PALESTINIAN PUBLIC'S WILLINGNESS TO COMPROMISE: TORN BETWEEN HOPE AND VIOLENCE

Michael SCHULZ

ABSTRACT

This study has examined Palestinians' readiness to compromise over the key issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In contrast to existing opinion poll results the claim that Palestinians support a territorial compromise over historical Palestine, this study indicates a radicalization of Palestinian attitudes. Four survey studies, conducted in 1997, 2001, 2006 and 2009, reveal that Palestinian support for a two-state solution have decreased at the expense of an increased preference for an Islamic state in the whole of historical Palestine. Also, Palestinians do not believe that peace with Israel can be achieved in the near future, and are ready to continue their struggle against Israeli occupation in the West Bank. The study also reveals that Palestinians are becoming increasingly isolated and hence less exposed to alternative strategies in the conflict with Israel. These attitudinal changes follow the negative developments in the peace process and the violence that erupted between Israelis and Palestinians in September 2000. Consequently, the lack of current public pressure on the Palestinian leadership to find a political compromise with Israel risks continued deadlock in the conflict. These changes also partly explain why Palestinians voted the Hamas movement into power in the January 2006 election.

Key words: Israeli-Palestinian conflict, compromise, public opinion, peace process, violence

АПСТРАКТ

Студијата ја истражува подготвеноста на Палестинците да прифатат компромис во однос на клучните прашања во израелско-палестинскиот конфликт. Спротивно на постоечките резултати од истражувањата на јавното мислење кои изложуваат дека Палестинците поддржуваат територијален компромис над историска Палестина, оваа студија индицира радика-

лизација на палестинските ставови. Четирите истражувања, спроведени во периодот 1997, 2001, 2006 и 2009 година откриваат опаѓање на палестинската поддршка за солуцијата за две држави за сметка на зголемената преференција за исламистичка држава на територијата на целата историска Палестина. Исто така, Палестинците не веруваат дека во блиска иднина може да се постигне мир со Израел, а се подготвени да ја продолжат борбата против израелската окупација на Западниот брег. Студијата, исто така, открива дека Палестинците стануваат сè поизолирани, па оттука и изложени на алтернативни стратегии во конфликтот со Израел. Ваквите промени во ставовите се резултат на негативните текови на мировниот процес и на насилството кое кулминираше во септември 2000 година. Консеквентно, непостоењето јавен приотисок врз палестинското раководство да најде политичко компромисно решение со Израел носи ризик од продолжување на ќорсокакот во кој се наоѓа конфликтот. Овие промени укажуваат делумно и зошто Палестинците гласаа за Хамас на изборите во 2006 година.

Клучни зборови: израелско-палестински конфликт, компромис, јавно мислење, мировен процес, насилство.

Introduction

To what extent are the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza ready for peace with Israel? This article considers this question and shows how the attitudes of Palestinians towards Israel as well as towards territorial compromise have become increasingly intransigent with each setback for the Oslo process. The so-called Oslo process, the peace process that was initiated in 1993 between Palestinians and Israelis, spurred hopes that one of the last century's longest lasting conflicts was on its way to being settled. Today, in 2010, hostilities between Israelis and Palestinians are situated in violence and stalemate.

At the same time, in contrast, the international community speaks of a two-state solution, implying that Israel will have a Palestinian state as neighbor in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The UN Security Council resolution 1397 of 2002 expresses a 'vision of a region where two States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side within secure and recognized borders'[1]. The so-called quartet, constituted of the UN, the EU, the USA and Russia,

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[1] From UN Security Council Resolution 1397, 2002.

are all working towards implementing this resolution. Furthermore, the Arab League, which has boycotted Israel since the organization's formation in 1945, also proposed a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, during its 2002 meeting in Beirut. If a Palestinian state is established in the West Bank and Gaza with East Jerusalem as its capital, the Arab League wills '[c]onsider the Arab-Israeli conflict over, sign a peace agreement with Israel, and achieve peace for all states in the region.'[2] This is the same position taken by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The then Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, and the current Palestinian Authority President, Mahmoud Abbas, accepted the principle of the so-called roadmap that the UN, USA, EU and Russia launched, as well as the basic idea of the Arab League visions during meetings between the two leaders in Aqaba in June 2003. Sharon said that '[i]t is up to the Palestinians to govern themselves in their own state.'[3] Abbas, said: 'Our goal is two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side.'[4] Even the current considered hardline Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, has said in 2009 that he accepts: 'a demilitarized Palestinian state alongside the Jewish state.'[5] Therefore, despite differences over how much and which parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip should be part of the future Palestinian State, a global consensus for a two-state solution emerges.

Why, then, is the peace process between Israelis and Palestinians in a deadlock? The public opinion in both Palestinian and Israeli societies provides a complex conflict picture. Israeli society has historically, according to some studies (Arian 1995, Sofer 2001), been reluctant to compromise on territory. According to these studies, Israelis are skeptical about the willingness of the Palestinians to have peace, and to accept and recognize the state of Israel. Following the outbreak of the so-called *al-Aqsa intifada* in 2000, Israelis increasingly lost faith in the willingness of the Palestinians to have peace with Israel (Meitel 2006:119ff). The victory of the Islamic movement Hamas in the January 2006 Palestinian election (with its Reform and Change list) further spurred Israeli skepticism. The Tami Steinmetz Centre at Tel Aviv University has, since 1994, conducted monthly opinion polls on the willingness of Israelis to achieve peace with the Palestinians and the price they are willing to pay in order to achieve peace. The so-called peace index (www.tau.ac.il/peace/) shows that the level of belief that peace can be achieved is high. The two permanent general questions asked are: 'Do you consider yourself a supporter or opponent to the peace process between Israel and the Arabs?'; and 'Do you believe or not believe that in the

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[2] From the Arab League's Beirut declaration in 2002 (www.al-bab.com/arab/docs/league/communique02.htm).

