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Student Research

The Language of Peace: Translating the Lessons of the Northern Ireland Peace Process to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

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BELFER CENTER
for Science and International Affairs

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All content and views presented in this PAE rest solely with the authors.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Policy Problem

For more than 60 years, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has persisted as one of the most intractable issues in international affairs. New governments, realities on the ground and violence have stalled a resolution. Today, disagreements over Israeli settlement expansion, and a general lack of political will, are the primary impediments to peace. Throughout the Israeli, Palestinian and diaspora communities, frustration at prior failed attempts at peace and pessimism about the future of a genuine process prevail.

Our Charge

Around the world, ethno-political conflicts have carried on for centuries and, in some cases, have witnessed meaningful political resolutions. One such relative success is Northern Ireland's peace process. On April 13th, 1998 Catholic and Protestant leaders signed the Good Friday Peace Accord and, in doing so, signaled an end to violence as a means to an end and ushered in an era of political process and, ultimately, reconciliation. In the twelve years since the signing, Northern Ireland has demonstrated not only how to bring the relevant parties together to come to an agreement but also how to sustain that agreement through dialogue and the resulting increase in trust among actors.

In this policy analysis we seek to understand both what lessons can be taken from the Northern Ireland peace process and how best to apply them in the Israeli-Palestinian context. Recognizing that historical analogies are never identical, we look to draw out the relevant factors that can inform recommendations for action for a variety of actors.

Lessons Learned

Through a thorough literature review, in-depth interviews with key British, Irish and American leaders and field study, we have gleaned seven key lessons from the Northern Ireland process. They are as follows in order of importance:

1. Political leadership was critical.
2. Strong principles of non-violence, constant dialogue, inclusion of all parties and addressing the issues holistically were necessary for maintaining momentum in the process.
3. The political influence of the Irish American diaspora was critical in pressuring the U.S. political leadership to shine a spotlight on the conflict.
4. Public support for the process was essential in allowing the lengthy negotiations to go on and in upholding the ultimate agreement.

5. Internationalization of the process lent legitimacy to the opposed parties.
6. Economic gains were a necessary but not sufficient (pre)condition for a political solution.
7. Timing mattered.

Translating Lessons

Given the lessons from Northern Ireland, we looked at two criteria to determine recommendations for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The first criterion was whether or not the conditions for the “lesson learned” are present in the region. If the conditions are present, like political will, we asked how our recommendations could bolster or move those conditions to a critical tipping point. If the conditions are not present, we asked how they could be introduced to the situation and determined if it was appropriate to do so. The second criterion we analyzed was whether and how we might be able to effect change in these areas.

Recommendations & Implementation

We have divided our recommendations into three main areas: geopolitical, grassroots and economic. Our geopolitical recommendations are as follows:

1. Consider the promise of membership in select international organizations for Israel and Palestine upon settlement of a two-state solution and compliance with international law.
2. Consider the potential effect of more punitive measures against the relevant players for example trade sanctions against Israel over illegal settlements and Gaza blockade or suspension of economic aid to Palestinian Authority for refusal to come to the negotiating table.
3. Engage regional actors and call for Palestinian elections in 2010.

Our grassroots recommendations are to:

1. Identify the diaspora and civil society groups interested in finding a meaningful and fair solution to the conflict.
2. Create forums for diaspora groups to meet and engage with Irish American leadership.

And lastly, our economic recommendations are to:

1. Encourage economic and security investment in the Palestinian territories.
2. Encourage financial support for Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation projects.
3. Increase economic investment in joint Israeli-Palestinian ventures.

In implementing these recommendations, we identify and suggest solutions for obstacles that may be faced. We also offer an initial mapping of institutions and individuals that could be instrumental in implementing the grassroots recommendations. Finally, we provide key insights into the Palestinian economy that will be useful in executing the economic recommendations

A Word about the British Consulate-General Boston:

The British Consulate approached Harvard to research the proposition that, notwithstanding the cultural and historical differences among domestic and international conflicts and their corresponding peace processes, there are several possible lessons to be learned from successful reconciliations of the past and many best practices that are universally applicable. South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission process and Pádraig Ó'Malley's Helsinki Principles are just two of many such examples which have helped bring seemingly intractable conflicts to an end through a process of reconciliation and negotiation. Parallels have also been inevitably drawn between the successful Northern Ireland peace process and the now stalled Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. Considering the fact that UK itself was a party in the Northern Ireland conflict and has an important political and diplomatic role in the Middle East peace process, owing to its position as a former colonial power, the British Consulate in Boston appreciated and encouraged the research by Harvard graduate students into whether the Peace Process in the Middle East, and more specifically the Israeli and Palestinian governments and their citizenries, could benefit from Northern Ireland's experience with conflict resolution. Brendan Rivage-Seul and Melinda Kuritzky, both graduate students in public policy at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government were therefore enlisted to attempt to explore this proposition. The following report details their findings, and is meant as a contribution to the debate.

INTRODUCTION

“There will never be peace in Israel.” This was the response from a 21-year old Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) soldier stationed in the Gaza Strip when asked about the prospects for a lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians. As we learned during a recent trip to Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories, the young soldier’s words reflect a general sense of hopelessness among the Israeli and Palestinian populations vis-à-vis their nearly one hundred-year-old conflict. When thinking about this Israeli-Palestinian quagmire, it is important to remember that just fifteen years ago many people were equally pessimistic about the situation in Northern Ireland and its decades-long conflict between Catholics and Protestants. Much like the current situation in the Middle East, the reality in Northern Ireland in 1998 was that a successful peace process had evaded successive governments. Many deemed the conflict irreconcilable. That same year though the reality began to shift in a fundamental way when, after more than two-years of negotiations, the impossible became possible. On April 13th, 1998 Catholic and Protestant leaders signed the Good Friday Peace Accord, signaling an end to violence as a means to an end, and ushered in an era of political process and, ultimately, reconciliation. Finally, after 30 years of violent conflict, the “Troubles,” which claimed the lives of 3,500 individuals, were over. In the words of the Northern Ireland Secretary of State, Shaun Woodward, the peace accord illustrated “that hope can always be realized and that conflicting parties must never give up.”

The successful peace process, culminating in a shared and peaceful government, representative of all the people of Northern Ireland, raises the question of whether there are concrete lessons to be identified from it that would be instructive for the peaceful conclusion of other conflicts. The following report is an attempt to answer that question by addressing in what ways, and to what extent, there are lessons to be learned from the relatively successful Northern Ireland peace process that can be applied to the currently stagnant Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Recognizing that not all lessons can be transferred and historical analogies are never perfect, this analysis is an attempt to better understand those that *can* be transferred to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and tries to explore the best possible way in which they can be transferred.

Divided into six sections, this report begins in section one with concise historical summaries of both conflicts. It also discusses important similarities and differences between the conflicts. Section two identifies the specific lessons learned from the Northern Ireland peace process. This section highlights only those lessons that are practical. In section three, a detailed explanation of the continued disruptions in the Middle East peace process is provided. Drawing on principles of negotiation theory, an analysis of the key issues, players, and obstacles to peace, as well as the normative suggestions for ways they can be overcome, is also included. Section four explores the extent to which lessons

identified in section two are applicable to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In section five, a series of policy recommendations are proposed for U.S., European, and Middle Eastern engagement in ending this conflict. In this section, consideration is also given to the role of the global diasporas that could be involved and recommendations are given for how best to fully bring in these groups. Section six then considers the potential obstacles to these policy recommendations and ways they can be overcome. In this roadmap for implementation, special attention is given to ways of energizing the politicians and general public of all those concerned with the conflict in Israel, Palestine, and beyond. The report concludes with a brief restatement of the analysis and findings, and looks ahead to the future of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND

Northern Ireland

“It is often said that Northern Ireland has too much history.”

--Peter Hain, Former Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

While it would be impossible to fully detail the history of Northern Ireland’s struggles in a few pages, it is worth highlighting the critical turning points that led to the Good Friday Agreement signed on April 10, 1998 and the follow-up of the St. Andrews Agreement in 2006. The latter led to restoration of the Northern Ireland Assembly, Sinn Féin’s recognition of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), and a commitment to power sharing in the Executive. The modern history of the conflict began in 1921 with a partition settlement that created the Irish Free State, made up of twenty six counties in the south of the island and six counties in the north, known as Ulster. The 1921 settlement devolved power to a bicameral legislature in Northern Ireland, with a subordinate government in Belfast having authority over policing, education, local government and social services. Ultimately, however, these six northern counties would remain part of the Union (of Great Britain and Northern Ireland).

Irish republicans -- who wanted to secure a united independent state of Ireland -- saw these institutions as antagonistic to their aims. The Irish Republican Army (IRA) campaigned from the 1920s onwards, often with violence, to attend to what they saw as unfinished business, first in the south of the island and then in its north. This led to a constant state of unionist vigilance and fear that was backed with legislation protecting the Protestant majority in the region from the Catholic minority on the island. In this process, however, a system of economic discrimination was introduced against Catholics in Northern Ireland. The minority formed about one third of the population for most of the twentieth century, and currently represents around forty percent.

By the 1950s, Catholics seemed willing to accept their status in Northern Ireland, rather than a united Ireland that had been espoused in previous decades. This would only occur, though, with significant civil rights reform in the region, including the removal of discrimination in the allocation of jobs and houses, permanent emergency legislation and electoral abuses. Much of the activism was modeled after the civil rights campaigns taking place in the United States at the time, such as staging peaceful protests, marches, sit-ins and using the media to air grievances. The disorder from these campaigns, however, caused the British government to deploy troops to enforce order. Initially welcomed by Catholics and Protestants alike, eventually the British troop presence led to a revival of the republican cause. The newly formed Provisional IRA began a campaign of violence against the British army and other symbols of British authority and legitimacy.

The era, now known as “The Troubles,” witnessed a period of escalating violence from the late 1960s until the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998; a period marked by significant violence inflicted on the whole community as the British Army, Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) and the Provisional IRA carried out operations, often leading to bloody “revenge killings” by paramilitaries. Few civilians were spared as witnesses, or victims, of the conflict. Indeed, the violence reached a peak in 1972, when 468 people died. Ultimately more than 3,500 people lost their lives before the transition to a lasting peace took hold.

