

AN INCLUSIVE PEACE PROCESS FOR THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The exclusion of women and civil society groups¹ from formal Track I negotiations is a defining feature of the failed peace process in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Meanwhile, the complexity of the conflict, which has already lasted more than 60 years, continues to grow. The current impasse in negotiations supports the status quo on the ground, where conditions worsen, perpetuating divisions within both groups in their visions for future cooperation and solutions to the complex dilemmas they face. A renewed approach is long overdue — one that takes into account the benefits of including all societal groups in working toward a viable peace, and one that allows women and civil society groups to contribute.

Research findings confirm that high-level officials' ongoing exclusion of key segments of civil society and women perpetuates competing narratives and leads to negotiated outcomes that fail upon attempted implementation. Literature and case studies of South Africa and Guatemala overwhelmingly support the idea that peace processes are more likely to result in sustainable outcomes when they include civil society and women, as

inclusivity ensures that negotiators address the interests and needs of all affected groups. Inclusive processes help facilitate shared understanding of the causes of conflict and in turn help create shared solutions.

This paper introduces a model that is sensitive to regional context and promotes transparency. It has multiple phases that mobilize civil society and engage Track I officials in a participatory and democratic approach. “The Inclusive Model for Peace” acknowledges the need to include all stakeholders — factoring in the role of the international community, media, and multilateral organizations, and supporting the inclusion of groups such as Hamas and Jewish settlers. It envisions inclusive processes leading to peace agreements signed at the Track I level that reflect the interests and needs of Palestinian and Israeli constituents. It envisions sustainable outcomes that can only be achieved by Palestinian and Israeli collectives engaging in a process that identifies their needs and then identifies the solutions they support to meet those needs.

INTRODUCTION

The long-standing structure for negotiations within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has involved a limited number of high-level officials. With that structure, civil society actors, who are often among the most committed to ending the conflict, have been unable to share their perspectives on the core issues and help build societal support for the outcomes. Given the ongoing conflict that Israel and the Palestinians face, this paper will explore the limits of existing and past negotiation structures, as well as the utility of a more inclusive process that would allow high-level actors to engage meaningfully with civil society groups.

This paper will draw on the efforts of conflict theorists and practitioners whose work informs successful strategies for engaging and leveraging stakeholders in pre- and post- negotiation settings. Our purpose is to reach a better understanding of why the current efforts by high-level decision makers have been insufficient to create a sustainable peace. We will look at how current theories in the conflict resolution field, as well as how strategies in other contexts, can feed into formal negotiation processes, thereby creating an inclusive structure for the peace process.

This paper will present a departure from traditional negotiation approaches that exclude important segments of society and will make the case that a necessary condition for creating a sustainable peace process, and ultimately a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, is the development of an inclusive structure for negotiation. It will also provide current leaders with an applicable model for an inclusive peace process, supported by models tested in other contexts.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This research includes a literature review of material on inclusive peace processes and their use in various conflict contexts. Primary research² for a qualitative study consisted of confidential interviews with 14 Israelis, Palestinians, and Americans: 4 active members of civil society organizations, 3 individuals affiliated with American and Israeli think tanks, and 7 academics who are also practitioners or scholars in the field of conflict resolution with knowledge of inclusive peace processes. Some have dual credentials and worked directly on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, either in the formal negotiation processes or in supportive roles to Track I negotiators.

Interview questions elicited personal and professional observations of inclusive peace processes in terms of their overall dynamics, including the strengths, weaknesses, challenges, and opportunities they present. Questions also drew out views on the necessary conditions for the inclusion of civil society and women in formal negotiations, and recommendations for how best to design an inclusive peace process, particularly in the context of the protracted Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The objective of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of issues that have impeded or facilitated the inclusion of civil society and women in formal Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and peace processes. This study also elicited views on the utility and necessary elements of an inclusive peace process.

A HISTORY OF EXCLUSION IN THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PEACE PROCESS

Overall, research indicates that when peace processes do not adequately include civil society, they are more likely to fail than those that use participatory deliberation processes as a basis for sustainable peace.³ This assertion rings true in the case of the failed Israeli-Palestinian peace process — a failure characterized by the exclusion of key stakeholders and marginalization of civil society from formal negotiations.⁴ Signed peace agreements aimed at ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have not been inclusive or comprehensive in their scope; that is, they have failed to accurately reflect the many needs across various sectors of Palestinian and Israeli society impacted by the conflict.