[3] From www.guardian.co.uk/israel/Story/0,,970282,00.html.

[4] From www.guardian.co.uk/israel/Story/0,,970282,00.html.

[5] From http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/31353238/ns/world_news-mideastn_africa/ (2010-04-22).

coming years there will be peace between Israel and the Arabs?'. Although with only a slim margin, the Israeli majority has consistently been positive towards the peace process and optimistic about the potential for peace – the surveys show that around 50 to 60 percent of Israelis believe that there can and will be peace with the Arabs. The index peaked immediately following the assassination of the Prime Minister Rabin on November 4th, 1995, when the survey showed that 70 percent of Israelis believed in the possibility of achieving peace.

Israeli support for the Oslo Accords, based on the principle of handing over territory in the West Bank and Gaza to the Palestinians in exchange for peace, peaked in this November 1995 measure – nearly 60 percent of Israelis surveyed supported the accords. Since then, support for the Oslo Accords has steadily decreased, and has languished well below 50 percent since the outbreak of the so-called *al-Aqsa intifada* in September 2000 (31.4 percent in December 2007 when this index was measured for the last time). In other words, the price that Israel has been expected to pay, in exchange for peace with the Palestinians, has lost Israeli public support. The Israeli public's perception that there is no legitimate Palestinian voice to talk with, and the absence of a genuine Palestinian peace implementer, has turned the Israeli public more favorably towards the government's unilateral strategies. Israel withdrew from the remaining 40 percent of the Gaza Strip in August 2005. The present Israeli government subscribes to a further unilateral strategy, concerning the West Bank, which leaves much less than 40 percent of the West Bank territory to the Palestinians. This proposal had broad public support, notwithstanding that not all details have yet been presented; besides the previous plans presented by the then Prime Minister Olmert at the Annapolis negotiations, in October 2008. After Israel's Gaza War against Hamas in December 2008-January 2009, claims that the Palestinians do not want peace, or that they do not have a sincere desire to compromise, increasingly pervade Israeli public discourse.

Previous research on Palestinian public opinion

What, then, do we know about the perceptions of the Palestinians concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? The methodological problems associated with an analysis of the Palestinian political culture are mainly related to finding data that reflects the Palestinian population at large. During the Oslo Era, 1993-2000, it became fashionable to measure Palestinian attitudes, a trend related to the fact that it became possible to survey the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza. Today, several opinion poll institutes conduct studies on the shifts in and positions of Palestinian public opinion. The Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research (PSR) in Ramallah is one such institute that has,

since 1993, regularly conducted polls and surveys. Some of these studies are producing data that are important for the understanding of the readiness of Palestinians for peace, but the polls have not generally explored the Palestinians' perceptions, over time, of the main conflict issues.

On one occasion, in September 1996, the PSR measured Palestinians' views about the continued peace process and their future expectations. 69.8 percent of those surveyed supported continued future negotiations with Israel, 50.9 percent expected a Palestinian state as an outcome of these negotiations and 53.0 percent were optimistic about the future.[6] This positive result was returned during a period when Israeli soldiers and Palestinian security forces came into combat for several days as a result of reaction to the opening of the Hasmonean tunnel in Jerusalem.[7] On another occasion, in 2003, when the so-called Geneva Accords[8] were publicly discussed in both Israel and the Palestinian self-rule areas in the West Bank and Gaza, the PSR asked Palestinians about their positions on the major issues of the Accords proposals. Support for the Accords was generally low and, as the PSR report made clear, was subordinate to the establishment of a Palestinian state: 'After reaching a peace agreement and the establishment of a Palestinian state, 77% of the Palestinians would support reconciliation between the two peoples, the Israelis and the Palestinians.'[9] This indicates hardening of Palestinians' positions since the 1996 study.

The Jerusalem Media and Communication Center (JMCC) is another organization that has regularly surveyed Palestinian views on important conflict and other political issues. One such poll, in June 2004, revealed that Palestinians considered the *al-Aqsa intifada* as a struggle to 'liberate all the Palestinian land' (45.5 percent) or to end the occupation on the basis of UN resolution 242 and establish a Palestinian state. Furthermore, Palestinians were asked to choose, among several alternatives, their preferred solution to the 'Arab-Israeli conflict'. The two-state solution received the highest approval (44.5 percent), while the bi-national state in all of historical Palestine received the support of 26.5 percent. One Palestinian state in all of Palestine received 11.1 percent support, while the Islamic state

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[6] PSR Opinion Poll Report No 24, September 1996, www.pcpsr.org.

[7] The opening of the Hasmonean Tunnel was seen by the PA as a threat to Islamic places and as yet another attempt by Israel to Judaize Jerusalem. Initially, rumours also suggested, incorrectly, that the tunnel was situated under the *al-Haram al-Sharif* area, where the *al-Aqsa mosque* is situated. This created a Palestinian public outburst, and friction between Israeli and Palestinian security forces followed.

[8] The Geneva Accords were the outcome of meetings between Palestinians (closely linked to the PA) and Israeli opposition politicians and intellectuals who came to a joint agreement concerning the key issues of the conflicts, after several meetings in secret Track II seminars in 2003.

[9] PSR Opinion Poll Report No 10, 4-9 December 2003, page 4, www.pcpsr.org.

option received the support of only 2.3 percent. 13.6 percent of those surveyed believed that there is no solution.[10] A more recent study, in June 2006 gives an even more optimistic view. This study revealed 52.5 percent of Palestinians surveyed preferred a two-state solution ('an Israeli state and a Palestinian state'), while only 7.4 percent wanted a Palestinian state in the whole of historical Palestine. 23.6 percent supported the bi-national option.

