers conceptual tools that prove useful in explaining how a lack of trust and understanding contribute to high, sustained levels of ethnic conflict (Williamson, 1981; Granovetter, 1985). In spot market exchanges where firms do not share any prior relationship, the chances of being deceived are high. The maxim of *caveat emptor* or 'buyer beware' reflects the risk inherent in market exchanges. Firms often respond to these risks by attempting to increase certainty through drafting, monitoring, and enforcing highly detailed legal contracts. Unfortunately, these attempts to close loopholes raise the costs of the transaction, making exchanges more time consuming, cumbersome, and expensive for both parties. Consequently, interdependent firms that could have benefited from cooperation instead rely upon limited internal resources in pursuit of their objectives.

Responses to the uncertainty also generate high transaction costs in ethnic group

relations. High levels of segregation in housing, education, leisure, and employment increase the likelihood that close encounters with members of the other ethnic group are like spot market transactions – one-time occurrences viewed as fraught with risk. Political violence and other forms of negative sanctioning constitute efforts to manage this risk by signaling to an out-group the high costs of damaging in-group interests. In the process, levels of uncertainty for the targeted out-group are increased. A similarly violent risk-management strategy by the out-group will result in the rapid escalation of transaction costs. Usually, only after an extensive tit-for-tat cycle does it become apparent to many, if not most, that violence is ineffective in that it exacerbates uncertainty rather than reduces it (Kriesberg, 1998).

What, then, are the implications of uncertainty for the success of a peace process? When firms experience a positive market transaction, they build trust and develop norms of reciprocity that govern subsequent exchanges (Gulati, 1995). By reducing uncertainty, trust enables firms to reduce their transaction costs. Repeated cooperation in the pursuit of mutually beneficial outcomes ensues. For peace processes to succeed, they must similarly offer more effective ways of minimizing risk. Accordingly, we hypothesize that dimensions of peace processes that build confidence and provide guarantees for reducing security threats increase the likelihood of overall success. Trust must replace mistrust. Humanization and tolerance must replace dehumanization and intolerance. Out-group aspirations must be recognized and accepted as equally legitimate to one's own aspirations. Greater assurances of safety must replace fears about the threat posed to security by the other group (Kelman, 1998; Hartzell, 1999).

As with transforming power relations, creating certainty through peace processes is easier said than done. Because they require

concessions, peace processes, by their very nature, engender uncertainty. Confidence-building measures, therefore, must be set in place to prevent reversion to violent means of managing risk. Kelman (1998) stresses the need to develop a common language and symbolic gestures that offer reassurance. Intercultural differences fuel alternative interpretations of agreements, thereby exacerbating distrust and heightening a sense of risk (Cohen, 1991). Accordingly, unambiguous language and precise mechanisms of implementation become important sources of certainty.³ Third-party interventions to promote implementation of agreements can also increase certainty (Hampson, 1996). Key aspects of agreements must be implemented rapidly on both sides to avoid the re-emergence of conflict (Varenes, 2003).

As with questions of power, peace processes must create certainty on both the elite and the grass-roots level if they are to be successful. Analytical problem-solving workshops, interactive sustained dialogues, and multicultural conflict-transformation trainings are some of the tools that can assist in generating certainty (Kelman, 1998; Saunders, 1999; Lederach, 1995). Higher levels of intergroup trust and cooperation at the grass-roots level will not only increase receptivity to negotiated concessions by elites, but may also serve as effective models for elites to follow (Ryan, 1996; Ross, 2000).

Complementarities and Complications

Like structural and cultural sources of conflict, structural and cultural sources of peacebuilding are entwined. Whereas domination brings a sense of threat and insecurity,

empowerment increases a group's confidence in its ability to bring about negotiated outcomes that satisfy its interests (Bloomfield, 1997; Hartzell, 1999). Similarly, a greater sense of certainty increases the willingness of a dominant group to share power with a minority group as well as increasing the belief among the minority group that the dominant group is actually committed to equality.

Conversely, a peace process is more likely to fail when the intersection of power and certainty achieved is widely regarded as far more consistent with the interests of one of the groups. To further complicate matters, a dimension of a peace process can have different short-term and long-term effects upon power and certainty. What generates support for a peace process in the short term may undermine it in the long term and vice-versa. With these complexities in mind, we turn to discussing our approach to applying our conceptual framework.

Case Analysis and Selection

Most case studies focus only on stable negotiated settlements (Hartzell, 1999). Instead, we compare one peace process that has ended (Oslo) with one that continues (Belfast Good Friday Agreement, BGFA). Including a 'failed' case enables an assessment of how variations in peace processes affect their outcomes. In the absence of such a comparison, the hypothesized sources of failure or success may be spurious. As discussed at length below and summarized in Table I, the BGF process promoted empowerment and certainty in several ways that the Oslo process did not. Observers familiar with only the Oslo process have often failed to recognize either these limitations or their significance. Nonetheless, the line between failure and success should not be drawn too starkly. A comparison reveals not only weaknesses in the Oslo process, but also relative strengths

³ Detailed negotiated settlements carry high transaction costs in terms of being time consuming, cumbersome, and expensive. Nonetheless, these transaction costs are lower than the human costs of managing risk through collective violence.

compared to the BGF process. As a result, our analysis highlights practical possibilities for alternative practices and outcomes in *both* cases.