Interview respondents were asked about their knowledge of negotiation dynamics and the inclusion of civil society and women generally and in particular during the course of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Negotiations were generally described as lacking in transparency, taking place primarily at the Track I⁵ level, and having very few people, most of whom were perceived as elite and many of whom had been repeatedly involved over the years. They were also described as taking place in the context of power asymmetry and relying heavily on external mediators, with the US's perceived bias toward Israel being seen as a complicating factor. Respondents repeatedly raised the question of good faith on the part of Track I negotiators from both parties, and one respondent involved directly in the Annapolis talks described them as “pure theater,” stating that “in the whole infrastructure of negotiations, there was no one who thought it was a serious process.” Respondents pointed to a consistent exclusion of civil society and women, with Track I negotiators from Israel and Palestine portrayed by one

respondent as unwilling to “[give] up one inch of their authority to [enable] non-official actors to be involved in the negotiations.”

In terms of women's involvement in particular, interview respondents cited patriarchy and male dominance in both Palestinian and Israeli society as playing a major role in the exclusion of women. Research supports the inclusion of women in peace processes as a critical variable, which “must be an integral part from the very beginning of any process of negotiation...[and] women's interests need to be prioritized, not because they are gender-specific, but because they are the basis of articulation of the needs of any society.”⁶ Israel's government has acknowledged the ongoing need to include the perspectives of women, and in March 2011, the Knesset passed the Expansion of Adequate Representation of Women (Amendments) Law, 5771-2011, expanding women's participation for which the earlier Equality of Women's Rights Law, 5771-1951 advocated.⁷ However, as one interview respondent stated and others confirmed, “women replicate the divisions among men,” in the Israeli-Palestinian context. During the Annapolis talks, for example, despite the involvement of women as Track I official representatives, most notably Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, “neither woman had any credibility with, or professed interest in representing, the views, approaches, and perspectives of women peacemakers.”⁸

In short, the presence and inclusion of women does not necessarily mean that negotiators will address women's interests, particularly if national or political identity is put first. Despite this, women

included at the Track I level have introduced new perspectives and ideas, though not related directly to promoting gender equality. For example Tzipi Livni first introduced the idea of setting up a forum (i.e., creating an “enabling environment”) within negotiations to foster a “culture of peace.”⁹ Indeed, most respondents supported the importance of including women at every level, with one stating simply: “Women should be included because they are half of the population!”

Respondents noted that the mobilization and activity of civil society and women on the Palestinian side had varied over time; they were most visible during the First Intifada (1987-1993) and the Madrid Peace Conference (1991). But efforts by civil society during formal negotiations had little impact on either side. Respondents confirmed that nonofficial Israeli and Palestinian actors were arbitrarily selected to provide technical assistance and expertise during negotiations, and one who was directly involved in this capacity during the 2007 Annapolis talks described efforts as simply “an academic exercise” of no consequence to final decisions and outcomes.

Also during the Annapolis talks, Palestinian human rights and civil society organizations sent an open letter to negotiating parties demanding a negotiated outcome that reflected international law and that mitigated the power imbalance.¹⁰ Another open letter written and signed jointly by Israeli and Palestinian civil society actors including “parliamentarians..., academics, private sector representatives, peace NGOs and grassroots peace movements” outlined demands for a comprehensive peace settlement using the framework of international law, with a “results-based implementation plan with clear benchmarks.”¹¹ International NGOs such as the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom also wrote letters that called for a change in the US

approach to the peace process. In addition to making demands within the parameters of international law, the group called for the participation of both Fatah and Hamas at the Annapolis talks and the full participation of women at all stages of a peace process.¹² These open letters had zero effect. The talks failed to meet any of the demands outlined in the letters and in fact fulfilled the prediction of senior Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, who stated that the summit was “doomed to failure.”¹³