There were attempts to broker peace from the 1970s onwards. Those efforts tried to find a way to satisfy the diametrically opposed views of the nationalists working towards a United Ireland, and the Unionists securing ties to Britain. In 1993, the President of Ireland, Mary Robinson, and the Prime Minister of Britain, John Major, signed the *Downing Street Declaration*, which included two important elements: “to try to find a way for parties linked to paramilitary groups to enter into discussions and a constitutional guarantee to unionists that Ulster would not cease to be a part of the UK without the consent of the majority of the people.”¹

This announcement proved to be a defining moment in the negotiations as it was the first time that both governments expressed a willingness to allow the extreme nationalist party, Sinn Féin, an organization universally recognized as the political arm of the IRA, to enter the negotiations. Following this announcement, the IRA declared a ceasefire in its military operations and loyalist paramilitaries followed suit by terminating hostilities, provided the republican ceasefire held.

The momentum gathered after the *Downing Street Declaration* began to slow, however, when the British government started insisting that nationalists decommission their arms before joining discussions. In 1995, the *International Body on Decommissioning of Weapons* was formed to look at how best to decommission weapons. Former U.S. Senator George Mitchell, former Finnish Prime Minister Harri Holkeri, and former Chief of the Canadian Defense Forces General John de Chastelain chaired the independent body. As discussions between the parties began, decommissioning would become the biggest obstacle to entering negotiations. After two long years of intense negotiations, the parties agreed to the Good Friday Peace Accord, which broadly speaking granted political autonomy and civil rights equality for citizens of Northern Ireland. Ultimately, because of the factors discussed in the next section, a broad understanding that developed across parties helped convince rival factions that discussions *can* happen without compromising principles.

Figure 1. Map of Northern Ireland from: University of Texas Library

Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

“A diplomatic peace is not yet the real peace. It is an essential step in the peace process leading towards a real peace.”

-- Yitzhak Rabin, Former Israeli Prime Minister

As was the case in Northern Ireland, the conflict in the Middle East is often characterized as an historical inevitability. The idea of a “Jewish State” was first conceived in 1896 when Austrian journalist Theodor Herzl argued that the world powers should meet to discuss the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Half a century later, in 1947, the United Nations proposed partitioning then Palestine into Jewish and Arab states with Jerusalem as an international city. The British government gave up its mandate that it had held since 1922 and the state of Israel was declared in Tel Aviv following a civil war between the Jewish and Arab communities. Shortly after the declaration, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq invaded the newly formed state of Israel and, in 1949, new borders were set that encompassed about 56 percent of the territory that the British held after the independence of Jordan in 1946. These cease-fire lines became known as the “Green Line.” This partition led to the first wave of Palestinian refugees fleeing the region – between 700,000 and 800,000.

Nearly twenty years later, Israel launched a preemptive attack against Jordan, Egypt, and Syria, taking control of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Golan Heights, in what became known as the Six Day War of 1967. In 1973, Egypt and Syria retaliated in a surprise attack on the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur but were held off by the Israeli army, which ended the war by moving its forces even deeper within Syrian and Egyptian territory.

Figure 2. Map of Israel and the Occupied territories from U.S. Department of State



The implications of this war were profound. Hafez al-Assad agreed to a cease-fire on the Golan Heights in 1974 and, in 1977, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat took the unprecedented step of visiting Israel. He was the first Arab leader to implicitly recognize Israel and jump-start the peace process. U.S. President Jimmy Carter invited both Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin to a summit at Camp David to negotiate a final peace. Ultimately, the talks succeeded, and Israel and Egypt signed the Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty in 1979. Under the terms of the agreement, Israel withdrew its troops and settlers from Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, in exchange for normalized relations with Egypt.

As Israel was fighting wars against its neighbors throughout the second half of the twentieth century, the Palestinians living under Israeli occupation began what would become a long struggle for freedom and autonomy. In 1964, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was founded and ten years later was given the right to sovereignty and national independence by the United Nations. The PLO began operating out of Lebanon and launched sporadic attacks into northern Israel. The Israeli army invaded Lebanon in 1982 and forced the PLO leadership to relocate to Tunisia. Frustrated with their status,

Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza began an uprising or *intifada*, in 1987. In 1988 PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat recognized Israel's right to exist and renounced terrorism, satisfying the U.S. conditions for entering negotiations.

In 1993, Israel, under the leadership of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, and the PLO, under Arafat, signed an agreement in Norway allowing for limited Palestinian self-rule in parts of the West Bank and in Gaza. Tragically, Rabin was assassinated in 1995 by an Israeli radical Zionist. His death brought conservative Likud member Benjamin Netanyahu to power effectively halting plans to move forward with the peace process. Five years later, U.S. President Bill Clinton tried to revive peace talks between Arafat and new Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak but these negotiations ended with no agreements.

Shortly after the failed peace talks in 2000, Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon visited the sensitive site of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, sparking a second *intifada* against Israel. Judging that Arafat was complicit in the *intifada*, U.S. President George W. Bush called for his replacement. In late 2004 Arafat fell ill, passed away and was replaced by the moderate Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas. Around the same time, Ariel Sharon called for and implemented a unilateral Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and four West Bank settlements. In 2006, an exchange of rockets and missiles took place between the Hamas-operated Gaza Strip and the Israeli Defense Forces. Since 2006, tensions between the separate West Bank (Fatah) and Gaza (Hamas) parties have led to in-fighting and the Israeli government has stepped up its security forces through the sealing of Gaza and the construction of a "security fence" in the West Bank. As of today, the most contentious issues preventing negotiations from moving forward are disagreements regarding Israeli settlement expansions in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and the reluctance of the Israeli government to negotiate with Hamas and end its blockade against Gaza. Palestinian reluctance to negotiate before these matters are addressed is also a barrier.

Similarities and Differences between Conflicts

In historical analogies, recognizing both what connects two different conflicts, and what makes them unique, is imperative. The most obvious similarity between the two conflicts considered here is the "fundamental difference over national identity."² Because political institutions and religious beliefs shape an ethnic identity, new dimensions became infused into the historical mix. Both conflicts also share a legacy of "intractability" with modern roots in partitions deemed "short-term solutions."³

According to Guy Ben-Porat,

In both places, these long-term, ongoing conflicts seemed to permeate all aspects of society and led to a zero-sum mentality that rendered

them impervious to conventional methods of conflict resolution. In both cases the asymmetry of power between the powerful group controlling the territory and the weaker group denied recognition and a greater share of power within the same territory created structural conditions that defined the complex nature of the conflict . . . both extend beyond a single issue that corresponds to a simple solution and involve not only material interests but also issues of identity and culture.⁴

Despite both Israeli and British efforts to pour resources into the region to “make their presence an undisputed fact,”⁵ internal and external solutions proved inadequate to satisfy the respective societies.

While similarities certainly exist between these two ethno-political conflicts, it is important to acknowledge the large geopolitical, historical and cultural differences in the narratives as well. The most significant difference between the two conflicts is the ultimate endgame. In the oft-cited analogy of Israel and Palestine, the outcome will more or less become a divorce of the two land entities and nationalities within them. In Northern Ireland, while the struggle was also over identity and land, the resolution always included some sort of cohabitation.

Additionally, relations between Jews and Palestinians in Israel, and Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, were structured differently. Palestinians living in the occupied territories after 1967 were never granted citizenship, remaining under military law instead. In Northern Ireland, Catholics had formal citizenship but were targets of political and social discrimination, much like the Palestinian-Israelis in Israel (Palestinians who remained in Israel after 1948 were granted formal citizenship).

In terms of space, Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland had more opportunity for interaction, in part because communities were interlaced in the region, particularly in Belfast. This is quite different from the experiences of separation between Israelis living in settlements in the contested territories (that abide by Israeli civil law) and non-citizen Palestinians. Another difference is the “third-party involvement of the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic that [has] no parallel in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.”⁶

And finally, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict operates on a religion platform unlike that in Northern Ireland. According to Israel’s ambassador to the Republic of Ireland Zion Evrony, “the sheer density of holy sites in Jerusalem, sacred to three different faiths, makes them flashpoints of emotional tension. In addition there are the painful, bitter memories of wars, and the challenge of mutual recognition not yet met by all in the Middle East.”⁷

SECTION 2: LESSONS LEARNED FROM NORTHERN IRELAND

Many describe the current political situation in Northern Ireland as tenuous, but one that has shown itself to be resilient to challenges from dissident groups or even from internal disruption. The vote to devolve criminal justice powers in March, 2010 is a good example of this resilience, as was the cross-community condemnation of sectarian killings in the summer of 2009. Although the reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants is deemed a “work in progress,” since the historic peace that was signed in 1998 Northern Ireland has experienced a complete turnaround and its citizens now enjoy an environment characterized by the absence of violence and improved economic growth. Because of this, it is widely considered a success in the realm of conflict resolution and an appropriate case to study as a reference for current problem areas around the world. Seven key lessons can be distilled from the Northern Ireland peace process.

Lesson One: Political leadership was critical.

“Governments need to take risks at every stage to keep the process alive, to maintain momentum, to prevent violence filling the vacuum left by the absence of political engagement. Governments need to be dogged, determined, imaginative, inclusive and flexible, to try everything and never give up in the face of inevitable set-backs and disappointments.”⁸

Nearly everyone interviewed for this study in Northern Ireland, the Middle East, and the U.S. reiterated this fact. According to Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Shaun Woodward, John Major and Mary Robinson’s leadership in approaching the situation in Northern Ireland was a “game changer.” They initiated the conversation with the *Downing Street Declaration* in 1994. Nevertheless, in the 1990s, the British government was still dealing with Northern Ireland as a security issue, for example by insisting that the IRA decommission its weapons. John Major knew that the political realities within his government would not allow him to fully see a peace process through, yet he was able to go as far as he could to let the next leader carry the torch.

It was the election of the British Labour Party in 1997 with Tony Blair as its leader that truly brought change to the relationship between London and Dublin. His time spent as a child in Northern Ireland provided him with a stronger connection to the region and, many have argued, he came in with a personal agenda to “sort out the mess.” Some, like Mary Madden of the Northern Ireland Office in Belfast have gone so far as to say that without Tony Blair, the peace process would not have occurred. Furthermore, because Northern Ireland was a bi-partisan issue in the United Kingdom, either Labour or Conservative governments could take political risks in engaging in a solution to the conflict, allowing for bold statements such as Blair’s demands to end the violence or get off the “settlement train.”