The two cases are suitable for comparison. The causes and dynamics of ethnic conflict are likely to affect the origins, trajectories, and outcomes of peace processes. The two cases selected share similar causes. Colonialism, ethnic-based political competition, strong identity boundaries, and ethnic stratification have all contributed to political violence in both Northern Ireland and the Middle East (see Byrne, 1999). Regarding dynamics, both conflicts are intractable in that they have been characterized by high, ongoing levels of intergroup violence that has not been amenable to reduction through negotiation.

Beyond these similarities, the concurrence of the BGF and Oslo peace processes helps to control for differences in historical context that could affect the origins, trajectories, and outcomes of these processes. Both peace processes have taken place in a post-Cold War context characterized by democratic transition and a growing international commitment to conflict management (Gurr, Marshall & Khosla, 2000). This contemporaneous character helps us to better pinpoint their immediate limitations in the absence of post hoc rationalizations for actions by conflict participants. The immediacy of the crises also offers a window of opportunity for influencing participants as they assess the past and look towards the future.

In addition to their shared historical setting, the peace processes possess other important similarities. Both used proximity talks to get parties to negotiate. Both involved ceasefires preceded by secret negotiations between paramilitary groups and governments. Both addressed issues of disarmament, amnesty for political prisoners, and reform of security practices. Both also lacked significant United Nations involve-

ment. And despite promising starts, both peace processes have experienced crisis.

While similarities make comparison between the cases appropriate, important differences should be noted. Israel is a sovereign state with a strong military. Unionists, on the other hand, have not controlled a state since 1972, when the British government imposed direct rule on Northern Ireland. Although Unionists primarily comprise a militarized police force, they are heavily reliant upon the British armed forces in repressing Republican insurgency. Whereas colonization in Ireland ended centuries ago, Israel continues to use settlements to facilitate the annexation of Palestinian lands. And while expansion beyond the pre-1967 borders is generally opposed by the international community, as reflected in United Nations resolutions, Israel receives consistent support for its policies from the United States. As will be discussed in detail, these differences have important implications for the two peace processes to be examined. The relatively greater power of Israelis over Palestinians compared to Unionists over Nationalists presents more formidable challenges to empowerment and confidence building. In particular, ongoing colonization exacerbates zero-sum game assumptions on both sides. And while the settlements give the Israeli government another bargaining chip, it is a hard one to cash in, given hardline opposition to ending colonization. While British sovereignty over Northern Ireland increases the power of Unionists relative to Nationalists, the dependency of Unionists upon the British government as the ultimate arbiter of their constitutional fate creates conditions of uncertainty that weaken Unionist support for peace processes. Several additional differences regarding dimensions of the peace process are discussed below. Rather than reducing the utility of comparison, these differences help us to identify promising

Table I. Comparison of the Belfast Good Friday and Oslo Peace Processes

	<i>Process</i>			
	<i>Belfast Good Friday (BGF)</i>		<i>Oslo</i>	
	Short term (ST) Unionist/Nationalist	Long term (LT) Unionist/Nationalist	Short term Israeli/Palestinian	Long term Israeli/Palestinian
Shared strengths				
Inclusion of militant nationalists	+			+
International pressure/support	+			+
Relative strengths and weaknesses				
<i>Territorial status</i>				
BGF: more ST and LT certainty	+ / -	- / +		
Oslo: less ST and LT certainty			- / -	- / -
<i>Minority safeguards</i>				
BGF: extensive	- / +	+ / +		
Oslo: minimal			+ / -	- / -
<i>Scope of agreements</i>				
BGF: wide	+ / +	- / -		
Oslo: narrow			- / -	+ / +
<i>Language of agreements</i>				
BGF: ambiguous	+ / +	- / -		
Oslo: clear			- / -	+ / +
<i>Popular input and consent</i>				
BGF: consultation and two referenda		+		
Oslo: little consultation; no referenda				-
<i>Repression of dissent</i>				
BGF: restrained, intragroup		+		
Oslo: sweeping, intergroup				-
<i>Role of the US government</i>				
BGF: minority group patron		+		
Oslo: dominant group patron				-
<i>Dependency on US government</i>				
BGF: more dependent		-		
Oslo: less dependent				+
Shared weaknesses				
Zero-sum game assumptions		-		-
Policing identity boundaries		-		-
Elite manipulation		-		-
Civil society: excluded and mostly hostile		-		-

+ indicates that case attribute has strengthened the peace process.

- indicates that case attribute has weakened the peace process.

new paths towards success. Table I summarizes our comparison of the strengths and weaknesses of the two peace processes identified using our conceptual framework. We begin with an examination of shared strengths.

Shared Strengths

Two features of the BGFA and the Oslo Accords (i.e. the Israeli–Palestinian Declaration of Principles, the Interim Agreement, and subsequent clarifications such as the

Cairo Agreement and the Wye River Memorandum) helped these processes to last longer and achieve higher levels of implementation than previous peace initiatives. First, both peace processes included militant nationalists. By increasing influence over potential spoilers through the negotiation process and binding agreements, inclusion of militants increased the power of other participants. At the same time, inclusion brought greater power to militant nationalists previously excluded from the polity.