In the Palestinian case, internal political and social divisions within civil society, along with the absence of a state, and physical barriers between Palestinians in the occupied territories have complicated conditions for mobilized activism. Leadership’s consistent exclusion of the Palestinian collective has perpetuated disunity within civil society. Ziyad Clot, a Franco-Palestinian legal advisor at the Annapolis talks who later leaked the controversial “Palestine Papers,”¹⁴ decried the exclusion of Palestinian constituents, which he says the PLO caused by engaging in nontransparent negotiations and failing to get input from major stakeholders.¹⁵ In the case of Israel, civil society is divided along identity and ideological lines, leaving it weak and less active in the peace process and “leaving room for stronger engagement of the military society.”¹⁶ This is perpetuated by perceptions of Israeli civil society as a “temporary order” that will give way to the state if and when the latter reclaims its role as the main provider of social services and as the chief regulator of the socio-economic sphere.¹⁷

Respondents described peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts at the Track II and grassroots level as largely ineffective and inappropriate, due to a focus on “cultural exchange” rather than civic and political action. Interviewees also discussed challenges to such efforts in the context

of ongoing violence and the structure of Israeli occupation, internal political and social divisions within Palestinian and Israeli civil societies, a high level of public distrust, and general suspicion. Palestinians often see Track II and grass-roots efforts as “normalization” or attempts to create a false concept of normal relations between occupiers and the occupied, thereby legitimizing conditions of Israeli occupation. The Israeli peace movement is likewise under attack from all sides — it is “politically ostracized and has in fact come to be perceived by many Israelis as ‘the enemy of the people.’”¹⁸

Secret back-channel negotiations continue to be a key feature in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Interview respondents attributed failed outcomes to Israeli-Palestinian negotiations described as “secretive,” “anti-democratic,” and “an exercise in avoidance.” Unfortunately, this kind of negotiation impacts the sustainability of peace processes by making it difficult to implement agreements and can also result in more constraints on future negotiations, due to the precedent set by failed past negotiations.¹⁹ Without public awareness, the public cannot hold leaders accountable for any signed peace agreement. This dynamic is supported by the Israeli-Palestinian context in which one respondent explained, and others agreed, that there is “public perception of a lack of good-faith effort toward peace by negotiators from both parties at the Track I level.”

Respondents repeatedly emphasized power asymmetry as a feature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that impedes the peace process at every level. Power asymmetry occurs when one party to a conflict holds significantly more power (e.g., military power) than another group. In this conflict, it is maintained and reinforced by the positional bargaining strategies²⁰ employed by Israeli and Palestinian leaders, as well as by international stakeholders involved in mediating the

peace process. Positional bargaining, also known as competitive or win-lose bargaining,²¹ has impeded possibilities for peace by hiding interests under the table and ignoring fundamental causes of the conflict.

VISIONS FOR AN INCLUSIVE MODEL

An inclusive peace process for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict means creating a system in which the public feels it owns the process. Bringing about this sense of ownership requires either direct inclusion of the public in negotiation processes and/or the *perception* of inclusion, achieved by maintaining transparency during negotiation processes. Interview respondents supporting these definitions voiced strong support for a transparent approach that involves direct participation of *all key stakeholders* in negotiation processes, and that addresses underlying interests and needs.

Interview respondents confirmed that peacemaking efforts to date have failed not only because of Track I negotiators’ exclusionary practices but also largely due to a lack of civil society mobilization at a meaningful level — i.e., at a level that influences Track I negotiations. One respondent said that the “attitude of civil society [toward Track I actors] is more like ‘do something,’ rather than ‘let us be involved.’” Another respondent noted that “it is the unofficial [exchanges] that open up the doors...civil society actors that provide the framework and in that case translate it into Track I.”

As we elicited more information on respondents’ visions for civil society involvement, a theme emerged: ideas supporting higher levels of civil society activity and mobilization. Several respondents described this as civil society’s “non-violent popular struggle” to demand inclusion by creating pressure at the Track I level as part of a larger

peace process. We surmised that stronger democratic processes²² must be created, in which leaders of both parties are responsible for the interests of their constituents. In short, respondents identified an active civil society as a vital element of inclusive peace processes — the more active the civil society, the more likely it would be to have a say at the negotiation table.²³

In addition to highlighting the crucial role of civil society and women, as well as traditionally excluded constituents (e.g., refugees), respondents gave prominence to a vision for educational campaigns to support attitudinal shifts toward inclusion of women and civil society, changes in legislation to incorporate inclusive processes into current structures, and the holding of open forums in Israeli and Palestinian communities. Some respondents suggested creating multilateral negotiations that would engage Track I officials in conversation with civil society, allowing the latter to request agenda items and make recommendations.

