

Israel and Palestine: Public Opinion, Public Diplomacy and Peace Making

**Part 1. The Shape of an Agreement
Part 2. Process**

**Dr. Colin Irwin
Institute of Irish Studies, University of Liverpool
www.peacepolls.org**

March 2009

About the poll

This poll was commissioned by OneVoice Israel and OneVoice Palestine in collaboration with Dr. Colin Irwin of the Institute of Irish Studies at the University of Liverpool. The fieldwork to develop the questionnaires was undertaken by the research team 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 and six hundred in the West Bank and Gaza to produce representative samples of both populations in terms of age, gender, social background and geographical distribution. Publication of the results of the polls has been timed to provide the new administration in the US and new government in Israel with information to assist them in developing their policies for peace in the Middle East.

EMBARGO

April 22rd 2009

Israel and Palestine: Public Opinion, Public Diplomacy and Peace Making

Dr. Colin Irwin
Institute of Irish Studies, University of Liverpool
www.peacepolls.org

Introduction

Like Northern Ireland the Israel Palestine conflict is one of the most intensely researched in the world. This includes public opinion. But at a time of change of Administration in the US, a new government in Israel and the appointment of George Mitchell as the President's Special Envoy to the Middle East the time seemed right to introduce some of the public opinion and public diplomacy methods employed as part of the Northern Ireland peace process to Israel and Palestine. This report reviews that effort. Inevitably the research covers ground polled by others. No apologies are made for this as the intention here was to look afresh at the problems of Israel and Palestine from a slightly different perspective to underline and confirm existing truths and/or discover new truths if any such truths exist.

These methods have now been used with considerable success in Macedonia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Kosovo, Serbia, Kashmir and Sri Lanka. One of the key features of these methods is to ask the people living in and through a conflict what they believe are the 'problems' that lay at the heart of their conflict, what the 'solutions' to these 'problems' might be and then to test these perceptions in both their own community and the society of their reported adversary. A month of such interviews in Israel and Palestine produced two very different questionnaires. One that focuses on the main features of a peace agreement, what negotiators frequently refer to as 'substantive issues' and the other on the failures of past negotiations associated with the 'peace process' itself. This first part of this report will deal with the substantive issues and the second part will deal with process.

Part 1. The Shape of an Agreement

Problems of substance

The first question in this poll asked informants in Israel and Palestine to say which problems they thought were 'Very significant', 'Significant', 'Of some significance', 'Of little significance' or 'Not at all' with a clear focus on the questions of substance that had to be dealt with in the peace process. The topics are familiar to everyone and are listed for Israelis and Palestinians in Table 1.

The top item for Palestinians is 'Establish an independent sovereign state of Palestine' at 97% 'very significant' followed by 'The rights of refugees' second at 95%, 'Agreement on the future of Jerusalem' third at 94%, 'Agreement on managing Holy sites' fourth at 91%, 'Security for Palestine' fifth at 90%, 'Settlements in the Occupied Territories/West Bank' sixth at 89% and 'Rights to natural resources' seventh at 88% 'very significant' and so on. For Israelis the top item is 'Security for Israel' at 77% 'very significant' followed by 'Agreement on the future of Jerusalem'

second at 68% then ‘Rights to natural resources’ third at 62% ‘very significant’. A number of observations need to be made here. Firstly it is absolutely essential that the issues at the top of these two lists get dealt with in any peace agreement or it is unlikely that that agreement will last. This means Palestinians need to be aware of and address the ‘Security of Israel’ problem that comes in 12th on the Palestinian list at only 21% ‘very significant’ and that Israelis need to be aware of and address the cluster of issues at the top of the Palestinian list starting with ‘Establishing an independent sovereign state of Palestine’ which comes in 11th on the Israeli list at 33% ‘very significant’. ‘Agreement on the future of Jerusalem’ comes in second and third on the Israeli and Palestinian lists respectively. Everyone seems to think this is important and this is agreement of a sort but can agreement be found? We will now look at this and other issues in a little more detail.

Table 1. Problems of ‘substance’ for the Israel/Palestine peace process expressed as per cent ‘Very significant’.

	PALESTINIAN per cent	Very Significant	ISRAELI 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
6 th	Settlements in the Occupied Territories/West Bank	89	Peace between Israel and Jordan	47
7 th	Rights to natural resources	88	Peace between Israel and Egypt	46
8 th	Agreeing borders for Israel and Palestine	77	Peace between Israel and the Arab World	37
9 th	Peace between Israel and the Arab World	35	Peace between Israel and Lebanon	36
10 th	Peace between Israel and Lebanon	31	Peace between Israel and Syria	36
11 th	Peace between Israel and Syria	30	Establishing an independent sovereign state of Palestine	33
12 th	Security for Israel	21	Settlements in the Occupied Territories/West Bank	33
13 th	[Peace between Israel and Jordan] ¹		Peace between Israel and Iran	29
14 th	[Peace between Israel and Egypt]		The rights of refugees	25
15 th	[Peace between Israel and Iran]		Security for Palestine	23

Some preliminary observations on solutions

Instead of using questions and answers that can easily be characterised as ‘yes’ or ‘no’ the negotiators in Northern Ireland adopted a scale that would provide them with more detailed knowledge on how far they could take their respective communities towards a peace agreement subject to firm leadership and support from the international community. This scale has been adopted here and for each solution put on offer (collected in Israel and Palestine during the month of field work) the person being interviewed for the questionnaire was asked which options they considered to be ‘Essential’, ‘Desirable’, ‘Acceptable’, ‘Tolerable’ or ‘Unacceptable’ as part of a peace agreement. The results using this scale are presented in the following tables, for the topics that must be negotiated between Israelis and Palestinians listed in Table 1.

¹ This and the two options below were not asked in Palestine.

Final status

A very conscious effort was made in this poll to cover as wide a range of potential solutions as was possible, not only to identify potential points of most likely agreement but also to eliminate points of strongest disagreement. Table 2 lists the various options for the final status of Israel and Palestine for both Palestinians and Israelis. It should be noted that it was not always possible to ask what some would consider to be the more radical options in both societies as, for example, a ‘Greater Israel’ would so upset Palestinians the interview would often be brought to a close as would ‘Historic Palestine’ amongst Israelis.

Table 2. Final status options for Israel and Palestine

PALESTINIAN per cent ²	Essential	Desirable	Acceptable	Tolerable	Unacceptable
1. (PALESTINIANS ONLY) Historic Palestine – From the Jordanian river to the sea as an Islamic Waqf	59	12	7	5	12
2. (PALESTINIANS ONLY) Historic Palestine – From the Jordanian river to the sea	71	11	5	3	7
3. (PALESTINIANS ONLY) One joint state – A state in which Israelis and Palestinians are equal citizens	18	13	10	12	43
4. One shared state - Bi-national federal state in which Israelis and Palestinians share power	8	7	7	12	59
5. Two state solution - Two states for two peoples: Israel and Palestine	38	15	10	11	24
6. Political status quo with economic development of Palestinian/the West Bank/Gaza (territories)	32	10	8	8	40
7. Confederation between West Bank and Jordan and between Gaza and Egypt	12	7	7	5	65
8. (ISRAELIS ONLY) Greater Israel – A Jewish state from the Jordanian boarder to the sea					

ISRAELI per cent	Essential	Desirable	Acceptable	Tolerable	Unacceptable
1. (PALESTINIANS ONLY) Historic Palestine – From the Jordanian river to the sea as an Islamic Waqf					
2. (PALESTINIANS ONLY) Historic Palestine – From the Jordanian river to the sea					
3. (PALESTINIANS ONLY) One joint state – A state in which Israelis and Palestinians are equal citizens					
4. One shared state - Bi-national federal state in which Israelis and Palestinians share power	7	6	11	8	66
5. Two state solution - Two states for two peoples: Israel and Palestine	32	13	16	17	21
6. Political status quo with economic development of Palestinian/the West Bank/Gaza (territories)	27	18	12	14	24
7. Confederation between West Bank and Jordan and between Gaza and Egypt	19	20	15	17	21
8. (ISRAELIS ONLY) Greater Israel – A Jewish state from the Jordanian boarder to the sea	17	10	11	8	47

² When these percentages do not add up to 100 the remainder were ‘No Answer’.