The studies give the impression that the two-state solution, which is the compromise solution, has solid support from Palestinians. Besides, the lack of a trend analysis over time there are also methodological concerns due to how the questions have been asked. Hence, it is dangerous to draw firm conclusions from existing research data that Palestinians are reluctant to compromise. Further, most of the analysis draws conclusions in relation to synchronic contemporary political developments and is less focused on diachronic process changes. The most important exception is Shikaki's study (1996a, 1996b) that empirically identifies a pattern where the increases and decreases in Palestinian support for Hamas are linked to the successes and failures of the PA in their negotiations with Israel. When the negotiations failed, the support for Hamas increased, and vice versa.

Methodological considerations

The thrust of this study is to inquire into the Palestinian public's preferred solution to the overall Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It also examines the Palestinians' preferred solutions to the key conflict issues, namely the future of the Palestinian refugees, the Israeli settlements and the city of Jerusalem. These analyses are designed to reveal the extent to which the Palestinian public is ready to compromise in order to achieve peace with Israel. They may also reveal the extent to which the PA's top-decision makers have public support for compromise in their negotiations with Israel. The underlying argument is that the space available for the PA leadership to maneuver and compromise will increase with a strong public backing for compromise solutions. The study also incorporates issues that relates to Palestinians' perceptions about Israel, about the possibilities of having peace and relations with the state of Israel, and about their personal relations with Israelis.

The aim of this analysis of the prospects for peace is to investigate the *political culture*[11] within a specific context. From an historical perspective, one could argue that the

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[10] JMCC Opinion Poll No 51, June 2004, Poll results on Palestinian attitudes towards the Palestinian Political issues and the intifada, jmcc.org

[11] Political culture refers here to 'a people's predominant beliefs, attitudes, values, ideals, sentiments, and evaluations about the political system of its country, and the role of the self in that system' (Diamond 1993,

notion of political culture is enjoying a 'renaissance' after decades of being academically discredited from both the so-called right and the left[12]. The underlying argument behind this article's analysis is that political culture determines the prospects for and the timing of peace. Emphasis on *mass political culture* has also become an important factor in understanding mechanisms contributing to change (see Przeworski 1988). This method is typically used in analyzing the prospects for transition to democracy. Often, the nature and commitment of public and subgroup attitudes towards democracy becomes the focus of such an analysis. However, this study is interested in peace readiness. A particular political culture may, in theory, exert public political pressure upon the existing political system. This pressure, in turn, creates the space for maneuver in which the political decision makers may act.

Caution must be observed; the above reasoning is problematic since it avoids some fundamental questions. Culture, an elusive notion to define, is perhaps easier to work with when a non-essentialist approach is used. Instead of emphasizing what the typicalities or codes of conduct of a specific context are, one must ask: How are social attitudes and behaviors changed or reproduced, and how are they perpetuated? A generalist, or nomotetic, approach also necessitates the deconstruction of larger contexts and the identification of particularities present in a specific context (i.e. the importance of subcultures), in order to discover how attitudes are generated and changed. Furthermore, it is necessary to understand how these attitudes form and influence top-level political decision-making about peace and security issues.

Public opinion and leadership relations

A research has shown that leaders may change their position when the time for peace is 'ripe' (Zartman 2005), and that occasionally in a conflict situation – for instance, as a result of public pressure, and/or political and security changes (for instance "the hurting stalemate") – new opportunities for top-leaders to negotiate for a peaceful settlement are created. Studies also reveal that even extreme agencies, such as those that use suicide-killing tactics, are dependent on public opinion. Hamas, for example, has used such violent strategies, and its use of these tactics is influenced very much by the reaction of Palestinian

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p. 3). It should also be noted that the very notion of 'political culture' is debated. Attitudes and behaviour are usually the foci of such an analysis.

[12] The schools of thought from 'rational choice', 'public choice' and 'positive political theory' explained that voters, leaders, diplomats et al. were rational, short-run-interest maximizers. The leftists and radicals maintained that political culture was only a reflection of the capitalist ideology and, hence, served as ideas related to specific classes. (cf. Almond, G.A. 1993, p. ix-xii)

public opinion: '[T]he social and public meaning of their activity is no less important than its religious legitimacy' (Bloom 2005, p 32). Further, other studies have revealed that the existence of a democratic popular political culture in many Arab states among the (mostly) religious Arab masses also forms the setting in which, for instance, Islamists have to act (Goddard 2002; Tessler 2002; Inglehart 2004). Hence, the Islamist are also influenced by the democratic culture and discourse, and also creating a more democratic discourse among themselves. There is a need to understand the interplay between the leadership level and the public in peace building efforts (see Lederach 1997). This underlines the need to study public opinion about peace and security issues in the Palestinian context.

The surprising conclusion from various studies is that when conflict parties are engaged in talks, 'contrary to common expectations, combatants do not have the greatest difficulty resolving underlying conflicts of interest and reaching bargains' (Walter 2002:5). However, up to two-thirds of all agreements ultimately fail to become implemented. Taking the Oslo process as an example, the negotiators could have reached a political agreement relatively easily (Oslo Accords from September 1993). From the beginning of negotiations, the Israeli and Palestinian negotiators were largely in agreement about the basic principles for dealing with the conflict issues upon which the ultimate agreement was built. However, difficulties emerged over the timing of implementation.[13] The Gaza-Jericho Agreement was signed in May 1994, six months later than originally scheduled. The implementation of some parts of the Oslo II Agreement that was signed in September 1994 was also delayed. Further delays in the implementation of the schedules followed the defeat of the Labor government in the May 1996 Israeli elections. Also, continued violent resistance from the anti-Oslo proponents (Israeli settlers, Hamas, Islamic Jihad and others), and public pressure, gradually worsened and influenced the political will and ability to implement the agreements.