In Northern Ireland, seven formal peace initiatives failed prior to the BGFA. The BGFA has lasted longer than any previous effort, in large part because political parties supportive of major paramilitary groups became signatories. In particular, the unprecedented inclusion of Sinn Féin galvanized Republican support for the peace process while reducing Republican spoiler violence as a destabilizing factor. By establishing a Northern Ireland Assembly and ministerial positions, the BGFA increased the institutional political power of not only Nationalists, but also Republican signatories.

Similarly, the Oslo process eventually included militant Israeli nationalists, with a Likud-led Israeli government agreeing to the Wye River Memorandum. And while Palestinian militants were not part of the negotiating team, Hamas did have a representative in Arafat's cabinet until the outbreak of the second intifada in 2000. By bringing about the creation of a Palestinian Authority, the Oslo process provided the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) with greater political power. In turn, the Israeli government received formal, binding assurances of security cooperation. Militant nationalist supporters of the peace process are less vulnerable to accusations of betraying the ethnic group by making compromises. As a result, these leaders were able to make concessions to sustain the momentum of the initiatives. Nonetheless, as the electoral

downfall of both David Trimble in Northern Ireland and Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel demonstrate, militant credentials may prove insufficient to prevent successful challenges by other hardliners who cry betrayal. Additional sources of pressure for compromise were needed.

Second, external actors used their power over conflict participants on behalf of peace processes. In both cases, the international community exerted considerable support and pressure for negotiated settlements. Norwegian intervention at the request of the PLO paved the way for the first Oslo Accords – signed at the White House on 13 September 1993. Subsequent intervention by the Clinton administration kept the peace process afloat. The administration also played a key role in bringing about the BGFA and bolstering the peace process in Northern Ireland during times of crisis.

Relative Strengths and Weaknesses

Beyond these shared strengths, there exist areas where one of the peace processes possessed advantages relative to the other. We now discuss these differences in terms of agreement provisions, agreement implementation, and third-party interventions.

Agreement Provisions

Short-term certainty regarding the territorial status of Northern Ireland generated Unionist support for the BGFA, while long-term certainty increased Nationalist support. The Agreement specifies that Northern Ireland will remain part of the United Kingdom until the majority of the populations in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland wish otherwise. A referendum passed in the Republic of Ireland changed Articles 2 and 3 of the Republic's constitution, replacing the claim of *de jure* sovereignty over Northern Ireland with an aspiration of territorial unity of the Irish people, subject to the consent of majorities

in both jurisdictions. With Unionists comprising the majority of Northern Ireland's population, these provisions provide Unionists with a higher degree of short-term certainty. On the other hand, the provision holds out the possibility of eventual political reunification of Ireland should Nationalists become a majority of Northern Ireland's population. With demographic changes favoring Nationalists, the greater certainty of favorable long-term political change has played a key role in generating Nationalist support for the Agreement (McGarry, 2002).

The Oslo process provided a lesser degree of certainty regarding sovereignty issues. The creation of a Palestinian Authority signaled a possible transition towards the establishment and mutual recognition of two independent, sovereign states – Israel and Palestine. Nonetheless, other aspects of the Agreement heightened uncertainty about the transition. Unlike the majority consent principle in the BGFA, Oslo negotiators deliberately avoided final-status questions. Nonetheless, a strong Palestinian Authority (PA) governing the totality of the Occupied Territories could have quelled concerns over the lack of explicit commitment to creating an independent Palestinian state. As noted by Jacobsen (2000: 9), however, this was not the case: 'far from granting quid pro quo regional autonomy, they [the Oslo Accords] deny the Palestinian Authority the rights normally confirmed by statehood (which cannot be reversed even if the status is later granted, pro forma) and the rights accorded to occupied peoples'. The Accords provided the PA with a discontinuous set of lands covering less than half of the West Bank.⁴ Failure to increase certainty in this regard undermined Palestinian support for the Oslo process.

⁴ Under the Interim Agreement or Oslo B, 90% of the Palestinian population was to be ruled by a Palestinian Council, but in an area covering less than 30% of the West Bank. The Wye River Memorandum transferred an additional 10% of the West Bank to the Palestinian Authority.

Like the territorial dimensions of the state, protection of minority rights also affects levels of certainty. The BGFA contains 'double minority safeguards' that protect both Unionists and Nationalists regardless of the territorial dimensions of the state. Provisions include reforming policing and the judicial system, establishing a Human Rights Commission, promoting equal economic opportunity, and granting equal state recognition of the cultures of both ethno-nationalist groups. While contributing to Unionist opposition in the short term, these provisions assisted in generating high levels of support for the Agreement among the Nationalist minority. In the long term, these same provisions, if fully implemented, will benefit Unionists should they become a minority in Northern Ireland in both numerical and structural terms.