Not all the questions in this programme of research produced as clear and unambiguous a result as this particular set of questions. The preferred option for Israelis was the 'Two state solution' at 45% 'essential or desirable' and only 21% 'unacceptable' followed by the 'Political status quo with economic development (also 45% 'essential or desirable' but 24% 'unacceptable) and 'Confederation between West Bank and Jordan and between Gaza and Egypt' at 39% 'essential or desirable' and 21% 'unacceptable'. 'One shared state' is 66% 'unacceptable' for Israelis as is a 'Greater Israel' at 47% 'unacceptable'.

The first choice for Palestinians is, as might be expected 'Historic Palestine' at 82% 'essential or desirable' followed by an Islamic Waqf at 71% 'essential or desirable'. 'One shared state' is rejected by Palestinians at 66% 'unacceptable' followed by 'Confederation' at 65% 'unacceptable' and the 'Political status quo with economic development' at 40% 'unacceptable'. The Palestinian results for the 'Two state solution are very similar to the Israeli results at 53% 'essential or desirable' and only 24% 'unacceptable'. So the 'Two state solution' continues to be the most widely accepted option for both Israelis and Palestinians and all other options presently being considered are less likely to gain as much support in both societies as a basis for a peace agreement.

This is progress of a sort, but what about the other contentious issues on the 'problems' list rank ordered in Table 1?

Refugees

The next question in the poll provided the person being interviewed with a range of options for dealing with the problem of refugees, the second most important issue for Palestinians after their desire for a sovereign state. As would be expected the first choice for Palestinians was 'Right of return AND compensation' at 92% 'essential or desirable' (Table 3). But this option was rejected by 77% of Israelis as 'unacceptable'. The results for other options are mixed and incomplete but the prospect of 'An Israeli recognition of the suffering of the Palestinian refugees, while most refugees return to the West Bank or Gaza and some return to Israel (1948)' was 'essential or desirable' for a majority of Palestinians at 53% and 'unacceptable' for only 23%. Unfortunately 60% of Israelis found this option 'unacceptable' but this level of resistance may not be insurmountable within the context of a comprehensive peace agreement and when coupled with some other options tested here could possibly produce a workable solution. For example a minority of Palestinians (34%) considered the option of the UN closing the refugee camps and resettling them with compensation outside Israel 'essential or desirable' so this option may work for this minority. Carefully crafted apologies were an important part of the Northern Ireland settlement and undoubtedly could play an important role for peace in the Middle East. This option needs to be considered and factored in.

Table 3. Refugee options

PALESTINIAN per cent	Essential	Desirable	Acceptable	Tolerable	Unacceptable
1. Right of return AND compensation	87	5	3	2	3
2. Right of return without compensation	17	14	12	9	48
3. Refugees who do not wish to return to Israel should be offered compensation for their loss and a choice of resettlement in Palestine/a Palestinian state or another Arab country	31	18	14	11	24
4. The number of refugees returning to Israel should be limited to family members and numbers agreed between Israel and Palestine/the Palestinians	4	5	6	9	75
5. Return to Palestine/a Palestinian state within agreed borders					
6. An Israeli recognition of the suffering of the Palestinian refugees, while most refugees return to the West bank or Gaza and some return to Israel (1948)	40	13	11	12	23
7. The UN should close the refugee camps and resettle them with compensation outside of Israel	25	9	7	6	51
8. (ISRAELIS ONLY) Israeli Arabs should be transferred to Palestine/the West Bank and Gaza					

ISRAELI per cent	Essential	Desirable	Acceptable	Tolerable	Unacceptable
1. Right of return AND compensation	10	1	5	6	77
2. Right of return without compensation	2	2	5	7	83
3. Refugees who do not wish to return to Israel should be offered compensation for their loss and a choice of resettlement in Palestine/a Palestinian state or another Arab country	9	8	21	10	51
4. The number of refugees returning to Israel should be limited to family members and numbers agreed between Israel and Palestine/the Palestinians	7	6	21	15	49
5. Return to Palestine/a Palestinian state within agreed borders	13	11	37	16	21
6. An Israeli recognition of the suffering of the Palestinian refugees, while most refugees return to the West bank or Gaza and some return to Israel (1948)	9	5	14	11	60
7. The UN should close the refugee camps and resettle them with compensation outside of Israel	20	19	33	12	14
8. (ISRAELIS ONLY) Israeli Arabs should be transferred to Palestine/the West Bank and Gaza	18	15	15	16	33

Security

As security appears to be the number one concern for Israelis we can expect them to have strong views on this issue and they do. Sixty three per cent of Israelis are opposed to Palestinians having an army as ‘unacceptable’ (Table 4). But only 19% are opposed to them having a strong police force. The distinction between a strong police force and an army needs to be explored in more detail as clearly it is in Israel’s interest for an independent Palestinian state to be able to manage its own security effectively. Sixty two per cent of Palestinians are like wise opposed to Israel having observation posts in the Palestinian state as ‘unacceptable’.

Table 4. Security options

PALESTINIAN per cent	Essential	Desirable	Acceptable	Tolerable	Unacceptable
1. Palestine should not have an army	3	1	2	2	91
2. (PALESTINIANS ONLY) Israel should be demilitarized	38	14	7	8	29
3. Palestine should have a strong police force	93	4	2	0	1
4. Palestine should have an army	93	4	1	0	1
5. On signing a peace agreement a force of international, regional and Arab states should replace the IDF in the Occupied Territories/West Bank for an agreed period	23	13	11	11	39
6. If no agreement is reached within two years this force will replace the IDF in the Occupied Territories/West Bank without further delay	24	12	16	14	31
7. If no agreement is reached under the supervision of this force Palestinians will take responsibility for all security on and inside their borders	43	14	11	8	22
8. The international force will ensure security on the Jordanian boarder	26	14	13	10	32
9. For an agreed period Israel will have access to the Jordanian boarder for reasons of security					
10. For an agreed period Israel will have observation posts in the Palestinian state for reasons of security	10	6	10	10	62
11. (ISRAELIS ONLY) The IDF should remain in the Occupied Territories/West Bank					

ISRAEL per cent	Essential	Desirable	Acceptable	Tolerable	Unacceptable
1. Palestine should not have an army	31	16	17	7	26
2. (PALESTINIANS ONLY) Israel should be demilitarized					
3. Palestine should have a strong police force	27	18	27	7	19
4. Palestine should have an army	14	5	7	8	63
5. On signing a peace agreement a force of international, regional and Arab states should replace the IDF in the Occupied Territories/West Bank for an agreed period	16	12	25	13	32
6. If no agreement is reached within two years this force will replace the IDF in the Occupied Territories/West Bank without further delay	15	10	21	9	43
7. If no agreement is reached under the supervision of this force Palestinians will take responsibility for all security on and inside their borders	14	10	24	8	40
8. The international force will ensure security on the Jordanian boarder	10	8	26	17	36
9. For an agreed period Israel will have access to the Jordanian boarder for reasons of security	22	14	32	10	17
10. For an agreed period Israel will have observation posts in the Palestinian state for reasons of security	34	16	30	3	14
11. (ISRAELIS ONLY) The IDF should remain in the Occupied Territories/West Bank	25	10	12	8	43

But the idea that ‘On signing a peace agreement a force of international, regional and Arab states should replace the IDF in the Occupied Territories/West Bank for an agreed period’ is only 32% and 39% ‘unacceptable’ to Israelis and Palestinians

respectively. Additionally the suggestion that ‘The international force will ensure security on the Jordanian boarder’ is only ‘unacceptable’ to 17% of Israelis and 32% of Palestinians. Clearly there is a role for the international community to contribute to the security of Israel in a substantive way in the context of a peace agreement. Finally it is worth noting that only 35% of Israelis consider it ‘essential or desirable’ for the IDF to remain in the Occupied Territories/West Bank while 43% consider this option ‘unacceptable’. Israelis, it would seem, have no great desire to stay there. A comprehensive peace agreement, a stable Palestine, international commitments and regional allies would seem to be the way forward.