Hence, when the Camp David II negotiations came to a close in July 2000, public disappointment with the failure of the summit negatively impacted on the peace process. This occurred notwithstanding that Camp David II was the first time that the key conflict issues were negotiated at a top-level summit. Hence, public expectations that the summit would come up with a final agreement was high, but due to the complexity of the issues, in combination with poor preparations of the negotiation teams, rather unrealistic expectations. At the follow-up summit in Taba, during 2001, the parties came even closer to an historical compromise; however, all parties realized that they lacked the necessary public support or mandate to push for agreement (Meitel 2006). Israeli Prime Minister Barak had recently lost his parliamentary majority and was facing a struggle against the Likud right wing chal-

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[13] Much has been written about the negotiations that lead to the Oslo Accords. One of the best analyses is written by Jones, 1999.

lenger Ariel Sharon for the Prime Ministership. Palestinian President Arafat was preoccupied with public pressure and the Oslo opponents in the midst of the *al-Aqsa intifada*. US President Clinton had almost no political mandate remaining, with his tenure in the White House drawing to a close. In conclusion, a political agreement was feasible, but the political realities in Israeli and Palestinian societies clearly had a negative impact on the decision makers' willingness to compromise. They preferred to maintain uncompromising positions on the outstanding issues due to fears of a lack of political backing (in the governments, parliaments, and on the streets) in their home arenas.

The surveys of 1997, 2001, 2006, and 2009

The survey data derives from a joint research project between Birzeit University and the Department of Peace and Development Research/School of Global Studies that was initiated in 1996. Four surveys were conducted: November 1997, July 2001, April/May 2006, and the most recent in September 2009. A random sample[14] of 1308 Palestinians was selected for the 1997 survey, 1492 for the 2001 survey, 1500 for the 2006 survey, and 1504 for the 2009 survey. The surveys contained approximately 150 to 200 questions. The target population is all individuals who are 18 years old or above and are residents of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, or of the city of Jerusalem (under Israeli control). The samples were made with the help of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS). Although between the four surveys some questions were changed, removed, or added, several key aspects under study have been measured on all four occasions.

Positions on solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

Overall conflict

We asked the subjects: 'What is according to you the *preferred* final solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict?' As shown in Table 1 below, the most frequent answer was 'Islamic state in the whole of Palestine'. In 1997 it was the most frequent answer, with 34.9 percent support. This percentage increased to 43.6 in 2001, to 52.4 percent in 2006, and slightly decreased to 35.9 in 2009. The compromise, two-state, solution has therefore significantly lost support over the study period.

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[14] A three-stage organized clustered stratified random sampling design was used to select the 2006 and 2009 samples. In the first stage, a random stratified sample was selected (125 numeration areas). In the second stage, an organized random sample of 12 households was selected from the sample selected in the first stage. In the third stage, one person was selected from each household. The population was divided into the following stratifications: 1) Governorates, and 2) Type of Locality (Urban, Rural, Camps).

Table 1. The preferred solution to the overall Israeli-Palestinian conflict

What is according to you the preferred final solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict?	1997	2001	2006	2009
Islamic state in the whole of Palestine	34.9	43.6	52.5	35,9
Arab state in the whole of Palestine	13.9	12.2	12.9	27,8
Secular and democratic state in the whole of Palestine	6.4	1.8	3.6	3.5
Bi-national state in the whole of Palestine	2.1	3.8	3.0	5,8
Palestinian independent state according to UN 1947 partition plan	7.9	6.2	11.6	9,1
Independent state in the West Bank and Gaza	28.4	22.9	14.6	15,6
Palestinian entity in West Bank and Gaza in confed. with Jordan	1.5	0.5	1.0	1.1
Other	4.9	8.9	0.8	1,3
Total	100.0 (1278)	100.0 (1487)	100.0 (1481)	100.0 (1504)

Also, even if a re-coding of the categories in Table 1 is made, between those who support the whole of Palestine option (Islamic, Arabic, secular and democratic, or bi-national) and those who support a two-state solution (according to the UN 1947 proposal, West Bank and Gaza, or confederation with Jordan), the result indicates an even more marked reduction in the willingness to compromise over territory. In 1997, 57.3 percent of Palestinians supported the whole of Palestine option, compared to 37.8 percent who supported a two-state solution. Those supporting the whole of Palestine option had increased to 61.4 percent in 2001, and even peaked to 72 percent in 2006, and slightly decreased to 61.3 in 2009. Support for a two-state solution had decreased to 29.6 percent in 2001, to 27.2 percent in 2006, and to 24.5 in 2009. Hence, the Palestinian public's attitudes towards the two-state solution and Israel have become increasingly intransigent. During the Oslo Accords, the time was riper for compromises, when the Palestinian public's willingness for a two-state solution was at its peak. Palestinians' increasingly intransigent positions must be correlated with the setbacks in the overall Israeli-Palestinian peace process (that ended in September 2000) and the negative impact of the outbreak of the *al-Aqsa intifada*. The in-

crease in various forms of violence – Israeli so-called extra-juridical assassinations of Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and al-Aqsa brigade leaders, the decrease in trust of the Arafat-led PA, the Palestinian economic decline, the restrictions of movement and closures imposed by Israel in the Gaza Strip and in the West Bank (often in relation to suicide attacks committed by Palestinians against Israeli civilian and military targets), and not least the devastating war in the Gaza Strip (December 2008-January 2009) – has hardened Palestinian attitudes towards conciliation. There is a dynamic interplay between the hardening of attitudes towards compromise and the increased repression that Palestinians experience.

