

Public Opinion and the Politics of Peace Research: Northern Ireland, Balkans, Israel, Palestine, Cyprus, Muslim World and the ‘War on Terror’

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Abstract

While stressing the political difficulties of reconciling third party interests and a truly independent applied social science Donald Campbell pointed to the solution to this problem through full disclosure and the participation of *adversarial stakeholder[s]* in both the design of experiments and interpretation of results. By applying these principles to public opinion research in Northern Ireland political parties from across the political spectrum were able to generate a program of pre-negotiation problem solving and public diplomacy that helped to secure the Belfast Agreement.

These methods have been successfully reproduced in Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Cyprus. Comparisons are made between this body of work and polls run by the US State Department, OSCE, British Home Office and others in Northern Ireland, the Balkans, Israel, Palestine, North and South Cyprus, the Muslim World and in the UK with respect to the ‘War on Terror’. The political and methodological difficulties predicted by Campbell are identified and analyzed in terms of failed negotiations and ineffective peace making.

In the Balkans, ten years after the signing of the Dayton Agreement, the international community does not use public opinion research and public diplomacy to drive peace processes forward with the degree of energy and commitment demonstrated in Northern Ireland. In Israel and Palestine researchers have not properly coordinated their work with each other and with their political elites. As a consequence their programs of research have not identified solutions to problems in a way that can give timely support to negotiations. In Cyprus the international community now accept that their decision not to support a program of independent polling and public diplomacy on the island contributed to the break down of the UN negotiations and ‘no’ vote in the 2003 referendum. Similar omissions by the British Home Office have resulted in their failure to properly identify the causes of alienation and radicalization amongst young British Muslims and to effectively deal with the growing insurgency in their state.

The global implications of these persistent failures seem to require a global response that would include the setting and monitoring of standards for applied public opinion research undertaken in support of the analysis and resolution of conflicts, that is independent of all state and other vested interests.

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Introduction: Campbell’s Galvanometer

‘Dead wrong in almost all of its pre-war judgements’ was the damning conclusion of the nine member bipartisan commission set up by the US President to critically examine the failure of the US intelligence community to accurately assess Iraq’s chemical, biological and nuclear weapons capabilities.¹ Lord Butler’s report reached similar conclusions with regards to the failings of the British intelligence community although the language used was far more circumspect.² Should anyone be surprised? Donald Campbell, perhaps one of the most prominent and respected social science methodologists of the past half-century would not have thought so. Indeed he might have been more surprised if the US and UK intelligence communities had got things right and supported the findings of the UN inspectors in opposition to the political agendas of their respective governments.

Donald Campbell believed political power within the scientific community and social-ideological commitments (national, political, religious, economic self-interest, etc.) to be major obstacles to the achievement of an objective social science.³ And he believed applied social science to be even more problematic, almost to the point of being impossible where matters of policy are concerned.⁴ Amongst a list of such difficulties he noted:

A second difference between applied social science and laboratory research is that the still greater likelihood of *extraneous, non-descriptive interests and biases* entering through the inevitable discriminatory judgemental components that exist in all science at the levels of data collection, instrument design and selection, data interpretation, and choice of theory. As we move into policy arena there is much less social-system-of-science control over such discretionary judgement favouring descriptive validity, and there are much much stronger non-descriptive motives to consciously and unconsciously use that discretionary judgement, to, so to speak, break the glass of the galvanometer and get in there and push the needle one way or the other so that it provides the meter-reading wanted for non-descriptive reasons. (Campbell, 1984)

Campbell goes on to note that: ‘Since scientists have to live in the larger society and are supported by it in their scientific activity, it becomes probable that science works best on beliefs about which powerful economic, political, and religious authorities are indifferent.’⁵ Clearly quite the opposite is the case when dealing with matters of state, waging war and making peace. In these circumstances, all too frequently, both domestic electoral imperatives and powerful international economic, political and

religious interests are at work. Perhaps, at this point, we should give up and not undertake peace research at all but simply resign ourselves to critically examining and reviewing the small percentage of such work that is made available to us through publication. Fortunately, however, Campbell provides us with some solutions to these difficult problems of political interests and questions of methodology. In addition to all the usual recommendations for open, transparent, multi-method, multi-team research he suggests that:

