Dialogue Between Israelis and Palestinians: Obsolete Approach or Still Viable Technique in the Middle East Conflict Transformation Toolkit?

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INTRODUCTION

I never thought that I would write my thesis on conflict transformation in Palestine and Israel. This particular conflict is one which many people I know, including family members and close friends, cannot discuss rationally or calmly. However, I fulfilled my graduate school internship at Karuna Center for Peacebuilding, an organization which has spent eighteen years implementing “effective multi-sector training programs and community-based projects that promote genuine dialogue, reconciliation, and nonviolent solutions in over 25 troubled or war-torn regions of the world.” One of my project assignments was to help to identify sponsors and funders for a proposed dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis. The proposed project was a direct outgrowth of a consultancy involving Palestinians and Israelis who had participated in CONTACT (Conflict Transformation Across Cultures) and/or another Karuna Center peacebuilding program and wanted to contribute their skills and experience to transforming this most intractable of current-day conflicts.

The project proved challenging to implement. One proposed partner, the president of the Jerusalem Rotary Club, professed his commitment to peace-building and pointed to peace-building projects his Club had sponsored. But he was deeply skeptical about the impact of dialogue (M. Zober, personal communication, February 28, 2012)

Frankly, while I am exceptionally optimistic in everything I say, think and do, dialogue interventions here have not been very successful. It has become an "industry" where a select few "peacemakers" make big salaries, fly to exotic locales to talk and get us nowhere. It would take a VERY SAVVY Middle East hand to design a program that would lead to successful results.
ABSTRACT

During the last thirty years of the 20th century, there was a proliferation of dialogues between Palestinians and Israelis. Participants in early unofficial dialogues sometimes became negotiators for official dialogues, or articulated positions which were later presented in public Track II negotiations such as the Geneva Accords. Nevertheless, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has not been transformed, and seems more intractable now than in many years. Given the optimism, effort, and analysis which have been invested in dialogue, this paper considers the question of whether dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians represents an obsolete approach or a still valuable technique in the Middle East conflict transformation toolkit.

Research was conducted through an extensive literature review followed by semi-structured individual interviews with Palestinian and Israeli activists who had had experience facilitating dialogue.

Based on this research, it appears that for many peace activists, dialogue remains an important component in a spectrum of peacebuilding activities. Almost all dialogue proponents recognize limitations which include asymmetrical power dynamics, language challenges, and cultural barriers. More significantly, there is a tendency to focus on transforming relationships between individuals without addressing the structural violence and the political backdrop with which the individuals struggle.

Notwithstanding dialogue’s shortcomings, some practitioners mourn its decline. Others, particularly Palestinians, resist all contact with Israelis, including dialogue, until power is equalized. A more hopeful trend is Israelis joining with Palestinians in their regular protests of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory, suggesting a movement beyond dialogue to action.
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Date: November 17, 2012
DIALOGUE BETWEEN ISRAELIS AND PALESTINIANS: AN OBSOLETE APPROACH OR STILL VALUABLE TECHNIQUE IN THE CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION TOOLKIT?

Laurie Millman

PIM 70

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Representatives of another potential partner, the Center for World Religions, Diplomacy, and Conflict Resolution at George Mason University, cited “dialogue fatigue,” and recommended a slightly different means to achieving the same end of enhanced communication and understanding. This approach proposed designing business-oriented ventures which would engage Palestinians and Israelis in a joint project, and would accrue concrete benefits to both groups in addition to the longer-term benefits of relationship-building. It remains to be seen whether this project will be funded and implemented, and if it represents a more viable approach to conflict transformation in this region.

Notwithstanding the current resistance to dialogue, it is important to acknowledge that for approximately twenty years, every conceivable kind of dialogue took place between every conceivable kind of sector group of Palestinians and Israelis. Galia Golan and Zahira Kamal, writing in 1999, offer a clear explanation of the potential impact of a productive dialogue, and a brief history of the premise, objectives, and makeup of the dialogue groups that took place:

The immediate goals of both sides were ... identical: to undo the demonization that had occurred in both communities regarding the other, to see and demonstrate that the “other” was not necessarily “terrorist” or “occupier,” poised to kill or oppress....

The longer-range goal was to create, among as broad a public as possible, at both the elite and grass-roots levels, an acceptance of the idea of a negotiated solution on the basis of mutual recognition and mutual compromise. Thus, the objective was not only to put pressure on the political leaderships to enter such negotiations, but also to “educate” the elites who were part of, or connected with, the political leaderships. ...

In keeping with the multifaceted nature of these goals, both the participants and the forms of dialogue varied. Thus, there were dialogues that were public or private, open groups or closed, specialized (women only; former military; by occupation, such as social workers, academics, mental health workers, students), one-time meetings (one or more days) or sustained over time, in Israel/Palestine or abroad, direct or through third parties, large or small (less than 12 people), or with or without facilitators, between elites or at the grass-roots level, political, social, with joint action, or with joint statement. ... The authors have participated in almost every type of dialogue, from the mid-1980s onward. (p. 203)
Some scholars maintain that the relationships forged through these dialogue groups was directly responsible for the 1993 Oslo Accords. Others maintain that notwithstanding the promise represented by the Oslo Accords, ultimately, the Accords were one more agreement that was never fully implemented. The conflict is no closer to resolution in 2012 than it was in the 1980s. Thus at this juncture, given the experience of Karuna Center and the vast literature on dialogue, it is appropriate to explore the role of dialogue in transforming the Palestinians-Israeli conflict.

**INQUIRY QUESTION**

The overarching question is as follows:

❖ Dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians: Is it an obsolete approach or a valuable technique for the Middle East conflict transformation toolkit?

Sub-questions include:

❖ Given the security and other challenges currently associated with face-to-face dialogues and the growth of online blogs, has dialogue shifted to a virtual context? If yes, what is the impact of online dialogues?

❖ Has “dialogue fatigue” led peace-builders to abandon dialogues in favor of more cross-border joint ventures focused on producing concrete products, and do such ventures achieve the same kind of relationship-building traditionally ascribed to dialogues?

❖ What is the impact of the Palestinian BDS movement (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions)?

❖ Given all of the above, what avenues remain for committed peace activists?
Introduction to Literature Review

The themes and tone of the literature have evolved with the passage of time. Scholars and dialogue practitioners writing in the last decades of the twentieth century express hope at the potential of dialogue to build the bridges necessary to transform the conflict. Scholars and activists writing in the first decades of the twenty-first century express weariness, frustration, and despair at the ability of dialogue to achieve further breakthroughs. They cite previous breakthroughs and the euphoria these breakthroughs and accords produced only to be followed by crushing disappointment and outbreaks of violence when the accords failed to be implemented, and little changed in people’s lived reality.

Several issues emerge repeatedly, including:

❖ the asymmetry of the relationship between Palestinians and Israelis, and how that power dynamic expresses itself in dialogue;

❖ the language of the dialogue and its implications for who participates;

❖ the cultural implications of dialogue given the reliance on words which do not always adequately convey nuances that are frequently expressed through gestures.

More significantly, however, one critical finding is that because the parties’ political realities are different, their objectives are different. Israelis, whose primary concern is security, may approach the dialogue with a goal of building individual inter-personal relationships, thus underlining the common humanity between the conflicting parties, and demonstrating that most Palestinians, like most Israelis, want peace. Palestinians, whose
primary concern is ending the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, may be less interested in fostering individual relationships and more focused on changing national political structures in order to establish a sovereign Palestinian state.

In this context, another critical finding is that the parties do not share the same overarching goal. Whereas the Israelis propose continuing the “peace process,” Palestinians demand justice first, out of which peace will arise. Given the non-parallel nature of the two parties’ basic needs, the literature suggests that traditional peace-building interventions, although valuable tools in a spectrum of peace-building activities, may represent too little too late at this juncture.

**Conflict Background and Analysis**

A timeline of key events, including attacks, counter-attacks, agreements, and reactions to agreements, is provided in the Appendix. However, several overarching trends can be identified.

❖ For the most part, the conflict in Israel-Palestine is relatively recent, that is, it dates from the late nineteenth century. Discussions of two thousand years of conflict represent a time collapse as described by Zerubavel (2003): “Our collective memory, in other words, telescopically amplifies what appears to us historically momentous while compressing or even entirely ignoring what we consider uneventful.” From 1516 through 1918, the Ottomans presided over an empire which included most of the Arab world. Islamic law prevailed and privileged Muslims over non-Muslims. However, Jews and Christians were recognized as “People of the Book” because of their monotheistic practices, and for the most part, they co-existed with Muslims. The Empire consisted of a series of districts and provinces which were administered more locally than federally. Palestine was an outlying
province which received attention more because of its significance to Europeans interested in its biblical sites than because of any particular status in the Empire.

❖ The origins of the current conflict occurred in an Arab world that was in a state of flux. The degree to which this evolution has continued is evident in the recent events of the “Arab Spring.” As the Ottoman Empire crumbled in the beginning of the twentieth century, its Arab residents, although not members of Western-style nation-states, began to mobilize for independence. Arab armies joined British forces at the end of World War I to defeat the Turkish rulers of the Ottoman Empire in exchange for a British promise of independence. However, when Britain assumed control of the territory in 1918, its promise of independence to the nascent Arab nationalist movement was subsumed by its simultaneous commitment of a homeland to the nascent Zionist movement.

❖ The publication in 1896 of Theodor Herzl’s book Der Judenstaat (The Jewish State) articulated the premise of the Zionist movement. This movement called for a Jewish homeland in Palestine based both on ancient Jewish tradition, which referred to the biblical “land of Zion,” and 19th century realities which saw Jews being persecuted in Europe.