The Oslo process never developed similar safeguards – either for the roughly 18% of Israeli citizens who are Palestinian or for the thousands of Jewish settlers in the Occupied Territories who may eventually find themselves in a Palestinian state. While certain to arouse opposition among those viewing political inclusion, social equality, and cultural recognition as threats to their visions of ethnically pure nation states, the provision of minority safeguards in any future peace initiative constitutes a prerequisite for both long-term domestic and interstate political stability (Rouhana, 1998). Inclusion of an ethnic minority blunts the impetus towards the violent pursuit of irredentist objectives. Immediate opposition to measures that promote long-term political stability highlights the importance of provisions and strategies for implementing negotiated settlements.

Agreement Implementation

Because of its effects upon levels of certainty, the clarity and specificity of language in an agreement have important consequences for both the short-term and long-term viability

of peace processes. Broad-based agreements with ambiguous implementation language generate popular support in the short term, but undermine support in the long term. Conversely, narrow agreements with precise implementation language reduce popular support in the short term, but ultimately promote it in the long term.

By covering most issues of central importance to Unionists and Nationalists alike, the BGFA addressed enough of the aspirations of both sides to justify its perceived limitations. Provisions covering decommissioning, the principle of majority consent, and the affirmation of Northern Ireland's status as part of the United Kingdom, the dismantling of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and devolution increased Unionist short-term support for the Agreement. Power-sharing in the form of a Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive, a British-Irish Council, the cross-border North-South Ministerial Council, police and judicial reforms, the equality agenda, parity of esteem, and the long-term prospect of reunification should Nationalists become a majority of the Northern Ireland population all increased Nationalist short-term support.

Securing consent across the political spectrum to a comprehensive agreement, however, required textual ambiguities in key areas covered under its terms (Ruane & Todd, 2001; Shirlow, 2001). For instance, while committing the signatories to 'the total disarmament of all paramilitary organizations', the Agreement does not specify exactly how disarmament will occur (Northern Ireland Office, 1998: 22). Signatories are simply instructed to 'work constructively and in good faith with the Independent Commission, and to use any influence they may have to achieve the decommissioning of all paramilitary weapons'. As both sides insisted upon maintaining self-interested interpretations of what was promised to and by the other side, deep-

ening uncertainty undermined confidence in the peace process. Ulster Unionist Party leaders promised their followers the rapid disarmament of the IRA. Despite the Agreement's confirmation of signatories' intentions to decommission all paramilitary weapons within two years, comprehensive decommissioning of Republican weaponry did not take place until 2005 – seven years after the Agreement was signed. Consequently, Unionists have blocked implementation of provisions of the Agreement valued by Republicans. Caught between Scylla and Charybdis, the signatories have stumbled along, hoping that clarifying key provisions of the Agreement might steer them through dire straits.

In contrast, successive agreements signed during the Oslo process focused narrowly upon the 'land for security' formula. A Palestinian Authority would receive control over a segment of the Occupied Territories in exchange for both formally recognizing and substantively assisting the existence of the State of Israel. Consequently, several areas of significance to both ethno-nationalist groups remained unaddressed. None of the agreements provided for the right of return of 3.5 million Palestinians who had been displaced as a result of colonization. None of the agreements decided the political status of Jerusalem or the fate of 200,000 Jewish settlers in the Occupied Territories. While the narrow scope of the Accords facilitated their signing, the long list of outstanding issues fueled immediate criticisms on both sides that too much had been given away for too little in return.

Nonetheless, the short-term disadvantage of the narrow scope of the Oslo Accords was offset by the advantages of textual clarity. The limited scope of the various agreements reached during the Oslo process allowed for clear language regarding implementation of its provisions. By providing specific mechanisms and timetables, four separate

agreements signed in 1994 and 1995 facilitated a fairly smooth process for the transfer of land and powers to a Palestinian Authority. The rapid establishment of the Authority increased Palestinian support for the peace process while presenting hardline Israeli opponents with a *fait accompli*. PLO implementation of pledges made as part of the Declaration of Principles also increased Israeli public confidence in the peace process. Had other weaknesses not derailed the process, the initial success of implementing the Accords would have provided a solid foundation for subsequent negotiations to widen the scope of the settlement.

While ambiguous language has precipitated crisis, other facets of the implementation process have strengthened the BGF peace process by empowering participants at multiple levels. Both Unionist and Nationalist political parties and paramilitary organizations solicited feedback from their constituents during the negotiation process. Along with a cross-community grass-roots campaign, these consultations helped the signatories to gain formal popular consent to the Agreement. On 22 May 1998, successful referenda in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland gave the peace process added legitimacy. With 71% of voters in Northern Ireland and 94% of voters in the Republic of Ireland supporting the agreement, the referenda constitute an island-wide, popular mandate for all signatories to fully implement their promises.

In contrast, the top-down nature of the Oslo negotiations largely excluded popular participation in the peace process. Successive Israeli governments failed to inform, canvass, or consult with the general public during negotiations. By exacerbating uncertainty, exclusion denied the Oslo process an important source of political power – legitimacy (Hermann & Newman, 2000). The failure to hold referenda in Israel and the Occupied Territories fueled allegations that the Accords

were the products of international pressure rather than of domestic mandate. Grass-roots opposition has also manifested itself in the form of spoiler violence.