There should be *adversarial stakeholder* participation in the design of each pilot experiment or program evaluation, and again in the interpretation of results. We should be consulting with the legislative and administrative opponents of the program as well as the advocates, generating measures of feared undesirable outcomes as well as promised benefits. (Campbell, 1984)⁶

This, with some modifications appropriate to the needs of negotiations and public opinion polling, is essentially what was done as part of the Northern Ireland peace process and it proved to be a great success. In this paper I shall only briefly review these methods because this work has been extensively described and analysed elsewhere.⁷ However, with the focus now on the politics of peace research I shall say a little more than I have before about some of the ‘intrigue’ that surrounded this program of applied investigation. I shall then go on to examine some of these same issues with regards to public opinion and peace research in Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina,⁸ Israel, Palestine, Cyprus, relations with the Muslim World and what is being called the ‘War on Terror’. Regrettably the research methods recommended by Campbell and applied in Northern Ireland have not been systematically adopted elsewhere. Finally then I shall explore some measures that could now be taken in an effort to overcome the difficulties inherent in applied public opinion polling and the politics of peace research. If adopted these measures should give social scientists both the tools and opportunities to help people make peace and better enjoy the social and economic benefits that flow from peace.

The Northern Ireland Experience

I arrived in Northern Ireland in the late 1980s having been awarded a Canada Council research fellowship to make a comparative study of the education systems in Northern Ireland and Israel. At that time, under ‘Direct Rule’ from Westminster, local politicians had very little say in the running of Northern Ireland affairs.

Unfortunately, the civil service who now assumed most of their former masters responsibilities were not always doing a much better job. Government departments were not known for their imagination, vision and political courage when it came to implementing innovative programs that might help to build peace. A significant section of the Northern Ireland population, sometimes referred to as the ‘silent majority’, were very often ahead of both the politicians and the civil service in matters of reform, such as the introduction of integrated education.⁹ In this case the problem was not the people, parents or even the children who supported mixed schools and the right of choice.¹⁰ The problem was the vested interests of religious and political elites and those groups who benefited from maintaining social divisions and the status quo associated with the separation of Protestant and Catholic institutions¹¹ through the lack of real choice.

In this circumstance public opinion research could clearly play an important role in advancing peace in Northern Ireland and with this point in mind I teamed up with Professors Tom Hadden and Fred Boal in 1996 to complete a poll on public policy and peace building. A few points of methodological and political significance are worth noting here. Firstly the various options for the questionnaire were written with input from both my colleagues and staff in the relevant government departments and agencies with a view to covering the full range of potential preferences from across the policy spectrum. Secondly the research was funded by the very independent Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (JRCT) who ran a special program for Northern Ireland and who were not afraid to challenge government policy in almost any area of activity including sensitive issues like policing and justice. Thirdly the results were published as a free supplement in the local current affairs magazine *Fortnight*¹² and in the most widely read local newspaper the *Belfast Telegraph*.¹³ The poll covered issues of segregation in housing, education and the work place as well as questions of equality, contentious parades, Irish language, police reform and political development.¹⁴ But I shall just give the results of the constitutional question here by way of illustrating how the instrument was designed to overcome problems of bias and because I want to draw comparisons with other states on this point later.

Table one lists eight options for the political future of Northern Ireland. The options are both accurate and understandable to the Northern Ireland electorate. Tom Hadden was a constitutional lawyer and all of the questions were pre-tested for comprehension in both communities. Interviewees were asked to rank order the options from one to eight. This produced the results in Table 2.