❖ Jewish immigration to Palestine began at the end of the nineteenth century in response to increasing anti-Semitism in Europe. The political reality of apparent British support for a Jewish state in Palestine, which would result in the division of the existing territory, and the brutal reality of Hitler’s extermination of the Jews in World War II accelerated Jewish
immigration to Palestine. Tensions in Palestine between the indigenous population and the newcomers increased.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the Arab residents of Palestine expressed their resistance to the proposed division of the land with protests that ranged from civil disobedience, such as strikes, to violent attacks on Jews. Jews also formed militant groups that attacked indigenous Palestinians. Nevertheless, Britain continued to support the premise of a Jewish homeland in Palestine and ultimately asked the United Nations to consider a proposal for the establishment of a Jewish state.

On November 29, 1947, after reviewing the recommendations of a United Nations special committee and notwithstanding the resistance of Palestinian representatives, a majority of U.N. member states approved the division of Palestine into a Jewish state (56.47% of the territory) and an Arab state (43.53% of the territory) with Jerusalem designated as an international community. The state of Israel was established officially on May 14, 1948, an act which Palestinians commemorate on May 15 as “al Nakba”, the Catastrophe. However, even before the official partition, Jewish and Arab forces had already begun attacking each other in the hope of claiming more territory. In April, Jews attacked a Palestinian village, Deir Yassin, killing many of the residents. As word of the attack spread, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians fled the territory fearing a continuing massacre.
Since the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, violent attacks have been waged by both state and non-state actors on both sides; peace-making has been attempted by both state and non-state actors on both sides, and the interests of international stake-holders have further complicated the conflict.

The Impact of Dialogue

Before we can explore whether dialogue is an effective tool for waging peace between Israelis and Palestinians, we need to define what we mean by dialogue. Harold Saunders (1999) writes: “Each experience is unique, but the capacity of human beings to talk in depth with purpose about their relationships, while rarely developed with ease, seems available in most cultures to move from violence to workable peaceful relationships.” (p. 3). This paper is focused not on Track I dialogues, which refer to official government negotiations, but rather on Track II dialogues. Track II dialogues include discussions between influential academics or activists who may participate with or without the knowledge of government officials, but they also may refer to discussions between ordinary people who are members of a common sector group, such as women, youth, bereaved parents, or clergy. (Sanjana Hattotuwa (2004) introduces Track III dialogue to refer to grassroots organizations). Sometimes, the discussion is positioned as Interactive Conflict Resolution, or a problem-solving workshop which includes conflict analysis and is focused on devising a solution to a particular facet of the conflict. Sometimes, the discussion is less focused on resolving the conflict and is geared to education and/or building relationships.
Tools for conducting successful dialogues have been codified by Dr. Paula Green, founder of Karuna Center for Peacebuilding and co-founder of the CONTACT program, reflecting her experience of dialogue trainings and facilitation. Several are included in the Appendix to this paper (see Appendix C and D). The essence of these tools is that at the heart of a successful dialogue is the creation of a safe space for honest participation and the promotion of active and open listening.

One reason peace activists recommend dialogue as a peace-building tool is that they believe that it represents a microcosm of the societal change that they envision, and that it has a magnifying potential to progress from the micro to the macro level. Mohammed Abu-Nimer (1999) asserts that the phenomenon that explains why dialogue provides a context for individual representatives of conflicting groups to shift in their perceptions and understanding of each other is the foundation of experiential learning, i.e., Kurt Lewin's theory of change. Lewin describes a group process that permits individual participants to “un-freeze” from their habitual point of view; “move” to a new perspective as a result of a group experience; and “re-freeze” in an enlightened state. Judy Kuriansky (2007) elaborates further on the rapprochement that may occur when representatives of conflicting groups may discover a common humanity: “A fundamental and useful principle in social psychology – called the ‘contact hypothesis’ – asserts that it is much harder to hate people you really know something about – particularly if you are working together for a common goal.” (p. 2)

Dialogue is valued not only for its power to shift attitudes among a core group of participants, but for its perceived potential to radiate out from them to an ever-expanding constituency, creating a groundswell for peace, and propelling political leaders into official
negotiations. In this context, dialogue may represent a critical first phase of the peace-making process. According to Fischer (1997):

Another important variant of ICR [Interactive Conflict Resolution] is intercommunal dialogue, which seeks to increase understanding and trust between members of conflicting groups that may eventually have some positive effects on public opinion or policymaking.

In the broader context of approaches to peace, both conflict analysis and dialogue are often used as peacebuilding interventions at the stage of prenegotiation, to help move the parties toward settling their differences and rebuilding their relationships. (p. 25)

An example of this model is the dialogue involving Israeli and Palestinian academics which Herbert Kelman initiated as a professor of social relations at Harvard University in the late 1960s, and which he continued over the course of two decades. Walid Salem and Edy Kaufman (2006) assert that the university setting, given its third-party affiliation and its implication of academic scholarship, promoted the open exploration of ideas. It also conferred a modicum of safety at a time – immediately following the 1967 War and Israel's annexation of additional territory – when official contact was suspended. Salem and Kaufman acknowledge that the ultimate impact of these dialogues cannot be evaluated, but they note that several participants, such as Edward Said, went on to become influential academics, while others became official negotiators for the Oslo Accords. In fact, some scholars assert that the Oslo Accords, Track I negotiations which occurred in 1993, represented a culmination of all the Track II initiatives that laid the groundwork during the 1980s.

was then, particularly, that Track II conferences among scholars acted as a legitimating forum in which both sides could meet, thereby avoiding officially sanctioned restrictions. The guise of academic conferences protected the participants, and even drew considerable (albeit silent) official observation by both the PLO and the Israeli government.” (p. 30) Daniel Lieberfeld (2007) cites negotiations in South Africa that led to the end of apartheid as well as talks between Israelis and Palestinians to highlight the flow of ideas and the relationship between Track II and Track I dialogues. He distinguishes a step between them which he refers to as Track I ½ or “hard Track II,” which he differentiates from “soft Track II.” According to Lieberfeld, soft Track II dialogues, which he also refers to as “citizens’ diplomacy,” involve ordinary citizens who are free to express ideas unencumbered from official positions, whereas “hard Track II” dialogues mix ordinary citizens with official representatives, and are designed to explore ideas which are then communicated to official negotiators engaged in Track I talks. This process recognizes that official negotiators are limited by their respective political realities, and relies on the “hard Track II” dialogues to function like a laboratory for vetting ideas before they are exposed to public scrutiny. Lieberfeld writes that in the case of negotiations between the African National Congress and the South African government, as well as between Israelis and Palestinians in the years between the Madrid Conference and the Oslo Accords:

Semiofficial talks established lines of communication between key decision makers, enabling constructive communication between adversary leaderships. In addition, the talks permitted leaders to agree on preconditions for official talks and to explore tradeoffs for the bargains eventually contained in official agreements. Through semi-official talks, leaders also clarified questions and verified answers regarding the other side’s intentions and actions and arranged for confidence-building actions on each side.” (p. 150)
According to Harold Saunders (1999), who participated in peace-making as both an official U.S. Government representative and as a private citizen, dialogue has a role not only in stimulating official negotiations, but in ensuring that such negotiations endure. He writes that peace-making is a multi-layered process which must occur simultaneously on an official level and in a people-to-people dimension. He views dialogue as the preamble to negotiations which helps to create the relational context in which negotiations can occur, as well as the coda to the negotiations which extends the relational context so that the agreements can actually be implemented on the ground. "... Only governments can write peace treaties, but only human beings – citizens outside government – can transform conflictual relationships between people into peaceful relationships." (p. xvii) That transformation occurs through the mechanism of dialogue. "Just as governments have used diplomacy and formal mediation or negotiation as their instruments for dealing with conflict, sustained dialogue is the instrument that citizens outside government use for addressing the human dimension of conflict to change their relationships." (p. xxii-xxiii)

The shortcomings of dialogue

Jonathan Kuttab (1988) outlines some of the weaknesses of dialogue while professing his belief in its enduring value:

I have written some harsh words about dialogue and its pitfalls; yet I am still a firm believer in it. Peace, justice and reconciliation can be advanced tremendously by an open dialogue between members of the oppressed group and those who are willing among the oppressor society. (p. 3)

Kuttab identifies several pitfalls that are echoed and illustrated by other scholars. Kuttab cites the asymmetry of the relationship between the dialogue partners. Palestinians live under Israeli
occupation, whereas Israelis live in a free and open society. Mohammed Dajani and Gerhon Baskin (2006) elaborate on this further, evoking the basic hierarchy of needs, and suggesting that Israelis' need for peace is real, but Palestinians' need for a resolution of the current situation involves their very survival. “For the most part, Israelis engaged in the dialogue may feel a pressing need for a better solution, but for the most part they are not personally affected as the status quo persists. The Palestinians arrive with a feeling that the current situation is the worst possible, and they are searching for an immediate change.” (p. 90)

Kuttab also notes that the dialogue partner who is oppressed may be urged to downplay the situation, partly to ease the guilt of the oppressor. In addition, Kuttab cautions that the tendency of the dialogue to focus on the individual and a common humanity, to the exclusion of the group represented by the individual and more global political challenges, avoids the fundamental conflict and its root causes.

