

PAX POPULI, PAX DEI

- Ten Years Of Peace Polls In Comparative Perspective

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Introduction

In the modern world of mass media, mass communications and globalization peace processes require the effective use of public diplomacy to achieve political legitimacy. Open, transparent, objective, public opinion research can help to unlock the full peace making potential of such diplomacy. But this requires truly independent peace research not bound to the interests of any of the conflict parties. Nine such surveys of public opinion were completed in support of the Northern Ireland peace process between April 1996 and February 2003. Critically the questions for eight of these polls were drafted and agreed with the co-operation of party negotiators to enhance the peace process by increasing party inclusiveness, developing issues and language, testing party policies, helping to set deadlines and increase the overall transparency of negotiations through the publication of technical analysis and media reports. After 30 years of failure the peace process in Northern Ireland has been a great success.

If all peace processes followed the recent experience of Northern Ireland they too might produce the same positive results. But this is not the case. The interests of governments and political elites, both domestic and international, all too frequently can pervert the will of the people to deny them the peace that they seek. In hindsight the people of Northern Ireland were very fortunate. With elections to negotiations, independent research and an independent Chair the people were able to make their peace through the democratization of their peace process. This was the key to that success. The people owned the peace process and the people's peace prevailed. This work is described in detail in my earlier WAPOR papers and, *The People's Peace Process in Northern Ireland* (Irwin, 2002a, 2012a) written so that the central lessons, of what were then being called *peace polls*, could be extended to the resolution of other violent conflicts around the world.

To this end the Centre for Democracy and Reconciliation in South East Europe (CDRSEE) commissioned me to undertake peace polls in Macedonia as a prelude to free and fair

elections in 2002; in Bosnia and Herzegovina to analyse the state of their peace process in 2004; and in Kosovo and Serbia as a prelude to the negotiation of a 'final status' agreement for Kosovo in 2005. This was followed up with a poll of British Muslims in the context of what George Bush was calling the 'War on Terror' in 2006. With the *Cvoter Foundation* in Delhi a peace poll was completed in Kashmir in 2008 with follow ups in Pakistan, and that same year a three year programme of peace polling in Sri Lanka was initiated supported by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. After Barack Obama was elected President and George Mitchell was appointed his Special Envoy to the Middle East I was asked to complete a peace poll in Israel and Palestine for *OneVoice* in 2009 and this was followed by a project in Darfur, Sudan funded by the US State Department. Finally I was able to visit Egypt during their revolution in early 2011 but no polling work was undertaken there due to legal restrictions. These polls are reviewed in detail in my recent book *The People's Peace* (Irwin, 2012b/c) with highlights explored comparatively in this paper.

Without exception the peace polls identified the problems that had to be resolved at the heart of each conflict and the solutions needed to end the conflict. When this was done and acted on peace was achieved but when this was not done the peace processes continued to fail. The polls also identified repetitive conflict themes: discrimination, bad policing, violent insurgencies, poor governance and corruption, failing economies, lack of democratic accountability and interference by third parties/states. The importance of these conflict elements changed with the cycle of the violence: pre-war, war, post-war. Critically the peace polls could help people achieve peace if the political elites and those responsible for peace used the work constructively to that end. Regrettably this was the exception rather than the rule. All too often the interests of spoilers coincide with the maintenance of the status quo of on-going war, occupation or violence directed against their own people. However, with the support of international institutions and standard setting, independent peacemakers can use peace polls and public diplomacy to challenge the spoilers, and help establish the people's peace.

Peace poll descriptions – problems, solutions and analysis

All conflicts are different. Different people, different histories, different regional and international contexts, etc. etc. and for these reasons each conflict requires the people involved in those conflicts to have their problems and solutions the focus of any associated conflict resolution research. If this is not done then, firstly, important elements of the conflict can get overlooked and secondly, those involved in the conflict will be far less likely to accept the findings of the research as relevant to their situation. Critically, as peace research, the problems and solutions of all the parties to these conflicts must be given equal treatment in a common piece of work. This approach necessarily emphasizes description over hypothesis testing. However, by consistently using the same research methods, including scales, it is possible to compare these descriptions across different conflicts and draw conclusions about any similarities and differences that may exist. When this is done for Northern Ireland, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Kashmir, Sri Lanka, United Kingdom (West and Muslim World), Israel and Palestine the results very clearly explain why some conflicts have been resolved while others remain a continued source of grievance, violence and death.

Northern Ireland¹

Table 1 lists the top 5 problems for the Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland run in several polls leading up to the Belfast Agreement made on Good Friday in April 1998 and Table 2 rank orders the importance of the various provisions of that agreement run in a poll a year later in April 1999. The critical point to make here is that the most significant problems for both the Protestants and Catholics were met through the terms and implementation of the Belfast Agreement. That implementation took several years but it has been done and the Northern Ireland peace process is a success.

Table 1. Top 5 of 19 problems for Protestants and Catholics

	Protestant per cent Very Significant	Per Cent	Catholic per cent Very Significant	Per Cent
1st	The Irish Republican Army and their use of violence.	87	The Lack of equality and continued discrimination.	71
2nd	All paramilitary groups and their use of violence.	67	The sectarian division of Northern Ireland politics.	66
3rd	The failure of government and the security forces to deal with terrorism.	56	The failure to provide a police service acceptable to all.	62
4th	The Republic's territorial claim on Northern Ireland.	53	The failures of Northern Ireland politicians.	59
5th	The Loyalist paramilitaries and their use of violence.	53	A lack of respect for the people of the 'other' tradition.	57
14th	The Lack of equality and continued discrimination.	21	(11th) The Irish Republican Army and their use of violence.	45

The top problem for the Catholics was discrimination by the Protestant majority (down at 14th on the Protestant list) who monopolized political power and used their police force to suppress dissent while the top problem for the Protestants was the insurgent Irish Republican Army (IRA) and their use of violence (down at 11th on the Catholic list). All these problems were eventually dealt with through decommissioning of paramilitary weapons, power sharing and reform of the police service, although it should be pointed out that the British Government had introduced very strong fair employment legislation several years before the signing of the Belfast Agreement but by that time the Catholic civil rights movement had been transformed into a political fight for a united Ireland. Too little was done far too late. The important point to make here is that if basic political and civil human rights standards had been observed in Northern Ireland then 25 years of civil war could have been avoided and that this was only put right by effectively dealing with all the major problems of both communities and this in turn was done through negotiations in which peace polls played a supportive role.

¹ As it took two months to collect a random sample taken from the electoral register, for the first poll in this series, all subsequent polls used a 1000 face-to face interview method based on a quota sample collected by MRNI at 48 different points across the Province in less than a week. This produced a representative sample in terms of age, gender, social class, religious affiliation and geographical area, which could be checked against the original random sample.

Table 2. Top 5 of 15 solutions for Protestants and Catholics in the Belfast Agreement

	Protestant per cent Very Important	Per Cent	Catholic per cent Very Important	Per Cent
1st	Decommissioning of paramilitary weapons.	69	The reform of the police service.	56
2nd	The New Northern Ireland Assembly.	42	The Equality Commission.	52
3rd	The Commission for Victims.	39	The New Human Rights Commission.	52
4th	All parts of the Agreement together.	38	The New Northern Ireland Assembly.	52
5th	A Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland.	36	North/South bodies.	52
14th	The reform of the police service.	15	(10th) Decommissioning of paramilitary weapons.	42

Macedonia²

Similarly, across the other side of Europe in Macedonia, different people with different histories in a different regional and international context seemed to face a very similar set of problems (Table 3). The Albanian minority were discriminated against by the Macedonian majority (1st on the Albanian list but 23rd on the Macedonian list) and the Albanians suffered at the hands of the Macedonian party police while the Macedonians were confronted by an increasingly active Albanian insurgency that had not been disarmed (1st on the Macedonian list but 22nd on the Albanian list). However both communities also had to deal with problems of corruption, criminality and a broken socialist economy.

Table 3. Top 5 of 24 problems for Macedonians and Albanians

	Macedonian per cent Very Significant	Per Cent	Albanian per cent Very Significant	Per Cent
1st	Activities of Albanian paramilitary groups still operating in Macedonia (ANA).	85	Discrimination against minority ethnic groups in employment, education and language rights	80
2nd	Incomplete disarmament of NLA by NATO	78	Activities of Macedonian party police and paramilitary groups operating in Macedonia (Lions, Poskokos).	67
3rd	Many illegally held weapons in the region	74	Bribery and party political corruption that undermines the democratic foundations of the state	66
4th	Serious organised crime including businessmen, paramilitaries and politicians	70	Poor economic opportunities for all sections of the society	61
5th	Bribery and party political corruption that undermines the democratic foundations of the state	65	The failure of the Macedonian economy	58
23rd	Discrimination against minority ethnic groups in employment, education and language rights	13	(22nd) Activities of Albanian paramilitary groups still operating in Macedonia (ANA).	10

² The public opinion survey work was conducted by the Centre for the Study of Ethnic Relations, Scopje, Macedonia, between 14-25 March 2002 to produce 1600 face-to-face interviews that represented a cross section of the adult population of Macedonia in terms of age, gender, social class, political and ethnic affiliation and geographical area.

Given all these difficulties and with an eye to the wars that had ravaged their neighbours the political leadership of the Serb Macedonian majority accepted the help of the European Union and chose to bring in all the necessary reforms that could lead to EU membership starting with the Ohrid Framework Agreement (FA) signed in 2001 and brokered by the EU and US. Interestingly the top priority for the Albanians was a University at 85% essential while this same item came in last on the Macedonian list at only 1% essential (Table 4). This is a very big gap. So this University, which I visited in Tetovo, had to be funded by the EU and without the prospect of EU membership it seems unlikely that this peace process would have been a success. The UK and Ireland were already in the EU when the Belfast Agreement was signed.

