

Dialogue Revisited

Learning from Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine

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Only 30 years ago, the conflicts in Israel/Palestine and in Northern Ireland were declared to be unsolvable. Today, three decades later, Northern Ireland is on the way to a sustainable peace, while the situation in Israel/Palestine seems to be even more difficult and complex. This thesis argues that, apart from the withering of religious influence or growing economic success, a multi-level dialogue process has been a key factor behind the successful peace process in Northern Ireland. In contrast, the failure to achieve a stable framework for peace in Israel/Palestine can be at least partially attributed to the absence of multi-level dialogue. However, this hypothesis, while supported by practitioner accounts and existing research in different disciplines, has mostly been underutilized in peace studies, which usually treat dialogue processes more as itemized best practices and methods than as a strategic approach in itself (Kleiboer 1998). Building on qualitative, semi-structured experts interviews from Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine, this thesis will proceed with comparative historical process-tracing analysis to test preliminary results and subsequent propositions. It will attempt to research the structural conditions and determinants that make dialogical communication more successful (best practices) and exploring its relative role and importance for conflict management and peacebuilding. Which could be a significant contribution to the evolution of dialogical communication in conflict and crisis management and a major help to policy-makers, researchers, mediators and citizen peacebuilder.

Relation to existing theory and practice and relevance for Peacebuilding

My thesis work builds on a variety of already existing research and practices on communication and dialogue in Peace and Conflict studies (Burton 1980), which will serve as foundations to this work. The project draws on Deutsch's (1953) work on collective identification, Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis, Habermas's (1998) communicative action theory, Burton's (1990) human-need theory and Risse's (2000) "power of the better argument", providing insightful analysis on the importance of communication and dialogue in the processes of group and identity formation as well as conflicts and their resolution. Meanwhile, network studies, such as Adler and Hass (1992) on epistemic communities, Adler and Barnett (1998) on security communities, Keck and Sikkink (1998) on transnational advocacy networks and Wapner on global civil society (1996), have further established dialogical communication as an essential platform for change in today's societies and regimes. It will be supported by current research on the changing global order with the emergence of globalization and newer forms of communication capabilities, networks and technology (McLuhan and Powers 1989, Castells 1996, Held 1999, Katz & Aakhus 2002, Barabasi 2003, Rosenau 2003, Bollier 2003, Slaughter 2004). On a practitioner's level, an array of different applications in negotiation studies, diplomacy and conflict management have been established. Dialogical communication is fundamental for this kind of work (Zartman and Rubin 2000), especially in traditional first track state diplomacy (Jauch 1997, Carlsnaes 2000, Catto 2002) as well as in the newer forms of second track, civic or citizen diplomacy and mediation (Fisher, Ury and Patton 1983, Kelman 1996, Fisher 1997, Saunders 1999, Voorhees 2002, Davies and Kaufman 2002, Galtung 2004).

Yet, an analysis is missing that studies the different dialogical communication processes not just as single and simple "best practice" methods at a certain stage in a conflict or as a pure consequence and expression of other changing conflict factors, but as a combined conflict management approach in itself. This

has left key questions unanswered on the relative importance of dialogue processes in conflict management and underutilized a potentially most powerful theory and tool for peacebuilding. Therefore, this dissertation will attempt to synergize theoretical and practical knowledge about the importance of dialogue in dealing with conflicts and trace how (and when) dialogue processes can be used more effectively in the prevention, managing and resolution of different kinds of conflicts. It will also provide important information on the actors, obstacles and chance involved in that process, helping academics and practitioners alike to find the best models of change.

Research Design and Methods

This thesis project argues that (H0) *dialogical communication and processes (independent variable) are a central catalyst for a successful peace process (dependent variable) in conflict situations*. This leads to subsequent questions such as: what kind of dialogue seems to work best, when, and what are the determining factors for its success and, last but not least, how can we measure it?

Trying to provide answers and proof to these questions and arguments, this thesis project will be built around a small-n case study that combines both within-case analysis and cross-case comparisons, which among comparative scholars counts as the strongest means available for drawing inferences (George and Bennett 2005). The two cases of Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine have been chosen because both conflicts seem to embody different experiences with dialogical communication. Northern Ireland had many successful examples of community and political dialogue even in times of major conflict (Fitzduff 1996, O'Day 1997, Bloomfield 1998, Cochrane 2001, Tonge 2002, Grant 2003), while in Israel/Palestine, communication and dialogue between the parties very often seems to stop and go nowhere when the conflict intensifies; dialogical communication is then virtually non-existent (Muslih 1993, Sela 1998, Abu-Nimer 1999, Sahliyah and Deng 2003). Focusing the case study to these two cases will allow for an intense examination of the causal chains at work and offers greater insights for causal inference (George and Bennett 2005, Hopmann 1996).