Maoz el al (2004) observe that the asymmetry of the power relationships between dialogue partners may be reflected in the dialogue encounter itself. They present a case study of a dialogue between Israeli Jewish and Palestinian graduate students as an example of a dialogue gone awry. The facilitator was not forceful enough to prevent the Israelis from dominating the dialogue by using such monopolizing techniques as speaking longer than the Palestinians and interrupting the Palestinians. In addition, the Israeli Jews attempted to dismiss the Palestinian point-of-view as Kuttab had described. Finally, the Israeli’s behavior reinforced Kuttab’s assertion that there is a tendency to focus on the individual rather than the group: “These [the Israeli Jewish males] continued to be focused, to a large extent, on the dilemma between interpersonal discussions, emphasizing similarities versus political discussions emphasizing national identities and the conflict.” (p. 1095)
Marc Gopin, Director of the Center for World Religions, Conflict and Diplomacy at George Mason University (2002), also acknowledges the risks of asymmetrical power on the effectiveness of dialogue, and he argues that the asymmetry extends to the language of the dialogue as well as cultural practices that inform the dialogue. “Simply stated, adversary groups often come out of circumstances in which one group has more military, economic, political and/or demographic power than the other group. But the asymmetry also may express itself in the nature of the encounter, its language, structure and cultural ethos.” (p. 10). Gopin’s points are several. First, whichever language is chosen, whether it is English or Hebrew, will of necessity exclude some participants and privilege others. Second, he asserts that reliance on spoken language to the exclusion of body language represents a cultural bias, favoring some traditions over others. Gopin references the behavior of his four-year-old daughter to remind readers that even though parents exhort their children to communicate their feelings by using their words rather than their bodies, anyone familiar with children’s behavior will recognize that children naturally communicate much of what is really happening through their body language. Gopin asserts that this is true for adults in some cultures as well, particularly when the adults are members of an oppressed group. “I would argue that dialogue itself, as a method of peacemaking is culturally charged, maybe even biased, and may not satisfy or correspond to the best cultural methods that a group may possess for peacemaking and the transformation of enemy relationships.” (p. 10).

By implication, Gopin also challenges the belief that the impact of dialogue extends from the small core group to the rest of the society. “Dialogue is inherently exclusionary. It is excluding everyone who is not in the room.” (p. 11). Menachem Klein (2006), describes the positive contributions of the Track II dialogues between Israelis and Palestinians which proliferated
during the 1990s and culminated in the Geneva Initiative, but he points out that ultimately, the talks' sphere of influence was limited. Echoing Harold Saunders, who cautioned that negotiating an agreement does not automatically translate to lasting peace on the ground, Klein notes that the dialogues “were conducted almost exclusively between professionals, and insufficient effort was made to bring together community leaders representing the two people who would have to live side by side under the terms of a peace accord.” (p. 119) Dajani and Baskin (2006) agree that in order for dialogues and other cross-border ventures to have an expansive impact on the conflicting societies, all population sectors must be engaged, even those which are traditionally neglected. Dajani and Baskin note that joint activities “almost never targeted the poor, the refugees, and the underprivileged.” (p. 91) In addition, even though Dajani and Baskin urge ongoing dialogue to lay the groundwork for eventual co-existence, they disagree with the basic premise that dialogue will create the momentum to actually change the political orientation. “But in the present violent reality, it would be hubristic in the extreme to think that the same small groups of Israelis and Palestinians, a few thousand at most on either side, are sufficient and acceptable as leadership in bring about or sustaining change.” (p. 109).

And yet, notwithstanding Dajani and Baskin’s contention that a small group of people cannot create large scale change, some scholars argue that in fact, the history of Israeli and Palestinian dialogue suggests that that is actually what did happen, but the change did not endure. In other words, some scholars argue that it was the proliferation of dialogues during the 1980s that led to the implementation of the Oslo Accords, but the ultimate problem was that the Accords were never acted upon. Salem and Kaufman (2006) introduce their book, Bridging the Divide by stating their premise: “Our task is to understand and explain the bottom-up process that provided
legitimacy to both Palestinian and Israeli leadership to engage in negotiations, produce the Oslo agreement, and then fail to implement them” (p. 11)

One theory is that dialogue has not succeeded in bringing about enduring peace because whenever peace seems within reach, extremist elements on both sides wage violence to sabotage the process. Edy Kaufman et al (2006) suggest that violence by both sides has been as effective in thwarting peace-making as if it had been coordinated by the conflicting parties:

On the other side of the political spectrum, the extremist powers and factions in both communities have united indirectly on the basis of their unwritten agreement to continue violence, state- and group-terrorism, the continuation of the occupation, hatred, and the demonizing of the “other.” More often than not, their dominant strategies – often in defiance of national and international law – and their fanatic dedication to “the cause” have proved better able to dictate the course of events than the peace forces. Although representing a minority in both societies, their militancy forced the moderates on both sides to participate only reactively … (p 193).

In contrast, dialogue and other peace-building activities have been singularly uncoordinated according to scholars who decry the lack of continuity, documentation, and cumulative gain. In their chapter in Bridging the Divide, Dajani and Baskin (2006) describe peace-making activities as “a salad with no chef.” (p. 94). In another chapter in the same book, Riad Malki (2006) agrees, and focuses specifically on dialogue: “Since there is no coordination at the Track II level between all participants and organizers, there is no institutional knowledge or available documentation.” (p. 130)

Is there such a thing as virtual dialogue?

The organic, pro-democracy movement known as the “Arab Spring” was spearheaded by students and other ordinary citizens demanding accountability from their governments. It spread through the Middle East and North Africa thanks to social media and other online technology. Acknowledging
technology's potential to disseminate ideas among people who might otherwise be unaware of each others' actions suggests that technology could play a role in peacemaking, and particularly in dialogue. Given the relationship component that is so essential to productive dialogue, some dialogue practitioners would argue that online discussion is not dialogue.

Sponsors of online media would disagree. Yossi Alpher (2012), the Israeli co-editor of an Israeli-Palestinian online publication bitterlemons, refers to bitterlemons as dialogue, albeit moribund:

“There is no peace process and no prospect of one. Informal ‘track II’ dialogue – bitterlemons might be described as a ‘virtual track II’- is declining.”

There are other instances of activists relying on discussions and relationship-building online. Sarah Warren (2010) writes about Global Citizen Corps’ efforts to inspire youth in different countries to learn from each other as part of a leadership development program. She describes a “youth-to-youth dialogue” involving young people from Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, the West Bank, Gaza, the U.S. and the U.K. that is facilitated through a combination of social networking sites, video conferencing, and face-to-face meetings. Of course, these online dialogues are not being used to work through difficult issues raised by opponents, but rather to share ideas among peer leaders.

However, online dialogue is proposed as a medium for conflict transformation by Sanjana Hattotuwa (2004). Hattotuwa writes about the use of information communications technology (ICT) in South Asia. He acknowledges several caveats, namely that government policies and an economically-driven digital divide translate to unequal access to technology. In addition, Hattotuwa recognizes that online dialogue, like face-to-face dialogue and other interventions, should not be evaluated on a stand-alone basis, but rather as part of a multi-faceted peacebuilding effort. Nevertheless, Hattotuwa suggests that online dialogues have a valuable role to play in raising the voices of grassroots activists:

... ICT, in the context of peacebuilding, is the use of enabling technologies to augment existing stakeholder interventions, enable hitherto marginalized actors to participate more fully in peacebuilding processes, empower grassroots communities and bring cohesion to the range of activities on multiple tiers that are an intrinsic part of full-field peacebuilding and conflict transformation (p. 52).
In Israel, there are several online media that purport to provide a forum for discussion. +972 is an Israeli publication that was established in 2010. It is published in English and appears directed mainly at Americans and other internationals. It includes a regular column by Palestinian Aziz Abu-Sarah, but most of the articles are written by Israelis and Americans, although from a left-of-center perspective. According to Liel Liebovitz (2012), the magazine is not widely read in Israel because it is highly critical of the Israeli occupation and re-casts stories covered by the mainstream Israeli media in a much more progressive perspective.

MEPEACE, also based in Israel, purports to be a network of peacebuilders in Israel, Palestine, and throughout the world. Echoing Hattotuwa in underscoring the importance of grassroots participation, the website celebrates the power of technology to lift up the voices of ordinary people:

MEPEACE provides platforms for interaction, information and inspiration to harness the potential of people and organizations the region and beyond to galvanize their collective will for peace.... Our goals are to create new platforms, centralize information, develop leadership in order to mobilize a critical mass of moderates for peace. ... We are building a grassroots movement with cutting-edge social network technology.

Notwithstanding the optimism expressed on the MEPEACE website, it is telling that bitterlemons ceased its regular publication this summer. Editor Yossi Alpher (2012) attributes the closing to the challenge of continuing to raise funds, which had come largely from the European Union, during a particularly bleak period for peacemaking:

We are ceasing publication for reasons involving fatigue – on a number of fronts. First, there is donor fatigue. Why, donors ask, should we continue to support a Middle East dialogue project that not only has not made peace, but cannot “prove” to our satisfaction – especially at a time of revolution and violence throughout the region – that it has indeed raised the level of civilized discussion?
Ghassan Khatib (2012), the Palestinian co-editor, notes that Palestinian writers had traditionally contributed articles to *bitterlemons* in spite of the “anti-normalization” campaign which urges Palestinians to refrain from contact with Israelis. (Contact implies a normal relationship between the two peoples, whereas the actual relationship, of Israeli-occupier and Palestinian-occupied should not be accepted as normal, or condoned as tolerable). However, Khatib notes that recently, Palestinians seem less willing to contribute to an online dialogue with Israelis. Khatib expresses gratitude that the publication had been able to present Palestinian viewpoints from Palestinian voices, a phenomenon which he laments is rare:

In this regard, it remains a criticism of mine and others who observe the media that Palestinians are rarely heard on their own terms. Instead, they are presented responding to Israeli concerns and answering western-derived questions, as if Palestinians have no independent dreams or visions. We must all do better.