INSIGHTS FROM OTHER CONTEXTS

When it comes to the peace process, Israeli and Palestinian civil societies have remained largely immobilized and continue to maintain a spectator role. We advocate a model that is sensitive to the Israeli-Palestinian context. In championing implementation strategies, we find it useful to draw from insights gleaned from understanding obstacles to inclusive peace processes and ways of overcoming them as experienced in other contexts. The cases of South Africa and Guatemala provide insight into these challenges and opportunities.

Insights from South Africa

The early 1990s in South Africa was a period of transition from an apartheid state to a multiparty democracy. The process consisted of multiple parties participating in negotiations with constituencies of all sizes, followed by public election of parties “to form a power-sharing transitional government and the delegates to an assembly that would draft the final constitution.”²⁴ The constitutional assembly initiated a three-phase program that:

1. began with a widespread campaign to elicit issues and perspectives and an initial draft of the constitution based on public submissions, followed by
2. distributing the draft to the public and inviting it to add further input, and
3. a final phase in which the constitution was finalized and adopted.²⁵

Positive outcomes set the stage for future participatory processes in South Africa, and according to the results of a survey, “helped to create a strong sense of ownership of the Constitution among the public, the majority of whom felt they had an opportunity to contribute.”²⁶

Although the South African model applied to a transitional setting, it provides insights that can help the actors involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to develop an inclusive peace process. These lessons relate to a set of values to follow in developing process mechanisms and methods that mitigate the logistical challenges of broad-based public participation.

By engaging the public in every phase of negotiations, South Africa’s Constitutional Assembly developed a program that satisfied “three fundamental principles: inclusivity, accessibility, and transparency.”²⁷ Historically, the Israeli-Palestinian peace process has been lacking in all three of

these values. Developing mechanisms for inclusivity and accessibility will be particularly important in the Israeli-Palestinian context due to structural impediments such as the wall of separation and institutionalized closure policies. The principle of transparency “helped to provide widespread public legitimacy for the process to create...the ‘new South Africa.’”²⁸ Given the aforementioned lack of transparency in Israeli-Palestinian formal peace processes, as well as public disillusionment, leaders must draw on the precedent set by South Africa in embracing that value.

Overall, the case of South Africa can teach Israeli and Palestinian leaders lessons on the importance of risk vs. reward. Leaders willing to take risks that may involve sharing their power, such as calling for referendums when facing widespread criticism regarding a particular issue, will gain legitimacy and reach agreements more likely to satisfy their constituents’ true interests and needs.

The difficulty of developing integrative agreements across all issues is almost certainly a challenge that would face Israelis and Palestinians in efforts to forge an inclusive peace process, particularly given their constituencies’ diverse opinions. Inclusion of key stakeholders such as diaspora communities of both parties will contribute to this difficulty. By examining South Africa’s experience, we can foresee mechanisms needed to meet challenges with implementing an inclusive peace process: for example, the development of a system that mitigates potential deadlock, and advanced methods for aggregating large volumes of data, both of which the South African process of public participation lacked.²⁹ South Africa’s key lesson with respect to logistical challenges is the need to develop detailed mechanisms and to accept that this process will take time, just as any other comprehensive and meaningful effort would.

Insights from Guatemala

In Guatemala, inclusive peace processes, including the Grand National Dialogue and the “Oslo consultations,” were used in the late 1980s, resulting in mobilized public involvement in peacemaking.³⁰ The Grand National Dialogue consisted of organizations from various segments of civil society that identified issues to discuss, followed by the formation of commissions with representatives from participating organizations, each tasked with preparing proposals to address one of the issues, and presenting proposals for public debate.³¹ The Oslo consultations were a short series of meetings that engaged various sectors of civil society in dialogue with the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG).³² Challenges in process mechanisms were related to basic threats to safety and security and were mitigated by strategies such as holding consultations outside Guatemala, although there were logistical challenges having to do with travel abroad. Despite challenges, engaging the public at every level — from identifying issues, to forming commissions, to debating proposals — collectively resulted in shifting the role of civil society from “being a spectator to being an active force in the peace process.”³³

The case of Guatemala sheds light on the types of exclusion that take place in the Israeli-Palestinian context and offers insight on how inclusion can be facilitated instead. The Guatemalan peace process points up three conditions for exclusion:

1. contextual history of nonacknowledgment by the established authority,
2. particular groups assigned to the status of (so-called) spoilers by the established authority, and
3. lack of trust in the process by key stakeholders, resulting in self-exclusion.