Beyond the governments of Northern Ireland and Britain, it was U.S. President Bill Clinton's spotlight on the conflict that gave the negotiations legitimacy and urgency. Peter King states that the "Blair-Clinton-Ahern trifecta of leadership led to peace." The three leaders also shared tremendous trust amongst each other, which allowed them the leverage to give in, or to push, in difficult situations. "Clinton's triangulation and Blair's 'third way' moved from black-and-whites to the blurry middle of consensus. Their politics of expediency was just what polarized Ireland needed."⁹ Shaun Woodward described the personal investment on Clinton's part (much like Blair's) as an indication to all parties that he was serious about a resolution to the conflict. In addition to the stirring speeches Clinton made and the time he spent with leaders when he visited Northern Ireland, simply incorporating phone calls into his daily schedule and checking in on Blair, Ahern, and others was effective in pushing toward a deal.

While the disparate political parties and militant groups involved in the negotiations in Northern Ireland were the cause of much of the violence throughout the last century, it was political courage and leadership on the part of many of the leaders of these parties that allowed the brokered settlement. John Hume and the Social Democratic and Labor Party (SDLP) were critical in negotiating a peace. Hume was an ardent opponent of violence on both sides. He also helped create what would be the foundation of the peace process in 1988 when he initiated contact with Gerry Adams. On the unionist side, David Trimble of the Ulster Unionist Party "took a big political risk during the all-party talks, capturing a rapid transformation in his political beliefs"¹⁰ and, despite a tremendous loss of support, was able to "persuade a fractured unionist community to vote for the Agreement."¹¹

Lesson Two: Strong principles of non-violence, constant dialogue, inclusion of all parties, and addressing the issues holistically were necessary for maintaining momentum in the process.

In terms of crafting a system of negotiation that could ultimately succeed, given the impasses created by the leaders of the political parties and the British insistence on decommissioning before talks began, U.S. Special Envoy and former Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell deserves tremendous credit. According to Woodward, "Mitchell is a living saint. All peace processes should have a George Mitchell." His ability to focus on bringing parties to the center without completely alienating the extremists was critical to the ultimate solution. The parameters upon which the negotiations were set in 1996, known as the *Mitchell Principles*, maintained a standard of non-violence and democracy. Specifically, the principles embodied a democratic and exclusively peaceful means of resolving political issues, parallel disarmament of all paramilitary organizations as per an independent commission, renouncement of violence and agreement to abide by terms of agreement reached in all-party negotiations. These constraints imposed certain logic into the equation with which a majority of the parties simply could not disagree.

Mitchell also recognized that, if the parties stopped talking, the negotiations would inevitably fail. Woodward states “the difficult part is getting people to the table to talk. It’s never over if you’ve got people talking.” Part of keeping stakeholders invested involved focusing actively on managing spoilers. Mitchell did this through refusing to let talks disintegrate because of the seemingly intractable issue of decommissioning. Convinced that prior decommissioning was unworkable, Mitchell recommended “parallel decommissioning” to occur as the negotiations were taking place. Mitchell proved that managing spoilers, while keeping the parties focused on the big picture (and agreeing on the “easy” parts first), was a winning combination. According to Mitchell, this idea “wasn’t a theoretical exercise in the art of compromise, but a down-to-earth alternative that could help to get the negotiations started.” This combined with elections to build public trust in the process allowed Major a way out of his previous position on decommissioning. “By focusing on elections, he provided the reassurance that the unionists needed, found a means to open all-party talks, and deflected attention away from his eventual abandonment of prior decommissioning.”¹²

In addition to actively managing spoilers, constant dialogue requires a strict management of *process*, particularly in complex multi-party negotiations like those in Northern Ireland. Mark Durkan, a senior SDLP member, attests to this: “Those preliminary negotiations were conducted without agreed rules . . . many arguments were long-winded and repetitive.”¹³ Mitchell saw this and focused on a process that would allow the various strands engaged in talks to periodically witness their progress. Constant dialogue also means using deadlines to “create momentum and generate agreements.” By March of 1998, Mitchell saw the necessity of creating a deadline to bring the negotiations to a close.

The real challenge now was how to bring the negotiations, imperfect as they were, from all of the different strands into one arena so that one agreement could be decisively negotiated . . . As I studied the calendar, the second weekend in April, Easter weekend, leaped out at me. It had historical significance in Ireland. If there were an agreement by Easter, there could be a referendum in late May and an Assembly election in late June [before the height of the marching season].¹⁴

Managing spoilers, process and deadlines allowed Mitchell to keep parties engaged even during times when it appeared as if a solution was unattainable.

Inclusion – of all parties and all issues – was another important principle that guided Mitchell in his conduct of the talks. According to Liam Maskey, “there would have been no peace had Sinn Fein not been included in peace talks.” Indeed, this was one of the most difficult pills for the British government and unionists to swallow, as Sinn Fein was closely associated with the militant IRA. Despite the fact that they joined the talks nearly a year

and a half into the negotiations, their presence gave the outcome all the more legitimacy. In terms of issues, one British diplomat stated, “In Northern Ireland, nothing was agreed upon until everything was agreed upon.” This was true with even the most toxic issues: policing, prisoner releases, decommissioning of weapons.

Lesson Three: The diaspora in the U.S. was influential in its ability to pressure the political leadership to shine a spotlight on the conflict.

If one was to go to a pub in South Boston in 1997 and ask a local Irish American his or her thoughts on the peace process, likely he or she would have had very little input to offer. The fact is, of the forty-two million Irish Americans, those who were vocal and influential in the peace process were few in number. Nevertheless, according to Joe Leary who runs the Irish American Partnership in Boston, the British Government had a lot to lose by eschewing Irish America because of its political and economic power in Ireland. Others in the British government reiterated the crucial support of Irish American economic involvement in Northern Ireland and, even though the Irish community as a whole was not involved in the Northern Ireland peace process, Irish America certainly counts in the political process in the U.S. Representatives of the Irish community have always been able to rally this group to the polls on any number of issues, informed or not.

In fact, for a long time the Irish American community was a negative force for peace. Those who were connected to the conflict and had resources funneled money to the IRA and leaned on the U.S. to back off. One British official claimed that this romanticizing of the republican movement didn’t really end until September 11, 2001 – when terror and violence to promote political aims became synonymous with “the bad guys.” The population within Northern Ireland did not necessarily trust the influence of the diaspora either. Unionists thought the U.S. was beholden to the Irish lobby. They opposed Clinton’s decision to allow Gerry Adams a visa to enter the United States. The community itself wasn’t monolithic either; the Ancient Order of Hibernians sent money that was representative of the working class, while the American Ireland Fund raises over \$18 million per year and represents entirely different and less political strata of the population.

There were individuals in the community, however, that recognized their influence on the U.S. government and pressured state and national representatives to get involved. The late Senator Ted Kennedy was one of the most influential individuals in pressuring Clinton in Ireland, according to Leary. Specifically, according to Joe Leary, the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Ireland, Jean Kennedy-Smith and many Irish Americans, including the influential Chuck Feeney, were among those who urged the president to approve Adams’ visa application. According to Mitchell, who also endorsed this cause, “they argued that it would enhance Adams’ stature, enable him to persuade the IRA to declare a

cease-fire, and permit Sinn Fein to enter into inclusive political negotiations.”¹⁵ Therefore, the Irish American leaders’ ability to influence the U.S. government gave Clinton a good reason to spend some of his political capital in moving a process forward successfully.

Lesson Four: Public support for the process was essential in allowing the lengthy negotiations to continue and in upholding the ultimate agreement.

Many individuals interviewed during this study in Northern Ireland claimed that the public was simply tired of the violence and ready to live in peace. However, according to Liam Maskey “people were less tired than they were eager to make peace. Never underestimate the ability of a [Catholic] and Protestant to fight forever. But both sides started seeing opportunities and that the world around them was changing.” Public support for the process was critical because it allowed the negotiations to continue without mutiny when the information was leaked about who was giving up what and who was getting what. According to Mitchell, “the leaks became so common that we joked about them.”¹⁶ A public largely committed to the process, despite the increase in violence from the extremist parties, was particularly critical in the last phase of the negotiations.

According to Zion Evrony, “commentators on Northern Ireland have remarked that even at the worst moments of the conflict, when a fresh atrocity seemed about to pitch the whole province into violence, the two communities always drew back from the brink.”¹⁷ In 1996, the IRA smuggled an approximately 500 pound bomb into a British military base, leading to headlines declaring the peace process over. In *Making Peace*, Mitchell describes how nevertheless “the cease-fire held, thanks in large part to the leaders of the loyalist parties, who persuasively urged restraint. The talks went on.” While the political leadership can be credited with urging the public to contain the violence, the public desire for peace held strong. According to unionist politician David Ervine, “we want this process because it’s our only hope for peace.”¹⁸

Lesson Five: Internationalization of the process lent legitimacy for opposed parties.

Incorporating international authority into the process is effective because of the international investment in the process, the enhanced legitimacy it lends to the process, and the dissipation of mistrust between the parties. The international presence in this case included the management of decommissioning by the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning under General John de Chastelain (Canada), Andy Sens (USA), and Tauno Nieminen (Finland); the leading and chairing of the negotiations by Mitchell and De Chastelain; and the encouraging role played by individuals with experience from other conflicts, such as Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa. This presence provid-

ed for leaders in other countries to take an interest in a positive solution to the conflict and, thus, invest political resources into seeing its resolution. O’Halpin writes that the resolution relied heavily on “external honest brokers, emissaries and witnesses – George Mitchell, John de Chastelain, Matti Ahtissari, Cyril Ramaphosa – to keep the show on the road.”¹⁹

“The central importance of third-party mediation, as well as outside actors who continuously facilitate the process of resolution, is another moral to be gleaned from Northern Ireland peacemaking.”²⁰ The internationalization also lends legitimacy to the process by creating circumstances that prevent opposing sides to back away because of mistrust. The International Monitoring Commission “reassured key constituencies at critical moments, injecting trust which the British and Irish Governments could not at times provide,” according to Peter Hain.²¹ In serving in an ombudsman role, the Commission “reports to the Governments on activity by paramilitary groups, on the normalization of security measures in the province, and on claims by Assembly parties that other parties, or Ministers in a devolved Executive, are not living up to the standards required of them.”²²

Lesson Six: Economic gains were a necessary but not sufficient (pre)condition for a political solution.