Table 4. Top 5 of 24 solutions for Macedonians and Albanians

	Macedonian per cent Essential	Per Cent	Albanian per cent Essential	Per Cent
1st	Effective measures against paramilitaries and organised crime	83	State funded University in Albanian	85
2nd	Strengthening the rule of law	75	Full implementation of the FA	84
3rd	True court independence	75	Strong measures to prevent ethnic discrimination	82
4th	Free and fair elections	72	Free and fair elections	80
5th	Rebuild the houses of displaced people and secure their safety	72	Local government development	78
24th	State funded University in Albanian	1	(16th) Effective measures against paramilitaries and organised crime	45

Bosnia and Herzegovina³

The devastating war in Bosnia and Herzegovina left everybody there in complete agreement as to what the top problems were following that war (Table 5) - 100 thousand dead, 2 million refugees and displaced persons, and a broken economy with few opportunities for the next generation. Unlike the people of Northern Ireland and Macedonia these Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats were ‘on their knees’. If a peace poll had been done before the war or in its early stages it might have looked more like the profile of problems in Northern Ireland and Macedonia. But this war, prosecuted with the full force of Serbian military might, had changed all that. The people of Bosnia and Herzegovina were at a different point in the conflict cycle and their top priorities were to repair their lives, country and economy and then deal with problems of corruption. In post war Bosnia and Herzegovina day-to-day survival was everyone’s top concern and there was no need to differentiate ethnic priorities on this point (Table 6). The war had largely settled questions of security (and discrimination) through ethnic cleansing and relocation of the population into substantially homogeneous enclaves all managed under the terms of the Dayton Agreement and the ultimate authority of the European Union.

³ The public opinion survey work was conducted by Prism Research, BiH, between 9-23 July 2004 to produce 1200 face-to-face interviews of citizens and 300 interviews of municipal employees that represented a cross section of the adult population of Bosnia and Herzegovina in terms of age, gender, social background, political views, nationality and geographical area.

Table 5. Top 5 of 167 problems for Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats

	Bosniak per cent Very Significant	Per Cent	Serb per cent Very Significant	Per Cent	Croat per cent Very Significant	Per Cent
1st	100 thousand dead	82	100 thousand dead	83	100 thousand dead	92
2nd	2 million refugees and displaced persons	81	2 million refugees and displaced persons	79	2 million refugees and displaced persons	91
3rd	War destroyed the economy	79	War destroyed the economy	79	Destruction of the country	85
4th	Destruction of the country	78	High unemployment	78	High unemployment	84
5th	War crimes are not prosecuted	75	Young people have few opportunities	76	Young people have few opportunities	83

Table 6. Top 5 of 145 solutions for all of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Per cent	Essential	Desirable	Acceptable	Tolerable	Unacceptable
Develop the economy	67	22	8	2	1
Develop agriculture	64	25	8	2	1
Invest in education	64	26	8	1	1
Become equal citizens of Bosnia	62	28	7	1	1
Prosecute and jail corrupt politicians	62	25	10	2	1

Kosovo⁴

Discrimination against the Albanian minority in Kosovo by the Serb majority from Belgrade is well documented and would almost certainly have produced peace poll results similar to Northern Ireland and Macedonia if conducted before the war. But the war changed all that so that after the war, but before an agreement had been reached on the final status of Kosovo, the Albanians now had the upper hand under the security umbrella of NATO. The Albanians wanted their own sovereign state, which had little or no independent economy to speak of, while the Serbs left behind in a number of enclaves feared for their lives (Table 7).

Moral logic would seem to suggest that those who are abused should be more understanding of the harm that abuse can do, but all too frequently the reverse seems to be the case with the abused becoming abusers. The top priority for Kosovo Serbs was that 'the people of Kosovo should actively make Kosovo Serbs welcome' at 77% 'essential' (Table 8). Regrettably only 5% of Kosovo Albanians shared this view although they also wanted the city of Mitrovica, which had been divided into Serbian and Albanian districts, to become a unified city. This was their top priority at 83% 'essential'. Only 8% of Serbs shared this view and Mitrovica remained a focus of continued conflict and dispute long after the international community recognised Kosovo's independence (ICG, 2011a and 2009). The peace poll highlighted this difficulty before the negotiations on the final status of Kosovo and clearly those responsible

⁴ The public opinion survey work was conducted between 26 August and 2 September 2005. It produced 1200 face-to-face interviews in Serbia and 1200 in Kosovo to complete a representative sample in terms of age, gender, social class, political and ethnic affiliation and geographical area for a total of 2400 interviews. To make sure all groups were brought into this program of research these interviews included 'booster' samples of Serbs in Kosovo enclaves and Serb IDPs in Serbia. The fieldwork was carried out by Strategic Marketing Research of Belgrade in Serbia and by Strategic Puls Research of Tirana, Albania for Kosovo.

for peace in the region did not pay sufficient attention to these facts. The top items on these lists have to be addressed if the peace process is to succeed - as had been done in Northern Ireland (Table 2).

Table 7. Top 5 from 148 problems for Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs

	Kosovo Albanian per cent Very Significant	Per Cent	Kosovo Serb per cent Very Significant	Per Cent
1st	Kosovo's final status	87	Serbs are afraid to talk Serbian in Pristina	89
2nd	Unemployment in Kosovo	85	People do not have full freedom of movement in Kosovo	84
3rd	The weak economy of Kosovo	75	An independent Kosovo will be less secure for everyone	80
4th	Not knowing the fate of lost persons	73	If final status of Kosovo is made without agreement Kosovo Serbs will not feel safe	79
5th	Corruption in Kosovo	70	An independent Kosovo will become a mafia state	79
	Serbs are afraid to talk Serbian in Pristina	1	Kosovo's final status	65

Table 8. Top 5 of 156 solutions for Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs

	Kosovo Albanian per cent Essential	Per Cent	Kosovo Serb per cent Essential	Per Cent
1st	Mitrovica should become a unified city	83	The people of Kosovo should actively make Kosovo Serbs welcome	77
2nd	Full independence	81	The city of Pristina should do more to make Serbs welcome	70
3rd	Kosovo should be allowed to have its own army	73	Special status for Serb religious sites	70
4th	Cooperation with the Hague Tribunal	67	International community should involve Belgrade more	70
5th	Kosovo should be a member of the UN	67	Kosovo can not leave Serbia	69
-	The people of Kosovo should actively make Kosovo Serbs welcome	5	- Mitrovica should become a unified city	8

Kashmir⁵

In 2008 when this poll was run the top problem for those living in Indian administered Kashmir (IaK) was corruption (Table 9) followed by high levels of unemployment and then the Kashmir conflict. This situation may have been different in 2009 when violence escalated but may have been the situation again in 2011 when corruption became the central political issue in all of India (Economist, 2011). In Pakistan administered Kashmir (PaK) education and insecure borders were the top concerns followed by the failures of India and Pakistan to resolve the Kashmir problem. Kashmir is a post-independence and post-war managed conflict

⁵ Using face-to-face interviews the public opinion survey work was undertaken by the CVoter Foundation, Delhi, between March and May 2008 and included a random sample of two thousand people from all parts of Jammu and Kashmir with additional booster samples for the Buddhist, Sikh, Gujjar and other minorities. The data for the Pakistan administered Kashmir (PaK) part of this poll were collected in February 2009 by D3 Systems, Inc. of Virginia to produce 1200 interviews as a representative sample of PaK in terms of age, gender, social background and geographical area.

that erupts into violence from time to time, but when the violence subsides neither India nor Pakistan seems to have the political will to resolve the dispute.

Table 9. Top 5 of 18 problems for Indian (IaK) and Pakistan (PaK) administered Kashmir⁶

	IaK per cent Very Significant	Per Cent	PaK per cent Very Significant	Per Cent
1st	Corrupt administration	59	Poor quality of education	42
2nd	High levels of unemployment	56	Independence will not bring safe borders with Kashmir's neighbours	41
3rd	India and Pakistan talking for 20 or 30 years with no result	54	India and Pakistan talking for 20 or 30 years with no result	41
4th	Pakistan and India are using the Kashmiri people for their own interests	45	High levels of unemployment	38
5th	The vested interests of all the groups involved in keeping the conflict going	45	The political leadership of Kashmir is divided	32
13th	Poor quality of education	35	(10th) Corrupt administration	29

In Kashmir, on both the Pakistan and Indian side, the people there want the violence to stop and have an opportunity to get on with their lives. On the Indian side an effective independent commission to deal with corruption is seen as the most important solution along with an end to violence while on the Pakistan side the people want hope and an end to violence (Table 10). From a peace polls perspective the on going monitoring of these problems and solutions could be fed into a discourse on the future of Kashmir. This has been done in other conflicts (Israel, Palestine, Sri Lanka) but in the end India and Pakistan are going to have to negotiate inclusively with the people of Kashmir as was done in Northern Ireland.

Table 10. Top 5 solutions for Indian (IaK) and Pakistan (PaK) administered Kashmir⁷

	IaK per cent Essential or Desirable	Per Cent	PaK per cent Essential or Desirable	Per Cent
1st	Effective independent Commission to deal with corruption	89	The violence should stop from all sides	78
2nd	The violence should stop from all sides	87	Give Kashmir real hope that a solution is coming	74
3rd	Majorities and minorities should be treated the same	85	New textbooks on good governance and human rights	72
4th	Build infrastructure and communications	84	Open trade between India and Pakistan	71
5th	We must learn from the past	84	Majorities and minorities should be treated the same	69

⁶ The 18 problems tested and reviewed here in both PaK and IaK are a subset of the 37 problems tested in IaK. A subset was used due to lack of access to PaK.

⁷ The PaK list of 48 solutions is taken from the IaK list of 132 solutions as a subset. A subset was used due to lack of access to PaK.