However, it is dangerous to assume that the Palestinians' preferred solution is that represented in the survey results. The solution ideally preferred may differ from what Palestinians would be ready to accept, or compromise over. The 1997 survey asked Palestinians whether they were optimistic about achieving the preferred solution. In 1997 45.0 percent of the Palestinians were optimistic, and 6.5 percent were very optimistic about the prospects of achieving the preferred solution. In 2001 they were asked whether they believed that the preferred solution could be achieved within the next 10 years. 22.8 percent of respondents said it was possible to some extent, 45.4 percent said that it was possible, and 6.8 percent said it was very possible. In general, Palestinians are optimistic about the implementation of their preferred solution despite the fact that the most preferred solution – an Islamic state in the whole of Palestine – is unacceptable to Israel. The 2006 survey asked Palestinians what other final solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict they could accept if the preferred solution could not be achieved. 48.5 percent of respondents said that they could not accept any other solution than the one that they most preferred. 23.8 percent of respondents preferred a solution that implied that Israel would no longer exist. However, 27.4 percent of Palestinians could live with a two-state solution, although this was not their preferred solution. Hence, there is a generally intransigent position among Palestinians towards accepting Israel's territorial control of the territory in the pre-1967 war borders, but approximately one-third of the Palestinian public appear ready to compromise, despite the overall conflict situation. Also, on a *direct* question of the support for a two-state solution, added in the 2009 survey, as many as 71.6 percent said that they would support this proposal.

At the same time, Palestinians are very pessimistic about the future. Only 15.9 percent of those surveyed in 2006 believed that relations with Israel would improve, while 66.6 percent believed that the chances of peace with Israel would diminish. Hence, one could say that Palestinians *prefer* an Islamic state in the whole of historic Palestine; they are hopeful that this can be achieved, and would not like to have any other alternative accepted. However, although not wholehearted, they would support a two-state solution if implemented.

Table 2. The acceptance of a two state solution

If the agreement to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was to establish an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem as its capital, would you support this solution?	2009
Do not support	18.8
Support to some extent	9.5
Support	52.1
Strongly support	19.5
Total	100.0 (1504)

Jerusalem

Probably the most disputed sub-issue in the conflict – and prominent in the negotiations at Camp David II in 2000 and at Taba in 2001 (Klein 2003) – is the future status of Jerusalem. The *al-Aqsa intifada* is directly linked to the Jerusalem issue. We can see that Palestinian willingness for compromise was highest in the 1997 survey, but decreased to its lowest point in 2001, when 89.9 percent preferred that East Jerusalem be under Palestinian control. In 2006, 86.0 percent of respondents still preferred this position.

Table 3. The preferred solution to the problem of Jerusalem[15]

What is the preferred solution according to your opinion for Arab Jerusalem (East Jerusalem)?	1997[16]	2001	2006
To remain under Israeli control	0.6	0.7	1.0
To be under Palestinian control	66.4	89.9	86.0
To be under common Israeli & Palestinian control	21.6	2.6	6.7
International control	6.6	4.1	7.1
Other	4.8	2.8	0.2
Total	100.0 (1286)	100.0 (1482)	100.0 (1483)

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[15] Not asked in the 2009 survey.

[16] In the 1997 survey the categories looked slightly different, but are re-coded in order to compare the results.

When asked, in 2006, what other solution they could live with, 62.1 percent of Palestinians surveyed asserted that they would not accept any solution other than their preferred one. However, almost one quarter of respondents could accept the proposal that East Jerusalem be under international control, which is consistent with the 1947 proposal of the United Nations, General Assembly resolution 181.

Table 4. The acceptance of other then preferred solution to Jerusalem

If this preferred solution cannot be achieved, what other final solution to Arab Jerusalem (East Jerusalem) could you accept?	2006
To remain under Israeli control	0.4
To be under Palestinian control	4.4
To be under common Israeli & Palestinian control	10.8
International control	22.2
Other	0.2
Do not accept any other solution	62.1
Total	100.0 (1483)

The uncompromising attitudes of Palestinian respondents in relation to their preferred solution is most likely related to the fact that the 2006 survey asked about East Jerusalem rather than the entirety of Jerusalem. Palestinian claims to West Jerusalem were not expressly measured, although the 1997 survey asked about the whole of Jerusalem rather than East Jerusalem. It is a logical extension of the survey results that Palestinians also prefer that West Jerusalem be under Palestinian control, as respondents across the three surveys indicated a strong preference for a state in the whole of Palestine. In fact, the slightly re-coded 1997 question included the partition alternative but only 12.8 percent of respondents preferred a partition of Jerusalem into Israeli control over West Jerusalem and Palestinian control of East Jerusalem.

When asked in the 2006 and 2009 surveys whether there would be a mechanism through which Israelis could visit religious/holy places in Palestine (such as in Jerusalem and Hebron), Palestinians demonstrated hard positions. 76.2 percent of the Palestinians either 'do not support' (57.2 percent) or 'support to some extent' (19.3 percent) this idea in 2006, and continue to have this position in 2009 (69.5 percent in total) , while only 23.5

percent believe that they could either 'support' or 'strongly support' a more tolerant position in 2006, compared to a slight increase to 30.3 percent in 2009.

The Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank

Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank have been a key issue, as most Palestinians consider them illegal. The surveys reveal that most Palestinians prefer to see the settlements removed. In 1997, 76.9 percent of Palestinian respondents considered the best solution to be the removal of the settlements. This figure increased to 90.6 percent in 2001, and slightly decreased to 82.1 percent in 2006.