Table 1. Eight options for the political future of Northern Ireland

Rank Order from 1 to 8	1 to 8
<i>Separate Northern Irish State</i> - The complete separation of Northern Ireland from both the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland and the establishment of a separate state within the European Union.	
<i>Full incorporation into the British State</i> - Direct rule from Westminster and local government similar to the rest of the United Kingdom with <u>no</u> Northern Ireland Assembly or separate laws for Northern Ireland and <u>no</u> Anglo-Irish Agreement.	
<i>Continued direct rule (No change)</i> - The continuation of direct rule from London in consultation with the Irish government under the terms of the Anglo-Irish Agreement .	
<i>Power sharing and the Anglo-Irish Agreement</i> - Government by a Northern Ireland Assembly and power sharing Executive under the authority of the British government but in consultation with the Irish government under the terms of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.	
<i>Power sharing with North-South institutions but no joint authority</i> - Government by a Northern Ireland Assembly, power sharing Executive and a number of joint institutions established with the Republic of Ireland to deal with matters of mutual interest. (But these arrangements will not include joint authority between the British and Irish governments).	
<i>Joint authority and power sharing</i> - Government by joint authority between the British and Irish governments in association with an elected power sharing Executive and Assembly.	
<i>Separate institutions for the two main communities</i> - Creation of separate structures for the government of each of the two main communities in Northern Ireland, subject to joint authority by the British and Irish governments.	
<i>Full incorporation into the Irish State</i> - Full incorporation of Northern Ireland into the Republic of Ireland to create a single state within the European Union.	

Table 2. Percentage preference for the future of Northern Ireland options in 1996

All of Northern Ireland	Independent State	British State	Direct Rule	Anglo-Irish Agreement	Power Sharing	Joint Authority	Separate Institutions	Irish State
1st Preference	10	28	10	10	10	14	2	15
2nd Preference	11	12	22	14	15	15	6	4
3rd Preference	12	6	18	24	16	15	6	3
4th Preference	7	7	14	24	24	10	8	5
5th Preference	11	8	11	15	21	15	11	6
6th Preference	13	7	11	7	9	22	23	7
7th Preference	13	15	10	4	2	9	36	10
8th Preference	19	14	5	4	4	5	10	39

Catholics	Independent State	British State	Direct Rule	Anglo-Irish Agreement	Power Sharing	Joint Authority	Separate Institutions	Irish State
1st Preference	8	3	6	14	11	24	2	32
2nd Preference	9	5	9	17	16	26	9	9
3rd Preference	2	4	10	21	22	23	11	6
4th Preference	4	4	18	21	23	11	12	6
5th Preference	8	9	17	18	14	10	15	9
6th Preference	14	10	19	8	10	5	21	12
7th Preference	15	29	18	2	3	1	19	12
8th Preference	34	33	5	1	3	1	11	12

Protestants	Independent State	British State	Direct Rule	Anglo-Irish Agreement	Power Sharing	Joint Authority	Separate Institutions	Irish State
1st Preference	10	49	14	7	10	6	2	2
2nd Preference	14	19	34	13	13	3	2	1
3rd Preference	19	8	26	25	11	7	2	1
4th Preference	10	9	11	28	26	9	4	2
5th Preference	13	8	6	14	28	19	9	3
6th Preference	13	5	4	6	7	40	24	2
7th Preference	11	3	3	6	3	15	51	8
8th Preference	10	2	5	6	5	7	9	57

Two observations should be noted here. Firstly the preferred Protestant and Catholic options of 'British State' and 'Irish State' while being most popular in their 'own' communities (49 and 32 per cent first choice respectively) were least popular in the 'other' community (57 and 33 per cent last choice respectively). Secondly the 'Power Sharing' option that ended up as the 'central plank' of the Belfast Agreement, was, over all, the least unpopular option in both communities (only 4 per cent last choice). This style of question and its associated analysis could clearly help to eliminate the negotiating positions that were simply not going to end up as part of a settlement and those positions that were.

This point was not lost on the politicians who had recently been elected to negotiate a peace agreement. They were sent free copies of the report detailing the findings of the poll and invited to nominate a member of their negotiating team to work with me to write questions and run polls on any matters of concern to them. Thus, in accordance with Campbell's exacting standards for applied social science research, parties from across the political spectrum representing loyalist and republican paramilitary groups, mainstream democratic parties and centre cross community parties all agreed the questions to be asked, the research methods to be used, the timing and mode of

publication. The first two polls dealt with procedural or ‘shape of the table’ issues, the third poll explored all the major elements of a comprehensive settlement, the fourth poll tested that settlement against public opinion and the last four polls dealt with problems of implementation. Nine polls altogether including the peace building poll.