By raising the costs of participation and increasing levels of uncertainty, spoiler violence threatens the stability of peace processes. Northern Ireland is no exception, with several hundred bomb attacks, shootings, and punishment beatings since the signing of the BGFA. Nonetheless, pro-Agreement actors have been largely effective in managing dissent. While splinter groups, like the Real IRA, continue to operate, their attacks are relatively infrequent compared to pre-ceasefire Republican operations. When major acts of violence by splinter groups have occurred, such as the Omagh bombing in August 1998 that killed 29 people, leaders of Sinn Féin have been quick to condemn the attacks. And while Loyalist paramilitary violence also persists, coordinating structures such as the Loyalist Commission have generated interorganizational pressure to refrain from activities that would derail the peace process. Opposition to the Agreement has, by Northern Ireland standards, been met in a restrained manner. Targeted, restrained, intragroup repression by paramilitary organizations has succeeded in avoiding alienating constituents while also preventing dissidents from destabilizing the Agreement by antagonizing other participants in the peace process.⁵

In the Oslo process, however, pro-Agreement actors were not as effective in dealing with spoiler violence. Neither side effectively prevented dissident elements from attacking the other group. Limited and

⁵ The importance of avoiding intergroup repression can be seen in the consequences of the Republican murder of a dissident Loyalist paramilitary leader in prison in December 1997. The shooting resulted in a rapid escalation of intercommunity violence that left ten people dead within the space of a month, precipitating a major crisis in negotiations.

largely ineffective intragroup repression has invited intergroup repression. Provocations by armed Jewish settlers have led to violent, indiscriminate reprisals. Suicide bombing attacks on Israel have led to sweeping IDF repression in the Occupied Territories. Both responses have decreased support for the peace process as much as the spoiler violence. Beyond the dynamics of contention among conflict participants, third-party interventions have played important though varied roles in the two peace processes.

Third-Party Interventions

By shifting the balance of power towards the less powerful ethnic group, the US government has played a constructive role in the BGF process. The Clinton administration used the 'special relationship' to generate bargaining leverage for Republicans. By granting a visa for the President of Sinn Féin, Gerry Adams, to visit the United States, the administration not only encouraged Republicans to participate in the peace process, but also placed pressure upon the British government to include Republicans at the bargaining table. As head of the International Body on Arms Decommissioning, former US Senator George Mitchell provided the principles through which Sinn Féin could be included in the peace process without the requirement of the IRA immediately decommissioning its weaponry. As chair of the multiparty negotiations that resulted in the BGFA, Mitchell played the role of impartial mediator and facilitator. Neither the British government (with its links to Unionists) nor the Irish government (with its links to Nationalists) could have served effectively in this capacity.⁶

⁶ Unionists did not immediately perceive the US government to be impartial. The Clinton administration officials devoted considerable time and effort to convincing Unionists that the US government did not have a political agenda for Northern Ireland beyond facilitating the peace process. See Darby & Mac Ginty (2000: 90).

In contrast, by adding to the leverage of the dominant ethnic group, US government policies have hindered the peace process in the Middle East. In the Palestinian–Israeli case, the US government has played a similar role to that of the British government in Northern Ireland – the reluctant but ultimate guarantor of the interests of the dominant ethno-nationalist group. As long as the US government remains a partisan actor in the conflict, any agreement that it mediates will be vulnerable to accusations of pro-Israeli bias by Palestinians and their international supporters.

The contrasting roles played by the US government in the two cases have contributed to very different assumptions regarding the potential for a forcible solution to conflict. By the early 1990s, both the British government and the Irish Republican Army believed that they could not impose their political will on the other through force of arms (Darby & Mac Ginty, 2000: 63–64). In contrast, some Israeli strategists believe that they can defeat the intifada through a combination of military operations and the expansion of settlements. US government military aid and loans for Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories encourage this belief. The vastly superior coercive capacities of the Israeli state have made a militarily imposed solution appear more viable. Consequently, peace initiatives are not seen as the only way forward by a large segment of Israeli policymakers. On the contrary, a proposed military solution resonates more with traditional Israeli and Palestinian policy discourses and their shared assumption that security can be achieved only through military strength and domination. Under the Sharon government, the Israel Defense Forces have systematically destroyed the Palestinian political infrastructure and leadership (Kimmerling & Migdal, 2003). As long as a belief in conquest prevails, the benefits of a negotiated settlement are

unlikely to be perceived as sufficiently high to outweigh the costs.

Because of the major impact of political transition in the United States upon both peace processes, the greater relevance of other states in the Oslo process has helped to provide a more sustained international pressure and support for continuance of the peace initiative in the Middle East than for the peace initiative in Northern Ireland. As one indication of the wider scope of international participation in the Oslo process, preliminary negotiations that provided the basis for the Israeli–Palestinian Declaration of Principles took place in Madrid, Moscow, and Oslo. Two subsequent agreements implementing the principles were negotiated in Paris and Cairo. Norwegian politicians played a key role in assisting the Israelis and Palestinians agree upon a draft of what became the Oslo Accords. In contrast, the relative disinterest of the Bush administration in the Northern Ireland process, while welcomed by many Unionists, has contributed to intransigence and crisis.