Settlements

One hundred per cent (‘essential or desirable’) of Palestinians want all the settlers to leave the Occupied Territories/West Bank and for the settlements to be demolished. Twenty six per cent of Israelis agree but 53% consider this option ‘unacceptable’ (Table 5).

Table 5. Settlement options

PALESTINIAN per cent	Essential	Desirable	Acceptable	Tolerable	Unacceptable
1. All the settlers should leave the occupied territories/West Bank and settlements demolished	98	2	0	0	0
2. Settlers can stay in Palestine/a future Palestine if they take up Palestinian citizenship	10	6	11	9	61
3. Settlers who stay in Palestine/a future Palestine should be allowed to choose Palestinian or Israeli citizenship	6	6	8	10	66
4. Abandoned settlements and infrastructure should be given to Palestinians	83	6	4	1	5
5. Dismantle most of the settlements, move settlers to large blocks and exchange land	16	10	9	9	54
6. All the settlements on the Israeli side of the security wall should be part of Israel					
7. (ISRAELIS ONLY) All the settlements should remain as they are					

ISRAELI per cent	Essential	Desirable	Acceptable	Tolerable	Unacceptable
1. All the settlers should leave the occupied territories/West Bank and settlements demolished	19	7	10	8	53
2. Settlers can stay in Palestine/a future Palestine if they take up Palestinian citizenship	5	4	13	6	69
3. Settlers who stay in Palestine/a future Palestine should be allowed to choose Palestinian or Israeli citizenship	4	5	22	9	58
4. Abandoned settlements and infrastructure should be given to Palestinians	10	6	14	10	58
5. Dismantle most of the settlements, move settlers to large blocks and exchange land	4	8	21	12	51
6. All the settlements on the Israeli side of the security wall should be part of Israel	37	12	33	3	12
7. (ISRAELIS ONLY) All the settlements should remain as they are	20	16	14	10	35

The idea that settlers who choose to stay in Palestine/a future Palestine might like to take up Palestinian citizenship seems to be equally ‘unacceptable’ to both Palestinians at 61% and Israelis at 69% while having the option to choose citizenship is also rejected at 66% and 58% ‘unacceptable’ for Palestinians and Israelis respectively. The option that seems to work best here, if a compromise is being sought, is for most of the settlements to be dismantled, to move settlers to large blocks and to exchange land

at 54% ‘unacceptable’ for Palestinians and 51% for Israelis. But when separately asked if ‘Abandoned settlements and infrastructure should be given to Palestinians’ 89% said this was ‘essential or desirable’. Fifty eight per cent of Israelis considered this option ‘unacceptable’ but perhaps the government of Israel might wish to consider this option as one of the ways in which they can assist those refugees who choose to return to Palestine. The most popular option for Israelis is for all the settlements on the Israeli side of the security wall to be part of Israel at 49% ‘essential or desirable’ but this option could not even be asked of Palestinians as it proved to be too contentious. As for all the settlements remaining as they are, like the IDF remaining in the Occupied Territories/West Bank that option was only supported by 36% of Israelis as ‘essential or desirable’ while 35% considered the option ‘unacceptable’.

Boarders

Eighty six per cent of Palestinians (‘essential or desirable’) would like Israel to withdraw to the 67 Boarder. Sixty per cent of Israelis consider this option ‘unacceptable’. Seventy three per cent of Palestinians similarly reject a boarder established by the security wall as ‘unacceptable’ and 35% of Israelis agree. Only 21% of Israelis consider this option ‘essential or desirable’. The potential for compromise here would appear to be for Israel to withdraw to the 67 Boarder with adjustments through agreement of equivalent exchange of land. This option is ‘unacceptable’ to 30% of Palestinians and 39% of Israelis and ‘essential or desirable’ for 49% of Palestinians and 20 % of Israelis with another 21% ‘acceptable’ and 11% ‘tolerable’ (Table 6).

Table 6. Boarder options

PALESTINIAN per cent	Essential	Desirable	Acceptable	Tolerable	Unacceptable
1. Israel should withdraw to the 67 boarder	78	8	3	4	6
2. Israel should withdraw to the 67 boarder with adjustment through agreement of equivalent exchange of land	38	11	9	9	30
3. Boarder established by the security wall	14	3	1	5	73

ISRAELI per cent	Essential	Desirable	Acceptable	Tolerable	Unacceptable
1. Israel should withdraw to the 67 boarder	12	5	7	7	60
2. Israel should withdraw to the 67 boarder with adjustment through agreement of equivalent exchange of land	10	10	21	11	39
3. Boarder established by the security wall	8	13	24	13	35

West Bank-Gaza connector

The West Bank-Gaza connector options were only asked in Israel. Of the three options on offer a 'Corridor between Gaza and West bank on land given to Palestine under land exchange' seems preferable at 43% 'unacceptable' in comparison to the proposed tunnel at 57% 'unacceptable' or bridge at 47% 'unacceptable' (Table 7).

Table 7. West Bank-Gaza connector options

ISRAELI per cent	Essential	Desirable	Acceptable	Tolerable	Unacceptable
1. Corridor between Gaza and West bank on land given to Palestine under land exchange	8	9	20	16	43
2. Tunnel connecting West bank and Gaza	9	5	13	13	57
3. Bridge connecting West Bank and Gaza	7	3	22	17	47

Water and natural resources

With regards to water there appears to be a consensus on this point that a regional solution (94% and 60% 'essential or desirable' for Palestinians and Israelis respectively) is preferable to some sort of division (59% and 32% 'essential or desirable'). As for 'energy, minerals and air space' 98% of Palestinians consider control of these natural resources to be 'essential or desirable'. As only 35% of Israelis find such control 'unacceptable' this option should not present a major problem for negotiators (Table 8).

Table 8. Water and natural resources options

PALESTINIAN per cent	Essential	Desirable	Acceptable	Tolerable	Unacceptable
1. Division of water between Israel and Palestine according to an agreement	46	13	7	8	24
2. Find a regional solution for water	84	10	2	1	2
3. Palestinians should have control of their energy, minerals and air space	96	2	1	0	1

ISRAELI per cent	Essential	Desirable	Acceptable	Tolerable	Unacceptable
1. Division of water between Israel and Palestine according to an agreement	21	11	25	12	28
2. Find a regional solution for water	45	15	22	10	5
3. Palestinians should have control of their energy, minerals and air space	18	8	26	12	35

Jerusalem

As Jerusalem is second and third on the Israeli and Palestinian lists of priorities (Table 1) it is necessarily going to be a difficult problem to resolve. Inevitably then the most attractive option for Palestinians is for all of Jerusalem to remain in Palestine at 95% 'essential or desirable' (Table 9a) and for Israelis it is for all of Jerusalem to remain in Israel at 56% 'essential or desirable' (Table 9b). Clearly, as these two options are mutually exclusive proposals to internationalise or divide the city also need to be considered. The idea that 'Jerusalem should be an 'International City of Peace' under the authority of the UN' is 'unacceptable' to 78% of Palestinians and 69% of Israelis so if the decision is left to the Palestinians and Israelis alone (and not the UN) that proposal will not get very far. However the suggestion that 'Jerusalem should be an 'International City of Peace' under the authority of a Multi-faith

Municipal Covenant’ is less problematic at 50% and 61% ‘unacceptable’ for Palestinians and Israelis respectively. Some aspect of ‘internationalism’ might therefore be part of the solution to the problem of Jerusalem but it is unlikely to be the whole answer.