This program of research is described in considerable detail in my book *The People’s Peace Process in Northern Ireland* so I shall not say much more about that here.¹⁵ However, I would like to add some comments about the politics of the research not mentioned in the book. The British and Irish governments were opposed to this independent program of research. They did not wish to participate in the writing of any of the questions, designing the research or acting as funders. They even raised objections to my presence in the building where the parties were provided with office space but were overruled by the parties at a meeting of their business committee. The two governments had their own plans for a settlement and did not want those plans disturbed too much by either the will of the parties or the people of Northern Ireland. Fortunately Senator Mitchell, the negotiations chairman appointed by President Clinton, and his US staff understood the benefits of the independent research and supported it. So the program of public opinion polling went ahead, JRCT paid most of the bills, the Belfast Agreement was concluded and the parties knew they could win a referendum before the referendum was run. Seventy seven percent of the Northern Ireland electorate said ‘yes’ to the Agreement when it was tested against public opinion¹⁶ and that support only dropped to 71 per cent in the referendum proper. Our program of applied social research was both successful and, as these things go, quite accurate.

I should point out that the design of the questions evolved quite a bit with input from the parties. Rank ordering three, four or perhaps five items was not very difficult. Eight was perhaps a workable maximum. More than eight proved to be very slow and mostly unworkable. Informants got questionnaire fatigue and wanted to give up. But we had literally hundreds of options we needed to measure against each other so we switched to a five-point scale in which the interviewee just had to put a tick in one of five boxes against each option. Thus, in the third poll done with the parties, the constitutional question illustrated in Table 1 now read: *A comprehensive Northern Ireland settlement will probably have to deal with all of the issues covered in this questionnaire. Such a ‘package’ will be placed before the people of Northern Ireland in a referendum. Please indicate which of the following settlement ‘packages’ you consider to be ‘Essential’, ‘Desirable’, ‘Acceptable’, ‘Tolerable’ or ‘Unacceptable’.*¹⁷

The results for this question are given in Table 3 and lead to the same set of conclusions as its equivalent rank order question. Firstly the preferred Protestant and Catholic options of ‘British State’ and ‘Irish State’, while being most popular in their ‘own’ communities (44 and 58 per cent ‘essential’ or ‘desirable’ respectively), were least popular in the ‘other’ community (90 and 75 per cent ‘unacceptable’ respectively). Secondly the ‘Power Sharing’ option that ended up as the ‘central plank’ of the Belfast Agreement, was, over all, the least unpopular option in both communities (only 40 per cent ‘unacceptable’). This style of question was much easier for the informant to work through and the results gave the parties a far more nuanced qualitative response as to what was really important and what was not. For example 4 per cent 8th preference (Table 2) gives no sense of the real extent of opposition to the ‘Power Sharing’ option while 40 per cent ‘unacceptable’ did.

Table 3. Percentage acceptability for the future of Northern Ireland options in 1997

All of Northern Ireland	Independent State	British State	Direct Rule	Anglo-Irish Agreement	Power Sharing	Joint Authority	Separate Institutions	Irish State
Essential	3	13	2	3	3	4	3	14
Desirable	8	14	8	8	11	13	5	12
Acceptable	17	18	21	24	23	20	17	9
Tolerable	15	16	25	23	23	14	20	9
Unacceptable	57	39	44	42	40	49	55	56

Catholics	Independent State	British State	Direct Rule	Anglo-Irish Agreement	Power Sharing	Joint Authority	Separate Institutions	Irish State
Essential	3	1	1	5	3	10	6	34
Desirable	7	3	4	13	13	27	7	24
Acceptable	13	9	12	33	31	31	25	18
Tolerable	12	12	32	30	26	13	26	14
Unacceptable	65	75	51	19	27	19	36	10