When George Mitchell was appointed Special Advisor to President Bill Clinton on Northern Ireland in 1995, his first task was to organize a conference on trade and investment. It was during this conference, attended by hundreds of American and Northern Ireland business and political leaders, that Mitchell discovered the entrenched political quagmire that would need to be resolved before investors could put their trust and money into the region. “The dispute in Northern Ireland is not purely or even primarily economic in origin or nature . . . but economic deprivation is a contributing factor in the problems in Northern Ireland.”²³ The findings of this report indicate that this economic development, while necessary for the sustainability of the agreement in the past decade, did not lead to a political solution.

According to a British government official, “economic development does *not* make people peaceful, but it is enormously helpful to be having a growing economy to facilitate hope and encouragement about the future.” The huge economic investment by the United States in Northern Ireland created thousands of jobs (and a much larger middle class) that led to a new climate of stability in the region that still exists today, despite current political troubles. The economic renaissance from 1998 to 2007 made Belfast the most expensive place to live outside of London and the surge in real estate helped smooth out the peace process, making the politics more manageable.

Yet economic growth without a political solution from the beginning is not enough. Adi Ashkenazi, an economic ministry director in Israel states that “economic growth is not the only solution -- nationalism is a much stronger cause.” Walid Awad, spokesman from the Central Media Commission of the Palestinian Authority corroborates this in his discussion of the Northern Ireland process by saying, “improving the economic conditions is essential . . . But all the economic benefit in the world is no solution without political solutions.” Economics matter, but politics matter more.

Lesson Seven: Timing mattered.

As Peter Hain so eloquently puts it: “As other parts of the world have discovered these alignments of leadership and circumstances do not come along often: failure to seize the opportunity can mean condemning another generation to conflict.”²⁴ In Northern Ireland, there was no *perfect* confluence of economic, social and political factors but it was certainly prescient to recognize that those that were in place had potential. In May of 1997, Tony Blair’s Labour government won with a large margin, one that did not rely on representatives from Ulster. In Ireland, Bertie Ahern’s liberal Fianna Fail party won over the conservative, Fine Gael. According to Woodward, “there actually is a right and wrong time to try things” and the new leaders in Ireland and Britain provided hope that strong governments would support the negotiations.

SECTION 3: FAILED ATTEMPTS AT PEACE

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which has dragged on for more than 60 years, can be summed up in two words: failed negotiations. Time and again, Israeli and Palestinian leaders have sat down at the peace table and each time they have left without a deal. Why does this keep happening? Parties in conflict with each other will stall a negotiated settlement and thereby prolong the conflict only when one or both of them determine that the alternative to a negotiated agreement is better than what the other side is offering. Put another way, only when there is no zone of possible agreement should a negotiation fail. In the parlance of Negotiation Analysis, the situations are respectively called BATNA (Best Alternative To Negotiated Agreement) and ZOPA (Zone of Possible Agreement). In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, neither of these two conditions is met. As this section will demonstrate, the respective BATNAs for the Israelis and Palestinians are not even close in value to the potential benefits of a negotiated peace. This means that there must be a clear, if somewhat narrow ZOPA. Why then does the conflict endure? Are the parties really irrational? Or is there something else at work?

The following section attempts to answer these questions by analyzing the positions of each of the relevant parties involved in the Middle East conflict and proposing value-creating recommendations for the parties moving forward.

Building on the historical summary presented in section one, this section first sets the context for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by reviewing the players, issues, BATNAs, resources and capabilities of the respective parties. It also considers the reservation and aspiration values of each side—all in an attempt to roughly illustrate the optimal (Pareto) outcome. The section concludes with a recommendation of a process by which the Israelis and Palestinians could go about negotiating a peace settlement to reach this outcome, as well as strategies and norms that both sides should consider using to achieve that. This section also considers a range of possible agreements between the two parties, opportunities for value creation, and some potential barriers to watch out for.

The Players

Though the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians involves millions of people, the key players involved are: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, President of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) Mahmoud Abbas, and U.S. President Barack Obama. Also key to this negotiation is the leadership of Hamas, which governs and controls the Gaza Strip. It is worth noting that the conflict over Palestinian leadership between Fatah and Hamas presents a potentially insurmountable challenge to negotiating a deal with Israel. Possible ways that Palestinians can overcome this conflict are explored towards the end of this section.

The Issues

At its core, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is about land and who has the more legitimate claim to it. Structurally the conflict is based around several issues, namely control of the Israeli occupied Palestinian territories in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem. Israel seized these territories in the Six-Day War of 1967 and continues to occupy them to this day in defiance of United Nations Resolution 242. Since 1967 the Israeli government has also actively developed settlements in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem and encouraged hundreds of thousands of Israeli settlers to move into these occupied regions. In 2005 Israel unilaterally dismantled all settlements in the Gaza Strip, forced all present Israeli settlers to relocate, and withdrew all troops from the area. To date however, Israel still controls border security for Gaza and the inflow and outflow of people, goods, and capital.

Another major issue is the status of the more than four million Palestinian refugees, who now claim a “right of return” to their homes in pre-1967 Israel that they were forced to abandon or flee from during the war for independence in 1948. Also of concern is Israel’s security. Without the buffer zone provided by the occupied territories in the West Bank and the “security fence” that runs along its borders, many argue that Israel would be exposed and vulnerable to military attacks. Still another issue is Israel’s relationship with the surrounding countries in the Middle East and the continued support it receives from the United States. It is also important to acknowledge that, although the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) accepted the existence of Israel in 1988, Hamas has yet to do so and still advocates Israel’s destruction in its founding charter.

Israel’s BATNA: Constant War and Insecurity

Since declaring its independence in 1948, Israel has gone to war nearly half a dozen times to preserve and expand its territories. It has also endured a series of *intifadas* or “uprisings” from Palestinian militants, who often deploy suicide bombers to target civilian populations, instill fear and foment conflict. The *intifadas* have caused hundreds of Israeli deaths and injuries, and have resulted in incalculable economic and social damage. As former NATO Ambassador Nicholas Burns often says, “it would not be an overstatement to say that Israelis have not known a single day of peace in their 62-year history.”

Without a negotiated settlement with the Palestinians, Israel’s best alternative is to maintain the status quo, which means enduring periodic wars, the constant threat of terrorism, and hostile relations with much of the Arab world. It also means continued high dependence on its military, contravention of international law, and pariah status among much of the international community. Without an agreement Israel will also continue to

bear the burden of caring for the growing Palestinian refugee population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and remain a liability to U.S. credibility in the Middle East and international community. Finally, Israel will continue to face the demographic reality of a growing Palestinian population that will soon exceed the Israeli population. Without a comprehensive agreement, the alternative is an apartheid state with oppressive living conditions for most Palestinians. Former Israeli Prime Ministers Ehud Barak and Ehud Olmert have both made public statements in the past acknowledging this bleak reality.

On the other hand, Israel's BATNA also includes maintaining control of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem. Without a deal, Israel can continue to develop and expand its settlements in the West Bank, and enjoy the military security provided by control of the remaining territories, which is declining in value in the missile age. Keeping East Jerusalem will also mean continued control of important Jewish and Muslim religious sites such as the Temple Mount, The Dome of the Rock, and the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Finally, maintaining the status quo would mean continued control over fresh water, the scarcest natural resource in the occupied territories.

Palestine's BATNA: An Unwinnable Military Struggle

Militarily the Palestinians have no chance of defeating the Israelis. Even with the support of other Middle Eastern nations such as Jordan, Syria, or even Iran, it is highly unlikely that the Palestinians could mount an offensive that would challenge Israel militarily. This is particularly true given Israel's strong nuclear weapons arsenal. The fact that the U.S. is Israel's staunchest ally makes such a scenario even less likely. In the past 60 years, Israel has gone to war six times and has not lost an inch of its territory.

Given the military reality, diplomacy and politics are the Palestinians' only viable tools. Without a peace settlement, the Palestinians' BATNA is to continue to exist without a state inside Israel, and to be controlled by the Israeli military. It also means enduring the hardships of a weak economy and relying on support from donor nations and international organizations to survive. Failing to reach an agreement will also likely result in a continued fracturing of the Palestinian leadership, the spread of radicalism, and anti-Israeli and anti-American sentiment.

The United States' BATNA: Increased Anti-Americanism in the Middle East

Since Israel's creation in 1948, the U.S. has been its strongest ally. Today the U.S. gives Israel close to \$4 billion annually in military and economic aid. Without a negotiated settlement, the U.S. will continue to see its credibility erode in the international community. Many critics of U.S. support for Israel frequently ask how the U.S. can claim to

champion international law and be an advocate for the UN system, but at the same time turn a blind eye to Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian territories. The contradiction is a growing problem, and continuation of the status quo will only provoke increased anti-American sentiment. Increased recruitment among terror cells, and many terrorist attacks against U.S. interests, are in part explained by U.S. support for Israel.

Israel's Resources and Capabilities

Israel's strongest asset is its nearly categorical military advantage and a relatively stronger BATNA than the Palestinians. By controlling the territories in question, Israel holds most of the chips. Economically, Israel has a huge advantage, which means it can afford to offer reparations to Palestinian refugees and compensate settlers in the West Bank who are forced to move back across the UN green line to pre-1967 Israel. The full faith and backing of the United States is also a tremendous asset.

Palestine's Resources and Capabilities

Palestinians enjoy the advantage of international sympathy. They also have UN support for reclamation of the lands that were seized during the 1967 war. The majority of the Arab world also stands firmly behind the Palestinian cause. Additionally, Palestinians are patient. They have waited 62-years to resolve this matter and feel no need to rush into a deal that is less than the minimum they are willing to accept. Lastly, Palestinians have the advantage of a fast growing population and will soon outnumber the Israelis by a wide margin.