Table 9a. Jerusalem options for Palestinians

PALESTINIAN per cent	Essential	Desirable	Acceptable	Tolerable	Unacceptable
1. (PALESTINIANS ONLY) All of Jerusalem should remain in Palestine	91	4	2	0	3
2. Jerusalem should be an ‘International City of Peace’ under the authority of the UN	8	4	7	11	69
3. Jerusalem should be an ‘International City of Peace’ under the authority of a Multi-faith Municipal Covenant	11	8	13	16	50
4. Divide the city according to Palestinian and Israeli neighbourhoods	8	7	9	13	61
5. Arab neighbourhoods should be the capitol of Palestine/a future Palestine and Israeli neighbourhoods should be the capitol of Israel					
6. Jerusalem should be divided into East and West along the pre 67 boarder	16	8	9	14	50
7. Jewish parts of the Old City should be under Israeli control and Muslim and Christian parts under Palestinian control					
Jewish parts of the Old City should be under Israeli control	4	7	3	10	76
Non-Jewish parts of the Old City should be under Palestinian control	63	11	5	6	14
8. The Old City should be under joint control	10	4	8	17	59
9. The Old City should be under international control	7	4	7	9	71
10. Arab Jerusalem will be connected to all of the Palestinian/future Palestinian state	89	5	3	1	2
11. If everything is agreed except for Jerusalem Palestinians should proceed with the agreement	8	4	4	4	78
12. As the last step to a final agreement give the Arab neighbourhoods of Jerusalem to Palestine					
13. (ISRAELIS ONLY) All of Jerusalem should remain in Israel					

If the city is to be divided then the ‘least, worst’ option for Palestinians is to divide Jerusalem along the pre 67 boarder at 50% ‘unacceptable’. The ‘least, worst’ options for Israelis are ‘Divide the city according to Palestinian and Israeli neighbourhoods’ at 55% ‘unacceptable’ (61% for Palestinians) and ‘Arab neighbourhoods should be the capitol of Palestine/a future Palestine and Israeli neighbourhoods should be the capitol of Israel’ at 54% ‘unacceptable’ for Israelis.³

With regards to the Old City the suggestion that it should be under international control was equally ‘unacceptable’ to both Israelis and Palestinians at 72% and 71% respectively. Similarly joint control of the Old City was not particularly attractive at 69% ‘unacceptable’ for Israelis and 59% ‘unacceptable’ for Palestinians. Ninety four per cent (‘essential or desirable’) of Palestinians seem to require that ‘Arab Jerusalem

³ This option was not asked in Palestine but given the desire of Palestinians to have their capitol in Jerusalem this option would probably be more attractive when ‘framed’ in this way. Amongst Palestinians living in Israel (Arab Israelis) the level of ‘unacceptable’ for these two options were 39% and 31% ‘unacceptable’ respectively.

will be connected to all of the Palestinian/future Palestinian state'. As only 50% of Israelis find this option 'unacceptable' there is clearly room for negotiation here. Critically, when asked 'If everything is agreed except for Jerusalem Palestinians should proceed with the agreement' 78% of Palestinians considered this option 'unacceptable'. So pushing an agreement through without resolving the status of Jerusalem has little chance of success. Fortunately, however, only 50% of Israelis strongly objected to the proposition that 'As the last step to a final agreement give the Arab neighbourhoods of Jerusalem to Palestine' as 'unacceptable'.

Table 9b. Jerusalem options for Israelis

ISRAELI per cent	Essential	Desirable	Acceptable	Tolerable	Unacceptable
1. (PALESTINIANS ONLY) All of Jerusalem should remain in Palestine					
2. Jerusalem should be an 'International City of Peace' under the authority of the UN	5	4	7	6	78
3. Jerusalem should be an 'International City of Peace' under the authority of a Multi-faith Municipal Covenant	6	3	18	11	61
4. Divide the city according to Palestinian and Israeli neighbourhoods	9	6	13	15	55
5. Arab neighbourhoods should be the capitol of Palestine/a future Palestine and Israeli neighbourhoods should be the capitol of Israel	7	5	18	15	54
6. Jerusalem should be divided into East and West along the pre 67 boarder	3	2	8	5	77
7. Jewish parts of the Old City should be under Israeli control and Muslim and Christian parts under Palestinian control	5	4	10	12	67
Jewish parts of the Old City should be under Israeli control					
Non-Jewish parts of the Old City should be under Palestinian control					
8. The Old City should be under joint control	3	3	11	11	69
9. The Old City should be under international control	2	3	14	7	72
10. Arab Jerusalem will be connected to all of the Palestinian/future Palestinian state	13	4	17	12	50
11. If everything is agreed except for Jerusalem Palestinians should proceed with the agreement	19	16	25	12	20
12. As the last step to a final agreement give the Arab neighbourhoods of Jerusalem to Palestine	8	7	17	12	50
13. (ISRAELIS ONLY) All of Jerusalem should remain in Israel	45	11	13	5	25

Holy Sites

Palestinian and Israeli views on the management of Holy sites are very similar to their views on Jerusalem. In this case the 'least, worst' option was 'Free access for everyone to the Holy sites. No side will have sovereignty on the Holy sites. Israel will be 'guardian' of the Wailing Wall and the Palestinian State 'guardian' of the Islamic Holy sites. The status quo of Christian Holy sites will remain' at only 46% 'unacceptable' for both Israelis and Palestinians (Table 10).

Table 10. Holy sites options

PALESTINIAN per cent	Essential	Desirable	Acceptable	Tolerable	Unacceptable
1. (PALESTINIANS ONLY) East Jerusalem, including Holy sites, under Palestinian sovereignty	92	4	2	1	1
2. The Wailing Wall will be under Israeli sovereignty, Christian and Muslim Holy site, including the Temple Mount, will be under Palestinian sovereignty	13	6	11	15	53
3. Free access for everyone to the Holy sites. No side will have sovereignty on the Holy sites. Israel will be 'guardian' of the Wailing Wall and the Palestinian State 'guardian' of the Islamic Holy sites. The status quo of Christian Holy sites will remain.	19	7	13	13	46
4. Neutral body, e.g. the UN will be the guardian of all the holy sites	5	4	8	12	69
5. (ISRAELIS ONLY) East Jerusalem, including Holy sites, under Israeli sovereignty					

ISRAELI per cent	Essential	Desirable	Acceptable	Tolerable	Unacceptable
1. (PALESTINIANS ONLY) East Jerusalem, including Holy sites, under Palestinian sovereignty					
2. The Wailing Wall will be under Israeli sovereignty, Christian and Muslim Holy site, including the Temple Mount, will be under Palestinian sovereignty	6	5	13	7	68
3. Free access for everyone to the Holy sites. No side will have sovereignty on the Holy sites. Israel will be 'guardian' of the Wailing Wall and the Palestinian State 'guardian' of the Islamic Holy sites. The status quo of Christian Holy sites will remain.	7	8	21	16	46
4. Neutral body, e.g. the UN will be the guardian of all the holy sites	6	3	8	10	73
5. (ISRAELIS ONLY) East Jerusalem, including Holy sites, under Israeli sovereignty	36	10	17	8	28

Implementation

Many of the critical issues reviewed in this poll are 'boarder line' in terms of negotiation. That is to say the levels of 'unacceptable' are close to 50% for Palestinians and/or Israelis. Sometimes they are a little more and sometimes less. But as has been repeatedly demonstrated in both Northern Ireland as a matter of practice and research and in Israel/Palestine through polling the 'whole' of any peace agreement is 'greater than the sum of its parts'. So when put together as a 'package' it should be possible to reach a comprehensive settlement on all the issues dealt with here in a way that is acceptable to a majority of both Israelis and Palestinians. It should be noted that the levels of 'unacceptable' for the issues that had to be negotiated and agreed in Northern Ireland were comparable to those found here.