Protestants	Independent State	British State	Direct Rule	Anglo-Irish Agreement	Power Sharing	Joint Authority	Separate Institutions	Irish State
Essential	3	23	3	0	4	0	0	1
Desirable	8	21	12	3	8	2	2	1
Acceptable	20	23	27	17	17	13	12	2
Tolerable	17	18	20	20	19	13	16	6
Unacceptable	52	15	38	60	52	72	70	90

With all the benefits of hindsight it is now possible to say that the negotiation of the Belfast Agreement was a very unique and special process indeed. For example, the formal negotiations were preceded by two major preparatory events, the Opsahl Commission¹⁸ and Dublin Forum for Peace and Reconciliation,¹⁹ to which all manner of submissions could be made and discussions take place. Both would have been suitable vehicles for public opinion research but this aspect of the negotiations did not get underway until parties were elected to the Northern Ireland Forum for Peace and Reconciliation.²⁰ The British Government designed the elections to this forum so that all groups, including those with Loyalist and Republican paramilitary associations, would get a place at the negotiating table so that the ‘talks’, as they were called, along with the research reviewed here, would be fully inclusive across the whole of the political spectrum. Subsequently the two governments, if they had chaired the talks, may not have maintained this degree of inclusivity but the talks chairman, Senator George Mitchell was independent and favoured an approach that did not leave any party, however small, outside the process.²¹

This negotiations structure and culture helped to facilitate the application of Campbell’s standards for applied social research so that the development of questions and the running and publishing of polls could be undertaken to deal with problems as they arose. The British and Irish governments started to see the benefits of the work. The Irish Government signalled their approval by inviting me to some of their social functions and when Peter Mandelson was made Secretary of State for Northern Ireland he had me over for a chat.

Other organisations were also running polls on the peace process: the BBC, various newspapers, the Northern Ireland Office and the US State Department. As they also run polls on peace processes around the world I shall take a look at the State Department work for comparative purposes. The emphasis of most media, political party and government polling is electoral politics. What leaders, parties and policies are most likely to represent a winning formula or team next time the electorate are asked to cast their vote. But the polling done in support of the talks was undertaken in an effort to solve problems in the negotiations so what we began to call ‘beauty contest’ questions were, for the most part, avoided.²² Additionally the policy questions run by the governments tended to emphasise attitudes towards policies for monitoring purposes rather than problem solving. For example the State Department constitutional question for the future of Northern Ireland run in 1995 only asked for the informants first preference and as such provided only limited information on the strength of support or opposition for the various options on offer (Table 4).

Table 4. Results of the 1995 US Consulate constitutional question

Which of the following political developments would you most like to see in Northern Ireland?	Protestants	Catholics
Northern Ireland becoming more fully part of the UK	48	6
A return to majority rule and a parliament at Stormont	8	2
A local parliament for Northern Ireland within the UK, with power sharing between local parties	33	23
Northern Ireland under the authority of both Britain and the Irish Republic	2	26
Northern Ireland as part of a united Ireland	2	33
Northern Ireland as an independent state	7	6

However, following the publication of the work done with the parties in the talks the State Department changed the style of their constitutional question to more accurately reflect our instrument in terms of both the language used to describe each option and by introducing a ‘preferred, acceptable, unacceptable’ scale (Table 5) and an ‘acceptable, unacceptable’ scale (Table 6).

Table 5. Results of the 1998 US Consulate constitutional question

I would like to ask your opinion of a number of political arrangements which might be considered for Northern Ireland. For each one, please tell me whether you consider that option to be preferred, acceptable or unacceptable.	Protestant Per cent preferred	Catholic Per cent preferred
Northern Ireland within the UK, with direct rule from London	40	4
A local assembly for Northern Ireland within the UK, based on majority rule	26	4
A local assembly for Northern Ireland within the UK with power-sharing between local parties	21	20
Northern Ireland under the authority of both the UK and the Republic of Ireland	1	16
Northern Ireland as part of a united Republic of Ireland	1	38
Northern Ireland as an independent state, not part of either the UK or the Republic of Ireland	8	7

Unfortunately the State Department option that ends up with the greatest cross community support ‘A local assembly for Northern Ireland within the UK with power-sharing between local parties’ critically does not include ‘North-South institutions’ (Table 1) and therefore does not accurately reflect the major elements of the Belfast Agreement. Consequently the Protestant support for this option is stronger

than it would be if it had been correctly described (52 per cent ‘unacceptable’ in Table 3 and only 25 per cent ‘unacceptable’ in Table 6).