Sri Lanka⁸

In Sri Lanka in 2008, when the war was making heavy demands on both sides, both the Sinhala and Tamils saw this as the main problem (Table 11). But the Sinhala put the blame clearly on the Liberation Tamil Tigers of Elam (LTTE) by placing them at the top of their problems list, at 60% very significant, while the Tamils had them down at 29th on their list at 36%. The on-going war, escalating violence and 30 years of violence were the top three problems for the Tamils followed by discrimination after independence and the failure of successive governments to find a political solution.

Table 11. Top 5 of 51 problems for Sinhala and Tamils in 2008 during the war

	Sinhala per cent (2008) Very Significant	Per Cent	Tamil per cent (2008) Very Significant	Per Cent
1st	The continued violence of the LTTE	60	The ongoing war	73
2nd	Abuse of Human Rights by the LTTE	59	Escalating violence in the last 2 years	69
3rd	Violence over the past 30 years	43	Violence over the past 30 years	58
4th	Fragmentation of the island into 'cleared' and 'un-cleared' areas	41	Discrimination after independence	55
5th	The ongoing war	40	The failure of successive governments to find a political solution (29th) The continued violence of the LTTE	52 36

The solution for the Tamils at this time was to stop the war and to have an inclusive peace process (Table 12). The Sinhala also wanted everyone to come together and solve the problem, but they also wanted a military solution and this is what they got.

Table 12. Top 5 of 71 solutions for Sinhala and Tamils in 2008 during the war

	Sinhala per cent (2008) Very Significant	Per Cent	Tamil per cent (2008) Very Significant	Per Cent
1st	Sri Lanka should be a Unitary state	58	Stop the war	73
2nd	Depoliticise the public service	46	Restart the peace process	66
3rd	All the people of Sri Lanka must come together through their representatives to solve the problem	51	The government should also negotiate with the LTTE	63
4th	The political leadership representing all stakeholders must come together to solve the problem	51	More inclusive and effective Peace Secretariat	59
5th	Defeat the LTTE by military means alone	46	The political leadership representing all stakeholders must come together to solve the problem	58

In 2010, after the war, the top problems for the Sinhala were inflation, corrupt politicians and unemployment (Table 13). Unemployment was also the top problem for the Tamils at 66%

⁸ Following a pre-test of this questionnaire Social Indicator of Colombo collected a random sample of the adult population of Sri Lanka between March and May 2008 for a total of 1,700 face-to-face interviews. Regrettably, for security reasons, due to the on-going war, the Northern province was excluded at this time. However, with the help of academic staff at the University of Jaffna, a sample was collected there a month later. This poll was run in June and repeated all the questions asked in the wider Sri Lanka poll with 200 interviews completed in 5 Divisional Secretariats.

very significant, but this was followed by the failure to provide Sri Lankan Tamils with a constitutional solution to their problems, at 62% down at 30th on the Sinhala list at 14%. The Sinhala had got what they wanted but not the Tamils and amongst the Tamils living in the Northern Province, where the fighting had been most intense, this failure was still first on their list at 71% very significant. For long-term stability and peace this problem had to be addressed.

Table 13. Top 5 of 38 problems for Sinhala and Tamils in 2010 after the war⁹

	Sinhala per cent (2010) Very Significant	Per Cent	Tamil per cent (2010) Very Significant	Per Cent
1st	Inflation	68	Unemployment	66
2nd	Corrupt politicians	64	Failure to provide Sri Lankan Tamils with a constitutional solution to their problems	62
3rd	Unemployment	62	The failure of successive governments to find a political solution	61
4th	The decline of the economy	54	Inflation	60
5th	Politicisation of the public service	53	Violence over the past 30 years	59

Fortunately, for the President of Sri Lanka, when the proposals drafted by the committee he established to deal with this problem were tested against public opinion the results were exceptionally good with both the Sinhala and Tamils placing fundamental rights at the top of their list of constitutional solutions (Table 14). Inevitably there were other more difficult issues to resolve but when compared to all the other conflicts reviewed here they were easier to settle than anywhere else. Following the defeat of the LTTE the President had all the political capital he needed to bring in the reforms recommended to him by his committee. But he did not seize the opportunity and without a resolution of this problem, known in Sri Lanka as the 'National Question', history may yet repeat itself in renewed violence (ICG, 2011b).

Table 14. Top 5 of 15 solutions for Sinhala and Tamils in 2010 after the war¹⁰

	Sinhala per cent (2010) Essential or Desirable	Per Cent	Tamil per cent (2010) Essential or Desirable	Per Cent
1st	Fundamental Rights	91	Fundamental Rights	87
2nd	Religious Rights	89	Language Rights	86
3rd	Language Rights	82	The Judiciary	84
4th	The Judiciary	76	Public Service	77
5th	Safeguards against secession	76	The Powers of the Centre and Provinces	73

⁹ Following the end of the war and defeat of the LTTE, given both the political context and culture of the people of Sri Lanka, it was not possible to ask hypothetical questions such as the significance of 'The continued violence of the LTTE'. Consequently this and similar problems had to be deleted from the post-war 2010 problems list in the questionnaire.

¹⁰ See Irwin (2012b) Table 6.6 on pages 96 and 97 for the descriptions of the 15 constitutional solutions tested here.

The UK - West and Muslim World¹¹

Given the age of globalization (communications, travel, trade, financial markets) it was perhaps inevitable that the grievances of trans-national groups would lead to the creation of insurgencies that have also gone global. Following the attacks and bombings of 9/11 in the US and 7/7 in the UK a peace poll run in the UK identified the kinds of polarization of problems and solutions previously associated with national majorities discriminating against their minorities. The top problem for most UK citizens seems to be the conflict between Israel and Palestine, with members of the Jewish community emphasising violence against Israel, while members of the Muslim community place more emphasis on US led wars in the Middle East in general (Table 15).

Table 15. Top 5 of 99 problems for All UK, Jewish UK and Muslim UK citizens

	All UK per cent Very Significant	Per Cent	Jewish per cent Very Significant	Per Cent	Muslim per cent Very Significant	Per Cent
1st	Suicide bombings that kill Israeli civilians	50	Suicide bombings that kill Israeli civilians	82	The negative portrayal of Islam in the media by irresponsible journalists	74
2nd	Israeli military actions that kill Palestinian civilians	47	Misrepresentation of Islam by minority Muslim groups to justify violence	62	Muslims collectively being blamed for acts 'done in their name'	70
3rd	Misrepresentation of Islam by minority Muslim groups to justify violence	46	Muslim states that do not recognise the state of Israel	62	The invasion of Iraq	70
4th	Religion being deliberately manipulated for political and economic gain	43	Increased Islamophobia after the 9/11 bombings	61	Western desire to control Middle East oil	67
5th	Increased Islamophobia after the 9/11 bombings	40	Lack of condemnation of extremist groups and terrorists by Muslim leaders in the UK	60	US foreign policy being a threat to peace and security of the world	66
-	The negative portrayal of Islam in the media by irresponsible journalists	23	- The negative portrayal of Islam in the media by irresponsible journalists	22	- Suicide bombings that kill Israeli civilians	38

With regard to solutions, UK citizens (including the Jewish community) want to ban all groups that incite hatred and violence, and deport foreign nationals that do this, while Muslims want an end to Western threats against Muslim states, equal treatment for all religions and effective laws to prevent incitement to hatred (Table 16). These solutions - stopping threats and violence and treating everyone the same - are common themes to be found in all the state conflicts reviewed here. The only difference seems to be the trans-national nature of these problems and solutions. States are encouraged to work together to defeat terrorism. This is undoubtedly a very good thing, but defeating terrorists, such as the Irish Republican Army, by military means alone is not enough. It is also essential to address

¹¹ This survey was conducted online by Global Market Insite, Inc. within the United Kingdom between 13 April and 2 May 2006 among a nationwide cross section of 1,360 adults (aged 18 and over). Figures for age, sex, race, education, region and religion were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. The survey included 203 participants from the UK Muslim community and 88 from the UK Jewish community.

their grievances through an effective peace process and with regards to the trans-national Muslim community of peoples and states there is little evidence of such a process at this time.

Table 16. Top 5 of 89 solutions for All UK, Jewish UK and Muslim UK citizens

	All UK per cent Very Significant	Per Cent	Jewish per cent Very Significant	Per Cent	Muslim per cent Very Significant	Per Cent
1st	Deport foreign nationals who incite hatred and violence from the UK	64	Deport foreign nationals who incite hatred and violence from the UK	76	Western states should stop threatening Muslim states	75
2nd	Ban Muslim groups that incite hatred and violence in the UK	62	Ban Muslim groups that incite hatred and violence in the UK	71	The civilizations of the West and Muslim World should appreciate each others differences and learn from them	71
3rd	Ban all groups that incite hatred and violence in the UK	61	Ban all groups that incite hatred and violence in the UK	71	All religions should be treated the same under British law	71
4th	Muslim condemnation and isolation of those who preach and practice violence	60	Muslim condemnation and isolation of those who preach and practice violence	69	Effective laws to prevent incitement to hatred for all religious groups	66
5th	Ban groups that incite hatred and violence against Muslims in the UK	57	Ban groups that incite hatred and violence against Muslims in the UK	66	Ban all groups that incite hatred and violence in the UK	65
-	Western states should stop threatening Muslim states	30	- Western states should stop threatening Muslim states	20	- Deport foreign nationals who incite hatred and violence from the UK	54

Israel and Palestine¹²

With regard to the negotiation of a peace agreement between Israel and Palestine, Table 17 faithfully reproduced the top requirement of Palestinians for their own state and Israelis need for security. These priorities are well known, but when these issues were rephrased as problems in the peace process a slightly more immediate set of concerns was produced that underscore the Palestinian need for a state and Israeli need for security (Table 18). The top priorities for the Palestinians was now freedom from occupation, the Israeli settlements, siege of Gaza and security wall, while Israelis placed terrorism and the need to maintain a Jewish majority at the top of their peace process problems list.