Table 5. The preferred solution to the problem of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza [17]

What is the preferred solution according to your opinion of the Israeli settlements in all West Bank (and Gaza[18])?	1997	2001	2006
Remove all settlements	76.9	90.6	82.1
Removal of most settlements	2.0	1.0	1.8
Stay under Palestinian control	4.2	2.1	4.9
Palestinian refugees move to these settlements	12.9	4.1	11.0
Stay under Israeli control	1.7	4.5	0.1
Other	2.3	1.5	0.0
Total	100.0 (1284)	100.0 (1480)	100.0 (1484)

Very few Palestinians contemplate alternative solutions to the issue of Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The second most popular option was to move Palestinian refugees to these Israeli settlements. In 1997, 12.9 percent of respondents considered this the preferred solution. This decreased to 4.1 percent in 2001, but jumped to 11.0 percent in 2006. It appears that the low preference for this option can be explained by the symbolic meaning of the settlements – Palestinians have no desire to take over the houses of those they view as occupiers. Instead, Palestinians' preferred solution involves destruction of these homes. Many settlements are also geographically located on hilltops

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[17] Not asked in the 2009 survey.

[18] Gaza was included in the 1997 and 2001 surveys but not in the 2006 survey due to the Israeli unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in August 2005, when the remaining Israeli settlements were removed and the Palestinian Authority took control over these areas.

in the West Bank, suggesting for Palestinians its symbolic status as the ruler controlling the surrounding 'Palestinian' territory below.

The Palestinian refugees

The Palestinian refugee issue was, alongside the Jerusalem problem, the issue that presented the greatest difficulty in reaching agreement, during the US-mediated Camp David II negotiations between Israel and the PA in 2000. This study differentiates between Palestinians classified as refugees but who are living inside the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and those who live outside these areas (in the Arab world and elsewhere).

There has been a marked shift in Palestinian attitudes during the study period about the preferred solution to the West Bank and Gaza refugees. In 1997 30.1 percent of those surveyed thought that the ideal solution was to improve living conditions in the existing camps. This figure declined to 18.6 percent in 2001 and to 15.2 percent in 2006. At the same time, in 1997, 40.8 percent of those surveyed preferred the solution involving refugees returning to the homes they occupied before 1948. This increased to 71.1 percent in 2001, and was 70.3 percent in 2006. Hence, the willingness of Palestinians to accept Israel's position of admitting very few Palestinian refugees to return to Israel within the pre-1967 war borders has decreased markedly during the last nine years (see Table 6).

Table 6. The preferred solution to the Palestinian refugees issue inside (the West Bank and Gaza)[19]

What is the preferred solution according to your opinion of the Palestinian refugees inside the West Bank and Gaza?	1997	2001	2006
Improve their living conditions in existing camps	30.1	18.6	15.2
Settle them in the camps where they currently live	15.1	4.0	4.4
Settle them in the West Bank and Gaza	8.0	2.8	6.3
Return them to their homes before 1948	40.8	71.1	73.9
Other	6.0	3.6	0.3
Total	100.0 (1282)	100.0 (1482)	100.0 (1485)

A similar pattern can be identified in relation to Palestinians' preferred solutions for refugees living in the Diaspora. In 1997 a majority of 54.9 percent preferred that the Pales-

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[19] Not asked in the 2009 survey.

tinian refugees should be moved to their original homes of 1948. This majority increased to 80.7 percent in 2001, and was still high at 76.3 percent in 2006. This option is unthinkable for most Israelis.

Table 7. The preferred solution to the Palestinian refugees issue (outside West Bank and Gaza)[20]

What is the preferred solution according to your opinion of the Palestinian refugees inside the West Bank and Gaza?	1997	2001	2006
Settle them in country of residence	8.1	4.6	10.2
Resettle them in the West Bank and Gaza	33.2	12.0	13.2
Return them to their homes before 1948	54.9	80.7	76.3
Other	3.8	2.7	0.2
Total	100.0 (1283)	100.0 (1479)	100.0 (1485)

Relations with Israel

The proposal to maintain diplomatic relations with Israel enjoys very low support among Palestinians. 72.2 percent of Palestinians surveyed in 2006 'do not support', or support only 'to a certain extent', diplomatic relations between the PA and Israel. In 2009 it had decreased somewhat but still a clear majority of 61.8 were skeptical of having diplomatic relations with Israel. Only 27.7 percent of respondents 'support' or 'strongly support' this position in 2006, and 38.2 in 2009. To what extent, then, are Palestinians prepared to accept Israel and to what extent are they ready to have political negotiations with Israel? When asked, in the 2006 survey, if they supported the proposal to have political negotiations with Israel, 37.4 percent of Palestinians supported and 21.6 strongly supported this proposal. This increased to 50.5 percent who supported, and 18.7 percent who strongly supported negotiations with Israel in 2009. Hence, there is preparedness amongst Palestinians to negotiate with Israel. However, when asked in the same survey if they supported Hamas recognizing Israel and, in return, Israel recognizing Hamas as a national liberation movement, 67.3 percent in 2006, and 56.8 percent in 2009, of Palestinians rejected this position. Furthermore, 77.2 percent in 2006, and 65.1 percent in 2009, of Palestinians surveyed did not support the proposal that Hamas abandon violence (or armed struggle) in its resistance to Israeli occupation. The support for '*Fedyah* operations' (suicide bombing) against civil targets inside Israel has, however, decreased. In 2006, 20.7 percent of respon-

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[20] Not asked in the 2009 survey.

dents indicated support and 24.0 indicated strong support for these kinds of operations. In 2009, the figures decreased to 20.6 percent who supported, and 14.9 percent who strongly supported these kinds of operations in 2009, At the same time, 40.4 percent strongly supported, and 43.4 supported peaceful demonstrations against Israel in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in 2006. In 2009 it increased to 22.2 percent strongly supported and 53.7 supported peaceful demonstrations.