**Alternatives to dialogue: concrete projects**

Although Marc Gopin acknowledges the value of dialogue as one component of peace-making, he cautions would-be peacebuilders about relying unduly on words, and he recommends deeds in their place. Gopin’s particular interest, perhaps because he is a rabbi, is shared religious study. He suggests that when the focus shifts from pure dialogue to dialogue about each other’s religious texts through the action of joint study, there is an opportunity for learning and rapprochement. Moreover, he suggests that whereas dialogue may leave out those who are not in the room, all individuals have the potential to engage in deeds with members from the other side and, in so doing, to contribute something concrete and of lasting benefit.
Gopin is not unique in his preference for joint activity over dialogue at this state of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Gopin’s colleague at the Center for World Religions, the Palestinian activist and journalist, Aziz Abu-Sarah, promotes Mejdi Tours, a dual-narrative exploration of the Holy Land as his investment in conflict transformation. Abu-Sarah hires Israeli and Palestinian tour guides who simultaneously provide their respective political, cultural, and historical interpretations of the same landmarks. However, even this venture, which presents the Palestinian and Israeli experiences equally, is anathema to some Palestinian activists. Lauren Gelfond Feldinger (2012) notes that “Palestinians involved in boycotting Israel have criticized Abu Sarah for promoting the ‘normalization’ of relations with Israelis.”

Some dialogue practitioners would argue that proposing projects as an alternative to dialogue represents a false dichotomy since dialogue was never intended to exist apart from action. Harold Saunders and Sanjara Hattotuwa assert that just as conflict is multi-layered, so peacemaking is a complex endeavor which must take place in several realms simultaneously. Lisa Schirch and David Campt (2007) note that dialogue can be a tool for social change if it leads to collaborative action. However, they acknowledge that this progression is not inevitable, and they ask: “How and when does dialogue effectively translate into structural change?” (p. 66). By way of answering this question, they note that sometimes, particularly when power is unbalanced, action is necessary first, before dialogue can occur. Schirch and Campt explain that the less powerful party may feel a greater urgency to initiate dialogue than the more powerful party, for whom the status quo is not uncomfortable. They cite an example from the U.S. Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s:

Black students increased their power by organizing, training themselves in nonviolent action, and carrying out sit-ins, marches, and boycotts of stores that promoted racial
segregation.... The nonviolent actions opened the door for successful dialogue between that black youth and the city leaders that led to desegregation. (pp. 67-68).

Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS)

It is therefore not surprising that supporters of the Palestinian campaign for the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) of Israel refer to the boycotts used successfully during the American Civil Rights movement as a successful precedent for their actions. They also situate their protest in the tradition of the nonviolent movement, including boycotts, used successfully to end apartheid in South Africa. They point out that in the South African context, there was no dialogue until the boycotts brought the South African government to the negotiating table as an equal partner to anti-apartheid activists. Writing in +972, Omar Rahman (2012) defends the legitimacy of the BDS campaign and responds to assertions that BDS is anti-semitic and “de-legitimizes Israel” by explicitly linking the BDS campaign to these respected, historic nonviolent movements:

But in the end, was de-legitimization not the point? Were not those heroes of the Civil Rights movement trying to de-legitimize the system of racial superiority in the South where a white man was worth more than a black one? For Palestinians and their supporters, “de-legitimizing” Israeli occupation and the unequal treatment of Palestinians based on their ethnicity would appear to be a moral task.

Through this lens, which demands an adjustment to the political structure, dialogue is perceived as futile. On its website, the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (www.pacbi.org) clarifies the need for a halt in dialogue:
Dialogue, if it occurs outside the resistance framework that we have outlined, becomes dialogue for the sake of dialogue, which is a form of normalization that hinders the struggle to end injustice. Dialogue, “healing,” and “reconciliation” processes that do not aim to end oppression, regardless of the intentions behind them, serve to privilege oppressive co-existence at the cost of co-resistance, for they presume the possibility of coexistence before the realization of justice.”

Even Jonathan Kuttab (1988), who concludes his article on dialogue’s limitations with a declaration of continued commitment to dialogue, acknowledges that dialogue may not upend the status quo assertively enough:

Dialoguers are not revolutionary individuals. They are not out to turn the world upside down. Therefore it is only natural that they tend to accept, at least to begin with what is rather than what ought to be.

Recently, the Israeli government has passed legislation which subjects Israelis who encourage the BDS Movement in any way to a civil lawsuit. This has led publications like +972 to minimize discussion of BDS actions. But Jeff Halper et al (2009), in an innovative article on reframing the discussion of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict scoff at equating criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism. The article asserts that this stance ignores the fact that a passion for civil rights has long been an integral component of Jewish tradition:

Jews have been disproportionately active in the Civil Rights Movement in the US, in the anti-apartheid movement (all the white ministers in Nelson Mandela’s first government were Jews, and a Jewish judge drafted the new South African constitution). ... Regardless of a Jew’s political position on Israel and the conflict, most Jews understand that human rights are universal ... (p. 26)
While not expressly endorsing the BDS movement, Halper suggests that perhaps the protests have not gone far enough: "... the fact that criticism of Israeli policies has not led to Palestinian self-determination means that insufficient pressure is being applied" (p. 28).

INQUIRY DESIGN

Approach to the Question

Having spent time at Kamna Center for Peacebuilding, I began my capstone research with an awareness of dialogue initiatives which had resulted in ongoing peace education (northern Bosnia) or were ongoing and held the promise of helping to generate solutions to other long-standing conflicts (women from Sudan and South Sudan, religious leaders in Sri Lanka). I also had a first-hand experience of the resistance from funders and potential partners to the current proposed initiative between Israelis and Palestinians, and an understanding of a proposed alternative project and the rationale for that proposal.

I conducted an extensive literature review in order to learn more about the historical context of the conflict as well as the nuances of each side's perspective. Although the onion metaphor applies to most conflicts, the layers in this conflict are particularly dense because the conflict over land is steeped not only in nationalist traditions, but it is overlaid with religious traditions which trace their roots to Biblical times. Thus, sorting out the actual events from the traditional telling was part of the process.

My proposal was to interview Israeli and Palestinian peace activists who had had a first-hand experience of dialogue in order to hear, from their own voices, what role they believed dialogue might play in advancing peace. I contacted both an Israeli and a Palestinian whose acquaintance I had made through Karuna. I then sought referrals from the CONTACT program for Israelis and
Palestinians who had participated in CONTACT and had worked or volunteered in dialogue programs. I wrote to journalists who were contributing to online journals and requested interviews. When activists did consent to be interviewed, I sought referrals from them.

**Data gathering techniques, including participants and instruments**

Ultimately, I conducted four semi-structured interviews. The participants were two Israelis and two Palestinians. One of the Palestinians lives and works in an Israeli Arab village. The other Palestinian lives and works in the West Bank. The Israelis both provided me with names of Palestinian contacts whom I could interview, as did the Palestinians. However, even though some of the Palestinians responded affirmatively to their colleagues about the possibility of an interview with me, three of the Palestinians to whom I was referred either did not respond to my interviews or declined to be interviewed.

The participants’ demographic breakdown is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>1 female, 3 male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>1 between the ages of 21-30, 3 between the ages of 40 and 65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>All had at least a Bachelors degree, two hold Ph.Ds; all have worked in peace-building</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Nationality            | 2 Israeli living in Israel  
2 Palestinian, one living in an Israeli Arab Village, one living in Bethlehem, Palestine |
| Identification         | Israeli Male aged 40-65 ........... #1  
Israeli Female aged 21-30......... # 2  
Palestinian Male aged 40-65....... # 3  
Palestinian Male aged 40-65....... # 4 |
I contacted all of the participants initially by e-mailing them and proposed to interview them using Skype so that we could “meet” face-to-face. One Israeli and one Palestinian accepted the offer. One Israeli and one Palestinian said that meeting by Skype was not possible so we corresponded entirely through e-mail. I asked all of the participants the same questions, and followed up on their responses as they allowed.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data Collection

I typed notes during the Skype interviews and transcribed them after the interviews. The e-mail correspondence provided me with text in the respondents’ own words. I organized the participants’ responses by question. I then used a deductive process to identify important themes within the data that related to the primary research objectives and questions.

Presentation and Analysis of Findings

Overview

Based on their own experience as dialogue facilitators, three of the four respondents believe that dialogue can play a role in advancing peace between Israelis and Palestinians. That being said, all of the respondents note dialogue’s limitations, some echoing themes in the literature review, some volunteering additional perspectives. One respondent does not attribute any value at all to dialogue. Few of the respondents are familiar with the online platforms which host “virtual” dialogues. Most of the respondents believe that joint ventures involving Israelis and Palestinians in concrete projects represent a viable approach to conflict transformation. Most of
the respondents understand the impetus for the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement, and some express empathy, but few seem optimistic that the movement will have enough critical mass to make a difference. One respondent alleges that the movement is irrelevant.

Perhaps because the respondents represent a segment of the population which is predisposed to rapprochement, given their history as dialogue facilitators, none of them advocate a total lack of contact until the political situation is resolved. Rather, they express great sadness that contact no longer seems possible, while also acknowledging that contact by itself, in the current political climate, is not enough to make an impact.