¹² The fieldwork to develop the questionnaires was undertaken in Israel and Palestine in November and December 2008. The fieldwork for the public opinion polls was undertaken by AWRAD of Ramallah and Dahaf of Tel Aviv following the elections in Israel in February 2009. Five hundred interviews were completed in Israel using telephones and six hundred face-to-face interviews were completed in the West Bank and Gaza to produce representative samples of both populations in terms of age, gender, social background and geographical distribution.

Table 17. Top 5 of 15 problems of ‘substance’ for Israelis and Palestinians to negotiate

Palestinian per cent	Very Significant	Israel per cent	Very Significant
1 st Establishing an independent sovereign state of Palestine	97	Security for Israel	77
2 nd The rights of refugees	95	Agreement on the future of Jerusalem	68
3 rd Agreement on the future of Jerusalem	94	Rights to natural resources	62
4 th Agreement on managing Holy sites	91	Agreement on managing Holy sites	57
5 th Security for Palestine	90	Agreeing borders for Israel and Palestine	49

Table 18. Top 5 of 56 problems of ‘process’ for Israelis and Palestinians to resolve

Palestinian per cent	Very Significant	Israeli per cent	Very Significant
1 st The freedom of Palestinians from occupation/Israeli rule	94	Terror has reinforced the conflict	65
2 nd The settlements	89	Maintaining a Jewish majority in Israel	62
3 rd The substandard living conditions of the people in Gaza	88	Incitement to hatred	52
4 th The security wall	88	Weak Palestinian government	52
5 th The Independence of the Palestinian economy	87	Islamic extremists are changing a political war into a religious war	52
Terror has reinforced the conflict	61	The freedom of Palestinians from occupation/Israeli rule	30

Finally these same sets of issues emerge as solutions in Table 19. Palestinians want the check points removed followed by the lifting of the siege of Gaza and a freeze on settlement construction, while Israelis want an end to suicide attacks and rockets being fired from Gaza. These three tables map out the way forward in the Israel/Palestine peace process. All that needed to be done was to implement the top solutions in Table 19, which in turn would address the problems in Table 18, which again, in turn, would make significant progress towards the top priorities for negotiation of a peace agreement in Table 17.

Table 19. Top 5 of 70 solutions of ‘process’ for Israelis and Palestinians to resolve

Palestinian per cent Essential or Desirable	Per Cent	Israeli per cent Essential or Desirable	Per Cent
1 st Remove check points	100	Stop all suicide/attacks against civilians	90
2 nd Lift the siege of Gaza	99	Stop firing rockets from Gaza	87
3 rd Israel should freeze settlements as a first step to deal with the settlements	98	Release Gilad Shalit	85
4 th Fatah and Hamas should reconcile their differences before negotiations	98	Prohibit all forms of incitement to hatred	81
5 th Release Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli prisons	98	Achieve peace through negotiation	79

Peace poll agreements and constitutional packages

By following this kind of analysis Senator George Mitchell was able to achieve peace in Northern Ireland. Why hasn't he been able to do the same in Israel and Palestine and why have so many of the other peace processes reviewed here failed. Were the publics in these other states less willing to make peace? Many politicians would say so, it being much easier to blame the people than themselves. So what are the facts on this point? Are the people to blame, or their political leaders? In Northern Ireland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Kashmir, Sri Lanka, Palestine and Israel all the major constitutional reforms proposed to solve their conflicts were tested against each other using the same methods and scale.

Table 20. Per cent 'unacceptable' for agreements made or proposed in Northern Ireland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Kashmir, Sri Lanka, Palestine and Israel

Conflict and constitutional proposal for conflict resolution	Per cent Unacceptable
Northern Ireland – Protestant (1997) Power sharing with North-South institutions but no joint authority	52
Northern Ireland – Catholic (1997) Power sharing with North-South institutions but no joint authority	27
Bosnia and Herzegovina – Bosniak (2004) Bosnia and Herzegovina with decentralised regions in accordance with European standards	17
Bosnia and Herzegovina – Serb (2004) Bosnia and Herzegovina with decentralised regions in accordance with European standards	28
Bosnia and Herzegovina – Croat (2004) Bosnia and Herzegovina with decentralised regions in accordance with European standards	39
Kosovo – Albanian (2005) Full independence and no choice of citizenship for Serbs in Kosovo (With choice of citizenship for Serbs – 52% 'Unacceptable')	13
Kosovo – Serb (2005) Full independence and no choice of citizenship for Serbs in Kosovo (With choice of citizenship for Serbs – 64% 'Unacceptable')	94
Indian administered Kashmir (2008) Regional integration and devolution – Pakistan and Indian Kashmir should function like a Co-Federation with an open border and decentralisation/local control in all Regions, Districts and Blocks (Muslim 27%, Hindu 40% and Buddhist 55% - 'Unacceptable')	32
Pakistan administered Kashmir (2009) Regional integration and devolution – Pakistan and Indian Kashmir should function like a Co-Federation with an open border and decentralisation/local control in all Regions, Districts and Blocks	9
Sri Lanka – Sinhala (2008) Enhanced Devolution – Full implementation of the 13 th and 17 th Amendments plus the devolution of significant powers to autonomous provinces negotiated at a peace conference	31
Sri Lanka – Tamil (2008) Enhanced Devolution – Full implementation of the 13 th and 17 th Amendments plus the devolution of significant powers to autonomous provinces negotiated at a peace conference	33
Palestine – Palestinian (2009) Two state solution - Two states for two peoples: Israel and Palestine	24
Israel – Israeli (2009) Two state solution - Two states for two peoples: Israel and Palestine	21

Table 20 lists the central principles upon which a peace agreement was made, or had been proposed, for all these states broken down by ethnic group with those opposed to such agreements noted as per cent ‘unacceptable’. In Northern Ireland in 1997 the constitutional arrangement that ended up being the cornerstone upon which the Belfast Agreement was built, ‘Power sharing with North-South institutions but no joint authority’, was ‘unacceptable’ to 52% of Protestants and 27% of Catholics while, in Israel and Palestine, the ‘Two state solution – Two states for two peoples: Israel and Palestine’ was only ‘unacceptable’ to 24% of Palestinians and 21% of Israelis in 2009. So when it comes to basic constitutional principles, an Israel/Palestine agreement should have been much easier to reach than the agreement in Northern Ireland. Additionally, when we compare these results with other countries and conflicts around the world the only negotiation that was significantly more difficult to resolve than Northern Ireland was Kosovo, where the international community chose, after failed negotiations, to impose a deal. In Kashmir and Sri Lanka deals should also be possible.

Of course some specific elements in these agreements will make them more difficult to reach. For example, police reform in Northern Ireland, and the status of Jerusalem in Israel and Palestine. But other elements such as economic and security benefits will make a ‘package’ more acceptable overall. By working with the parties elected to the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland, and with the President’s All Party Representative Committee in Sri Lanka, detailed constitutional packages were agreed and tested against public opinion in these two countries. Table 21 gives the results for Northern Ireland in March 1998, along with the referendum results of 22 May 1998. As an additional 26 per cent of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) electorate said they would not vote for the Belfast Agreement if their party did not support it (from 50% down to 24%) the difference between the public opinion poll and referendum results could be calculated with some precision. With the DUP taking about 18% of the vote, a reduction of about 6% from 77% in the poll to 71% in the referendum was to be expected. These results were all within the margins of error.

Table 21. Results for the Northern Ireland settlement ‘package’ tested as a whole in March 1998 and the referendum result of 22 May 1998

Question: *If a majority of the political parties elected to take part in the Stormont Talks agreed to this settlement would you vote to accept it in a referendum?*

Per cent	All of NI	Protestant	Catholic	DUP	PUP+UDP	UUP	Alliance	SDLP	Sinn Fein
Yes	77	74	81	50	68	83	96	95	61
No	23	26	19	50	32	17	4	5	39

Question: *If you said ‘Yes’ would you still accept these terms for a settlement even if the political party you supported was opposed to them?*

Per cent	All of NI	Protestant	Catholic	DUP	PUP+UDP	UUP	Alliance	SDLP	Sinn Fein
Yes	50	46	53	24	24	50	87	70	22
No	50	54	47	76	76	50	13	30	78

Referendum result

Per cent	All of NI
Yes	71
No	29

Table 22 gives the results for Sri Lanka after the end of the war in 2010. The results are very good with 83% saying they would support the reforms. But, like Northern Ireland, these results become marginal if some of the political parties withdraw their support, and if all the parties did this then it seems very likely that a referendum would fail. Constitutional reform in Sri Lanka is firmly in the hands of the political elites.

Table 22. Results for the Sri Lankan settlement ‘package’ tested as a whole in March 2010.

Question: *Would you support a package of constitutional reforms for Sri Lanka as outlined here?*

March 2010	Sri Lanka	Sinhala	Tamil	UC Tamil	Muslim	Eastern Tamil	Northern Tamil	Other Tamil	SLFP	UNP	JVP	TNA	SLMC
Yes	83	83	84	86	80	89	77	90	87	80	69	78	74
No	9	9	7	12	13	0	15	4	6	11	27	17	14
DK	8	9	8	2	8	11	8	6	7	9	4	5	12

Question: If answer is ‘Yes’ - *Would you support a package of constitutional reforms for Sri Lanka as outlined here if the political party you are closest to was against them?*

March 2010	Sinhala	Tamil	UC Tamil	Muslim	SLFP	UNP	JVP	TNA	SLMC
Yes	46	35	53	32	49	39	6	26	25
No	33	43	31	37	36	34	63	48	43
DK	20	22	16	31	15	27	31	26	32

Peace poll politics

So political parties can make or break agreements at the polls. What then are peace polls good for? We’ve seen that they are excellent tools for objective conflict description and analysis. But their value goes far beyond this. Peace polls can guide those in destructive, intractable, often bloody conflicts through to mutually acceptable agreements (Irwin 2002a, 2012a). They can help those who want to make peace get to peace by bringing their people with them. Partisan polls, in contrast, are used by spoilers to break agreements and maintain the status quo by having their people oppose all reasonable offers made. All of which begs another question – under what circumstances can peace polls be used, and by whom, to help achieve peace? And when such efforts are opposed, what can be done to spoil the spoilers?