United States' Resources and Capabilities

As the wealthiest, most powerful nation on the planet, the U.S. is uniquely positioned as the world's only super power to broker a peace between Israelis and Palestinians. Israel's heavy reliance on U.S. military and economic aid provides the U.S. with an additional leverage. Additionally, the United States has the military capability to guarantee the security of both parties, and has enough influence in the United Nations to potentially negotiate the commitment of international peacekeepers to the region during any transition of territories.

Finding the ZOPA: Israeli and Palestinian Reservation and Aspiration Values

Internal polls in Israel and Palestine find that a clear majority of both populations seek a lasting peace settlement. In recent years there has also been a strong movement away from the zero sum mentality on both sides and a general acceptance of the principle

of a two-state solution. As one tries to locate a fair equilibrium in this conflict, it is helpful to keep both parties' aspiration and reservation values in mind. Though it is difficult to ascertain what these values are, it is possible to make a conservative approximation based on offers that have been on the table from both sides in past negotiations.

Israel's aspiration value is likely to maintain control of all of the occupied territories, that is the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem, and see the entire Palestinian population absorbed by the surrounding nations of Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt. Ideally, it would also get security guarantees against suicide bombers or rocket launches from groups like Hezbollah or Hamas. Finally, it would like to normalize diplomatic and trade relations with all nations in the Arab League, retain strong support from the U.S., and eventually join NATO and the EU.

The Palestinian aspiration value is likely to retake control of pre-1967 Israel and return refugees and their relatives to the homes they inhabited before 1948. Palestinians would probably also like to see all Israeli Jews (or at least most of them) return to Europe or the United States. Like Israel, they too would like security guarantees to protect against invasion and would like normalized diplomatic and trade relationships with surrounding nations.

Clearly, both sides cannot realize their aspiration values and if they both hold out, there will never be a deal. The reservation values (the minimum each party would be willing to accept), however, paint a different picture.

Israel's reservation value is likely to return all of the Gaza Strip (as it has done already, but still controls its borders) and much of the West Bank to the Palestinians, provided both territories are de-militarized. It would also likely allow for a very limited right of return for Palestinian refugees, for example fewer than 50,000. It is also probable that Israel would agree to reparations for refugees who are not permitted to return, and an apology from the Israeli government for perceived crimes committed during the War of Independence in 1948. Regarding East Jerusalem, Israel would likely accept designation of that part of the city as an international zone that would serve as a dual capital for the two states and whose security would be guaranteed by U.S. troops at first and, eventually, U.N. peace keepers. Finally, Israel would require that Hamas amend its charter to recognize the Jewish state's sovereignty and categorically cease its rocket attacks from Gaza.

The Palestinians reservation value is probably to regain control and autonomy over nearly all of the West Bank, all of the Gaza Strip, and parts of East Jerusalem. For them it is also imperative that any Palestinian state be contiguous in nature and that it be free of Israeli military checkpoints. Also, any territory exchange must include at least partial

control of the scarce fresh water resources in the region. Regarding refugees, Palestinians would likely accept a limited right of return, for example one that includes any refugee who was born in or before 1948, combined with substantial financial reparations and a formal apology from the Israeli government for the perceived injustices of the 1948 War of Independence. For Hamas' part they would likely agree to recognize the state of Israel within its pre-1967 borders.

From the calculations above it is clear that there is likely a considerable ZOPA for the Israelis and Palestinians to work with. The challenge then is how to get them back into a negotiation with a process that would lead to a reasonable outcome for both parties that falls within that ZOPA. The next section considers how the Palestinians, Israelis and Americans could successfully do that.

Agreeing on a Process: Norms and Standards

A major obstacle to success in past negotiations between Israeli and Palestinian leadership has been agreeing on the process by which the negotiations will proceed. Recently, just getting both parties to the table has been a huge challenge –particularly given Palestine's fractured leadership and the emergence of conservative voices such as Benjamin Netanyahu and Avigdor Lieberman on the Israeli side. Another challenge has been finding an unbiased third party to facilitate the negotiations. In the past this role has always been filled by the United States. Given America's "special relationship" with Israel, however, this does not make a lot of sense and, though the U.S. has a strong role to play in these negotiations, it seems unfair that the U.S. be the only outside party present. In that regard the quartet of the EU, Russia, the U.S., and the United Nations should be given a greater role to play.

Hamas should also eventually be included in any negotiation. The party was democratically and legitimately elected to represent Palestinians in 2006 and must be recognized as such. To be included in the negotiation, however, Hamas must renounce its calls for the destruction of Israel and amend its charter --much like the PLO did in the 1987-- to recognize the sovereignty and legitimacy of the Jewish state of Israel within its pre-1967 borders. Without this concession, there is almost no chance of a comprehensive agreement or of Hamas being included in any negotiation.

Value-Creating Options: Ending the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Once and for All

A comprehensive peace deal between Palestinians and Israelis offers tremendous potential to add value, and not only bring peace between the two parties, but within much of the Middle East.

As Israel attempts to negotiate a peace agreement with Palestinians, it might also do well to attempt to reconcile its relationship with the rest of the region – particularly Iran. In fact, including Iran in some way would signal that both Israel and the U.S. are earnestly seeking a peace agreement not only with Palestinians, but Iranians as well. The same argument could be made for including Hezbollah, provided it agrees to amend its charter and renounce calls for the destruction of Israel. The Arab Peace Initiative proposed by King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia in 2002-and later ratified by more than 50 Arab nations in 2007- is a good example of the potential for increasing the overall pie. Endorsing the agreement, which promises normalized relations between the entire Arab region and Israel in exchange for a complete withdrawal from the occupied territories and a “just settlement” of the Palestinian refugee crisis, would be a good place for Israel to start. The initiative is supported by a large number of policy makers throughout the world and has been praised by leaders of dozens of nations, including the U.S. and Israel. The conflict is not limited to Israelis and Palestinians. The entire Arab world has a stake in the outcome and ergo should be included in the process in some way. Done properly it will be a better deal for everyone.

Going Beyond Winning: A Proposal for a Comprehensive Solution to the Conflict

Having framed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in negotiation terms, and explored some of the considerations for process and value-creation that should be included in any future attempt at peace talks, this paper will now present a proposal for conflict resolution as well as what can be considered the optimal (Pareto) outcome for both parties. Before any negotiation can take place in earnest, however, there are a series of actions that must be taken by both parties, which are briefly explored below.

On the Palestinian side there must be unity in leadership. Fatah and Hamas must form some unity in government and speak with one voice in any negotiation with Israel. To accomplish this, Hamas must follow the example set by the PLO in the 1980s and renounce its calls for the destruction of Israel. It must also amend its charter to recognize Israeli sovereignty inside the UN recognized armistice line from 1967 and refrain from indiscriminately launching rockets into southern Israel. The PLO must also have free and fair elections by the end of 2010.

On the Israeli side, earnest action must be taken to indicate an interest in negotiating a peace agreement. This means halting all settlement building and expansion in the West Bank and East Jerusalem immediately, ending its economic blockade on the Gaza Strip, and relaxing security checkpoints throughout the West Bank.

The actual negotiations should take place in a neutral country such as Switzerland. As stated previously, in addition to the Israeli and Palestinian leadership, the negotiations should have multiple third parties present, including representatives from the U.S., EU, United Nations, and the Arab League. Each party present should be allowed to submit a proposal for resolution of the following issues: the occupied territories, the refugee situation, financial reparations or payments for land, and diplomatic relations with the Middle East –and any other issues that they deem relevant to the matter at hand. After getting all ideas out on the table, and figuring out what both parties can agree on, the negotiation could then shift to direct talks to resolve matters that are still in contention.

If properly and rationally executed, after walking through each of these steps, Israelis and Palestinians should come to an optimal agreement as follows:

Israel:

1. Agrees to return 95% of the occupied territory in West Bank and Gaza Strip, and to the withdrawal of all troops from the region within a period of two years.
2. Agrees to dismantle 95% of settlements in the West Bank in the next two years. Any remaining settlements will become part of the new Palestinian State after those two years, not including any land swap deals.
3. Agrees to dismantle portions of the “security fence” that cut into the West Bank within the next two years.
4. Agrees to make East Jerusalem an international zone, with security provided by UN Peacekeepers.
5. Agrees to allow all Palestinian refugees who were born in or before 1948 the option of returning to Israel or signing a waiver in exchange for a financial buyout.
6. Agrees to commit significant aid over the next 5 years (paid for in part with U.S. aid) for economic and social development projects in the new Palestinian state.
7. Agrees to normalize full diplomatic and trade relations with all Arab League countries.
8. Agrees to partner with Palestinian security forces to crack down on terrorism and security threats.

Palestinians:

1. Hamas agrees to renounce its calls for the destruction of Israel, and to recognize its sovereignty within UN designated borders.
2. Hamas agrees to halt indefinitely any military actions directed against Israel.
3. A Palestinian Unity government agrees to a limited “right of return” for refugees born in or before 1948 only.
4. Agree to normalize relations with Israel and all Arab League countries.
5. Agree to share East Jerusalem as a dual-capital and international zone.

6. Agree to partner with Israeli security forces to crack down on terrorism and security threats.

United States:

1. Agrees to provide multi-billion dollar annual development and security aid for the new Palestinian state for a period of five years.
2. Agrees to commit to a significant military presence in the region for a period of three to five years to oversee the transition of West Bank settlements and the Gaza Strip, and to maintain peace along the borders.
3. Agrees to phase out direct economic and military assistance to Israel over a period of five years.

United Nations:

1. Agrees to provide permanent peace keepers for the East Jerusalem international zone, and commits human rights observers to oversee the transition of West Bank settlements.
2. Passes a new Security Council resolution recognizing the sovereign state of Palestine, which includes the entirety of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

This conflict remains unsettled because Israeli and Palestinian leaders are undervaluing the potential benefits of a peace settlement and overvaluing their BATNAs. Additionally, it seems that both sides have made the mistake of approaching past negotiations with a zero sum, distributive mentality and missed out on clear opportunities to create value and enlarge the overall pie in the process. If Israeli and Palestinian leaders were to sit down and consider the facts, and rationally and accurately calculate their respective reservation values, they would likely see that it is clearly in both of their best interests to negotiate an agreement. The next section considers what lessons from the successful Northern Ireland peace process are transferable to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to what extent those lessons could help both parties reach a negotiated agreement.