Table 11. Implementation options

PALESTINIAN per cent	Essential	Desirable	Acceptable	Tolerable	Unacceptable
1. The peace agreement will be subject to a referendum by the people of Israel/Palestine	92	4	2	1	1
2. Each party will mutually recognize the state of Israel and the state of Palestine	56	7	10	10	17
3. All political prisoners shall be released	98	1	0	0	0
4. The peace agreement will be the end of conflict between both parties	64	8	7	7	10
5. An international body acceptable to both parties will be established to monitor and enforce the full implementation of the agreement	64	15	10	6	4

ISRAELI per cent	Essential	Desirable	Acceptable	Tolerable	Unacceptable
1. The peace agreement will be subject to a referendum by the people of Israel/Palestine	37	21	25	3	11
2. Each party will mutually recognize the state of Israel and the state of Palestine	43	16	21	6	12
3. All political prisoners shall be released	16	7	14	11	45
4. The peace agreement will be the end of conflict between both parties	43	20	17	4	13
5. An international body acceptable to both parties will be established to monitor and enforce the full implementation of the agreement	39	18	23	7	12

With regards to the implementation of an agreement there is a great deal of common ground to be found between Israelis and Palestinians (Table 11). Ninety six per cent ('essential or desirable') of Palestinians want a referendum, as do 58% of Israelis (levels of 'unacceptable' are only 1% and 11% respectively). The idea that 'Each party will mutually recognize the state of Israel and the state of Palestine' is only 'unacceptable' to 17% of Palestinians and 12% of Israelis. Almost everyone wants an agreement to be the end of the conflict (72% 'essential or desirable' for Palestinians and 63% for Israelis with 'unacceptable' at 10% and 13% respectively). Ninety nine per cent of Palestinians want all political prisoners to be released and in contrast to the vast majority of Protestants who opposed such releases in Northern Ireland only 45% of Israelis find this proposal 'unacceptable'. Finally, the last option in this part of the questionnaire asked Israelis and Palestinians for their views on an international body acceptable to both parties being established to monitor and enforce the full implementation of an agreement. Only 4% of Palestinians and 12% of Israelis considered this proposal 'unacceptable' (79% 'essential or desirable' for Palestinians and 57% 'essential or desirable' for Israelis). In Northern Ireland such international involvement in all aspects of the peace process was the norm so perhaps the failure to reach an agreement in Israel and Palestine is not a problem of substance but a problem of process.

Part 2. Process

Problems of process

The first question in this poll asked informants in Israel and Palestine to say which problems in the peace process they thought were ‘Very significant’, ‘Significant’, ‘Of some significance’, ‘Of little significance’ or ‘Not at all’. Table 1 lists these problems in order of significance for Palestinians and Israelis. From a list of over twenty such problems the top five for Palestinians were ‘The freedom of Palestinians from occupation/Israeli rule’ 1st at 94% ‘very significant’ (15th on the Israeli list); ‘The settlements’ 2nd at 89% (13th on the Israeli list); ‘The substandard living conditions of the people in Gaza’ and ‘The security wall’ 3rd and 4th both at 88% ‘very significant’ (16th and 21st on the Israeli list) and ‘The Independence of the Palestinian economy’ 5th at 87% (17th on the Israeli list).

The top five problems for the Israelis were ‘Terror has reinforced the conflict’ 1st at 65% ‘very significant’ (15th on the Palestinian list) followed by ‘Maintaining a Jewish majority in Israel’ 2nd at 62% (16th on the Palestinian list) then ‘Incitement to hatred’ 3rd at 52% ‘very significant’ (20th on the Palestinian list); ‘Agreements not implemented for lack of trust between Palestinians and Israelis’ was 4th at 48% (12th on the Palestinian list) and ‘The problem has become global’ 5th at 42% ‘very significant’.

Table 1. Problems in the peace process expressed as per cent 'Very significant'.

	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	Agreements not implemented for lack of trust between Palestinians and Israelis	48
5 th	The Independence of the Palestinian economy	87	Israel can not have security without peace	46
6 th	Lack of employment opportunities in Palestine/the West Bank and Gaza	84	Anti-Israeli attitude amongst Palestinians	44
7 th	The attitude of the Settlers towards Palestinians	76	The problem has become global	42
8 th	Unbalanced conflict for Palestine with Israel having more power	74	The two sides will never reach an agreement without active intervention of other outside parties	38
9 th	Discrimination against the 1948 Palestinians/Arab minority in Israel	70	Israelis believe the State of Palestine will become a terrorist state	38
10 th	Lack of health care services in Israel/Palestine	67	No vision of a shared future	38
11 th	The Palestinian cause became dependent on regional and international powers	67	Occupation/Israeli rule has reinforced the conflict	32
12 th	Agreements not implemented for lack of trust between Palestinians and Israelis	64	Lack of employment opportunities in Palestine/the West Bank and Gaza	31
13 th	Israel can not have security without peace	64	The settlements	31
14 th	Occupation/Israeli rule has reinforced the conflict	64	The global financial crisis	31
15 th	Terror has reinforced the conflict	61	The freedom of Palestinians from occupation/Israeli rule	30
16 th	Maintaining a Jewish majority in Israel	59	The substandard living conditions of the people in Gaza	29
17 th	Anti-Palestinian attitude amongst Israelis	58	The Independence of the Palestinian economy	28
18 th	The two sides will never reach an agreement without active intervention of other outside parties	57	The attitude of the Settlers towards Palestinians	28
19 th	The global financial crisis	53	Lack of health care services in Israel/Palestine	27
20 th	Incitement to hatred	50	Evacuation of settlers leading to civil war	25
21 st	Anti-Israeli attitude amongst Palestinians	47	The security wall	25
22 nd	No vision of a shared future	46	Anti-Palestinian attitude amongst Israelis	24
23 rd	Unbalanced conflict for the Arabs against Israel	45	Failure to moderate public opinion	23
24 th	Israelis believe the State of Palestine will become a terrorist state	42	Unbalanced conflict for Palestine with Israel having more power	22
25 th	[Unbalanced conflict for Israel with regional Arab and Islamic countries] ⁴		The global environmental crisis	21
26 th	[Evacuation of settlers leading to civil war]		Discrimination against the 1948 Palestinians/Arab minority in Israel	19
27 th	[Failure to moderate public opinion]		[Unbalanced conflict for Israel with regional Arab and Islamic countries] ⁵	
28 th	[The problem has become global]			
29 th	[The global environmental crisis]			

⁴ This and the four options below were not asked in Palestine.

⁵ This option was not asked in Israel.