The first type of exclusion, related to historical context and established societal norms, does not necessarily indicate purposeful exclusion; rather, it is systemic in nature. As such, established authorities are unlikely to initiate ensuring the inclusion of these groups — this was the case in Guatemala and is also the case for Israelis and Palestinians. In Guatemala, the structure for negotiations mitigated this kind of exclusion by giving civil society and women the opportunity to participate in the process and therefore impact its outcomes.³⁴ In fact, it was a result of women’s self-determined involvement and lobbying efforts that the 1996 peace agreement affirmed “women’s right to a paid job, eliminating legal discrimination and imposing penalties for sexual harassment, in addition to setting up new institutions to promote women’s political participation.”³⁵ Thus, Guatemala provides valuable insight into how traditionally excluded groups can affect outcomes — it requires, first, a process that allows for the participation of historically unacknowledged or excluded groups; and, second, it demands significant activity and organization on the part of groups themselves, who must be active in their demands for inclusion.

The second type of exclusion applies to key stakeholders perceived by established authorities as “spoilers,” or “those that feel they will lose if compromises are reached”³⁶ and thus as prone to disrupt or derail the peace process. Exclusion of spoilers is a strategy likely to fail, as “they often come back later to disrupt the implementation of an agreement,” and exclusion can also “increase [spoilers’] commitment to violence by removing political alternatives.”³⁷

Both of these outcomes have proven true in the Israeli-Palestinian case, where we continue to see disruption in the peace process and renewed violence by groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad on the Palestinian side, and Jewish settlers on

the Israeli side. In Guatemala, the peace process initially excluded the URNG, with the government’s demanding decommission in exchange for inclusion.³⁸ As it turned out, “at no point did any URNG members seek to undermine the peace process by playing the role of spoiler.”³⁹ In fact, the URNG ultimately bought into the peace process and supported inclusive social participation in peacemaking. A major reason for the group’s buy-in was its realization that the public’s emphasis on underlying issues “decreased perception of the conflict as a purely military issue and gave it a political nature.”⁴⁰ The Guatemalan case illustrates a situation in which inclusion uncovered underlying issues, creating trust and transforming groups traditionally considered spoilers into process advocates. The insight gained from Guatemala when it comes to so-called spoilers is that established authorities must take the lead in creating a space for inclusion of such groups.

The third type of exclusion occurs when stakeholders practice self-exclusion by boycotting a process or interaction they do not trust. Self-exclusion in the Israeli-Palestinian context is less overt, due to a peace process that is by nature exclusive — i.e., there is limited chance for self-exclusion. However, civil society’s distrust in the formal peace process is shown by limited trust in joint peace efforts, which to date have been largely characterized by a lack of comprehensive coordination, and non-cumulative results.⁴¹ In Guatemala, the participatory nature of the peace process served to build trust and encouraged several sectors of society who had excluded themselves from the national dialogue to eventually buy into the process.

To summarize, in both Guatemala and South Africa, dialogue mechanisms were used to create a space for public interests to be put on the table, which facilitated a shift in public perceptions of conflicts to focus on underlying causes, rather

than on the manifestations of those causes. The strong lesson learned from decades of a failed peace process between Israelis and Palestinians is that without civil society involvement, peace agreements will likely continue resulting in failure and further entrenching the conflict. The reasoning is simple: In order to address conflicts adequately, we must address the basic human needs⁴² of major stakeholders, men and women.