In general those who have power want more power, or at least to maintain the power they have. Conflict often arises out of a disparity of power. So using peace polls to help those with less power gain some degree of equality with those who have more power will generally be opposed by the powerful. In this circumstance, only the most enlightened political leaders, interested in their peoples' long-term interests, would encourage peace polls, while the weak, who seek equality should welcome them. In practice the political mix is a little more complicated than this when the interests of third parties are factored in – global and regional super powers, radical extremists and last, but by no means least, the committed peacemakers.

In Northern Ireland the committed peacemakers were the small centre parties, Alliance and Women's Coalition, along with the Nationalist, Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) who strongly opposed the violent tactics of Sinn Féin as the best way to achieve a united Ireland. But all the other parties joined in and in every party there were individuals who were equally enthusiastic about the peace polls - lawyers who took all legal standards very seriously, paramilitaries who had seen and known too much violence, political scientists with a professional interest in conflict resolution - they all made a valuable contribution to the work.

With all the benefits of hindsight, the key to the success of the peace polls in Northern Ireland was the democratization of the peace process through the very unique elections to the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation, and with it a seat at the negotiating table. Additionally, under the chairmanship of Senator George Mitchell, an inclusive process was created that did not side-line the smaller parties in favour of those with the largest electoral mandates. In every sense Senator George Mitchell was a Democrat. He, and no doubt his President, wanted to achieve a peace agreement in Northern Ireland and he was willing to help all the local parties in this regard, even when their interests might sometimes not quite coincide with those of the British and Irish governments. In this political environment, of a genuinely independent super-power chair and a democratized, inclusive negotiating process, the peace polls thrived (Irwin 2012b/c Ch. 2 and 3).

In the Balkans the key to success there was the very good network of highly motivated journalists that Nenad Sebek, the Executive Director of the Centre for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe (CDRSEE), was able to tap into (Irwin 2012b/c Ch. 4). He was an ex BBC journalist himself. In Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo these journalists had all the contacts at their fingertips (or more specifically on their mobile phones) and were able to arrange interviews with all the key players – academics, politicians, party spokespersons and NGO and IGO directors/staff. But only one poll was done in each of these countries, they never evolved into a series except perhaps in Kosovo where the work was taken over by US government agencies working through a Washington based NGO the Academy for Educational Development (AED). This was done in support of President Martti Ahtisaari's negotiating team working out of Vienna under a UN mandate.

The peace polls run with CDRSEE were independent and all the results were published. Sometimes there were objections to this policy, such as from the BBC World Service Trust in Bosnia and Herzegovina who had misgivings about the critical questions concerning the international community and who was to blame for the war. But with their US connections (Richard Schifter was on the Board of Directors of CDRSEE at the time and was a US

diplomat) perhaps the poll run in Kosovo and Serbia was as much an information gathering exercise as a prelude to negotiations as it was a stand-alone piece of conflict analysis. I am genuinely grateful for the opportunity CDRSEE gave me to run my polls in the Balkans but they never reached their full potential as a series of peace polls to democratize the target peace process as had been done in Northern Ireland.

Similarly in Cyprus my introductions to Greek and Turkish Cypriots facilitated through the Peace Research Institute in Oslo (PRIO), the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, President Clinton's Special Envoy Richard Holbrook and CDRSEE all ended up with the polls being done by the US Embassy in Cyprus which, in public diplomacy terms simply failed (Irwin 2012b/c Ch. 7). The difficulty here is that these polls were not published and were therefore not open to scrutiny in either academic or public diplomacy terms. At the very least they should have countered the partisan polls of Greek and Turkish Cypriot spoilers by publishing balanced polls from both communities and highlighting Cypriot desires for their politicians to negotiate in good faith.

The Greek and Turkish Cypriot negotiators I met with had reservations about the peace polls. In practice those negotiators who wanted to get to peace were for them but those who wanted to hold out for the very best deal for their community, at the ultimate expense of a deal, were against them. Quite rightly they calculated that the peace polls could sometimes weaken their hand. But the opposite is also true. Sometimes their hand will be strengthened. In practice they should create a level playing field. Unlike the multi party talks in Northern Ireland the difficulty in Cyprus was that formal negotiations were restricted to the offices of the elected Presidents of the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities and if they were not both committed peacemakers then the process was destined to fail. In this context the only way forward is independent peace polling that can bring in opposition parties that are committed peacemakers. Alexandros Lordos and his colleagues (*Cyprus 2015*, 2011) are now doing the best that they can to achieve this but it took ten years to persuade those responsible for the peace process in Cyprus to allow this to happen.

I got an opportunity to run a peace poll in Indian administered Kashmir (IaK) through Shyam Saran, the Indian Prime Ministers Special Envoy, who I met at the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Oslo Forum and also through my World Association of Public Opinion Research (WAPOR) colleague from Delhi, Yashwant Deshmuk. Like Nedad Sebek he was a well connected journalist and if he did not know the right people himself he knew who did know the right people so that all sections of Kashmiri society could be brought into the research process. Unfortunately there was little interest in the work in India in 2008 when Kashmir was relatively quiet and it wasn't until the violence erupted in 2010 that the results were published (Deshmukh and Irwin, 2010) and the Indian government took note. By which time we had also run some of the questions in Pakistan administered Kashmir (PaK). This work was followed up by a Chatham House: Royal Institute of International Affairs poll (Bradnock, 2010) but they did not know how to properly construct level playing field peace poll questions, so 'give and take' compromise solutions got lost in the analysis (Irwin 2012b/c Ch. 5). Regrettably such failures give polling and public diplomacy a bad name and it is therefore not surprising that many politicians and diplomats are sceptical about their benefits.

In Sri Lanka the President's All Party Representative Committee (APRC) was not quite 'All Party'. The Tamil National Alliance (TNA) who were then the political representatives in Parliament of the rebel Liberation Tamil Tigers of Elam (LTTE) were excluded from the APRC because the government was presently at war with them. Additionally the major opposition party, the United National Party (UNP), chose to exclude themselves from the APRC as they did not believe the President had established the committee in good faith, they thought it was cosmetic. But the Chair of the APRC, Professor Tissa Vitharana MP was able to meet with the TNA and UNP Members of Parliament through other forums. Similarly I was able to meet with representatives of these parties and did so as an independent researcher (Irwin 2012b/c Ch. 6).

In Northern Ireland the chairman of the talks, Senator George Mitchell, was not allowed to meet with Sinn Féin when the Irish Republican Army (IRA) broke their cease fire and formal contact with the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) was brought to a close when they walked out of the talks. But he was able to maintain contact through third parties if he needed to do so and again I continued to work with both Sinn Féin and the DUP as an independent researcher throughout the negotiation of the Belfast Agreement. Subsequently Sinn Féin and the DUP did enter into government together. Informal contact with all parties is always an option at the track two level. So the restrictions that limit formal negotiations to governments alone in places like Cyprus, Israel and Palestine, should not apply to independent researchers supporting such negotiations if they are not making any progress in that constrained format.

The major problem for me to run peace polls in the Middle East or concerning any conflict that involves what is happening in the region is that my state, the United Kingdom, and her most important ally, the United States of America, are deeply involved in conflicts there. We are told that 'the first casualty of war is the truth' or, in an effort to be a little more objective about this, when states fight wars it is essential that they are just wars against a preferably evil enemy and peace polls designed to tell the truth about relationships with that enemy would most likely be counterproductive to such imperatives of public diplomacy.

Having said that, I was once told by a general who commanded forces in the Balkans that his intelligence officers brought him my analysis of relations between Albanian and Serb Macedonians and he found it the most useful such analysis he had presented to him. The important point to make here is that professional military officers responsible for the lives of their men do want to know the truth. One would only wish that all politicians and the civil servants who work for them were equally well enlightened, but frequently they are not. Their interests are more complex, and this explains why the polling and other intelligence work associated with relations between the West and the Muslim World and the 'War on Terror' were so misdirected (Irwin 2012b/c Ch. 8).¹³ Table 23 lists the grant applications I have made to undertake peace polls in the Middle East and with Muslim peoples there and around the world. They all failed. Given the importance of the topic the success rate should have been better. If state intelligence services were privately doing their public opinion research to peace poll standards for use by their military and diplomatic staff that would be something, but they seek safety in narrow hypothesis testing over which they have some control instead of using rich description that leaves no social or political stone unturned.

¹³ For an excellent analysis of US polls see Stroud and Sparrow (2011).