Two points need to be made here. Firstly the two lists are very different as the problems each society faces are in reality and/or perception very different. Secondly, although the rank orders are different and the percentages for Palestinians are generally higher than they are for Israelis the Palestinian percentages are sometimes very similar to the Israeli percentages. For example the top concern for Israelis is 'Terror has reinforced the conflict' at 65% 'very significant' and 61% for Palestinians. And second for Israelis is 'Maintaining a Jewish majority in Israel' at 62% and 59% for Palestinians (a difference of only 3%). So although the problems have a different order for Palestinians they do seem to understand that the problems Israelis have are significant also. However, this apparent 'appreciation' does not seem to be reciprocated as much as might have been hoped. The top problem for Palestinians 'The freedom of Palestinians from occupation/Israeli rule' at 94% 'very significant' registers at only 30% 'very significant' amongst Israelis (a difference of 64%). So in addition to what might be called a 'problems gap' there is also a communications or 'appreciation gap' that appears to have an Israeli bias.

The second question in this section looked at the problem of process in a slightly different way. This time those being interviewed were asked about responsibility for the lack of progress or what in Northern Ireland was called the 'Blame Game' (Table 2). For Israelis the top five points of failure were 'Weak Palestinian government' and 'Islamic extremists are changing a political war into a religious war' 1st and 2nd both at 52% 'very significant' followed by 'Arming of Palestinian militants' 3rd at 49%, 'Palestinians have no accountable single partner for peace' 4th at 48% and 'Palestinians divided by Hamas and Fattah' 5th at 43% 'very significant'.

The top five points of failure for Palestinians were 'Israel is not ready to make peace' 1st at 85% 'very significant' followed by 'Lack of US resolve to establishing a Palestinian state' 2nd at 82%, 'UN failure to implement resolutions' 3rd at 80%, 'Israel's refusal to accept 67 borders' 4th at 79% and then 'The lack of progress in the peace process led to Palestinian division' 5th at 73% 'very significant'.

These two lists are, too a considerable degree mirror images of each other. For example the item at the bottom of the Israeli list is 'Israel is not ready to make peace' at only 14% 'very significant' while it is 1st on the Palestinian list and the item at the bottom of the Palestinian list is 'Arming of Palestinian militants' at 26% 'very significant', and this item is 3rd on the Israeli list. Interestingly 'Palestinians divided by Hamas and Fattah' (5th on the Israeli list) could not be asked in Palestine as they took the opposite view that 'The lack of progress in the peace process led to Palestinian division' (also 5th but on the Palestinian list) and this item could likewise not be asked in Israel because they took the opposite view again.

As part of the peace process in Northern Ireland the people there came to learn the futility of playing the 'Blame Game'. So much so that at one point the BBC was able to launch a satirical TV comedy series called 'The Blame Game', but then Irish humour can be quite black. The antidote to the 'Blame Game' are 'solutions' and these were the subject of the remainder of this questionnaire.

Table 2. Problems of responsibility for lack of progress in the peace process expressed as per cent ‘Very significant’.

	PALESTINIAN per cent	Very Significant	ISRAELI per cent	Very Significant
1 st	Israel is not ready to make peace	85	Weak Palestinian government	52
2 nd	Lack of US resolve to establishing a Palestinian state	82	Islamic extremists are changing a political war into a religious war	52
3 rd	UN failure to implement resolutions	80	Arming of Palestinian militants	49
4 th	Israel’s refusal to accept 67 borders	79	Palestinians have no accountable single partner for peace	48
5 th	(PALESTINIANS ONLY) The lack of progress in the peace process led to Palestinian division	73	(ISRAELIS ONLY) Palestinians divided by Hamas and Fattah	43
6 th	Israel’s refusal to directly negotiate with Hamas	71	Israel evacuated Gaza without making a peace agreement	38
7 th	Arming of settlers	71	UN failure to implement resolutions	38
8 th	Arab states divided on the future of Palestine	71	Arab states divided on the future of Palestine	37
9 th	The Quartet (US, EU, UN and Russia) is ineffective in promoting the peace process	71	Weak Israeli government	36
10 th	The failure of the international community to address the security of Israel in the Middle East	69	The failure of the international community to take account of the asymmetry of the conflict between Israel and Palestine	35
11 th	Israeli society is moving to the right	65	Israel left Lebanon without making a peace agreement	34
12 th	(PALESTINIANS ONLY) Israel uses resistance (launching of rocket attacks) from Gaza as an excuse not to make peace	64	Israel’s refusal to accept 67 borders	33
13 th	Israel does not understand the effects of occupation on the peace process	64	The Quartet (US, EU, UN and Russia) is ineffective in promoting the peace process	31
14 th	Weak Palestinian government	62	The failure of the international community to address the security of Israel in the Middle East	29
15 th	Influence of military in Israeli politics	62	Israel’s refusal to directly negotiate with Hamas	27
16 th	Jewish extremists are changing a political war into a religious war	58	Israeli society is moving to the right	25
17 th	Israeli occupation is changing a political war into a religious war	54	Jewish extremists are changing a political war into a religious war	23
18 th	Israeli society is divided	44	Arming of settlers	23
19 th	Islamic extremists are changing a political war into a religious war	43	Lack of US resolve to establishing a Palestinian state	21
20 th	Palestinians do not understand the security threat to Israel	35	Israeli occupation is changing a political war into a religious war	17
21 st	Weak Israeli government	34	Influence of military in Israeli politics	17
22 nd	Arming of Palestinian militants	26	Israel is not ready to make peace	14
23 rd	(ISRAELIS ONLY) Palestinians divided by Hamas and Fattah		(PALESTINIANS ONLY) The lack of progress in the peace process led to Palestinian division	
24 th	[Palestinians have no accountable single partner for peace]		(PALESTINIANS ONLY) Israel use resistance from Gaza as an excuse not to make peace	
25 th	[Israel evacuated Gaza without making a peace agreement]			
26 th	[Israel left Lebanon without making a peace agreement]			
27 th	[The failure of the international community to take account of the asymmetry of the conflict between Israel and Palestine]			

Some process solutions

The results using the ‘Essential’, ‘Desirable’, ‘Acceptable’, ‘Tolerable’ or ‘Unacceptable’ scale are presented in the following tables for various steps that could be taken to deal with the problems listed in Tables 1 and 2. Critically policies that one society expressly want to see implemented as highly ‘essential or desirable’ need to be compared with levels of ‘unacceptable’ in the other society. High levels of ‘unacceptable’ indicate political difficulties while low levels of ‘unacceptable’ suggest the policies in question can be taken forward.

Rebuilding confidence

Table 3 lists a variety of suggestions for rebuilding confidence in the peace process. From a list of twenty-four items the top five for Palestinians were ‘Lift the siege of Gaza’ and ‘Remove all check points’ 1st and 2nd at 99% ‘essential or desirable’ followed by ‘Release Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli prisons’ and ‘Israel should freeze settlements as a first step to deal with the settlements’ 3rd and 4th at 98% and then ‘Israel should demolish the wall’ 5th at 96% ‘essential or desirable’. Unfortunately all these proposals are resisted by Israelis at quite high levels of ‘unacceptable’ ranging between 47% and 57% except for freezing the settlements, which is only opposed by 23% of Israelis as ‘unacceptable’. As this option is one of the key demands for Palestinians it is a matter of considerable regret that a small but influential minority are able to do so much harm to the peace process.