Shared Weaknesses

Both peace processes suffered from weaknesses endemic to efforts to resolve intractable conflicts. First, by negatively affecting estimations of the impact of concessions upon power and certainty, zero-sum assumptions have generated substantial opposition. By requiring concessions to opponents, peace processes are, under zero-sum assumptions, disempowering and threatening.

Zero-sum assumptions manifest themselves in both Republican and Loyalist opposition to the BGFA. With direct ties between Northern Ireland and the Irish government limited primarily to a cross-border Ministerial Council, where any minister on the council can veto a policy initiative, dissident Republicans have argued

that the BGFA has even less of an ‘Irish dimension’ than the Sunningdale Agreement of 1973. Moreover, removing Articles 2 and 3 from the Irish constitution legitimates British rule in Northern Ireland. From this perspective, the peace process poses a serious threat to the objective of Irish reunification. On the other hand, dissident Loyalists view the North–South Ministerial Council and the British–Irish Council as an assault on British rule that paves the way towards a united Ireland. In both cases, concessions are viewed as betraying the nation and even as surrendering to the enemy.

The Oslo process offers another example of how compromise leads to conflict by violating zero-sum assumptions. Palestinian hardliners condemned PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat for recognizing a state established by force of arms against the wishes of its longstanding inhabitants. Israeli hardliners condemned Israeli prime ministers who were willing to give part of the land that was the ancient birthright of the Jewish people (Kimmerling & Migdal, 2003: 363). As both sides began hedging to appease hardliners, the peace process collapsed.

By partially recognizing the aspirations of both nations, the BGFA and Oslo Accords threatened the ‘us versus them’ distinctions that provide certainty of purpose and belonging. During an anti-Oslo Accords rally in Tel Aviv, a protester had a picture of Arafat superimposed upon a picture of Rabin, implying that the Israeli prime minister was the PLO chair’s puppet. After a peace rally in November 1995, a disgruntled Jewish settler hoping to derail the peace process assassinated Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. In response to the mostly symbolic reconciliation policies of a Unionist prime minister during the 1960s, Reverend Ian Paisley responded, ‘He is a bridge builder he tells us. A traitor and a bridge are very much alike for they both go over to the other side’ (Moloney & Pollak, 1986: 120).

As the quote illustrates, religious and political elites in both Northern Ireland and the Middle East have played upon the palpable fears of the other group to advance their own ambitions. In 2002, police raids on Sinn Féin's parliamentary office revealed secret British government documents. While it would be naive to assume that any of the pro-Agreement paramilitary groups or the Northern Ireland security forces have stopped gathering intelligence on one another, opponents of the Agreement used the revelation to raise Unionist fears that Republicans are using the peace process as a deceptive cover for planning another armed uprising. These opponents not only raised fears, but also increased their shares of the Unionist vote considerably. The anti-BGFA Democratic Unionist Party led by the same Reverend Paisley now has the largest share of Unionist votes in Northern Ireland.

In Israel, the Likud Party has played upon fears and mistrust of Palestinians to gain and sustain political power (Hermann & Newman, 2000). In October 2000, Zionists marched through the Palestinian part of Jerusalem to a sacred Islamic site – the Haram al Sharif (Temple Mount) mosque. The leader of the march, Ariel Sharon, made a speech pronouncing that all of Jerusalem was and would forever remain under Israel's control. Widespread rioting throughout the Occupied Territories ensued. Clashes between the IDF and the Palestinian Authority police took place. Many were killed and hundreds injured. Most of the casualties were Palestinian civilians. Palestinian paramilitary groups responded by launching attacks on Israeli civilians. Hardline Israeli politicians, in turn, used these attacks as support for their views that Palestinians would never be satisfied until Israel was destroyed. Playing upon these fears, Sharon was elected prime minister in February 2001.

Grass-roots opposition, however, cannot be attributed solely to top-down manipu-

lation. In both cases, segments of civil society opposing peace processes are more powerful than supportive segments. Owing to the relative strength of its sectarian segments, civil society has failed to sustain pressure on behalf of peace processes. After the non-party 'Yes' campaign in support of the May 1998 referendum on the BGFA, the third sector has played a less significant role in sustaining the peace process in Northern Ireland. Along with the perennially destabilizing influence of Loyalist parades during the marching season, high levels of Unionist grass-roots mobilization during the November 2003 elections played an important role in the victory of the Democratic Unionist Party. The declining influence of non-party, non-nationalist civil society reflects the heavy emphasis placed upon high-level diplomacy and the establishment of formal political institutions; ongoing hostilities and suspicions towards non-aligned, cross-community organizations; and difficulties in developing cross-community organizational capacities in the context of a highly segregated and deeply divided society.

Similar to Northern Ireland, there was greater grass-roots pressure against rather than for the Oslo process. While well-timed mass peace rallies occasionally bolstered the fortunes of politicians supporting the early stages of the Oslo process, protests and violence against supporters of the peace process were more common. Israeli occupation and Arafat's efforts to consolidate power stunted the development of Palestinian civil society. Within Israel, the strong state for many years has constrained the development of both Jewish and Arab-Palestinian civil society. Even with more state facilitation, the relative absence of equitable, positive interaction across ethno-nationalist lines on the grass-roots level translates into weak cross-community organizational capacities. As in Northern Ireland, members of nonaligned organizations often face

allegations of co-optation and betraying the nation. Given the shared weaknesses of the BGF and Oslo processes, what measures can improve the chances that subsequent initiatives will succeed in creating lasting settlements?