Table 23. Failed Middle East and Muslim World grant applications¹⁴

Agencies	Partners	States	Title	Year
FCO, EU and US State Department	Albany Associates	Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Egypt	Peace polling in the Middle East	2010
FCO, EU and US State Department	Albany Associates	Israel and Palestine	Peace polling in Israel and Palestine	2010
EU, Canada and Germany	Albany Associates	Lebanon	Palestinian refugees, the Lebanese and a poll	2010
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Dr. Mina Zemach and Dr. Nader Said	Israel and Palestine	A proposal to undertake 'peace polls' in support of renewed Israel/Palestine negotiations	2009
AHRC/ESRC	Professors Stephan Wolff and Adrian Guelke	Global	The politics of religious conflict in local, regional and global perspective	2007
The Leverhulme Trust	Dr. Ghassan Khatib JMCC	Israel and Palestine	Public opinion and the Israel/Palestine peace process	2007
JRCT	Professor Adrian Guelke	UK	Muslim alienation, radicalisation, public opinion and public diplomacy	2004
USIP		Global	Improving relations with, and within, the Muslim World: Applying lessons of public diplomacy from Northern Ireland	2004
UK Home Office	Professor Adrian Guelke	UK	British Muslims and the problems of radicalization	2004

The politics of peace research in Israel and Palestine are complicated further by the fact that domestic US electoral politics are greatly influenced by relations between Israel and the political fortunes of US Senators and Members of the House of Representatives. Between the Jewish lobby and Christian right, American politicians seeking re-election have to be careful not to be seen as anti-Israel. Many take the view that peace in the Middle East is in Israel's best self interest (Urquhart, 2011), I share this view, but unless this is done with some small degree of justice for the Palestinians this is not going to happen. Regrettably talk of justice for the Palestinians can get translated into anti-Israeli political rhetoric in the United States of America and in this context peace polling could potentially do harm to the stats quo.

Given the level playing field effect of peace polls it is understandable that Israel would and do use partisan polling to advance their interests (Irwin 2012b/c Ch. 9). But I was a little surprised to find some reticence on the Palestinian side to fully engage in my peace polls there. It depended on who I talked to and then the *Palestinian Papers* were published that revealed the full extent to which the Palestinians were willing to make concessions to Israel for peace. Peace polls were not only a possible threat to policies of continued Israeli expansion and the electoral prospects of US politicians they could also be a source of embarrassment for some Palestinian negotiators.

¹⁴ Israel and Palestine are the most well researched and funded peace process in the world. In this context the EU critically examined their policies to try and discover why they had failed. Dr. Mina Zemach and Dr. Nader Said were on the committee commissioned to make this review and it is my understanding that they expressed the opinion that the majority of projects chosen for support failed to effectively challenge the status quo. In my judgment this is funding for what can best be called the 'peace industry' not conflict resolution.

Unwelcome social research can be blocked by the gatekeepers of the granting agencies in the developed countries of the West. In Darfur, Sudan the National Intelligence and Security Service perform this task (Irwin 2012b/c Ch. 10). In Egypt and other countries caught up in the Arab Spring laws on the statute books openly restrict academic freedoms and rights of association and free speech. The effect, however, is the same. Peacemakers get stopped and this, in my view, is a most serious crime. What is the remedy?

Conclusion:

Making peace polls work and coming to terms with the politics of peace research

Providing the standards for applied social science set by Campbell are met (Irwin, 2012b/c Ch. 1) then public opinion research can be used to help identify the criteria and context for a 'ripe' intervention, establish real dialogue and effective communication, solve problems and keep peace processes on track by:

1. Analysing and prioritising conflict problems and solutions in the light of prevailing public opinion.
2. Identifying appropriate local policies for both domestic and international intervention and providing expert advice on this basis to local and external actors engaged in the process of conflict resolution/prevention/management in the target state.
3. Gauging public support for those interventions across all sections of the community, including those opposed to them and their reasons.
4. Directing local and international resources at policy areas of greatest concern.
5. Engaging politicians and parties in programmes of discourse, research and pre-negotiation problem solving.
6. Testing policy options on given issues from across the political and communal spectrum to identify areas of common ground and potential compromise.
7. Engaging the public in 'their' peace process to give 'them' ownership and responsibility.
8. Stimulating public discourse through publications in the media.
9. Building broad popular consensus and support for a local peace process.
10. Continuing the engagement with conflict parties, individually and jointly, beyond polling to help them analyse, interpret and act upon polling results in the most appropriate manner in order to move forward.
11. Involving other NGOs, IGOs and appropriate states through the publication and targeted dissemination of detailed reports.
12. Maintaining the good offices of the international community to assure guarantees and post-resolution commitments.
13. Establishing a body of expert knowledge to facilitate more effective peace making, peacekeeping and peace building in general.
14. Re-engaging with the conflict parties at period intervals or as may be required after the conclusion of negotiations to identify the need for further polling in order to assist in renewed conflict resolution/prevention efforts or help with agreement implementation.

This is perhaps an ambitious list of activities for practitioners to undertake but the research reviewed here suggests pollsters can become peacemakers providing they work to the highest standards of their discipline and maintain their independence. But maintaining true independence when confronted by the interests of the various parties to a conflict, the vested interests of regional and global powers, their bureaucracies and the control that they are able to exercise over the ‘purse strings’ and ‘gate keepers’ of the granting agencies, can make such independence very difficult and sometimes impossible. What can be done to solve this problem?

Well, first of all the World Association of Public Opinion Research (WAPOR) can do what they have always done and require their members to uphold codes of best practice with regards to transparency and disclosure. Additionally, in the light of the cases reviewed here, WAPOR could add Campbell’s (1984) standards for applied social research to their criteria of best practice, particularly where matters of war and peace, life and death, are concerned. With this point in mind Professor Michael Traugott, when he was President of WAPOR, set up a sub-committee to establish standards for peace polls. Our draft for these standards is given in Appendix 1. Additionally the United Nations Department of Political Affairs in New York worked with me to produce an Operational Guidance Note on Public Opinion and Peace Making and this is given in Appendix 2.

If codes of professional ethics and standards of best practice like these were adhered to then possibly doing what has been suggested here would be sufficient to the task at hand. The world would be safer. But we know that this kind of standard setting is not enough. For example, in the field of human rights, simply establishing such rights in international law does not bring states to the point where they will always observe them. Monitoring is required, as well as, on occasions of real danger, pro-active engagement. Sometimes it just may be necessary to go and do a poll against the wishes of some interested parties when peace and stability are threatened. How can all of this be done?

Perhaps, by way of an analogy, the activities of human rights organisations like *Human Rights Watch* and *Amnesty International* can help provide the answer. Following their example what is needed is a pro-active monitoring NGO created to make sure public opinion research is effectively used to resolve conflicts, give advice and support to independent practitioners in the field and to undertake interventionist polls when it is considered absolutely necessary and practical to do so. The international community frequently monitor and pass judgement on elections to make sure they are free and fair and there are no reasons why peace research should not likewise be subject to international scrutiny.

The globalisation of conflict seems to require a global response and pollsters working to the standards proposed here have their part to play. It also follows that states abusing human rights (freedom of association and speech, academic freedom) to prevent peace polls from being undertaken should be exposed and sanctioned. Peacemakers deserve every possible protection that their professional associations and the international community can offer, especially when they seek peace and justice for all through the ethical application of their talents and discipline.

Appendix 1

Draft Guidelines written for the World Association of Public Opinion Research

WAPOR peace poll guidelines

Public opinion is a critical force in shaping and transforming society. Properly conducted and disseminated, survey research simultaneously provides the public with information about what other affiants are thinking while allowing its voices to be heard. In this way knowledge of public attitudes and their wide dissemination to the public can be useful in resolving conflicts by making public views widely known. This document provides guidelines for conducting peace polls to analyse violent conflicts and assist parties to find a resolution to those conflicts.

Peace polls and violent conflict

Peace polls are polls of *publics who are parties to a violent conflict*, they may be directly involved in the violent conflict themselves as potential victims of that conflict or indirectly involved as either the electorate of a government or constituents of a community engaged in a violent conflict.

Such polls can be undertaken at any point in the cycle of a conflict as the objective of a peace poll is to help parties involved in a conflict to bring an end to and/or prevent further harm associated with the destruction of property, injury and death. Ideally peace polls should be undertaken prior to the outbreak of violence when parties to a conflict may be threatening and/or preparing for violent action, in the hope that accurate measurement of the opinions and attitudes of all the effected publics can help resolve the conflict through peaceful negotiation. In practice such remedial action is frequently not undertaken until one party or another wishes to sue for peace after the prospects of their gaining some advantage through continuation of the violence has been lost. Critically peace polls are nonpartisan and therefore should be undertaken at any and all points in the cycle of a violent conflict with a view to preventing harm in accordance with international human rights and humanitarian law. Thus peace polls can and should be undertaken before violent conflicts begin, during hostilities and after the violence has ended to prevent, reduce and prevent the reoccurrence of violence and its harmful consequences.

Clearly there are many practical difficulties associated with such polling including, for example, freedom of association, free speech, the press and other media; the safety of those undertaking the polls and their informants; the neutrality of the researchers and their relationship to the parties to the conflict and how questions of independence and safety can be reconciled. Each conflict will present its own particular set of problems in these regards, and these guidelines are made with a view to helping the researchers navigate those problems.

Peace polls can serve a variety of different functions with a view to helping parties to peace. They can be used to track the attitude of publics involved in a conflict. Such timeline research should be able to identify those sections of the various publics that are commonly referred to as ‘extremist elements’ and ‘silent majorities’ along with their community and political affiliations. They can be used to rank order ‘problems’ associated with the causes of the conflict and ‘solutions’ or policies for dealing with those problems. Critically it is important to gauge the values that all publics have with regard to such problems and solutions so that all the parties to a conflict have an equal opportunity to know and weigh the views of their adversaries on key issues. In addition to such analysis and description peace polls can be used for public diplomacy by informing both publics and elites as to the nature of the conflict, the identification of common ground, points of most serious division and potential for compromise between various publics on these issues. Such research also clearly has an obvious academic dimension to it that might include a political analysis of leadership and party fortunes; however, if such research is to be used proactively as part of a peace process then care should be taken not to include questions that are politically partisan and/or can not be published as an otherwise transparent piece of research. These different functions will necessitate both the design of different research instruments and different methods of dissemination that will variously include summary and detailed reports to the interested parties, the media and academic press.