The Impact of Dialogue

One theme to emerge from the interviews is that dialogue has the potential to build trust and relationships across conflict barriers.

Participant #3 says: “I totally agree that dialogue helps to create a context for negotiation because it means we can see each other as equals, as humans, as face to face, eye to eye; dialogues can build trust, create relationships based on trust.”

Participant #2 agrees. Describing a dialogue between right wing low-range Israeli leaders and the Fatah in Palestine, this respondent reports: “I can say that Israelis and Palestinians from the two groups did humanize each other, found similarities, build some trust (it was only 5 days) and even explored the limits of their own preparedness to stretch (maybe holding in mind their constituencies).”

Another theme in the responses, however, can best be expressed as “So what?” In other words, acknowledging that dialogue has the potential to establish relationships and build trust
does not necessarily also establish that those relationships and trust will either “radiate outward” or have an impact on the political process by advancing diplomatic negotiations to resolve the conflict.

Participant #2, having acknowledged that relationships were forged, adds: “I don’t think they [Israelis and Palestinians] could really find in each other a partner for peace, and I don’t know if their experience radiated elsewhere.” This respondent also adds that dialogue facilitators need to anticipate and prepare for the challenges of “re-entry.” Even assuming that the dialogue participants have experienced a shift in attitude, the respondent asks:

How capable are they to “radiate” the experience further? Back home they meet people who have not gone through this process and who may be full of hate/mistrust/fear etc. towards the other side. They may be very cynical or critical towards the person who participated in the dialogue and towards his/her new realizations.

Participant #3, who agrees that dialogue can build trust, reminds us that dialogue is losing popularity because the political reality has still not changed: “Dialogues are dwindling due to no tangible progress on the ground.”

Participant #1 suggests that the relationships that are built through dialogue are superficial and do not lead to anything substantive. This respondent suggests that Israelis engage in dialogues with Palestinians because it makes them feel progressive and it may be that “some Arab lady comes to a Jewish lady’s house and you quilt, because Jews never get together with Arabs but there is no productive anything. She [the Jewish lady] would not want to know ‘the other’ by staying in their village.”
This respondent also raises the issue of language as a potential obstacle in dialogue, asking
“What language do you use? ... Do you force the Arab participant to speak in Hebrew?”

Participant #2, who indicates that dialogues do build relationships, qualifies support for dialogue
with the caveat that there is a gulf between participants’ experience during the dialogue and the
effect that that experience has on the political situation. This respondent echoes Participant #1 in
the assertion that dialogues permit Israelis to feel progressive because they have made a
connection with a Palestinian, but do not propel them to become active in changing the situation.
“On the Israeli side, these encounters do not challenge the position of privilege and power, and
when talking politics with their friends ex-participants can continue to blame the Palestinians for
the continuation of the conflict while saying - I have a Palestinian friend.”

Participant #4 shifts the emphasis of the discussion. This participant suggests not only that
dialogue does not have the power to impact the political process, but that dialogue can flourish
only when the political environment is already conducive.

In our case I do not think it is a matter...of dialogue fatigue.....but all the time we were
involved we were under the constraints of the politics of the Arab Israeli conflict....if
political developments between Israelis and Palestinians were positive, for example
developments surrounding the Oslo Accords of 1993 then dialogue atmosphere between
the two sides was encouraging and many dialogue groups emerged. However, as soon as
things turned for the worst in the relationship, as seen in the ups and downs of the period,
1993-2007 then the whole atmosphere of dialogue was poisoned....the feelings of mistrust
was immediately discerned.... and many dialogue groups would disappear. So I believe
that political developments between the two groups need to be viable in order for the
dialogue groups to succeed. I do not believe in any dialogue in the absence of these.

This response suggests that dialogue is important, but that its role is not so much to impact the
political process, which creates the climate in which dialogues can proliferate, but to build the
relationships and understanding in which negotiations can be implemented.
Impact of virtual dialogues

Participants' response to a question about the impact of online discussions ranged from a total lack of familiarity (Participants #1 and 3) to some awareness, to skepticism. Participant #1 asks: “Do they have any kind of audience? Have they achieved any results? Have they built a bridge?” Participant #2 indicates some limited awareness of +972 and bitterlemons but suggested that +972 in particular is too strident for most Israelis. This participant introduced me to MEPEACE suggesting that if there is any local involvement in “virtual dialogue,” it is more likely to take place through this platform which feels less confrontational.

Value of joint ventures

Joint ventures that engage Israelis and Palestinians in concrete projects represent an effective vehicle for building peace, but they face significant obstacles at present according to respondents.

Participant #1, who has spent a career in peace-building and service, responds enthusiastically to the suggestion of a hands-on project: “Get the conflicting parties involved in something of mutual enjoyment and benefit … clean up a polluted river, start up a for-profit business … carry out a major construction/infrastructure project that solves a problem …” This respondent also cites the U.S. Peace Corps as an example of a program that allows people from different cultures to do real work.

Participant #3 cites youth peace camps as an example of successful cross-border joint ventures, but notes that “these have been banned by the Israeli government for security reasons.”
Participant #4 agrees that joint ventures have the potential to be more impactful than dialogue groups, but cautions that the political challenges that affect dialogue groups apply to joint ventures as well: “... of course concrete projects like the Peace Corps is more effective than mere talking. Joint ventures like joint businesses no doubt is a good idea but it will be more effective if the political process or negotiations are taking place at the same time.”

Participant #2 acknowledges that there is a trend towards concrete projects, particularly by funders, who increasingly encourage dialogue projects to include a concrete component. This respondent has no actual experience of the type of joint ventures which produce a concrete, mutually beneficial product, although the respondent is aware of organizations, such as Friends of the Earth Middle East, which foster such collaboration. However, the respondent personally participates in activities in which Israelis cross the border and join Palestinians in Palestinian projects:

An almost pre-condition for this work – is a declaration by the Israelis that they oppose the occupation. It again depends on the person if they are able to bring these impressions back to their family and friends without being attacked and disregarded. As far as I know this is again a small-scale phenomenon that doesn't stand a chance to engage larger segments of the population – at least on the Israeli side. It is very threatening to anyone holding to a "conflict mindset" to realize and acknowledge that actually their side is responsible for/guilty of severe abuse of human rights etc.

Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) Movement

According to participants interviewed for this project, the BDS Movement is understandable, but it does not have the momentum necessary to have an impact.
Participant #1, who is skeptical about the impact of anything but concrete projects, suggests that a real non-violent effort by the Palestinians could actually work. However, the respondent hastens to add that the current Palestinian movement is not “satyagraha.” The respondent is referring to the non-violent movement initiated in India by Mahatma Gandhi to empower the Indians to liberate themselves from British rule. The Palestinian movement, according to this respondent, is “irrelevant ... it has nothing to do with reality.”

Participant #2 seems to have more sympathy for the BDS movement, but echoes and expands upon some of the points made by Participant #1. This respondent acknowledges the movement’s lack of relevance in Israel noting that it is not having any real impact on Israelis’ daily lives; as a result, many Israelis are unaware of the movement. The respondent also suggests that the movement is “not only pro-Palestinian, but also anti-Israel.” Perhaps this is the essence of the comparison made by the first respondent, i.e., that satyagraha, as explained by Gandhi, is meant to acknowledge inter-dependence and that rather than adding to the conflict dynamic, it is meant to be practiced affirmatively and with respect for one’s opponent. Participant #2 also remarks that:

...both in South Africa, in India and in King’s civil rights movement there were people from within the privileged society who worked in solidarity with the ones fighting for equality and freedom. Nowadays, it seems that some voices in the Palestinian anti-normalization movement are opposing any contact with Israelis, in order to strengthen their claim for boycott. ... From a “naïve” conflict transformation perspective I feel that this attitude is not helpful, that Palestinians would not raise enough support by trashing Israel.

Participant #3 also understands the reasons for the boycott movement. The respondent asserts that “Palestinians are dealing with someone who does not believe in your right to live in peace, dealing with someone who questions your very existence.” This respondent, an advocate of
ongoing dialogue notwithstanding a belief that dialogue does not translate to change on the ground, is also in favor of non-violent resistance. “There is a real difference in how much power both sides have. Peaceful struggle against the Israelis makes sense.” At the same time, this respondent suggests that the Palestinians need a lot more education for this movement to be successful. “Palestinian society is not ready at this point to practice this kind of resistance.”

Participant #4 claims to not be very familiar with the movement urging Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions of Israel. However, the respondent is aware of Palestinians who are protesting the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza on site. The respondent salutes those Israelis and others, as described by Participant #2, who join the Palestinian protesters: “ISM [the Palestinian organization called International Solidarity Movement] and many peace loving Israelis have done wonderful things to stand by Palestinians in their struggle.....yes, they are doing and they did wonderful things especially Israeli weekly support of Palestinian resistance in some Ramallah villages.”

**CONCLUSIONS**

This paper considers the inquiry question: Dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians: Is it an obsolete approach or still valuable technique in the conflict transformation toolkit? Secondarily, the paper considers alternatives to dialogue should dialogue be considered no longer effective to transform the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis.

On balance, most of the people interviewed, and many of the scholars and activists whose writings comprise the literature review, consider dialogue to be a valuable peacebuilding tool with respect to the longstanding conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. In the current climate,
as hope for rapprochement through dialogue has given way to weariness from failed negotiations and despair at the seeming intractability of the conflict, dialogue proponents express wistfulness for the contact, the relationships, and the missed opportunities. Says one interview participant:

I made many ... friends in all the dialogue sessions I had....but now we seem to be so much apart....we do not even contact each other....the whole atmosphere in the dialogue area is not healthy at this stage.....