Table 8. The position on armed (suicide bombs etc.) attacks on Israeli civilians

Are armed attacks against civilians in Israel beneficial?	1997
Disagree	76.9
Agree somewhat	2.0
Agree	4.2
Agree strongly	12.9
Total	100.0 (1304)

Do you support Fedyah operations against civil targets in Israel?	2001	2006	2009
Do not support	17.8	43.4	58.9
Support to some extent	6.6	11.9	5.7
Support	29.7	20.7	20.6
Support strongly	45.9	24.0	14.9
Total	100.0 (1478)	100.0 (1453)	100.0 (1504)

The findings appear contradictory and require further discussion. The mainstream position of the Palestinians is that they are living under occupation and therefore are entitled to use some means in order to liberate Palestinian territory. The support among Palestinians for using some means in this 'liberation struggle', whether these means *Fedyah* operations against civil or military targets, political negotiations, or peaceful demonstrations, is high. It is not generally important for Palestinians to distinguish between violent or non-violent means, in what is perceived as a justified struggle against Israeli occupation. These findings are consistent with results from other studies of Palestinian identity (see Lindholm Schulz 2003a, 2003b).

Hamas, the organization presently in control of the PA, has support for its non-conciliatory position towards Israel. The Hamas strategy of using violent means in the struggle against Israel enjoys current popular support. However, compared with 2001, less then one year after the outbreak of the *al-Aqsa intifada*, support for the suicide tactic has

declined dramatically. This may be explained by Palestinian fatigue of the Israeli retaliation that has followed each Palestinian suicide killing of Israeli civilian (or military) targets. The overall objective of ending the Israeli occupation has strong popular legitimacy amongst Palestinians; however, there has been a decline in support for the use of military means to achieve this objective. Hamas, although seeming overtly impervious to the public mood, also announced a truce at the beginning of 2005, which held until June 2006, as well as refrained from using the suicide attacks against Israeli civilians. During spring 2006, Hamas made several statements indicating a possible shift towards a more conciliatory position towards Israel. The PA Prime Minister, Ismail Hanyah, announced, after the PA's election victory in January 2006, that '[i]f Israel declares that it will give the Palestinian people a state and give them back all their rights, then we are ready to recognize them.[21]' Also, the spokesman, Ismail Abu Shanab, stated that if Israel agreed to the Saudi plan, which calls for Israel to return to its pre-1967 borders in return for 'normal relations' with Arab nations, Hamas would 'cease all military activities'.[22] However, since violence escalated in the summer of 2006, and further peaked with the Gaza War at the shift at 2008/09, it is uncertain to what extent Hamas will continue its pragmatic shift.

Friendship ties with 'others'

Relations with the enemy in conflict situations are naturally limited, and Palestinians, in general, do not engage in relations with Israelis. If they do so, they risk being seen as traitors in their own society, and thereby risking their lives. Other studies have shown how identity groups in conflict tend to describe themselves as 'victims', and readily construct stereotypes of the 'other' (Stephan & Stephan 1996). In conflict transformation theory, relationship building on all levels in society between the conflict parties is essential (see Lederach 1997). The 1997 survey measured two aspects of the extent of relationships Palestinians had with 'others', during a period when the peace process was ongoing. One aspect relates to actual existing friendship relations, and the other relates to the extent to which Palestinians are willing to have relations with others.

As can be seen in Table 9 below, Palestinians have few friendship relations with Israelis. Only 2.9 percent had 'many', and 0.2 percent had 'very many' Jewish Israeli friends. Categories such as age, years of education, party preference, religion or religiosity, and Gaza or West Bank resident did not explain this pattern. However, a small gender difference could be identified, where there was a slight tendency for males to have friends among Israeli

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[21] From www.english.aljazeera.net, Sunday 26, February 2006.

[22] San Francisco Chronicle: www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2002/04/28/MN222422.DTL

Jews.[23] This appears to be explained by the greater opportunities males have to meet with Israelis, since more Palestinian males than females work inside Israel. This is verified in the correlation between place of work and the extent of friendship relations with Jews.[24] On the question of the willingness of Palestinians to have relations with Israeli Jews, 9.6 percent of the 1997 respondents were 'somewhat willing', 2.3 percent were 'much' willing and 0.7 percent were 'very much' willing (see Table 10). The small minority group of those who are willing to have relations with Israeli Jews is in fact larger than those who have existing friendship relations, perhaps indicating a potential for more actual relationships.

Table 10. Palestinians' friends among different identities in 1997

Has friends and acquaintances	among refugees/ non refugees	among returnee / residents	Among Palest. in Israel	among Christians/ Muslims
No	31.0	47.1	61.2	66.2
Few	27.9	38.1	29.2	24.4
Many	32.7	13.4	8.4	8.6
Very many	8.4	1.4	1.2	0.8
Total	100 (1293)	100 (1297)	100 (1299)	100.0 (1296)

Has friends and acquaintances	in the West Bank/Gaza	among Jordanians	among Egyptians	Among Israeli Jews
No	69.5	69.9	82.9	85.7
Few	23.2	21.7	13.3	11.2
Many	6.0	7.6	3.2	2.9
Very many	1.4	0.8	0.6	0.2
Total	100.0 (1302)	100 (1294)	100 (1236)	100 (1296)

Successive setbacks in the peace process have limited Palestinians' movement within as well as outside the West Bank and Gaza, in turn decreasing Palestinians' opportunities to meet and establish new friendship relations with Israelis. It is not surprising that few Palestinians reported having significant numbers of relationships with Israeli Jews. Whilst we find that Israeli Jews are the category of 'other' that Palestinians have least relations with and are least willing to have relations with, relative to other identities, it is evident that Palestinians in general have few relations with all 'outsider' groups referred to in the sur-

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[23] The correlation score is 0.304 on the Pearson scale and is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

[24] The correlation score is 0.306 on the Pearson scale and is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

vey, whether Israeli Jews, Jordanians or Egyptians. Also Palestinians surveyed exhibited limited friendship with the categories: Christian/Muslim, West Bank/Gaza, Palestinians in Israel, resident/returnee and refugee/non refugee. However, Palestinians' willingness to establish relations with these identities is slightly higher than with other nationals than actual friendships formed. Hence, it appears that the high degree of isolation of Palestinians and their relatively low mobility has a negative impact on both actual friendship relations and the willingness to have relationships with others. Palestinians become more dependent on those in their immediate environment (close family affiliations and the *Hamulah*). The lack of opportunities for Palestinians to meet 'others', combined with the hardship of the violent day-to-day situation, make 'others' and their lifestyles more remote from, and therefore of less interest to, Palestinians.