Peace polls undertaken as a part of a peace process should be published as soon as practically possible after the fieldwork is completed. Any delay in disseminating the results will inevitably raise questions about the legitimacy of the effort as well as rendering the research and its conclusions less relevant over time. For similar reasons the results should be disseminated to all the interested parties and publics at the same time as any preferential access to the results would be interpreted as partisanship. Secondary analysis for academic purposes, particularly as part of any comparative studies, is clearly not subject to these same imperatives.

Many national governments and Inter-Governmental Organizations (IGOs) place legal restrictions on providing assistance to terrorists. This does not and should not include research directed at identifying the opinions of such persons, their organizations and their respective constituencies. Identifying and measuring the extent of support for radical groups is a necessary part of conflict analysis and resolution, and WAPOR strongly oppose any restrictions placed on such research. However, providing compensation to such groups for their cooperation and participation in public opinion research does raise a number of moral, legal and methodological problems. In this circumstance all forms of compensation to the various interested parties engaged with as part of the research should be avoided except for the research team themselves.

Ethical principles

Survey researchers in general and those conducting peace polls in particular need to follow certain broad principles in conducting their research:

1. Peace polls conducted for public consumption should be impartial and non-partisan. Peace polls are scientific research designed to collect data and report information on conflicts. They are not tools for partisan advocacy. Such neutrality can be achieved by systematically engaging with all the parties to the conflict through each and every aspect of the research including research program and questionnaire design, sampling and interviews, analysis of results, and dissemination.
2. Methods should be transparent, public, and well-documented. These goals can be achieved by publicly describing the methods prior to conducting the peace poll and by adhering to the standards of minimal disclosure delineated in this document. It is also recommended that when the peace poll is used for analysis, the data set (without individual identifiers) along with appropriate survey documentation be deposited in public archives and/or on web sites for general access.
3. Data collectors must adopt study designs for their peace polls that are suitable for producing accurate and reliable results and that follow specific procedural and technical standards stipulated in this document.
4. When reporting results from peace polls, data collectors and analysts must be careful to keep their interpretations and statements fully consistent with the data. Speculation and commentary should not be labelled as data-based reporting. Limitations and weaknesses in the design of a peace poll, its execution, and the results must be noted in all reports and analysis. Results should be released to the public and other interested parties through the general media and simultaneously made accessible to all.
5. The identity of respondents in peace polls must be protected. No identifying information (e.g. name, address, or other IDs) should be maintained with the sample records, and the data set should not allow deductive disclosure of respondents' identity. To limit the chances of deductive disclosure, small-area geographic details should not be revealed.
6. When undertaking polls in conflict settings, as much effort must be put into protecting those doing the interviews as is done for the respondents. However, unlike those being interviewed the researchers can be best protected from harm through full disclosure and transparency. Any effort to hide the intention, source of funding or those directly and indirectly involved in doing the research and for what purpose can put the fieldworker at risk. For these reasons the preamble to the questionnaire should be agreed to by all the parties to the conflict, secure and effective lines of communication should be established to the parties to the conflict, and the fieldworkers should have access to such security arrangements through the managers of the research who must take responsibility for their staff.

Peace poll methods and disclosure

Poll methods must be generally accepted as good survey practice and must be disclosed with the results of the peace poll, as well as with any analysis or subsequent public release of the dataset.

Items for Minimal Disclosure

These items should be disclosed with any peace poll report. Good practice would be to disclose as much of the methodology as possible, particularly those items marked with an asterisk.

- *Sponsor of the peace poll
- *Name of the polling company or principal researcher; prior experience (if any) in peace polling; and whether the data collector has any business or personal ties to political parties, candidates, political organizations or governmental bodies
- *Name of the organization responsible for analysis, if different
- *Those responsible for writing the questions and questionnaire design without compromising the anonymity and safety of key informants/research participants
- *How and when the results of the peace poll will be published/disseminated
- *Number of interviews
- *Number of sampling points
- *Sampling frame
- *Geographic dispersion and coverage
- *How sampling points are selected
- *Where interviews are conducted: in public places, in person at homes, by phone, etc.
- *Any legal/practical limits on data collection that might affect polling accuracy (e.g., restricted access to certain areas and/or communities by security services or ongoing fighting)
- Time of day of interviewing
- Whether interviewers are part of a permanent field staff or hired for the occasion
- *How respondent anonymity is guaranteed (paper questionnaires, etc.)
- The interview schedule or questionnaire and instructions
- Which results are based on parts of the sample, rather than the whole sample
- A description of the precision of the findings, including estimates of sampling error
- Monitoring and validation procedures (if any)
- Weighting procedures
- Response rates (using one of the definitions in the AAPOR/WAPOR “*Standard Definitions: Final Dispositions of Case Codes and Outcome Rates for Surveys*”) and item non-response on questions
- Any known nonresponse biases
- General description of how estimates are made and the kinds of variables that are being used, and whether adjustments for non-response have been made
- Known design effects

Interested parties may sometimes make claims about unpublished and/or private data. Any such claim also requires documentation, and any public statement referring to peace poll results should abide by these disclosure principles and requirements.

Good Practices

Those conducting peace polls should always use generally accepted scientific methods. However, there are a number of good practices that apply specifically to peace polls to ensure impartiality.

Management and control of the project

WAPOR take the view that the key ingredient for the successful management of a peace poll is for those responsible for the peace poll to follow the ethical and best practice guidelines provided for in this document. A peace poll can be carried out by a variety of individuals and organizations, for example: a university lecturer and his or her students, a polling company, newspaper, NGO, state government or inter-governmental body such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). In all cases those responsible for the maintenance of standards in those organizations (e.g. university ethics committee, NGO board of trustees) should make sure these ethical and best practice guidelines for peace polls are followed at all times. Beyond this fundamental principle of management the widest possible consent of all the parties to the conflict, with regard to all management decisions that must be made, is to be encouraged. In addition to agreement of the questions to be asked issues relating to sampling, funding, timing, writing up the results and dissemination should be made collectively whenever possible. In practice an initial peace poll undertaken by individuals may function quite informally on all these points but if the research develops into an important part of a negotiations/peace process then it may be necessary to establish a steering committee to oversee these activities in collaboration with those responsible for the negotiations. The inclusion of the most eminent and respected local and international scholars and practitioners in such a committee is to be encouraged, as they will help to give authority to the findings of the research and any difficult and politically sensitive decisions that may have to be made.

Research team

Peace polls often require data collection in difficult environments where extensive local knowledge and experience is essential to the success of the project. But as local polling organizations frequently only have such expertise in their own community it is often necessary to put together a consortium of organizations that can pool their intellectual and field resources across a variety of populations. If such cooperation proves difficult to establish, then it may be helpful to introduce a neutral third party into the research team with peace poll management experience.

Funding

As with the research team costs can be shared by those undertaking the research in the various communities effected by the conflict and/or media interests that represent the different communities. Alternatively a neutral third party can cover such costs providing they are acceptable to all of the parties to the conflict.

Questions

Impartiality in question design can be achieved by involving all the relevant parties to the conflict in the design and agreement of the questions asked. Focus groups are often used for this purpose; but where highly sensitive and politically charged issues are discussed, it is often better to conduct such interviews in a 'one-on-one' format with such interviews undertaken by persons from the informants community and/or a neutral third party. Additionally as the research is being undertaken to assist the parties to bring an end to their conflict, it is most helpful to include them in the questionnaire design process and, where circumstances allow, give them 'ownership' of that process. Finally as the objective of a peace poll is to help the parties to a conflict achieve peace, it is necessary to move beyond simple abstract judgments about the conflict and parties to the conflict to deal with the problems that caused the conflict and appropriate solutions to those problems that can be translated into policies and agreements. Involving political elites and their staff in such activities can be very productive although such involvement may have to be anonymous. Confidentiality will give political elites opportunities to test controversial policies against public opinion without running the risk of criticism from 'spoilors'.

Selective release of results

Partisan polls frequently 'cherry pick' the results by selectively releasing results in order to present a biased picture of public opinion that favours the position of those who commissioned the poll. Such biased framing of the issues at stake can also occur at the questionnaire design phase of the research by selectively asking different questions to different communities. This practice should be avoided by making every effort to ask the same questions of all the communities surveyed with an explanation provided when this cannot be done. For the same reasons, all the communities and peoples effected by a conflict should be included in the research process.

Defining relevant populations

Conflicts (particularly in the popular press) are frequently defined in simple polar 'them and us' terms. Inevitably such simplifications tend to ignore the views of the 'silent majorities' in many populations and/or significant minorities whose views are often shaped by their need to live with the various parties in conflict. Conversely identifying radical groups and the extent to which their views are marginal and not mainstream is equally important. For all these reasons the sample and its demographics should be as representative of all relevant groups as resources will allow.

Over samples

General samples of populations cannot always generate statistically significant samples of minorities whose views may be essential to the understanding of a conflict (e.g. terrorist groups). In these circumstances over samples should be collected of such groups along with a clear explanation of how the sample was generated.

Translation

Ethnic conflicts frequently involve populations and subpopulations that speak different languages. Every effort should be made to use the double translation method to provide copies of the questionnaire in all the relevant languages. When this is not possible, an explanation should be given about how the fieldwork was conducted so as to provide the

respondents with the best possible opportunity to participate in the research in the language of their choice.

Analysis, publication and dissemination

Full disclosure of results

The necessities of transparency and the imperatives of public diplomacy require that the results of the research be made available to the widest possible audience in a manner that is clear and easy to understand. With this point in mind the use of rank orders and simple percentages are to be encouraged for presentational purposes with the use of more sophisticated multivariate techniques reserved for expert analysis. Statistical summaries for all questions should be published and made publicly available.