Strategies for Success

Drawing upon the combined strengths of both peace initiatives will improve the chances for the lasting resolution of two intractable conflicts. In terms of shared strengths, it will remain important to include militant nationalists in negotiations. As implausible as it may seem, including Reverend Paisley and the Real IRA in the Northern Ireland peace process and Hamas in the Middle East peace process holds out the best prospects for both maximizing the power of participants and minimizing the power of opponents. In addition, international public opinion must continue to exert pressure, calling for reciprocal concessions and compromises that provide the foundation for long-term peace.

In addition, the Middle East peace process might fruitfully borrow from certain strengths of the Northern Ireland process. In particular, an explicit commitment to a two-state solution and safeguarding minority rights will help to reduce uncertainty. By adding the power of legitimacy, consistent, open communication with rank and file constituents during negotiations, followed by referenda in Israel and the Occupied Territories, would help to create the political breathing space for elites to deliver upon provisions of the agreement that are important to the other side. Both the Israeli government and the PLO would be served well by engaging in the type of restrained, targeted, intragroup repression of dissidents seen in Northern Ireland since 1998.

Perhaps of greatest importance, the US government would better facilitate peace in

the Middle East if it moved closer to the role that it has played in the BGF peace process. Rather than contributing to intransigence by increasing Israeli military and settlement capacities, the USA could use Israel's dependency as leverage for encouraging negotiated accommodation with Palestinians.⁷ Just as the British government looked to the US government to broker the BGFA, the US government might look to the European Union to broker a new set of accords. In the process, the US government can strengthen relations with its European allies while removing a major source of tension with most states belonging to the United Nations.

The BGF peace process might also fruitfully borrow from strengths of the Oslo process. Developing clear implementation language specifying exactly what is to be done by whom, how, and when will increase support for the peace process, by increasing accountability and reducing uncertainty. Linking related areas of importance can assist in building confidence and facilitating agreement implementation. Similar to the Wye River Memorandum's linking of Israeli military withdrawal with the Palestinian Authority's repression of paramilitary organizations attacking Israel, linking sequentially the decommissioning of weaponry by Republican and Loyalist paramilitary groups with reductions in the number of British Army bases, as well as the disarming of the Police Service of Northern Ireland, promises advances for all sides. Providing the European Union a greater role in the peace process would not only facilitate European integration, but also insulate the peace process from the uncertainty resulting from changes in US foreign policy priorities. While the two peace

⁷ Precedents for this type of policy exist. In 1991, the Bush administration used a Congressional debate over US loan guarantees as leverage to get the Israeli government to participate in the Madrid Conference. The conference helped to lay the groundwork for the Oslo Accords.

processes suffered shared weaknesses, several strategies offer promise for overcoming them.

Meeting in the Middle: Accommodating Conflicting Nationalisms

Viewing national aspirations as mutually exclusive has limited support for peace processes. Over time, nationalists must rework their all-or-nothing assumptions regarding the relationship between the nation and the state if harmonious ethnic relations are to ensue (McGarry, 2002; Smootha, 2002). In Northern Ireland, this means the acceptance of active roles for both the British and Irish governments in Northern Ireland affairs. In the Middle East, this means the acceptance of two separate states coexisting peacefully. While such arrangements do not completely satisfy either nation's aspirations, they do not completely *deny* these aspirations either. Rather than being disempowering, peace processes are collectively empowering. Participants assist each other in achieving nationalist aspirations to a greater degree than either could in the absence of mutual consent.

We Are Them: Reconstructing Conflicting Identities

Because each ethno-nationalist group's identity depends upon vilifying and castigating the other, antagonisms are likely to continue even with a formal political settlement. Scholars and practitioners have advocated three long-term strategies for reconstructing ethno-nationalist identities. Some have called for cultivating gender, class, regional, ideological, and consumer-based identities that cut across ethnic lines (Boal, Keane & Livingstone, 1997; Sarsar, 2002). Others have proposed a multicultural strategy, where ethnic groups condone, if not affirm, the nonviolent expression of each other's collective identities (Smithey & Kurtz, 2003). Still others have called for the reconstruction of collective identities in ways

that lower group boundaries (Rouhana, 1998). While it is unlikely that any one of these strategies will immediately reduce political violence, a combination of the three may have such a long-term effect.

Foiling the Spoilers: Responding Effectively to Elite Manipulation

While recent studies have noted how elite manipulation destabilizes peace processes, specific suggestions for overcoming this obstacle have been mostly anecdotal. Based upon our analysis of the two cases, we recommend the following strategies. Participants in peace initiatives must secure and implement enough promises so as to satisfy their rank-and-file constituents that the peace process is in their interest. Just as political violence escalates in a tit-for-tat manner, peace initiatives grow stronger when all sides reciprocate good-faith concessions. As Darby & Mac Ginty (2000) point out, however, waging peace runs the risk of alienating one's own followers and paving the way for the rise of hardline political opportunists. Accordingly, peace agreements must be implemented rapidly so that hardliners do not have the time to capitalize upon fears or disillusionment with a lack of progress.