Addressing causes through interest-based negotiations,⁴³ instead of positional bargaining, is critical to developing an inclusive and sustainable peace process. The challenge is to ensure that the core interests of all parties are put on the table, and that common visions for peacebuilding are developed. One of the more obvious examples of the utility of identifying underlying interests in the Israeli-Palestinian context relates to water resources, which are critical to both parties. Each year, Israel pumps about 60 percent of its fresh-water from West Bank sources.⁴⁴ If both parties take an interest-based approach, they might explore alternative solutions to shared water scarcity problems. Inclusion of all segments of civil society is critical in this case, as the process should model the desired outcome for multiple stakeholders.

AN INCLUSIVE MODEL

Lisa Schirch makes the case that deliberate negotiation designs, rather than wishful thinking, measure good faith.⁴⁵ In that spirit, we are introducing a model (see Figure 1) that proposes a multistakeholder, multilevel process that includes all segments of civil society, including women's and other groups that formal processes have traditionally excluded. This model speaks to the kind of social order Israelis and Palestinians could build — one that opens the lines of communication between policymakers and constituents. In its essence, this model proposes strengthened

democratic processes and public capacity to have a political impact. This process facilitates reconciliation by uncovering the underlying needs of all major stakeholders, including civil society and women, and creates negotiation frameworks that address those needs.

Participation

The Inclusive Model for Peace (Figure 1, below) calls for the active participation of all major stakeholders, including established authorities, who should engage in public deliberations as citizens, both to ensure representation and to demonstrate that they are invested in the process.

Palestinian stakeholders include, but are not limited to, women's groups, the private business sector, social movements and activists, academic institutions and educators, private citizens, refugees, the diaspora, nongovernmental organizations, religious leaders, media organizations, and the Palestinian Liberation Organization, Palestinian Authority, Hamas, Islamic Jihad and other political groups.

Israeli stakeholders include, but are not limited to, women's groups, the private business sector, social movements and activists, academic institutions and educators, private citizens, Jewish settlers, Palestinian-Israelis, the diaspora, NGOs, religious leaders, media organizations, political parties, Israeli Defense Forces, and the military and security establishment.

The model presents a departure from traditional approaches to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process by taking into account the internal divisions, within both parties, that play a role in preventing sustainable outcomes. Israelis and Palestinians must each have their own internal conversations. As Figure 1 illustrates, internal conversations take place in Phases I, II, and III of The Inclusive Model for Peace. These conversations