Notwithstanding their dismay over the current moratorium in dialogues, dialogue advocates readily acknowledge dialogue’s limitations. Some of these have to do with dialogue as a process, and some of these have to do with the dialogue’s potential to impact the larger political process between Israelis and Palestinians. For instance, the most widely recognized limitation on dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis is the asymmetry in the power dynamic between the dialogue partners. According to most scholars, the importance of this disparity cannot be overemphasized. The imbalance in the partners’ respective political situations insinuates itself into the very conduct of the dialogue, affecting the relative authority and confidence with which the dialogue is conducted, the emotions that are expressed in the dialogue, and the importance that is attached to the outcome.

Additional potential challenges to the effectiveness of dialogue include the privileging of one language over another. Discussions of dialogue’s limitations also focus on the inclusion of some groups and not others, with the excluded groups often consisting of people who are consistently left out of the political process, such as less-educated people, refugees, and poor people. Shortcomings may also include a cultural bias which over-values words, and risks missing visual cues and body language.
There is also the very real threat of ostracism after the dialogue. Dialogue participants may undergo the kind of attitude shift Kurt Lewin describes as unfreezing, moving, and refreezing. Upon returning to their respective communities and sharing their newfound understanding of "the other," participants may be greeted with a chilly reception or downright hostility from friends, family, and neighbors who have not undergone a similar metamorphosis.

Invariably, parties to a conflict engage in dialogue with the goal not only of building understanding and relationships across the conflict divide, but in the hope that the dialogue will bring about change – change in the structural violence at the root causes of the conflict, change in the political system which perpetuates the structural violence, change in the political will to negotiate. Thus, in order to assess the long-term impact of dialogue in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the paper has sought to explore whether and how dialogue impacts the larger political context in which the conflict takes place. Some dialogue advocates have organized dialogues among prominent academics in the hope that these participants will either influence key leaders or become key negotiators themselves. Others have argued for engaging the masses in the hope that a groundswell of support for peacemaking will impel leaders to negotiate more seriously. Lisa Schirch and David Campt (2007) suggest that in order for dialogue to have an impact not only on the dialogue participants but in a larger arena, it must ultimately engage ordinary people on a grassroots level at the same time that it also engages key leaders with decisionmaking capability.

However, it seems that there is a marked difference in perspective between early dialogue proponents, such as Herbert Kelman and Harold Saunders, who write optimistically in the belief that dialogue encounters among influential academics and future negotiators can influence Track I negotiations, and current activists who have engaged in dialogue even as negotiation after
negotiation has failed to produce an agreement. Some activists interpret the failure of negotiations to mean that engaging in dialogue now is futile since by now, all of the positions have been articulated and are well-known and understood; the obstacle to peace at present is the political will to compromise.

Given the current skepticism about dialogue and/or the reluctance to engage in dialogue until the political landscape changes, there is a tendency among funders and peacebuilding organizations to focus on joint ventures that produce a concrete product with benefit to both Israelis and Palestinians. This focus on collaborative activities, such as tourism or environmental projects having to do with water use, appears to be an acknowledgement that while engaging in peacemaking directly is currently out of favor, engaging in activities that might lead to peacemaking is better than completely abandoning all relationship-building. Nevertheless, interview respondents seem to believe that ultimately, these projects will encounter the same fate as dialogue. That is, while they might contribute something of lasting benefit regardless of the political environment, they will ultimately be constrained by political intractability.

Others go beyond the view that engaging in dialogue is futile, to characterize engaging in dialogue as counter-productive. The position that dialogue and other relationship-building activities are tantamount to an acceptance of the status quo undergirds the campaign for the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions against Israel, which urges a moratorium on all contact until Israel ends the occupation of Palestinian territory and acknowledges the Palestinian right to self-determination. The Palestinian Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) disparages the relationship-building activities of such organizations as One Voice, which brings Israeli and Palestinian youth together, and the Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information (IPCRI). PACBI asserts that these organizations promote collaboration as if the conflict exists between
two equal parties rather than between unequal parties which PACBI designates as oppressor and oppressed.

The Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement raises the ire of Israelis who assert that it is the latest in a tradition of anti-Semitic attempts to deny their right to exist. As a result, the Israeli government has threatened Israeli supporters of the movement with a civil lawsuit. In defense of the campaign, Omar Rahman (2012) seeks to position it as one component of a nonviolent protest movement, arguing: “Boycott has always stood out to me, sin qua non, as the archetype of civil disobedience.” I suspect that the reason it was so difficult to secure interviews among Palestinian activists is that many refuse to connect with an American, given the U.S. support of Israel. Apparently, there is growing international support for the movement as many popular artists, such as Bono, have refused to perform in Israel in deference to the movement. Nevertheless, according to both Israeli and Palestinian respondents, the movement does not have enough widespread participation among Palestinians, nor does it create significant enough deprivation among Israelis to have an impact on the political situation.

A more interesting manifestation of nonviolent protest, perhaps, is the ongoing Palestinian resistance in some villages to house demolitions and other Israeli occupation measures. Rather than eschewing contact with Israelis, they welcome the Israeli activists who join them to make common cause against a situation which they too consider unjust.

**Practical Applicability and Recommendations for Next Steps**

In weighing dialogue’s assets and limitations, Marc Gopin (2002) concludes: “... we must pursue dialogue as reconciliation, but with great humility and elasticity, ready and willing to
combine it with or supplant it with other modes of reconciliation, especially in terms of deed, symbol, and emotional communication.” (p.3)

Gopin’s assessment mirrors my own conclusion that dialogue must continue as one tool in the conflict transformation toolbox. However, my own recommendation, as I take into account the differing situations and needs of the conflicting parties, is that it is time to go beyond dialogue.

A description by the American Friends Service Committee of the path taken by Ghassan Andoni, the co-founder of the Palestinian Center for Rapprochement between People, describes Andoni’s recognition of a progression in peacebuilding steps:

The Center’s aim was to allow those in conflict to acknowledge each other’s humanity and to work together for a world in which they could peacefully coexist. It did this through dialogue and joint activities between Israelis and Palestinians. As the Occupation wore on Ghassan and Rapprochement moved from dialogue to direct nonviolent action intended to end the Occupation. In this connection he co-founded the International Solidarity Movement (ISM), coordinating international volunteers with Palestinians and Israelis in nonviolent actions that called attention to the oppression created by years of Occupation. In working with ISM he has insisted that all international participants commit themselves to nonviolence, both physical and verbal.

The passage clearly situates dialogue in a spectrum of peacebuilding activities that must evolve as the environment changes. Lisa Schirch and David Campt (2007) also suggest a progression of peacemaking which may begin with dialogue and may continue to include dialogue, but which must inevitably move beyond dialogue:

Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King both taught that dialogue should be tried first, before any other strategies. When Gandhi became determined to end British colonialism, he invited and engaged in dialogue with the British whenever he could. But he also understood that at many points along the journey, the British representatives were not interested in true dialogue but sometimes were just trying to dissuade him from pursuing change. Yet Gandhi kept to his principles. He pushed for change through a wide variety
of nonviolent tactics and strategies, but took every opportunity to engage in dialogue with those who opposed him (p. 67)

As I consider recommendations in light of the many voices I have encountered through my research, I am reminded of other research projects I have conducted in pursuit of my degree in Conflict Transformation at the SIT Graduate Institute, and I discern an overarching theme. In my study of Village Schools International, I am left ultimately with the founder’s statement:

We’ve chosen to work under Tanzanians. They lead and they’ve chosen what the approach is. I’ve set aside whatever approach I may have.

In my study of reconstruction in Haiti, I recall the Declaration by grassroots groups and NGOs:

[We] have decided to launch a national and international campaign to bring forth another vision of how to redevelop this country, a vision based on people-to-people solidarity to develop the opportunity now facing this country to raise up another Haiti. We [want] to build a social force which can establish a reconstruction plan where the fundamental problems of the people take first priority.

Likeise, in this capstone paper, one interview respondent notes:

I respect a lot those few Israeli activists who are supporting peacefully Palestinian struggle to end Occupation....they are on the front lines with Palestinians in their weekly protests in Ramallah area and in the Bethlehem area.

Ultimately, I conclude that this is the role for activists who would like to advance the cause of peace between Israelis and Palestinians. At this point in the conflict, one must defer to Palestinians who are resisting the Occupation peacefully in the hope that in standing with them
affirmatively, in support of Palestinian self-determination, and in promoting dialogue with them, first justice, and ultimately peace, will prevail.

Recommendations for further research

Through this study, I have concluded that dialogue is a critical peacemaking initiative which plays a key role at various points along the spectrum of peacemaking but must inevitably yield to more pro-active nonviolent actions. I am intrigued by the point made by one interview respondent that in both the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa as well as the Civil Rights movement in the U.S., members of the privileged group joined forces with the oppressed group in their struggle. I have noted the unmitigated gratitude expressed by another respondent for the joint resistance described in this study. For further research, I would like to review historical precedents to explore the impact of that joint action, i.e., does collaboration across the conflict divide in resistance and nonviolent action represent a significant factor in the success of the resistance. Just as Lisa Schirch and David Campt (2007) ask what is the tipping point for a cooperative dialogue to progress into collaborative action, it would be helpful to research the tipping point at which a seemingly intractable conflict begins to lose its intractability.