Fortunately, many other suggestions are welcomed by both Israelis and Palestinians. ‘The new US Administration should place a high priority on Middle East peace’ opposed by only 11% of Israelis and 3% of Palestinians is already happening. The EU and US are working with Egypt to end the conflict between Hamas and Fatah (only 17% and 4% ‘unacceptable’) and through the efforts of research like this poll civil society is getting more involved in the peace process (only 14% and 6% ‘unacceptable’). Almost everyone wants to achieve peace through negotiation (4th on the Israeli list and only opposed by 5% of Israelis and 8% of Palestinians as ‘unacceptable’). Unfortunately, like the freezing of settlements a small but significant minority of Palestinians (24% and 23% respectively) are opposed to the top two Israeli proposals to ‘Stop all suicide/attacks against civilians’ at 90% ‘essential or desirable’ and ‘Stop firing rockets from Gaza’ 2nd at 87% ‘essential or desirable’. Minorities again seem to be holding up peace. But such minorities exist in every conflict and the way to deal with them is to move the peace process forward in support of the will of the majority who do support most (but not quite all) of the proposals listed in Table 3.

Table 3. Priorities for rebuilding confidence in the peace process

Palestinian per cent	Essential or Desirable	Israeli % Unacceptable
1. Lift the siege of Gaza	99	48
2. Remove all check points	99	57
3. Release Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli prisons	98	47
4. Israel should freeze settlements as a first step to deal with the settlements	98	23
5. Israel should demolish the wall	96	56
6. The new US Administration should place a high priority on Middle East peace	91	11
7. The UN should hold Israel and Palestine accountable and impose sanctions for all violations of international law	91	36
8. The UN should make recommendations for the resolution of the conflict	90	30
9. The EU should establish their own policies for the Middle East	87	26
10. EU and US should work with Egypt to end conflict between Hamas and Fatah	80	17
11. Civil society should get more involved in the peace process	74	14
12. Achieve peace through negotiation	71	5
13. Resist occupation/Israeli rule through violence to achieve peace	69	76
14. The Arab League should explain the Arab Peace Initiative to Israelis	66	25
15. If there is no agreement have an internationally supervised truce for 5 years	58	17
16. Resist occupation/Israeli rule through civil disobedience to achieve peace	54	41
17. Palestinians should explain themselves to the Israelis	52	
18. Stop firing rockets from Gaza	52	4
19. Stop all suicide/attacks against civilians	50	2
20. Release Gilad Shalit	42	6
21. Hamas should recognise Israel if Israel withdraws from the Occupied Territories/West Bank and Gaza	36	44
22. [Palestinians and Israelis should explain themselves to each other]		8
23. [Palestinians should declare a unilateral stop of attacks against Israeli targets to put pressure on Israel]		18
24. [The wall can be built on the 67 boarder]		50

Israeli per cent	Essential or Desirable	Palestinian % Unacceptable
1. Stop all suicide/attacks against civilians	90	24
2. Stop firing rockets from Gaza	87	23
3. Release Gilad Shalit	85	32
4. Achieve peace through negotiation	79	8
5. Palestinians and Israelis should explain themselves to each other	69	
6. The new US Administration should place a high priority on Middle East peace	59	3
7. Civil society should get more involved in the peace process	58	6
8. Palestinians should declare a unilateral stop of attacks against Israeli targets to put pressure on Israel	57	
9. Israel should freeze settlements as a first step to deal with the settlements	56	1
10. EU and US should work with Egypt to end conflict between Hamas and Fatah	55	9
11. If there is no agreement have an internationally supervised truce for 5 years	47	17
12. The EU should establish their own policies for the Middle East	46	4
13. The UN should hold Israel and Palestine accountable and impose sanctions for all violations of international law	42	2
14. The UN should make recommendations for the resolution of the conflict	39	3
15. The Arab League should explain the Arab Peace Initiative to Israelis	38	12
16. Release Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli prisons	33	0
17. Lift the siege of Gaza	33	1
18. Hamas should recognise Israel if Israel withdraws from the Occupied Territories/West Bank and Gaza	31	39
19. Resist occupation/Israeli rule through civil disobedience to achieve peace	30	24
20. Remove all check points	26	0
21. Israel should demolish the wall	23	2
22. The wall can be built on the 67 boarder	20	
23. Resist occupation/Israeli rule through violence to achieve peace	11	12
24. [Palestinians should explain themselves to the Israelis]		29

Negotiations

As both Israelis and Palestinians want a negotiated peace (79% and 71% ‘essential or desirable’) it should come as no surprise that nearly all the suggestions for strengthening the negotiations are welcomed by both Palestinians and Israelis. There is however one notable exception. Seventy three per cent of Palestinians and 52% of Israelis are opposed to the idea that ‘The PLO/ Fatah and Israel should negotiate in secret’ as ‘unacceptable’. This is how the failed negotiations of the past many years have been conducted and both Palestinians and Israelis want change.

At the top of the Israeli list (3rd on the Palestinian list) is ‘The people should be kept informed of progress in the negotiations’ at 74% ‘essential or desirable’ and 2nd on the Israeli list (4th on the Palestinian list) is ‘Targets, timetables and milestones should be set for negotiations’ at 68% ‘essential or desirable’ and so on and so on. Unlike all the questions previously reviewed in this research there is now much more agreement between Palestinians and Israelis than there is disagreement.

I do not know how many of these suggestions from the people of Israel and Palestine will be taken up by their respective leaderships but they should now be very much aware that if progress is not made in negotiations then calls for reform of their negotiating practices will be well received. Fortunately for the negotiators in Israel and Palestine one of the top negotiators in the world is now their Special Envoy from the United States of America. After 30 years of ‘The Troubles’ and failed negotiations in Northern Ireland the governments of Britain, Ireland the US and EU moved to internationalise that process and make the people and civil society active partners/stakeholders. Israel and Palestine have much to learn from that, their own people want a stronger and more inclusive process and George Mitchell is probably the most experienced facilitator to help them in that task.

Table 4. Priorities for negotiations⁶

Palestinian per cent	Essential or Desirable	Israeli % Unacceptable
1. Fatah and Hamas should reconcile their differences before negotiations	98	16
2. Address the roots of the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians as an integral part of the negotiations	97	12
3. The people should be kept informed of progress in the negotiations	94	5
4. Targets, timetables and milestones should be set for negotiations	91	7
5. Negotiators should recognize each others just aspiration	86	7
6. The US should negotiate with all Palestinians including Hamas	77	37
7. Bring the Israeli pro-peace parties into the negotiations	72	22
8. The Arab Peace Initiative should be the bases for negotiations	69	41
9. Multilateral negotiations should include Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and the Arab League	69	35
10. Saudi Arabia should take a leading role	64	56
11. The Quartet's Road Map should be the basis for negotiations	44	30
12. The PLO/ Fatah and Israel should negotiate in secret	16	52
13. [Civil society should play a role in negotiations]		16
14. [Women's groups should be involved at all levels in negotiations]		29
15. [Representatives of political prisoners in Israeli prisons should be involved in the negotiations]		55
16. [Israel should allow the Palestinian prisoners to answer this questionnaire]		35
17. [Palestine and Israel should consult with Arab states on matters of mutual interest]		39
18. [Israel should agree to include Hamas in negotiations if they guarantee not to endanger Israel's security within the 1967 borders (without formally recognizing Israel as a Jewish state)]		52
19. [Negotiations should be hosted in a neutral country]		15

Israeli per cent	Essential or Desirable	Palestinian % Unacceptable
1. The people should be kept informed of progress in the negotiations	74	1
2. Targets, timetables and milestones should be set for negotiations	68	2
3. Negotiators should recognize each others just aspiration	66	5
4. Fatah and Hamas should reconcile their differences before negotiations	58	1
5. Civil society should play a role in negotiations	54	
6. Address the roots of the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians as an integral part of the negotiations	51	0
7. Bring the Israeli pro-peace parties into the negotiations	42	9
8. Women's groups should be involved at all levels in negotiations	41	
9. Negotiations should be hosted in a neutral country	37	
10. Multilateral negotiations should include Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and the Arab League	32	7
11. The US should negotiate with all Palestinians including Hamas	31	7
12. The Arab Peace Initiative should be the bases for negotiations	27	8
13. The Quartet's Road Map should be the basis for negotiations	27	24
14. Israel should allow the Palestinian prisoners to answer this questionnaire	26	
15. Palestine and Israel should consult with Arab states on matters of mutual interest	25	
16. Israel should agree to include Hamas in negotiations if they guarantee not to endanger Israel's security within the 1967 borders (without formally recognizing Israel as a Jewish state)	25	
17. Representatives of political prisoners in Israeli prisons should be involved in the negotiations	20	
18. The PLO/ Fatah and Israel should negotiate in secret	14	73
19. Saudi Arabia should take a leading role	12	13

⁶ Unfortunately quite a few questions in this particular section were only asked in Israel. Hopefully this omission will be corrected in future polls.