Additionally, leaders must educate their supporters about the costs of having fears manipulated by opponents of peace processes. Giving in to fears of the other community will lead to self-fulfilling prophecies, where actions fuel mutual fears rather than abate them (Bar-Tal, Jacobson & Klieman, 1998). Security for one group can be achieved only through actions that enhance the security of the other. Beyond promoting recognition of interdependence, leaders should educate supporters about the strategic advantages of concessions. Granting major negotiating demands of the other group ensures that any subsequent resort to arms on its part would precipitate internal divisions while isolating it internationally.

From this vantage point, concessions increase rather than decrease group power.

*Peace from Above and Below:
Strengthening 'Civil' Society*

The 'uncivil' character of civil society presents a major obstacle to both peace processes. Nonetheless, both cases provide instances of mass peace mobilization. In Northern Ireland, the Peace People, the Opsahl Commission, and the Yes Campaign all drew high levels of support from both Unionists and Nationalists (Guelke, 2003). Gush Shalom (Peace Bloc), Ta'ayoosh (Co-existence), and Women in Black have similarly organized high-profile cross-community peace campaigns (Helman & Rapoport, 1997). And while cross-community contacts are more extensively developed at the elite level, an increasing amount of grass-roots dialogue has emerged. In the long term, desegregation will facilitate the formation of heterogeneous networks that will provide a stronger foundation for a more 'civil' civil society. These structural changes should both reflect and reinforce changes in assumptions and identities discussed above.

It is difficult to overstate the importance of strengthening non-sectarian civil society to sustaining peace processes. First, even in the absence of encouragement from above, grass-roots peace campaigns have provided discourses and policy recommendations that elites have subsequently drawn upon to mobilize support for negotiated settlements (Chazan, 2005; Guelke, 2003). Second, by demanding that all parties adhere equally to human rights standards and implement fully their promises as part of negotiated settlements, a nonviolent peace movement drawing high levels of participation from both communities can assist politicians in making concessions because of, rather than in spite of, popular pressure. Third, a strong non-sectarian civil society is likely to give a greater voice to groups frequently excluded

from policymaking. In Northern Ireland, members of the Women's Coalition regularly encountered derision and overt hostility to their participation in the negotiation and implementation of the BGFA. In the Middle East, where security issues are often considered to be 'men's business', women have lacked a formal institutional voice comparable to that achieved by the Women's Coalition. Given the prominent role played by women in peace mobilization, strengthening civil society will help to bring women's views and experiences more to bear. Whereas elites have primarily constructed security in terms of the physical safety of members of one nation, prominent women's peace organizations have redefined the concept in ways that highlight human rights, interdependence, and the insecurity that comes with the denial of basic needs. We believe that promoting this latter conception of security strengthens peace processes by emphasizing cooperation rather than domination as the basis for increasing group power.

*Atonement: Breaking the Cycle of
Violence*

As repression justifies rebellion and 'terrorism' justifies repression, political violence rapidly intensifies. One common strategy to break the cycle of violence is for both sides to acknowledge the human rights violations that they have committed, to express deep regrets for these violations, and to commit themselves to nonviolent forms of political contention (Maoz, 2000). There are, of course, dangers in dredging up the past. Old grievances are given new life. Forgiveness can be seen as disrespectful towards victims. Continued denial of wrongdoing may provoke anger. Powerful actors can manipulate the process to highlight the human rights violations of opponents while concealing their own wrongdoings. Outside of formal processes, much in the way of reconciliation can be accomplished through what Sarsar (2002:

322) terms 'education for coexistence'. Such an education offers multiple perspectives on events, celebrates the accomplishments of members of both ethno-nationalist groups, and eliminates the myths that fuel stereotypes and hatred.

Conclusion

This study was written amidst setbacks in efforts to bring lasting political settlements to the conflicts in Northern Ireland and the Middle East. The 'security perimeter' around the Occupied Territories reminds us of the 'Peace Line' – a wall built in 1969 to separate Loyalist and Republican neighborhoods in West Belfast. Overflowing refugee camps and the apparent effort to eliminate the Palestinian political leadership also remind us of mass internment and the shoot-to-kill policies of the Northern Ireland Security Forces. Both policies increased support for armed Republicanism. We again expect the same radicalizing effects upon Palestinians.

Despite these setbacks, we also note how close both peace processes have come to bringing about just and lasting settlements of two conflicts. As Table I demonstrates, there is cause for optimism. The large number of plus signs for both cases reveals that both peace processes had a multitude of strengths that contributed to their unprecedented duration and progress. In particular, both peace processes contained innovative attributes that empowered participants and provided a greater degree of certainty. Differences across the cases also suggest fruitful opportunities for strategic cross-fertilization, learning from the strengths of one process to assist in remedying deficiencies in the other. We believe that by building upon promising elements of past peace processes, conflict resolution scholars and practitioners can significantly improve the chances that the next round of major peace initiatives will, mercifully, be the last.

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