SECTION 4: TRANSFERABLE LESSONS FROM NORTHERN IRELAND

Given the success of the Northern Ireland peace process and the lessons gleaned from it, the key question some may ask in Northern Ireland is, “What lessons does this peace process have to teach people and parties involved in conflicts all over the world, particularly the Israelis and Palestinians?” One would hear remarkably similar answers, which were summed up best by Shaun Woodward who said that, “The Israelis and Palestinians should see from our example that it doesn’t have to be like this. If you work together, that which now seems impossible can be achieved.”

In Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories of the West Bank, this study found much the opposite of what was encountered in Northern Ireland. Interviews conducted with Israelis, whether members of the Knesset, academics, or local entrepreneurs, all communicated a profound lack of hope about the prospects for a peace settlement between Israelis and Palestinians. The principal justification for this sentiment, according to those interviewed, was the Palestinians’ divided political leadership. As one Knesset member put it, “we do not have a viable political partner in peace.” From those conversations, a disturbing level of comfort with the status quo was also discerned among many Israelis. Tidhar Wald, an Israeli and Harvard Kennedy School graduate, would later explain that this made sense. “Why shouldn’t Israelis be comfortable,” he asked. “They have security and the wall, the economy is doing well. Israelis are concerned about Iran, not the Palestinians.”

In interviews with residents, academics, NGO leaders, and government officials in Ramallah, the Palestinian government’s political capital in the West Bank, the sentiment was equally pessimistic. Though the security situation seemed very much under control and the local economy vibrant, not one Palestinian indicated any reason to think things would change or that they would one day soon have their own independent state. As Issa Kissasei, a Harvard Kennedy School graduate and Director General of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) Negotiations Affairs Department, put it, “There is no hope. The state of Israel cannot see their interests and the Israelis are not ready for peace.” What is often perceived in the international news media as arrogant and stubborn leadership by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was also universally cited as a potentially insurmountable barrier to peace.

With all this in mind, consider the seven lessons in peacemaking from Northern Ireland introduced in Section 3 and the extent to which they are present and transferable in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict:

Leadership is Critical

As stated previously, there is a strong opinion among Palestinian government officials and residents of the occupied territories that they do not have a viable political partner for peace in the Netanyahu government. There is an equally strong opinion amongst the Israeli government and citizens of Israel that Palestinian leadership is divided between Fatah and Hamas, and that they similarly have no partner in peace. The status quo has become increasingly acceptable and the Palestinian question has become less of a priority.

Internationalization of the Process

The U.S., along with the Quartet and the member nations of the Arab League, has effectively internationalized this conflict. A central challenge that remains is the inability or unwillingness of any of these countries or entities to put sufficient pressure on Israel to change its current policies and address its continued violation of international law.

Economic Progress is Necessary but Not Sufficient for Peace

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Salam Fayyad and with the help of international donors, the economy in the West Bank grew seven percent last year. That, combined with additional security measures and a crackdown on Palestinian terrorist groups, has allowed Israel to remove a number of its security checkpoints in the occupied territory and permit greater freedom of movement among the Palestinians. Key countries can continue to promote this economic growth through trade and foreign assistance to the Palestinians.

Inclusive Framework of Non-Violence and Democracy: The Mitchell Principles

Though George Mitchell plays a lead role in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, he has yet to develop an inclusive framework of non-violence and democracy as he did in Northern Ireland. Consider that Hamas, which has democratic legitimacy, has not been engaged in direct talks in the same way that Sinn Fein (the political arm of the IRA) had been during the Northern Ireland peace process, or that despite the urging of the U.S. Israel continues to expand settlements in East Jerusalem.

On the other hand, Palestinians were scheduled to hold elections in January 2010 but have postponed them until June. Based on the research conducted for this study, there is no indication that the Palestinian Authority actually intends to hold these elections nor that there is much insistence for them to take place.

The Influence of the Diaspora

The constituencies that make up the Israel Lobby in the United States (including evangelical Christians) are unrivaled in their political influence. Though there are 42- million Irish Americans who could potentially provide a counter balance to that influence were they to take up the Palestinian cause, it would no doubt still pale in comparison and political influence.

Timing is Important

Many have argued that, given the current leadership, now is not the time to negotiate an accord between Israelis and Palestinians. The demographic reality of Israel, however, demands a negotiated settlement; so too does the presence of a U.S. president who has demonstrated a willingness to make peace talks a high foreign policy priority. Mahmoud Abbas' leadership of the Palestinian Authority must not be taken for granted and it is unclear how much longer he will remain in office if peace talks continue to stall. Timing is as much art as science. One could argue, despite tensions between hard-liners, "if not now when?"

Clearly, there is strong potential to create conditions similar to those that led to success in Northern Ireland.

SECTION 5: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concludes that the Israeli government (and its electorate) has gotten too comfortable with the status quo and that, absent U.S. leadership, the EU should take measures to change that. The United Kingdom is the European nation best positioned to lead such an EU intervention. This makes particularly good sense given Tony Blair's current role as "Special Envoy for The Diplomatic Quartet on the Middle East". Moreover, the United Kingdom and the EU lack the degree of conflict of interest that America has vis-à-vis its strong military and economic relationship with Israel. In terms of influencing and transferring the specific lessons from the Northern Ireland peace process, the UK is in a strong position to play a major role. The following section explores the geopolitical, grass-roots and economic policies that the United Kingdom can implement on varying timelines.

Geopolitical Recommendations:

A question many experts in the field are beginning to ask is, in the absence of U.S. pressure and leadership, driven in part by the Israel Lobby's unrivaled political influence in Washington, what can member states of the EU do? As this study shows, in order to pressure Israel into action and bring it to the negotiating table the Europeans – behind British leadership -- can use sticks or carrots. The latter is the most preferable choice, at least at first.

Recommendation #1 -- Membership in International Organizations:

Consider the promise of membership in select international organizations for Israel and Palestine if both agree to a two-state solution and compliance with international law.

Controversial Israeli Foreign Affairs Minister Avigdor Lieberman has publicly stated that he is strongly in favor of membership for Israel in both NATO and the EU. It stands to reason then that most Israelis would be too, particularly given the Article V security guarantees that would come with NATO membership. The economic benefits of EU association cannot be discounted either. The promise of these Euro-centric affiliations, combined with normalized relations with Arab League nations articulated in the Arab Peace initiative just might put enough positive pressure on Israel to take a leap of faith and take measurable steps toward a two-state solution. Palestinian leadership has also expressed an interest in WTO membership.

Recommendation #2 -- Threaten Trade Sanctions Against Israel Over Illegal Settlements and Gaza Blockade (One Year Deadline):

With this locus of influence in mind, and in order to move the process forward, Great Britain and the EU should set a timeline (no more than one-year) for Israel to begin to take advantage of its offer for EU and NATO membership, making it clear that the status quo will not do. Should the Israelis fail to take action, then the EU should consider punitive trade sanctions similar to those imposed on South Africa during its apartheid era in the 1980s. Nobel Laureate and Archbishop Desmond Tutu has already called for such measures, comparing Israel's illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories to the repressive and discriminatory policies of South Africa's apartheid regime. The British government and Europeans would do well to consider the merits of that message.

Recommendation #3 -- Engage Regional Actors:

The Arab Peace initiative of 2002, which proposed normalized relations between Israel and all Arab league countries, provided Israel pull back to the pre-1967 borders and come into compliance with international law, was a huge diplomatic breakthrough. The subsequent ratification by unanimous vote of that same initiative by the Arab League in 2007 was even more promising and illustrates a critical shift in Arab mindset about the future role of Israel in the Middle East. Continued delays and breakdowns in the Arab peace process, combined with bellicose actions by the Israeli government against Hamas in Gaza, have jeopardized the momentum generated by those two events. To maintain this Arab support, it is essential that the Quartet (specifically the EU and the UK) continue to engage the regional actors and communicate clearly that they view the Arab Peace Initiative as the way forward for all parties.

To summarize, on the geopolitical front the United Kingdom would do well to take the following three steps:

1. Promise of NATO and/or EU membership for Israel, conditional on settlement of two-state solution
2. Threat of trade sanctions over illegal settlements and Gaza blockade (one year deadline)
3. Engage regional actors

Grassroots Recommendations

The lessons gleaned from the Northern Ireland Peace Process lead to several grassroots recommendations as well. Overall, an increased effort in connecting the communities that remain divided, not only in Israel and the Palestinian territories themselves but also abroad in the relevant diaspora communities, is recommended. Key leaders from the Northern Ireland negotiations should also play a role in fostering this communication.

Recommendation #1 -- Identify the diaspora and civil society groups interested in finding a meaningful and fair solution to the conflict:

Many international, national, and local non-state actors have a large stake and role to play in bringing parties to the table, and in the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is important to bring groups together that have similar, albeit certainly not identical, interests in a peace negotiation to build trust between the communities and iron out the differences in approaches. Before that can happen, however, it is imperative to identify the prime groups for these community-building exercises.

Among the players on the Jewish-American and Israeli-American side are groups on the left like Americans for Peace Now (APN) and J-Street. APN is the American counterpart to the Israeli pacifist group *Shalom Achshav* that supports Palestinian self-determination within the 1967 borders. In the middle of the spectrum are organizations like the National Jewish Democratic Council (NJDC) that supports a strong U.S.-Israel relationship but wants to stop settlement building, and the Combined Jewish Philanthropies (CJP), which focuses more on Jewish education. On the right, there is The David Project, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC -- the U.S. "pro-Israel" lobby), the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America (CAMERA -- a pro-Israel media watchdog group), and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), among others.

The Arab-American and Palestinian-American organizations also fall on different points along the political spectrum. The American Islamic Congress and the Muslim Public Affairs Council support dialogue between parties and a Palestinian state alongside Israel, with the U.S. as an impartial mediator. The Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), the Muslim American Society (MAS), and The American Task Force on Palestine (ATFP) fall in the middle of the spectrum with agendas ranging from empowerment for American Muslims to interfaith dialogues and anti-discrimination movements. The Palestinian Solidarity Movement (PSM) is another Palestinian-American organization that focuses on ending U.S. aid to Israel and supports a right of return for Palestinian refugees.