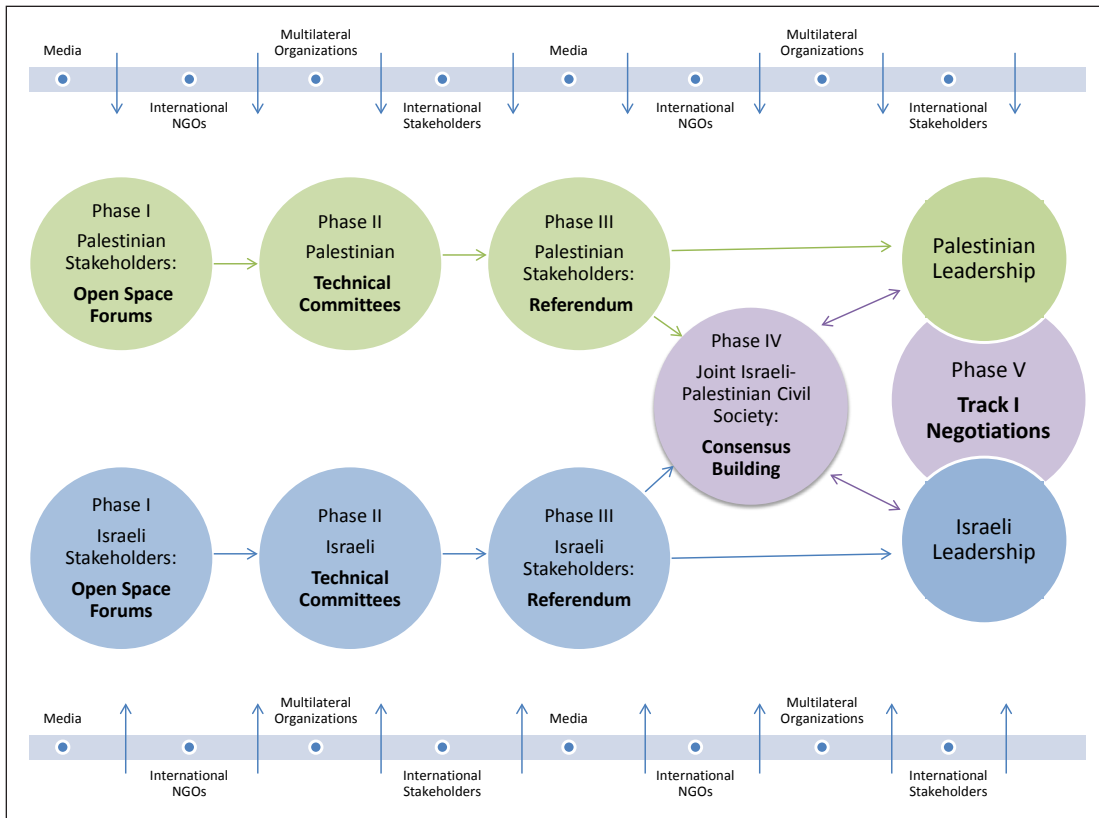


Figure 1. *The Inclusive Model for Peace*⁴⁶

demonstrate the importance of clarifying each group’s understanding of shared interests, internal barriers, and a range of possible solutions. Internal consensus building among Palestinian and Israeli stakeholders leads into joint problem-solving efforts in Phases IV and V. External stakeholders, including the international community and media outlets, are involved in the entire process, to help maintain transparency and to provide monetary and logistical support.

READING THE MODEL

In Phase I, we propose convening stakeholders in forums using “Open Space” methodology,⁴⁷ so that the agenda, content, and outcome of meetings is determined by participants, and organizers will be able to gather firsthand input from participants.

Phase II recommends the formation of technical committees, made up of content experts within both Israeli and Palestinian communities, again to convene separately. These committees would be tasked with developing proposals to solve issues identified in open space forums.

Phase III calls for distributing proposals to all constituents, followed by holding referendums for Palestinian and Israeli constituents to vote on these proposals. The first three phases should result in a compilation of data that accurately reflects the outcomes both parties’ constituents would like to see for various components of the conflict.

Phase IV brings together Israeli and Palestinian civil society and women’s groups to engage in joint problem solving and consensus building. They identify shared views on issues or proposals

that emerged from the open space and referendum processes. Ideally, they will be able to create joint partnerships and alliances.

Phase V represents formal Track I negotiations, in which we envision Israeli and Palestinian government leaders engaging in a new interest-based framework for negotiations based on issues and outcomes obtained from public participatory processes. This phase is connected to Phase IV with double-ended arrows; in this process, drafted agreements reached at the Track I level are distributed to the public, who should be invited to comment on the draft text before final agreements are adopted and signed. The model thus holds Track I negotiators accountable to the public and promotes sustained inclusion by increasing civil society's capacity to influence the political process.

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AND MEDIA

Representatives of the international community have always been major players in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, both directly and indirectly, supporting their own interests as stakeholders and as representatives of their constituents. In the proposed model, we account for this reality by demonstrating the role of the external actors as supporters of and stakeholders in all phases of the model. In doing so, we acknowledge the need for international buy-in and wide media coverage, not only to alleviate fears of threats to foreign interests but also to contribute to Palestinians' and Israelis' transparent inclusive processes. Additionally, a major component of a viable peace process will involve garnering both financial and technical support from the international community for future partnerships and initiatives.

IMPLEMENTATION

We envision either Track I or Track II and both parties' grassroots movements to lead processes outlined in this model, and the international community to provide logistical assistance. In the South African case study, government leaders took the initiative to engage constituents in an inclusive process. In the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is unclear whether current leaders will concede any decision-making power to their people. If not, civil society actors can initiate the model from the ground up.

At present, we are witnessing major social movements around the world, such as Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street, and we have even seen social uprisings taking place within Israel in recent months, with protestors demanding social justice on a range of domestic policy issues.⁴⁸ Although organized social movements can impact policy and create change, neither Track I nor Track II and grassroots actors can organize and implement this model on their own. Ultimately, government leaders and constituents, with support from the international community, must push for broader inclusion.