Newspapers

Although best practice with regards to publication would normally require making all the results of a peace poll available to all sections of the media at the same time the disadvantage with such an approach is that partisan media will cherry pick the results to present a biased picture that favours their interests. If those responsible for the management of the peace poll believe the local media environment would react in this way then they may wish to consider making deals with the most widely read newspapers in the various communities to give them a brief first exclusive providing the research team have editorial control of this first release of the story. Full reports and press releases should be made to all media at the same time or shortly thereafter including publication on the Internet.

Broadcast media

Given the limited time allowed for any one news item, the broadcast media find it very difficult to do justice to the subtleties of a well researched peace poll and therefore are not ordinarily the most appropriate primary vehicle of dissemination.

Reports

Full reports with analysis and results, methods and instruments should be published on the Internet and thus made freely available to all interested parties. The report should include detailed descriptions/explanations of how the data was collected, managed, coded (particularly in the case of open-ended questions), etc., etc. Whenever possible this should also include making the full data set available for secondary analysis. Inevitably some media and commentators will choose to distort the findings of the poll so having the full results published in this way is, in the end, the only real answer to the problem of partisan interests and partisan reporting.

Appendix 2

Operational Guidance Note produced for the UN Department of Political Affairs (New York)

Operational guidance note Public opinion and Peace-making

What is a peace poll?

Public opinion polls are most commonly used in political affairs to analyse the electoral fortunes of parties, their leaders and policies, frequently with a view to advancing their own interests and agendas. But in Northern Ireland, public opinion polls were used as a tool to enhance the peace process by increasing party inclusiveness, developing issues and language, testing agreement proposals, helping to set deadlines and adding to the overall transparency of negotiations through the publication of technical analysis and media reports. These methods have successfully been replicated elsewhere, and it is now possible to say what the most important characteristics of a peace poll are:

- **All the parties to a conflict should assist in the drafting and agree all the questions.**
- **All the communities and peoples to the conflict should be asked all the questions.**
- **All the results should be made public.**

Timing and publication of the poll results should also be managed to coincide with the critical decision making events in the negotiations.

When to run a peace poll?

Peace polls can be run at almost any point in the cycle of a conflict providing the mediator and their researchers have safe access to the parties to the conflict and the peoples and communities they represent.

Who can help?

Several national and international organizations (e.g. United Nations Development Program, UNDP) run public opinion polls around the world on a regular basis using local market research companies and/or academic institutions. These companies and institutions can be used as subcontractors, but peace polls must be independent of all third party and other state or political interests. This independence can be achieved by either putting together a balanced team of researchers/mediators from these various organizations and/or bringing in an external mediator/researcher with peace-building and negotiating expertise.

How to get started?

To get started it may help to design, run and publish a public opinion poll on confidence building measures, the desire of the people for a negotiated settlement and some initial suggestions for an agreement from as wide a range of political perspectives as is possible. Then contact the parties that must make the peace and the parties who are willing to do most to achieve peace and invite them all to participate in a programme of polling research in support of a peace process.

The uses of a peace poll

- Engaging politicians and parties in programmes of discourse, research and pre-negotiation problem solving.
- Testing policy options on given issues from across the political and communal spectrum to identify areas of common ground and potential compromise.
- Engaging the public in ‘their’ peace process to give ‘them’ ownership and responsibility.
- Stimulating public discourse through publications in the media.
- Analysing and prioritising conflict problems and solutions in the light of prevailing public opinion.
- Identifying appropriate local policies for both domestic and international intervention and providing expert advice on this basis to local and external actors engaged in the process of conflict resolution/prevention/management in the target state.
- Gauging public support for those interventions across all sections of the community, including those opposed to them and their reasons.
- Directing local and international resources at policy areas of greatest concern.
- Building broad popular consensus and support for a local peace process.
- Continuing the engagement with conflict parties, individually and jointly, beyond polling to help them analyse, interpret and act upon polling results in the most appropriate manner in order to move forward.
- Involving other NGOs, IGOs and appropriate states through the publication and targeted dissemination of detailed reports.
- Maintaining the good offices of the international community to assure guarantees and post-resolution commitments.
- Establishing a body of expert knowledge to facilitate more effective peacemaking, peace-keeping and peace-building in general.
- Re-engaging with the conflict parties at periodic intervals or as may be required after the conclusion of negotiations to identify the need for further polling in order to assist in renewed conflict resolution/prevention efforts or help with agreement implementation.

Tips for running or supervising a peace poll

- Cover all major aspects of social and political life affected by public institutions and government departments as ‘the people’ and their ‘political representatives’ often have very different views (and interests) about the nature of the conflict and its resolution.
- Encourage key decision makers to become involved in drafting the research questions and program of work so that they will take the results more seriously.
- As politicians may be skeptical about the benefits of public opinion polls first undertake a program of basic research to demonstrate the independence and validity of the work.
- If politicians disagree with the results of the basic research poll – this is welcome - invite them to help design the next survey to their satisfaction.
- Do not exclude any serious parties from the applied research - it is most helpful to test support for mainstream opinion, centre party compromises and radical reforms together.
- If the large established parties are not willing to participate try the small centre parties first after which the larger parties may decide they do not wish to be left out.
- Start with some simple confidence building questions about the peace process in general and other confidence building measures (CBMs) that could easily be implemented.
- Deal with all of the principal procedural or ‘shape of the table’ issues before getting into too much detail over substantive or ‘negotiated settlement’ issues.
- In public opinion polls the elimination of extreme positions - those with little cross community support - is just as important and just as easy as finding compromises and common ground.
- Sometimes questions that have been drafted can not be run in a poll for lack of space. This is not entirely a bad thing as it provides a working foundation for later polls.
- Systematically deal with all preconditions and objections to a peace process – people generally want negotiations in preference to war.
- Do not avoid sensitive issues because others might take on those same questions in a less helpful way that is potentially more damaging to the peace process.
- Give ‘the people’ every opportunity to answer questions about the exercise of their democratic franchise – they like it – and the results should send a message to their elected politicians.
- Devise questions that can prioritise the major problems in a conflict and their potential solutions.
- Develop questions that include all of the potential elements of a final agreement by way of informing both the negotiators and the general public.
- Do not be put off by complexity. The people living with a conflict often have a very sophisticated understanding of that conflict.
- Use a method of analysis that reflects the voting procedures used in the negotiations proper in terms of both constituencies and levels of support required.
- Test comprehensive agreements as a ‘package’ as many of its problematic elements will be acceptable as part of a balanced settlement.
- Clearly identify the politically unacceptable alternatives to a comprehensive settlement when it is opportune to do so. For example when radical groups are actively opposing a ‘deal’.
- Timing is of the essence. For example testing a 'Comprehensive Settlement' would be almost useless if run months before the parties are ready to ‘cut a deal’ or the day after

talks collapsed!

- Try to retain control over funding so that the parties involved with the polls will not be able to exercise a veto if they think the work is not going to go their way.
- Don't use public opinion polls to renegotiate agreements. Regrettably much of the partisan media will do this anyway.
- Don't assume the work is over once the deal is signed particularly if many of the issues raised in the research are not dealt with in the agreement.
- Even when a very difficult decision has to be made try to include all the critical parties to that decision - however difficult that makes the work.
- When key players refuse to negotiate a particular issue, use neutral parties to feed in constructive suggestions.
- When key players introduce questions designed to produce an unhelpful result, get neutral parties to critique the value of such questions.
- Design and run 'cold shower' questions that explore the consequences of failure when the point of 'do it or lose it' is reached. Public opinion polls are an excellent medium for dealing with 'contextual' issues.
- Try not to end the research arbitrarily. Let the parties have a say in when to run the last poll as they are ultimately responsible for the success of the peace process.
- When support for running a public opinion poll is 'mixed', consult widely and do not be afraid to temporarily poll against the wishes of some parties.
- Have an experienced board or advisory group at hand to back up difficult polling/ethical decisions.
- As an independent facilitator or mediator it is generally inappropriate to express personal opinions but reviewing the work done and progress made can sometimes be very helpful.

Questions for the Peacemaker

- Which political parties, politicians, their staff, government officials, editors, journalists, broadcasters, academics, teachers, and community leaders take an interest in public opinion and would like to run polls on a peace process for their own, third party and/or public information? (Clearly if the answer to this first question is 'none' then it may not be possible to run a peace poll).
- What questions do these people think can most usefully be asked in terms of 'problems' their 'solutions' and associated CBMs, etc., etc. in order to start, advance, strengthen or help consolidate a peace process?
- Which Universities and academics have experience with surveys of public opinion in the region and have an interest in a peace process?
- Which market research companies operate in the region and have undertaken polls amongst the relevant communities?
- What polling has been done on a peace process?
- What is the demographic profile of the relevant groups to the conflict in terms of total population, social geography, language, education, age and so on?
- Are the chosen subcontractors independent of all third party and/or state policy or legal restrictions that might prevent them from working with certain groups?

- Are the peace polls being designed to address matters of concern to the peace process with clearly understood research and public diplomacy objectives?
- Is the work being undertaken with local input from different academic, political and community perspectives?
- Can the local representatives work together to produce a common piece of research or should an outside facilitator be brought in to help co-ordinate their work?
- Which newspapers are pro-peace process, have a cross community readership and/or will publish reports in co-operation with newspapers from other communities?
- Are the results being published to make them available to academics, journalists and broadcasters for critical review and incorporation into other peace-building activities?
- Which NGOs and IGOs have an interest in the region and could give financial and research policy support?

Further information and references

This Operational Guidance Note has been prepared by the Peacemaking Databank Team based on content derived from the book 'The People's Peace Process in Northern Ireland' by Dr. Colin Irwin. Examples of peace poll questionnaires, reports and further technical information can be found at: <http://www.peacepolls.org>

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