Preliminary comparative field research has been conducted. Forty semi-structured expert interviews in both regions have been completed, leading to subsequent propositions on determinants and interfering variables of dialogical communication. The preliminary research suggests that there are three central features determining the effectiveness of dialogical communication. It needs to be (H1) *frequently over a longer period of time* (Watzlawick 1962, Saunders 1999, Voorhees 2002) and happen on (H2) *multi-levels of society including official and unofficial participants* (Diamond and McDonald 1996, Colletta and Cullen 2000, Miller, Butts and Rode 2002), and, last but not least, these processes need to be (H3) *linked with each other, especially political leadership and civil society* (Lederach 1997, Smith 1999). Using comparative historical process-tracing, these propositions will have to be further tested by analyzing the principal causal variables, mechanisms and processes believed to conduce these specific types of outcomes (Hall 2000).

Research Plan and Completion

This research will be based on a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods, limiting the chances of misinterpretations and wrong causal connections. This will be done by using a data-set of about 300 interviews from both regions (ca. 100 personal interviews (40 already conducted) and ca. 200 second-hand interviews (existing)), the process-tracing methodology will be complimented by statistical comparison (e.g. inter-group marriages, violence, segregation), archival research (e.g. news articles, interviews) and survey data research (e.g. Northern Ireland Social Attitudes Survey/ Life and Times Survey).

Field research in Northern Ireland (Juli-August 2005) and Israel/Palestine (August-September 2006) has been conducted and preliminary research results have been discussed with the dissertation committee (e.g. prospectus defense) and presented at major conferences (e.g. ISA 2007, and upcoming APSA 2007) as well as being under review for publications. This summer a second research trip to first Israel/Palestine and then Northern Ireland is needed to conduct ca. 70 additional interviews on the preliminary research results. Furthermore local research facilities will be used, for Northern Ireland: Transitional Justice Institute (Belfast), Intercom (Belfast), INCORE (Derry/Londonderry), University of Ulster (Coleraine) and for Israel/Palestine: Hebrew University (Jerusalem), Chaim Herzog Institute for Media Politics and Society (Tel Aviv), MIFTAH (Ramallah), to gather necessary additional data in archival research. This trip will complete the field research for this dissertation.

The theory part of the dissertation is nearly completed. With the second research trip to both regions this summer empirical research will be completed as well followed by the analysis and evaluation of the research data. Leading to writing and completing of chapters and revisions (which will be also submitted for journal

publication), with a possible first draft to be completed at the end of the summer 2008 and a planned defense of the dissertation before the end of 2008. Followed by the planned publication of the thesis work in a book by a major university press.

Assistance and Mission of the Center for Citizen Peacebuilding

I believe this project absolutely fits the mission of the Center for Citizen Peacebuilding to turn research into action for a safer world. My studies on the role of dialogue processes in conflict management and peacebuilding has immense implications for success and failure of conflict management in the future. I believe my research will enlarge the important discourse on this issue and generate practical advice for policy-makers and citizen peacebuilders in different conflicts on how to better make use of and strategically apply and encourage dialogical communication to bring change and lay the foundation for more intense negotiations and sustainable peace.

SUMMER 2007 BUDGET
“Dialogue Revisited – Learning from Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine”

<i>NORTHERN IRELAND, FOUR WEEKS</i>	<u>unit price</u>	<u>quantity</u>	<u>total</u>
Airfare, coach, roundtrip LAX-Dublin	\$762.00	1	\$762
Train, Dublin-Belfast	\$39.60	2	\$79
Bus fares, inter-city	\$12.00	10	\$120
Taxis	\$17.00	30	\$510
Per Diem, N. Ireland (room and board)	\$65.00	28	\$1,820
Miscellaneous	\$200	1	\$200
SUBTOTAL			\$3,491 ca. \$4000
<i>ISRAEL/PALESTINE, FIVE WEEKS</i>			
Airfare, coach, roundtrip LAX-Tel Aviv	\$1470.00	1	\$1470
Car Rental (plus insurance)	\$798	1	\$798
Gas, Toll costs	per week \$70	5	\$350
Per Diem, Israel/Palestine (room and board)	\$65.00	35	\$2,275
Miscellaneous	\$200	1	\$200
SUBTOTAL			\$5,093 ca. \$4000
<i>American Political Science Association annual meeting</i> <i>Chicago (IL), August 30th – September 2nd 2007</i>			
Airfare, coach, roundtrip LAX-Chicago	\$378.00	1	\$378
Per Diem (food)	\$30.00	4	\$120
Accommodation (potentially be shared with other student)	\$120.00	4	\$480
SUBTOTAL			\$978
TOTAL			\$9,562
Center for Citizen Peacebuilding support requested			\$3000