While it would be easy to link Jewish- and Arab- or Palestinian-American organizations that have the same goals to one another (like the Boston Coalition for Palestinian Rights and APN that both want to evacuate Jewish settlements), it is important to recognize that the actors who wield a tremendous amount of influence in the U.S. government need to be brought on board. President Obama has invited J-Street, APN, NJDC and AJC to the White House, while AIPAC contributes millions in the form of lobbyists and donations to gain Congressional access.

Palestinian and Arab organizations have less influence, but they can and should be involved in advocacy and peace-building efforts. For example, the ATFP “is dedicated to advocating that it is in the American national interest to promote an end to the conflict in the Middle East through a negotiated agreement that provides for two states - Israel and Palestine - living side by side in peace and security.”²⁵ This aligns with J-Street and APN’s goal, as well as AIPAC’s support for a two-state solution.

Beyond issues surrounding the conflict itself, these organizations can instigate dialogue on minority concerns in the U.S. For example, the AJC “continues its efforts to promote pluralistic and democratic societies where all minorities are protected.”²⁶ ISNA is “building bridges of understanding and cooperation within the diversity that is Islam in America and is now playing a pivotal role in extending those bridges to include all people of faith within North America.”²⁷ These organizations and individuals have a lot in common – be it the experience of anti-Semitism in the U.S. or the discrimination against Arab- and Muslim-Americans in the post September 11th environment.

Recommendation #2 -- Create forums for diaspora groups to meet and engage with Irish American leadership:

While forums already exist for this kind of engagement, it mostly occurs in the region, not among diaspora and civil society groups abroad – and particularly not with groups that are known to be politically or ideologically opposed. Setting up dialogues at the local and national levels can make connections and foster a sense of trust that is currently lacking.

One way to engage diaspora groups would be through conferences specifically related to topics of agreement, such as the necessity for the U.S. government to promote anti-discrimination efforts for minority groups. These conferences can solicit the participation of individuals from various sectors—government, businesses, and NGOs. They should also encourage media attention to spotlight the efforts of disparate groups that are able to meet and engage.

Irish America can play a role in mediating discussions that bring together Arab-American and Jewish-American groups to debate contentious issues. Irish American leaders, such as Chuck Feeney, Joe Leary, and Pádraig O'Malley are useful resources for advocacy groups that want to improve their lobbying efforts with the U.S. government. They can also provide moral support and an understanding of the tensions and conflict that Israelis and Palestinians experience. As Shaun Woodward said, "the message from Northern Ireland to Palestinians and Israelis and all those involved in sectarian conflict is the following: 'it doesn't have to be like this. If we work together, that which now seems impossible can be achieved.'"

Thus, a summit with key Irish American, Arab- and Palestinian-American, and Jewish-American leaders that focuses on how to use resources most effectively could have just as much influence on the process in the Middle East as a summit in Israel or Palestine.

One way that Irish leaders can contribute to a movement towards a meaningful negotiation is by imparting the lessons learned from embracing extremist views. Overwhelmingly, key actors in Israel and the West Bank believe that their American counterparts, particularly on the Palestinian side, tend to be more extreme than those living in the region. This is similar to the views that the Irish diaspora held toward the Republican movement in the second half of the twentieth century—violence was romanticized because it wasn't on their front doorstep. Irish leaders explaining how a mindset shift toward reconciliation (particularly after September 11th when Irish America no longer wanted to be associated with terrorism) benefited the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland would be an inspirational example for those on both sides of the conflict. It would also be apt to compare the Catholic minority plight in Northern Ireland to the Palestinian-Israeli minority in Israel.

Economic Recommendations

While economic engagement is laced throughout the geopolitical and grassroots recommendations, there are specific economic actions that can be taken to both pave the way toward a political solution, and to provide a sustainable base and framework for cooperation to uphold political agreements.

Recommendation #1 -- Encourage economic investment in the Palestinian territories:

In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in addition to political negotiations and security, a genuine agreement needs economic growth to help Palestinians improve their economy, according to an interview with George Mitchell. "I want to emphasize that political negotiations, security for both, and what you call the bottom up, correctly, economic and institutional growth [is necessary] so that when the Palestinian state is created, it is capable of functioning effectively from day one."²⁸

The West Bank is ripe for economic investment, as it has seen tremendous development in the past two years, as a result of better security and more stability. According to Issa Kissaseia of the PLO Negotiations Affairs Department, “we have tried to create a vibrant economy in the West Bank to show that secularism is the way to go.” It is recommended that Arab-, Palestinian-, and Jewish-American diaspora groups contribute to this economic revitalization by investing in infrastructure, education and civil society projects. This can be spurred by economic investment conferences similar to the one that Mitchell organized in the 1990s and U.S. Special Envoy to Northern Ireland Paula Dobriansky coordinated in the last decade.

In addition to diaspora groups, it is recommended that the UK government take a lead in investment in the Palestinian territories. In 2008, the British government pledged 500 million dollars for economic development in Palestine until 2011. Currently, much of the investment goes toward police training and boosting security efforts. According to the U.S. State Department, Palestinian Authority laws “have established a legal structure that aims to promote foreign investment. The 1998 Investment Law guarantees the repatriation of foreign capital and prohibits expropriation and nationalization of approved foreign investments.”²⁹ The jointly sponsored UK-U.S. Palestinian Investment Conference (PIC) in 2008 raised \$1.4 billion dollars for investment in real estate, industry, insurance, ICT and food processing.³⁰ The PIC planned for June of this year is an excellent opportunity to continue British support for economic growth in the Palestinian territories.

Recommendation #2 -- Encourage financial support for Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation projects:

Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation projects exist both in the region and around the world. They should be supported by individuals connected to the region but also by those who understand the importance of trust in conflict resolution. People like Brian O’Neill and Joe Leary were crucial actors in encouraging economic investment in Northern Ireland and they can take the lead in supporting reconciliation projects. Organizations like Intercomm Belfast run by Liam Maskey are good examples of positive international efforts to transfer reconciliation lessons from one conflict to another. Seeds of Peace is another group founded in the United States “dedicated to empowering young leaders from regions of conflict with the leadership skills required to advance reconciliation and coexistence.”³¹

In the region, reconciliation projects vary from potluck dinner exchanges to conflict resolution research centers. Several promote exchanges and opportunities for interaction between children and young adults, such as Abraham’s Vision, Beyond Words, Crossing Borders and Hand in Hand, among others. The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Transformation Network, The Palestine Center for Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation, and the Isra-

el-Palestine Center for Research and Information are dedicated to practices of conflict resolution based on principles of non-violence, symmetry and equality, and trust building between diverse groups within each society. Organizations like the Compassionate Listening Project, Givat Haviva, Open House, and Peace Now in Israel foster dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians.

Recommendation #3-Increase Economic Investment in Joint Israeli-Palestinian Ventures:

The encouraging economic situation in the West Bank belies the police state reality of its Palestinian residents. It also ignores the increasingly desperate situation for the 1.5 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, which remains under an Israeli military blockade. As the U.N. Undersecretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs recently decried to the *New York Times*, “What we are seeing here for the people of Gaza is an existence, not a life.”³² To address this issue, and in the vein of promoting the lessons from Northern Ireland and the utility of economic growth during a peace process, the British government should dramatically increase economic investment in the West Bank, Gaza, and within Israel proper, to the extent that there are worthwhile joint Israeli-Palestinian ventures to be funded.

SECTION 6: IMPLEMENTATION

It is important to note that these recommendations are interlinked and building on one another. For example, geopolitical solutions are somewhat dependent on grassroots solutions, particularly in the U.S., and economic incentives and investment are critical for both. This section lays out political tactics, ways to overcome barriers, and specific organizations to target in implementing these recommendations.

EU and NATO Membership for Israel

The proposal regarding EU and NATO membership for Israel, advanced in the earlier sections of this study, received a variety of responses. Most thought it was a good idea but “politically impossible.” Those skeptics may be right. It is important to remember, though, that many considered peace in Northern Ireland to be impossible just 15 years ago. Similarly, it was not long ago that many experts on the Middle East scoffed at the idea that the Arab League would ratify a peace initiative to normalize relations with Israel, provided it pulled back to its pre-1967 border. The peace in Northern Ireland and the Arab League’s promise for normalized relations with Israel were, in large part, the result of game-changing big ideas. In Northern Ireland, the principles of consent, political autonomy, and equality of civil rights played an important role. With the Arab League, the Arab Peace Initiative had a similarly significant role. It should be acknowledged that, at the moment, EU or NATO membership for Israel would be politically difficult to accomplish. However, consider that Israel’s largest trading partner is the EU or that the inclusion of Israel might be an important counter-balance to the eventual inclusion of Turkey who, incidentally, is also a NATO member.

NATO membership for Israel also seems like a politically difficult idea at first. After all, do Western European states really want to be bound by Article V of the NATO treaty that would require them to intervene every time Israel gets attacked? The hope, though, would be that after negotiating a peace with the Palestinians and normalizing relations with all Arab League nations, the prospect of an attack would be greatly reduced. It is also important to acknowledge that Israel already enjoys *de facto* Article V protection from the United States. The bottom line is that logistically, both memberships could make a lot of sense for Israel and once a two-state solution is achieved, that which now seems politically impossible could become a reality. A final point is that the mere suggestion of these memberships would communicate to Israel that the EU is very serious about reintegrating Israel into the international community and is committed to its economic and military security.

EU Trade Sanctions against Israel

EU trade sanctions against Israel should come only after adequate warning and only if Israel rejects the offers of EU and NATO membership. If, however, after a period of one -year Israel continues to take a recalcitrant position, the UK should push for EU trade sanctions. Israel continues to defy international law with its occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Its blockade against Gaza has also caused untold human suffering. Though trade sanctions would be politically difficult to implement, the mere mention or debate about them could jar Israel into action. Ultimately, however, the UK, France, Germany, and other powerful EU states will have to decide whether they are on the side of international law and human rights or whether they support a defiant Israel.

Engaging Regional Actors

Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Turkey, Egypt and Syria are the crucial power players who must be kept “in the loop” and invested in the Israeli-Palestinian peace. Continuing to include these countries, and other Arab states, in peace process events whenever possible will be essential to accomplish this. The Arab Peace Initiative must continue to be touted as well.