Economic priorities

When the fieldwork for this questionnaire was being undertaken at the end of last year there was much talk about what was termed 'Economic Peace' so many questions were suggested to deal with this topic and these are reviewed in Table 5. Inevitably Israeli and Palestinian priorities are different with Palestinians putting 'Remove all check points' at the top of their list at 100% 'essential or desirable'. Unfortunately this is opposed by Israelis at 61% 'unacceptable' as is 'Provide Palestinians with access to the ports of Haifa and Ashdod' at 64% and 'Allow all Palestinians free access between Gaza, Jerusalem and the West Bank' at 54% 'unacceptable'.

But the slightly less radical proposals (from an Israeli perspective) to 'Ease security measures in the Occupied Territories/West Bank and Gaza so that the economy can develop' and 'Develop the economy for all Palestinians in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza' is only opposed by 22% and 23% of Israelis respectively while 'Achieve a peace agreement so that the Palestinian economy can develop' is only opposed by 17% of Israelis. Economic development and peace do not seem to be an 'either/or thing' as the Israelis 3rd choice on their list is 'Work on the peace process and economy together' at 53% 'essential or desirable' ahead of 'Develop the Palestinian economy to help achieve peace' and 'Achieve a peace agreement so that the Palestinian economy can develop' 5th and 6th at 46% and 45% 'essential or desirable' (no significant difference).

Table 5. Priorities for economic development

Palestinian per cent	Essential or Desirable	Israeli % Unacceptable
1. Remove check points	100	61
2. Establish a permanent corridor between Gaza and the West Bank	98	40
3. Open an airport in Palestine	98	42
4. Ease security measures in the Occupied Territories/West Bank and Gaza so that the economy can develop	97	22
5. Develop the economy for all Palestinians in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza'	96	23
6. Achieve a peace agreement so that the Palestinian economy can develop	95	17
7. Open boarder crossings between Gaza and Egypt	95	46
8. Open boarder crossings between Palestine and Israel	95	
9. Work on the peace process and economy together	92	11
10. Provide Palestinians with access to the ports of Haifa and Ashdod	91	64
11. Israel and Palestinian economic cooperation should include the job market	85	36
12. Cooperate on environmental issues	79	8
13. Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Egypt and other Middle Eastern countries should develop their common interests	72	9
14. Develop the economies of Jordan, Palestine and Israel together	61	27
15. Israel and Palestinian economic cooperation should be limited to trade and investment	33	28
16. [Develop the Palestinian economy to help achieve peace]		17
17. [Eliminate all forms of discrimination in Israel and Palestine]		19
18. [Agreements on water and economic development should be signed without delay]		15
19. [Allow all Palestinians free access between Gaza, Jerusalem and the West Bank]		57

Israeli per cent	Essential or Desirable	Palestinian % Unacceptable
1. Agreements on water and economic development should be signed without delay	56	
2. Cooperate on environmental issues	54	4
3. Work on the peace process and economy together	53	1
4. Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Egypt and other Middle Eastern countries should develop their common interests	49	10
5. Develop the Palestinian economy to help achieve peace	46	
6. Achieve a peace agreement so that the Palestinian economy can develop	45	1
7. Develop the economy for all Palestinians in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza'	43	0
8. Eliminate all forms of discrimination in Israel and Palestine	43	
9. Ease security measures in the Occupied Territories/West Bank and Gaza so that the economy can develop	41	1
10. Develop the economies of Jordan, Palestine and Israel together	33	12
11. Open boarder crossings between Gaza and Egypt	29	2
12. Establish a permanent corridor between Gaza and the West Bank	26	1
13. Israel and Palestinian economic cooperation should include the job market	23	4
14. Remove check points	21	0
15. Allow all Palestinians free access between Gaza, Jerusalem and the West Bank	20	
16. Israel and Palestinian economic cooperation should be limited to trade and investment	18	37
17. Open an airport in Palestine	15	0
18. Provide Palestinians with access to the ports of Haifa and Ashdod	12	4
19. Open boarder crossings between Palestine and Israel	0	2

Reconciliation

When it comes to reconciliation, as with negotiation, there is more agreement between Israelis and Palestinians than there is disagreement (Table 6). The top priorities for Palestinians 'Reach an understanding on all core issues and start implementation under international supervision without delay' at 92% 'essential or desirable'; 'Both sides should use all possible means to build confidence and trust between the two communities' at 80% and 'A peace agreement must lead to living side by side as good neighbours' at 78% 'essential or desirable' were only opposed at 17%, 3% and 6% of Israelis respectively as 'unacceptable' while the counter proposal to 'Establish two completely separate states without any interaction' was 'unacceptable' to 35% of Palestinians and 37% of Israelis. A majority of Palestinians want Hebrew taught in Palestinian schools (78% 'essential or desirable') and Arabic taught in Israeli schools (58% 'essential or desirable'). A minority of Israelis oppose this at 6% and 18% respectively as 'unacceptable' as do a minority of Palestinians at 10% and 17% so perhaps for them such a policy should be a matter of choice.

Table 6. Reconciliation

Palestinian per cent	Essential or Desirable	Israeli % Unacceptable
1. Reach an understanding on all core issues and start implementation under international supervision without delay	92	17
2. Both sides should use all possible means to build confidence and trust between the two communities	80	3
3. A peace agreement must lead to living side by side as good neighbours	78	6
4. Teach Hebrew in Palestinian schools	74	18
5. Teach Spoken Arabic in Israeli schools	58	19
6. Establish two completely separate states without any interaction	39	35
7. [Both sides should publicly take responsibility for the harm they have done to the other]		17
8. [Prohibit all forms of incitement to hatred]		4

Israeli per cent	Essential or Desirable	Palestinian % Unacceptable
1. Prohibit all forms of incitement to hatred	81	
2. Both sides should use all possible means to build confidence and trust between the two communities	79	5
3. A peace agreement must lead to living side by side as good neighbours	73	5
4. Reach an understanding on all core issues and start implementation under international supervision without delay	58	4
5. Both sides should publicly take responsibility for the harm they have done to the other	51	
6. Teach Hebrew in Palestinian schools	49	10
7. Teach Spoken Arabic in Israeli schools	47	17
8. Establish two completely separate states without any interaction	31	37

Conclusion

The analysis of the substantive issues covered in Part 1 of this poll suggests that the shape of an agreement for a two state solution may not be very different to the various solutions proposed in the past. However, the results of the second part of this poll suggest that the peace process itself is in much need of reform and on this point there appears to be sufficient grounds upon which to establish an Israeli/Palestinian consensus for new negotiations that are not subject to the failings of the past.