Limitations of the Study

The study is limited by the number and makeup of the interview respondents. Given constraints of time, distance, and willingness to respond, I interviewed just four dialogue participants. I was not able to interview these participants face-to-face, except through the medium of skype, where they had access to skype. In addition, because I sought dialogue participants so that I could inquire about the impact of dialogue based on their personal experience, I did not interview Palestinians or Israelis who had never had an opportunity to

40
engage in dialogue or had refused to engage in dialogue. Thus, by definition, the study is limited by the respondents' predisposition to peacemaking. A broader assessment of the impact of dialogue would need to examine the experiences of those who have engaged in dialogue activities as well as of those who have never participated.


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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Overarching Question: Is dialogue obsolete or still valuable as a tool?

1. During the 1970s and 1980s, there were dialogues between many different groups – women, bereaved parents, teens. Advocates of dialogue maintain that dialogue is designed to accomplish several objectives:

   o rehumanize the other
   o illustrate similarities between opponents
   o highlight key issues that may not be addressed by negotiators, who are frozen into official positions
   o build relationships and trust which are necessary to create a climate in which official negotiations can not only take place but in which the agreements they produce can have a lasting effect;
   o radiate out to the broader population
   o convince constituents on both sides that there is a “true partner for peace” on the other side.

They also maintain that diplomatic negotiators, who are often locked into official positions, do not have the liberty to explore real give and take until unofficial dialogues vet the issues and explore the limits to which the general population is prepared to stretch.

*Have you had an experience or knowledge of dialogue working in this way?*
2. Face-to-face dialogues seem to have either ended or slowed down in the wake of a growing belief that they have not accomplished any real movement in the Mid East after 40 years of agreements, negotiations, missed opportunities. However, dialogue seems to continue online where difficult issues are being “discussed” with great honesty.

*What is the impact of such blogs as +972 and BitterLemons?*

- Are they read by just a small segment of like-minded activists or do they reach broader segments of the population?

3. Some people say that in lieu of dialogue, what is needed is joint (cross-border) ventures focused on concrete projects with benefits for both constituencies, i.e., water issues, solar technology, etc.

*Have you had any experience that this approach accomplishes the goals dialogue was designed to accomplish, i.e., humanizing the other, building understanding, engaging larger segments of the population in a belief that peace is possible and that there is a true partner for peace on the other side?*

4. Palestinian advocates of anti-normalization refer to the boycott of South Africa. They urge no dialogue or any other academic or cultural contact until the Israeli Occupation of Palestinian territories is ended. Their argument is that all the theater projects, summer camps, etc. have failed to move Israelis any closer to negotiating a two-state solution. Therefore, they maintain that any contact under current circumstances is tantamount to accepting the unacceptable.
As unpleasant as this may be for Israelis, it is a non-violent action which figures prominently in Gene Sharp's non-violent toolbox, and it was used by Mahatma Gandhi successfully in India to begin the movement for independence from Great Britain. Boycotts were also used in the Southern U.S. during the Civil Rights movement.

*What do you think the impact of this movement is? Is this a popular movement among Palestinians? Is there any understanding among Israelis of this approach?*

5. *How can Israelis, Americans, and other who want to advance the cause of peace be active in peace work in the context of this movement?*
The capstone paper provides a brief overview of the events of the past 125 years. Since the conflict has layers of religious and historical claims to the land, the following timeline provides some historical context of the past 2,000 years. The major reference sources are timelines compiled by Procon.org, the BBC News, and POV from American Documentary, Inc.

It is important to delineate the land at the heart of the conflict. According to Procon.org:

For about two thousand years the name Palestine has been used internationally for the lands on both sides of the Jordan River... The name Palestine will here be used...to refer to the area from southern Syria (the Beqa Valley) to Egypt and the Sinai, and from the Mediterranean to the Arabian desert.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10,000-8,000 B.C.</td>
<td>The earliest homo sapiens engaged in agriculture are found in Palestine, Transjordan and Lebanon during this era.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1250 B.C.</td>
<td>Earliest mention of Israelites in Palestine, although it is not clear whether the tribe is indigenous or immigrants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1020 B.C. – 923 B.C</td>
<td>Israelites united under the reigns of Saul, David, Solomon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>952 B.C.</td>
<td>First temple in Jerusalem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>923 B.C.</td>
<td>Solomon’s death; kingdom splits into Israel and Judea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>923 B.C. - 629 A.D.</td>
<td>Successive nations and tribes (Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, and Byzantines) conquer and rule the region, annexing territories, creating empires.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400 B.C.</td>
<td>Arab tribes are mentioned in the region as early as 716 B.C.; there is an influx of Arab tribes in 400 B.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>330 A.D.</td>
<td>The emperor Constantine names Christianity the empire’s official religion. Palestine, Christianity’s birthplace, becomes a destination for pilgrims.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>622 A.D.</td>
<td>The prophet Mohammed begins the conversion of Arabs, mostly pagans to Islam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>636 – 1517 A.D.</td>
<td>Arab armies attack Palestine. Muslims rule the empire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>690s</td>
<td>The Dome of the Rock is built in Jerusalem where the Jewish temple had been built, destroyed, rebuilt, and destroyed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1099-1187 A.D.</td>
<td>Christian soldiers invade but the region soon reverts to Muslim rule.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1517-1918</td>
<td>Ottomans take over the empire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>Jews experience persecution in Eastern Europe and begin immigrating to Palestine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>Theodor Herzl publishes <em>Der Judenstaat</em>, articulating the premise of the modern Zionist movement, i.e., that Jews have a historical homeland in the biblical land of Zion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>The Ottoman Empire joins Germany and Austria in World War I fighting against Britain, France, and Russia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915-1917</td>
<td>The British and the French, seeking control of the Ottoman Empire, make agreements representing competing promises:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>The Sykes-Picot agreement, negotiated in secret, allocates territory between France and Britain despite nascent Arab calls for independence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915-1916</td>
<td>Letters from Sir Henry McMahon, British Commissioner in Egypt, to Sharif Hussein bin Ali, Emir of Mecca, seem to encourage Hussein’s vision of an Arab nation, and his proposed revolt against the Ottomans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>A letter from British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour to Lord Rothschild, a Zionist, expresses Britain’s commitment to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## 1920s British & French Mandate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1917-1918</td>
<td>British army defeats German-Turkish army in December 1917; by September 1918, Britain controls Palestine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>The League of Nations creates French mandates (Syria and Lebanon) and British mandates (Iraq and Palestine); denies Arab independence. Facing Arab resistance, Britain cedes the land east of the Jordan River to Emir Abdullah and recognizes the Emirate of Transjordan, which becomes Jordan. Britain retains control of the land between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920s – 1930s</td>
<td>Jewish immigration to Palestine continues. Arabs stage the “Great Arab Revolt” which lasts until 1939. Jews organize armed groups, such as Haganah and the more militant Irgun Tsvai Zeumi to retaliate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>Hitler exterminates European Jews. Jews immigrate to Palestine in increasing numbers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>British commission recommends that Palestine be divided into a Jewish state and an Arab state. Palestinians vehemently oppose this proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>Britain asks the U.N. to intercede in Palestine given continuing unrest. The U.N. establishes a study committee which proposes dividing Palestine into a Jewish state (56.5% of land) and an Arab state (43.5% of land); Jerusalem is to have international status. Jews welcome the plan; Arabs protest the division. The U.N. General Assembly passes the plan due to go into effect in 1948. Violence starts as both sides seek to augment territory.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
May 14, 1948  |  Israel declares statehood.
---|---
May 15, 1948  |  Palestinians declare “al-Nakba”, the Catastrophe. Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq attack Israel, but Israel rebuffs them and gains additional territory. Egypt takes over the Gaza Strip and Jordan takes over territory around East Jerusalem and the West Bank.
December 11, 1948  |  U.N. General Assembly passes Resolution 194 acknowledging Palestinian refugees’ right to return to their homes in Israel or receive compensation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1949-1956</td>
<td>Arab states unite in boycotting Israel politically and economically. Egypt denies Israel access to the Suez canal. Border classes occur regularly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>Israel invades Egypt and moves to take over the Suez Canal. Britain and France become involved in order to protect their interests. The U.S. and Russia pressure Britain, France, and Israel to leave the area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957-1967</td>
<td>Egypt, Syria, and Jordan continue to talk about eradicating Israel and create a military pact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Arab governments form the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to support the Palestinians, but the Palestinians want to represent themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Israel attacks Egypt, Jordan and Syria. In a war lasting 6 days, Israel annexes the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip from Egypt, the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan, and the Golan Heights from Syria.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 1967 War

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>The U.N. Security Council passes Resolution 242 condemning the annexation of territory through war and urging a peaceful resolution to the Middle East conflict.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Arab leaders hold a summit in Khartoum, Sudan at which they underscore their refusal to recognize Israel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yasser Arafat becomes head of the PLO.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>King Hussein attacks Palestinians operating in Jordan. Many Palestinians are killed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>PLO kills 11 Israeli Olympic athletes at the Games in Munich.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1973 War

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 1973</td>
<td>Egypt and Syria attack Israel during the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur. U.N. Resolution 338 calls for an end to hostilities, and for peace negotiations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Menachem Begin, former Irgun leader, becomes Prime Minister of Israel. His Likud party favors settling the West Bank and Gaza, buffering Israel from Arab attacks, and making it harder for Israel to give up land. Egyptian President Anwar Sadat offers peace and recognition to Israel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Egypt and Israel sign the Camp David Accords establishing a framework for peace which includes a modicum of independence for Palestinians, even though they are not present at the negotiations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Egypt and Israel negotiate peace. Israel leaves the Sinai Peninsula. Other Arab states feel betrayed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Sadat is assassinated by Egyptian soldiers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1982</td>
<td>In response to attacks on Israel by the PLO, now based in Lebanon, Israel invades Lebanon. The PLO suffers heavy losses, and the headquarters relocate to Tunisia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The leader of the Christian Phalange militia Israel’s ally in Lebanon, is killed. The militia exacts revenge on Palestinian refugees in the Shatila and Sabra camps. The Israeli army does not stop the attack.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987-1993</td>
<td>First Palestinian Intifada begins in Gaza and the West Bank to protest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Israel’s occupation. Palestinians engage in strikes and boycotts but also throw stones at Israeli armed forces. Palestinians inside Israel demonstrate in sympathy. Many Palestinians are killed by Israeli forces but the uprising continues.