Table 11. Willingness of the Palestinians to have friends among different identities in 1997

Willing to establish relations...	with refugees/ non-refugees	with West Bankers & Gaza people	with returnees /residents	with Jordanians
No	7.3	11.6	13.2	23.0
Somewhat	22.7	27.5	34.0	35.5
Much	52.1	46.6	44.3	35.4
Very much	17.8	14.4	8.6	6.1
Total	100 (1267)	100.0 (1265)	100 (1258)	100 (1273)

Willing to establish relations...	with Egyptians	with Palestinians in Israel	w. Christians/ Muslims	with Israeli Jews
No	27.3	27.5	39.8	87.4
Somewhat	36.5	36.6	33.4	9.6
Much	29.7	30.8	22.9	2.3
Very much	6.5	5.2	3.9	0.7
Total	100 (1193)	100 (1260)	100.0 (1284)	100 (1257)

Also, the 1997 survey evinces no correlation between background variables such as age, income, gender or place of residence, and the existence of and willingness to have relations with Jordanians and Egyptians. Hence, it is not the case, for instance, that wealthier older males in the West Bank have more friendship relations with Jordanians due to geographical closeness and better mobility opportunities. Rather, isolation and the absence of contact with others also structure the social milieu around which Palestinians identify, and influence with whom they establish, or are willing to contemplate, relations. Palestinians' existing relations are dependent upon the nature of the opportunities available to meet

others. When Palestinians' opportunities to meet Israelis expand, so, too do their opportunities for developing relations and friendships. As these opportunities do not presently exist, Palestinians' willingness to contemplate relations with Israelis is very low. From a long-term peace building perspective this situation is a critical impediment to peace.

Conclusion

The findings of this study have several implications for how we interpret existing theories, and for how we methodologically judge data. As was shown in this study, the erosion of Palestinian support for entertaining compromise towards Israelis confirms the perceptions that both realities on the ground and the successful implementation of peace agreements are critical in moving towards peace. Previous studies have shown the willingness of Israelis to compromise has decreased with the backlashes of the negotiations and the overall peace process, the increased incidence of Palestinian suicide attacks, and with the outbreak of the *al-Aqsa intifada*. This study identified a clear decrease in the willingness of the Palestinians to compromise, over the study period 1997 to 2009. The trend over the period indicates that the PA's hesitation to participate in political negotiations with Israel, and the continuous violence since the outbreak of the *al-Aqsa intifada,* and aftermaths of the Gaza War, have hardened the Palestinian popular position. Despite the support of the international community for a two-state solution, the peoples involved, Israelis and Palestinians, are now intransigently positioned, perhaps more so than ever before. The road to a political solution seems a long way off, despite the fact that many of the key issues are amenable to technical solutions, and have very nearly been the subject of successful compromise, particularly in the negotiations of Camp David II in 2000 and Taba in 2001.

From a conflict resolution perspective, we can conclude that increased isolation – in the Palestinian case meaning a literal physical surrounding by walls and fences – negatively impacts upon possibilities to build peace-building capacities. In all conflicts, peace builders need to support the development of relations across social boundaries of the peoples in conflict, and to strengthen those who have such relations. Options, ideas and alternatives to the perceived non-conciliatory zero-sum positions need to be explored.

Hence, if the isolation characterizing this conflict continues, there is a growing risk that the Palestinian public plays into the hands of 'spoilers', who will leverage on fear and misunderstanding (see Darby & Mac Ginty 2000, Aggestam 2006). Israel can of course, due to its military predominance, dictate how much of the West Bank remains under Palestinian control. Then, there will be few opportunities to explore the underlying needs of both the Palestinians and the Israelis, and there will certainly be no opportunities to explore joint interests and relationship building.

From a methodological point of view, we also realize that the way the questions about conflict and peace were framed and structured will have influenced the responses of the Palestinian participants in certain ways. Further studies are required to explore particular details around the key issues. For instance, in the Jerusalem study conducted by Segal et al (Segal et al 2000), Palestinians and Israelis were asked to rank the importance of various quarters inside Jerusalem. That detailed study was sensitive to differentiating between the levels of willingness to compromise over various parts of the city. For our case, in an apparently zero-sum situation we need to understand more about the Palestinian public's perceptions about detailed key issue solutions. This could contribute to a melting of the image of Palestinians and Israelis as intransigent foes, with no the ability to compromise with each other. However, this is an empirical question to be answered.

Furthermore, as shown in many other studies, violence has a direct negative impact on the ability of individuals to become creative problem solvers in relation to the 'other' (see Waller 2002, Glasl 1999). The violent cycle takes over, and the will and emotions to take revenge use violent means, and to physically destroy the 'other' dominates, thereby also risking psychological isolation. Victimization of the self, an inability to see the other's suffering creates a mirror image of the parties in an endless struggle. It is only when this isolation can be broken that new relationships can be built, and opportunities can be created to begin an urgently-needed conflict transformation process. Both Israelis and Palestinians have been involved in various people-to-people projects during the peace process, however most of these broke down as a result of renewed violence. Critics derided these people-to-people projects for failing to create much-needed momentum. However, this study indicates that we need to find new ways to empower Palestinians and Israelis in building new relationships. Rather than being critical of people-to-people projects we should learn from our mistakes and continue to try. If pessimism prevails, we risk ongoing bloodshed between Israelis and Palestinians.

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