Implementation of this model will require significant technical support, along with coordinated and concerted team efforts. Given the current structural and political obstacles facing Palestinian communities in particular, alternative strategies to accommodate the reality on the ground will have to be explored. For example, the gender-based structures and relations in Israeli and Palestinian societies may require legislative mechanisms or quotas to ensure the representation of women in Phases II and V. Authorities must alleviate restrictions on freedom of movement and interaction between Israelis and Palestinians, as well as among Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem. Special attention must

be paid to ensuring diversified sources of income so that funding does not come with added pressures from any one group. Tools for models of engagement both in person (e.g., designated meeting facilities) and through web-based platforms (e.g., social media) will be needed, including methods for data collection and dissemination, as well as tools for prioritizing issues. A comprehensive communication plan must be developed, including mechanisms to mitigate restrictions on freedom of the press on the ground.

LIMITATIONS

Models

The adage “the devil is in the details” is particularly appropriate in considering an inclusive approach to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Given the model’s ambitious strategy to engage a broad range of stakeholders, the mechanisms that will govern these relationships will be critical to successful implementation. A number of issues may limit the implementation of this model; most importantly, securing buy-in from current power holders. The ever-changing and often hostile political environment of the Israeli-Palestinian context is difficult to control, and may adversely impact or even derail phases proposed by the model. What’s needed is a detailed implementation plan and evaluative measures that draw on insights related to process mechanisms used in other conflict contexts yet still maintain sensitivity to the unique circumstances of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Research limitations

Given the protracted nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, respondents provided insights into specific points in time during the peace process, and they limited their answers to their experiences and access to information. The Israelis’ and Palestinians’ places of residence played a major role in how they viewed the issues, understood the role of civil society, and experienced other mitigating factors such as third parties and environmental resources.

The research this paper covers focused on the most relevant information and insights, sometimes at the expense of expanding on many relevant topics and themes. Our hope is that other researchers will take this opportunity to expand on some of the approaches suggested here. Despite limitations in its scope, the case made for inclusive peace processes can contribute to current and future research and serve as a reminder to policymakers to consider the important role that civil society, women, and all key stakeholders play not only in achieving peace but also in deepening democracy.

CONCLUSION

The ongoing exclusionary strategy fostered by Israeli and Palestinian leaders, consisting of hiding interests under the table and negotiating based on positions, has resulted in a categorical failure of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Clearly, a new approach to and movement toward peace is needed. It is not only an issue of getting to the table; it is an issue of getting negotiators at the Track I level to engage in meaningful exchanges with, and to be accountable to, their constituents. This paper drew upon the work of practitioners and scholars supporting the case for inclusion, as well as the insights of a limited number, yet broad range, of experts on what could be done differently to engage key stakeholders, including civil society and women.

This paper contributes to a large body of knowledge on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, but it is unique in its departure from conventional negotiation approaches that exclude key stakeholders, such as large segments of civil society and women. It makes the case that a sustainable peace process requires an inclusive structure for negotiations. We introduce current leaders and policymakers to an applicable model for an inclusive

peace process supported by models tested elsewhere, in South Africa and Guatemala. These cases overwhelmingly support the idea that peace processes with sustainable outcomes depend on the inclusion of civil society and women who engage in participatory democratic processes to identify underlying causes of conflict, and to develop shared solutions.

The Model for Inclusive Peace supports a comprehensive process that begins well before formal negotiations. It leverages conflict resolution tools and techniques such as open space forums and consensus-building processes and accounts for technological advances that can facilitate a process to engage both direct and indirect stakeholders in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The model is sensitive to the role of the media, international community, and multilateral organizations and allows for their ongoing engagement to ensure buy-in and global support for decisions and agreements reached by the parties. Most important, it promotes a culture of transparency, partnership, engagement, and commitment of all groups in developing a shared vision of peace for Israel/Palestine.

NOTES

(Endnotes)

- 1 We use the terms “women” and “civil society” to mean both distinct and overlapping stakeholder groups. An inclusive peace process is one in which women, as a group, are fairly represented in all capacities – as governmental delegates, for example. Such a process also includes civil society (i.e., nongovernmental or non-profit) groups, in which both women and men play a role.
- 2 Snowball sampling technique was used, and confidential interviews were conducted by phone and face-to-face.
- 3 Lisa Schirch, *Designing a Comprehensive Peace Process for Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2011): 1–38.
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