1988

Israelis are unable to stop the Intifada, and the Palestinians are unable to stop the Israeli occupation.

The PLO declares a willingness to recognize Israel.

The U.S. begins a dialogue with the PLO, but Israel refuses to negotiate with the PLO, and recommends Palestinian elections.

Jordan gives up the West Bank to the PLO.

November 15, 1988

The Palestine National Council (PNC), positioned by the PLO as its government, declares the creation of a Palestinian state.

1991

The U.S. and the Soviet Union convene the Madrid Conference in an effort to facilitate peace treaties between Israel and Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, modeled on the Israel-Egypt accord. Since Israel will not negotiate with the PLO, the Palestinians are represented by Jordan.

1993

Israeli and PLO negotiators hold their first direct talks in secret in Oslo, Norway.

September 13, 1993

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzak Rabin and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat sign a Declaration of Principles at the U.S. White House representing each side’s first official recognition of the other’s right to exist.

The “Oslo peace process” envisions a five-year period during which issues such as the plight of Palestinian refugees and the disposition of Jerusalem are worked out. The basic premise, however, is that Israel will trade “land for peace,” by withdrawing in stages from the West Bank and Gaza, and the Palestinians will establish an interim government, end the intifada, and take over security in the territories.

Extremist elements on both sides (Israeli settlers, the militant Islamist group Hamas) reject the accords.

July 1, 1994

Yasser Arafat returns from Tunisia to assume control of the new Palestinian Authority in Gaza.

1994

Hamas stages suicide attacks on Israelis. Israelis retaliate with targeted killings. An Israeli settler kills Muslims engaged in prayer.

September 28, 1995

Rabin and Arafat sign an agreement in Taba, Egypt, “Oslo II,” detailing how the Palestinians will take over the West Bank and Gaza and calling for Palestinian elections.

November 4, 1995

A Jewish student assassinates Rabin. Shimon Peres becomes Prime Minister.

1996

Hamas continues to kill Israelis.
May 1996  The Likud Party’s Binyamin Netanyahu beats the Labor Party’s Shimon Peres to become Prime Minister. He encourages increased settlement activity in the West Bank.

October 23, 1998  Under pressure from U.S. President Clinton, Netanyahu signs the Wye River Memorandum committing Israel to continue to pull out of the West Bank.

1999  The five year mark in the Oslo peace process arrives with no final resolution. Arafat postpones full establishment of a Palestinian state as the Labor Party’s Ehud Barak replaces Netanyahu.

October 4, 1999  Sharm-al-Sheikh agreement between Ehud Barak and Yasser Arafat call for declaration of principles on final status issues (refugees, borders) to be articulated by February 13, 2000, with a final agreement to take place by September 13, 2000.

May 2000  Israel withdraws from Lebanon.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Event</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 2000</td>
<td>President Clinton facilitates negotiations (Camp David II) between Ehud Barak and Yasser Arafat, but the two sides do not offer acceptable compromises.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 28, 2000</td>
<td>Ariel Sharon, a member of the Israeli Knesset, visits the al-Aqsa Mosque. Second intifada breaks out. Palestinians complain that Israeli forces respond to demonstrators with excessive force.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 6, 2001</td>
<td>Israelis elect Ariel Sharon Prime Minister in a move away from peace negotiations and in favor of enhanced security. Palestinians increase suicide attacks in Israel. Israel targets and kills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Palestinian fighters.  

2003  
Israel increases attacks against Hamas.  
Arafat names Mahmoud Abbas minister so that he can negotiate with Israel and the U.S.  

June 2003  
Ariel Sharon and Mahmoud Abbas meet in Jordan.  
Abbas convinces Palestinian groups Islamic Jihad, Hamas, and Fatah to halt attacks to give the Roadmap plan a chance to succeed. Israeli reciprocates by moving some forces out of Gaza.  
Israel kills Hamas leader and Hamas ends the ceasefire.  

October 2003  
Israeli and Palestinian former leaders meet unofficially to negotiate the Geneva Accords, a blueprint for peace.  

February 2004  
Ariel Sharon announces plans to remove Israeli settlers from the Gaza Strip.  

2004  
Israelis continue to target and kill Hamas leaders. Palestinians retaliate with suicide bombings in Israel.  

November 11, 2004  
Yasser Arafat dies in Paris. Mahmoud Abbas becomes President of the Palestinian Authority.  

February 8, 2005  
At a summit in Egypt, Abbas and Sharon agree to a truce. Ariel Sharon begins removal of settlers from Gaza.  

November 2005  
Ariel Sharon resigns from the right-wing Likud party announcing the formation of the Kadima party, a more centrist party.  

January 2006  
Ariel Sharon has a massive stroke. Ehud Olmert assumes power and continues Sharon's path.  

January 2006  
Hamas wins a majority in Palestinian elections. Israel deems Hamas a terrorist organization and declares an economic blockade of the territories.  

March 2006  
Kadima wins a majority in Israeli elections signaling the continuation of the Israeli withdrawl from the West Bank.  

July 2006  
The militant group Hezbollah based in Lebanon fires rockets into Israel. Israeli troops invade Lebanon.  

August 2006  
There is a ceasefire in Lebanon. Israel announces that Hezbollah fired 4,000 rockets into Israel.  

June 2007  
Mahmoud Abbas declares the Hamas government illegitimate and forms an emergency government, which Hamas terms illegal. There is fighting between Hamas and Fatah.  

November 2007  
U.S. President Bush says that Israeli and Palestinian leaders are agreed to negotiate peace by the end of 2008.  

June 2008  
Israel and the Palestinian group Hamas declare a ceasefire. Hamas seeks an end to Israeli incursions into Gaza and the economic blockade.  

December 2008  
Israeli forces move into Gaza to try to force Hamas into a ceasefire. Hamas continues to send missiles into Israel.  

March 2009  
Israeli elections reinstate Likud party. Binyamin Netanyahu becomes
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 2009</td>
<td>U.S. President Obama declares U.S. support for a separate Palestinian state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2010</td>
<td>Israeli troops stop flotilla heading to Gaza to thwart the economic blockade. Nine people are killed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2011</td>
<td>Al Jazeera news leaks documents which show that Palestinian negotiators were more prepared to compromise for peace than had been publicized.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2011</td>
<td>Recognizing that advancing the cause of a Palestinian state requires unity, the Hamas and Fatah parties create a joint government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2011</td>
<td>Palestine is accepted in UNESCO even though the U.N. organization loses U.S. funding as a result.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2011</td>
<td>The U.N. Security Council is unable to vote on Palestine’s bid for recognition as a state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2012</td>
<td>Palestinian and Israeli negotiators hold talks in Jordan. Palestinians demand a moratorium on Israeli settlements in the occupied territories but Israel refuses to be bound by conditions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2012</td>
<td>Netanyahu’s Likud party joins the Kadima party in a unity government securing Netanyahu’s power. The Prime Minister advocates a military solution to Iran’s nuclear industry.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3 Ground Rules for Dialogue

The dialogue process requires practicing understanding and creating ground rules.

Constructing the boundaries of the conversation—the limited context and manner in which it will take place—is a big part of what allows it to open and deepen into new awareness.

Establishing ground rules by group consensus involves the whole group in creating optimal conditions for freedom of expression and exploration. The ground rules express the spirit of the discussion, which is based on listening respectfully and without argument while discussing issues that may tempt us to argue. The ground rules provide a container which encourages everyone to take an active part, even those who tend to hold back.

The group creates the ground rules; the facilitator makes sure that there is agreement, that the list is complete, and the rules are followed.

Basic ground rules to include:

- Honor confidentiality
- Respect differences
- Speak in the first person and from individual experience, not as a representative of a group
- Describe experiences, not opinions
- Do not try to persuade or change others
- Listen openly and without interruption
- Respect air time; be aware of those who are more quiet, or have a language barrier
- Avoid cross talk and side conversations

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3.4 Debate versus Dialogue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Debate</th>
<th>Dialogue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Goal is to win</td>
<td>• Goal is to discover common ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Involves listening to find the opponent’s weak points</td>
<td>• Involves listening to understand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Involves criticizing other points of view</td>
<td>• Involves openly considering all points of view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assumes one right answer to a question or problem</td>
<td>• Assumes that many different ideas can contribute to a fuller solution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Comes from a position which one defends</td>
<td>• Expresses feelings, concerns, fears, and uncertainties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Exposes faults in the positions of others</td>
<td>• Demonstrates strengths on all sides of an issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Looks to strengthen a predetermined position</td>
<td>• Uncovers brand new possibilities and opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Further polarizes antagonistic positions</td>
<td>• Builds bridges of understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Promotes competition</td>
<td>• Promotes collaboration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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