Implementing Grassroots Efforts to Empower the Diaspora in the U.S. and Beyond

In planning a joint conference or seminar with different groups, there are several in the Boston area to consider. While these lists are not exhaustive, they provide a solid mapping of local and regional organizations that should be part of the conversation.

On the Jewish-American side, the following organizations in Boston should be approached:

- AJC of Greater Boston
- Jewish Community Relations Council
- J-Street
- Brit Tzedek v'Shalom Boston
- Boston Workmen's Circle
- Taglit-Birthright Israel (Boston chapter)
- New Israel Fund
- The David Project
- AIPAC

On the Arab- and Muslim-American side, the following organizations should be contacted:

- American Islamic Congress
- American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee of Massachusetts
- Muslim American Society
- Muslim Council of Boston
- Islamic Society of North America
- Boston Network of Arab American Professionals
- Council on American-Islamic Relations
- Islamic Center of New England.

From the Irish-American and British communities, the following are recommended:

- Irish American Partnership
- Local Representatives in the Friends of Ireland Caucus
- Irish Immigration Centre
- Boston Irish Business Association
- American Ireland Fund
- Irish Chamber of Commerce
- Eire Society of Boston
- Irish and British Consulates
- British American Business Council of New England, Inc.
- University of Ulster American Friends

And, finally, from the academic community, reaching out to the following programs, and individual scholars within them, might be advantageous:

- Harvard Kennedy School's Middle East Initiative
- Harvard Program on Negotiation
- Harvard Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation
- Harvard Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs
- Boston College Irish Institute
- Boston University Elie Wiesel Center for Judaic Studies
- Boston University Institute for the Study of Muslim Societies and Civilizations
- MIT Jerusalem 2050
- Tufts Program in International Negotiation and Conflict Resolution
- Tufts Edward R. Murrow Center of Public Diplomacy
- Brandeis Crown Center for Middle East Studies

In addition to the traditional social networks in the Boston community, such as houses of worship, YMCAs, local pubs and restaurants, new media technologies are useful for disseminating information and encouraging dialogue. Social media tools such as Facebook and Twitter should be used to advertise cross-cultural exchanges and events. Even creating a “fan page” on Facebook for an event can spark interest and generate publicity. Blogs are a great way to sustain a more substantive dialogue between groups. For example, the Irish American Partnership could start a “lessons learned” blog on their website where individuals from the Irish American community could contribute stories of how they participated in supporting reconciliation in Northern Ireland. Jewish- and Israeli-American, and Arab-, Muslim-, and Palestinian-American group members could engage with their own accounts as well.

Implementing Economic Investment

The economy in the West Bank is based mostly on services as the region has limited natural resources but maintains a well-educated and highly skilled labor force. The agricultural sector is growing and the major products include olives, citrus fruits, flowers and vegetables. There is a small industrial sector that produces mostly food products, shoes and clothing. Rounding out the GDP of the region are remittances and a budding tourism sector.

In soliciting both public and private investment, the European Union’s Anima Investment Network believes that Palestine, “with its strategic location and need for widespread infrastructure development is an untapped emerging market with enormous investment potential.”² The market-based economy, increasingly robust regulatory framework, and labor market are key positive factors for investors to consider. Additionally, the Palestinian economy has already begun integrating with regional and international economies through a network of free trade agreements and associations.

The current obstacles to investment involve security concerns and access to the people, goods and services in the region as a result of the checkpoints hindering movement. While an improved security environment in the last two years has mitigated some of the risks to investment, the checkpoints remain a significant barrier to economic development. While the political solution may address this issue to a degree, access will likely remain a problem for the next several years. Investment in infrastructure, education and civil society projects may lead to better returns at the present.

Cisco® is one private firm that has taken the lead in Palestinian investment and could serve a model to other interested firms. In its Palestinian Commitment report, the company states:

Cisco aims to build stronger and more productive communities by increasing access to opportunities for education and economic participation. The Palestinian Commitment provides an opportunity to leverage Cisco® networking and collaborative technologies and our strategic partnership model to support the sustainable development of career skills and job opportunities, particularly in the ICT sector, and provide lasting benefits to individuals within the Palestinian territories.²

While Cisco® is able to commit to large investment projects, regional small cap companies could promote further economic growth through the development of ICT companies, as one example.

In terms of financial support for reconciliation projects, the following is a list of organizations that are recommended:

- Crossing Borders
- Dialogue Project
- Givat Haviva
- Givat Haviva Educational Foundation
- The Center for Conflict Resolution & Reconciliation (CCRR) Bethlehem
- The Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace
- Hope Flowers School Bethlehem
- Seeds of Peace
- Interfaith Encounter
- Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel
- Adams Institute
- Madre
- Palestinian Centre for Human Rights

CONCLUSION

In the final analysis, the Northern Irish peace process between Protestants and Catholics contains a number of general lessons in peacemaking and conflict resolution that should inform future approaches to the Israel-Palestinian conflict. As this report has demonstrated, the Northern Ireland peace was largely a function of seven key factors: political leadership, an inclusive negotiation framework based on principles of peace and democracy, a strong public desire for peace, U.S. involvement (prompted by the Irish-American diaspora), the internationalization of the process, economic gains, and good timing.

In the admittedly very different Israeli-Palestinian conflict, many of these general factors are not yet present. The main reason for this is the inability or unwillingness of the Obama administration to put pressure on Israel to come to the negotiating table in good faith. This is nothing new for American presidents of course. As Harvard political science professor Stephen Walt puts it, “The central barrier to the Middle East peace process all of these years has been the American inability to put pressure on Israel.” The fact is that Israel has simply gotten too comfortable with the status quo and that has to change. The spark to that change can and should begin with the Irish-American community, now estimated at 42 million strong. Much as they did during the 1990s, Irish-Americans should unite, this time in opposition to Israel’s illegal occupation of Palestinian territories and call on the U.S. government to put more pressure on Israel to freeze settlement expansion and come to the negotiating table. Irish-American community leaders should also reach out to the Israeli, Jewish, Arab, and Palestinian diaspora groups in the U.S. to impart the lessons they learned in the 1990s, and should work to bring the parties together.

The EU also has a greater role to play in mediating this conflict – and the catalyst could be the UK. Specifically, the UK should put forward a proposal of fast-tracked EU and NATO membership for Israel provided it negotiates a two-state solution and complies with international law. The promise of such memberships and the economic opportunities and security guarantees that come with them just might put enough positive pressure on Israel to deal in good faith. Should the Israelis fail to take action, the EU would then need to consider punitive trade sanctions similar to those imposed on South Africa during its apartheid era in the 1980s. The message to Israel must be clear: we want to help you but the status quo is unacceptable.

Twelve years ago Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland ended a conflict that many said was irreconcilable. As Irish-Americans continue to enjoy the remarkable peace achieved on the Emerald Isle, it is important that the lessons that made that peace possible not be forgotten, nor the ways in which they can be applied to help Israelis and Palestinians achieve a lasting peace of their own.

APPENDIX:

List of Interviewees

Ambassador Paula Dobriansky
Ambassador Nicholas Burns
Kate Auspitz, Issues Director for Congressmen Capuano
Professor Stephen Walt, Harvard University
Joseph Leary, Irish American Partnership, Boston
Clare Risman, British Consulate-New York
Yasser Abed Rabbo, General Secretary of the PLO Executive Committee
Walid Awad, Spokesman, Central Media Commission PLO
Wafa Amr, Freelance journalist (Reuters)
Issa Kissasei, PLO Negotiations Affairs Department
Dr. Jad Isaac, Director of the Applied Research Institute Jerusalem (ARIJ)
Dr. Sabri Saidam, West Bank Bezreit University
Naseef Mu-Allem, Director of Palestinian Center for Peace and Democracy
Danny Pins, Jewish Joint Distribution Committee
Alan Stewart, Political Officer, British Embassy in Tel Aviv
Adi Ashkenazi, Director: Division of Economics in the Ministry Regional Cooperation
Yohanan Plessner, Knesset Member
Oren Magnezy, Laurus Consulting
Yael Patir, The Peres Center For Peace
Liam Maskey, Intercom Belfast
Mary Madden, British Government
Dennis Godfrey and Chris McNabb, Director and Deputy Director of Communications, NIO
Shaun Woodward, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Nick Perry, Senior Director for Policing and Security
Robin Masefield, Director of Northern Ireland Prison Service
Gareth Johnston, Director of Criminal Justice
Peter King, Special Adviser to First Minister Peter Robinson
Duncan Morrow, Community Relations Counsel
Carinne Luck, J-Street

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THE DUBAI INITIATIVE

The Dubai Initiative is a joint venture between the Dubai School of Government (DSG) and the Harvard Kennedy School (HKS), supporting the establishment of DSG as an academic, research, and outreach institution in public policy, administration, and management for the Middle East. The primary objective of the Initiative is to bridge the expertise and resources of HKS with DSG and enable the exchange of students, scholars, knowledge and resources between the two institutions in the areas of governance, political science, economics, energy, security, gender, and foreign relations related to the Middle East.

The Initiative implements programs that respond to the evolving needs of DSG and are aligned with the research interests of the various departments and centers of HKS as well as other schools and departments of Harvard University. Program activities include funding, coordinating and facilitating fellowships, joint fellowships with DSG, internships, faculty and graduate research grants, working papers, multi-year research initiatives, conferences, symposia, public lectures, policy workshops, faculty workshops, case studies, and customized executive education programs delivered at DSG.

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The Dubai School of Government (DSG) is a research and teaching institution focusing on public policy in the Arab world. Established in 2005 under the patronage of HH Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of Dubai, in cooperation with the Harvard Kennedy School, DSG aims to promote good governance through enhancing the region's capacity for effective public policy.

Toward this goal, the Dubai School of Government also collaborates with regional and global institutions in its research and training programs. In addition, the School organizes policy forums and international conferences to facilitate the exchange of ideas and promote critical debate on public policy in the Arab world.

The School is committed to the creation of knowledge, the dissemination of best practice and the training of policy makers in the Arab world. To achieve this mission, the School is developing strong capabilities to support research and teaching programs including

- applied research in public policy and management;
- master's degrees in public policy and public administration;
- executive education for senior officials and executives; and,
- knowledge forums for scholars and policy makers.