Table 6. Results of the 2003 US Consulate constitutional question

Catholics	Direct rule	Local assembly - majority rule	Local assembly - power sharing	Joint UK-ROI authority	United Republic of Ireland	Independent state
Acceptable	23	42	79	63	58	30
Unacceptable	77	58	21	37	42	70

Protestants	Direct rule	Local assembly - majority rule	Local assembly - power sharing	Joint UK-ROI authority	United Republic of Ireland	Independent state
Acceptable	71	79	75	14	6	17
Unacceptable	29	21	25	86	94	83

For the most part State Department polls are kept confidential. The results reproduced here in Tables 4, 5 and 6 are taken from a US Consulate press release²³ put out in 2003 to demonstrate continuing support for devolved government in Northern Ireland. The results are ‘cherry picked’ for political effect. As a consequence journalists and politicians in Northern Ireland do not take them as seriously as they might if they came with full disclosure. The media and the US Consulate (in collaboration with the National Democratic Institute (NDI) in Northern Ireland), do sometimes consult with parties on questions to be asked but they do not go as far as asking parties to ‘sign off’ on a given questionnaire. Inaccuracies and biases creep in, there is little transparency and the standards for applied social science set by Campbell are far from being met.

I would be the first to admit that working with up to ten political parties and getting them all to agree a common program of research is not easy. It requires considerable patience but the benefits of building a political consensus supported by a majority of the electorate is well worth the effort. It brings stability through agreements that are clearly seen to have the support of the people. Working with just two political parties, behind closed doors, is much simpler. This is how governments usually handle their negotiations and when the British government reverted to this style of closed, exclusive dialogue in an effort to resolve outstanding differences between the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and Sinn Féin in 2004 the negotiations failed in December of that year.²⁴ Similarly negotiations between Greek and Turkish Cypriots failed in April 2004, between Israel and Palestine in 2000 and there is still a very great deal to be done to bring stability to the Balkans ten years after the end of their war. Hopefully exploring some comparisons between these examples of failed or inconclusive negotiations will help to shed a little more light on what kind of public opinion polling can best help to build peace in the modern world of 24/7 media coverage and well informed electorates who want and should be active partners in their own peace process.

Macedonia

The Centre for Democracy and Reconciliation in South East Europe (CDRSEE) had taken a keen interest in my Northern Ireland work since I met one of their directors at a conference on the future of Cyprus in Istanbul in December 1998.²⁵ Subsequently, in April 2000 they invited me to Thessaloniki in Greece to address a group of young parliamentarians from the Balkans²⁶ and in 2002, when there appeared to be a real possibility of war breaking out between Macedonians²⁷ and Albanian²⁸ insurgents, they asked me to run a poll in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia²⁹ (FYROM) to analyse the problem from the local point of view and hopefully identify some solutions. The project was co-funded by the Greek Ministry for Macedonia and Thrace, CDRSEE and the Foundation for Open Society Institute in Macedonia (FOSIM) who also helped to organise local support in terms of arranging interviews, interpreters, publication and press conferences, etc. Meetings were held in Skopje and Tetrovo with representatives from a broad cross section of society and the major ethnic groups. Building on the Northern Ireland experience informants were asked what they thought the major problems were and what could be done to resolve them. The top five ‘problems’ are listed in Table 7 from a list of 24 and the top five ‘solutions’ are listed in Table 8, also from a list of 24.³⁰ It may be helpful to point out here that I would only allow a ‘problem’ to be listed providing the informant who introduced the ‘problem’ would also offer a ‘solution’.

Table 7. Top five and last Macedonian and Albanian causes of continued conflict.

	Per cent ‘Very significant’	Macedonian		Albanian
1	Activities of Albanian paramilitary groups still operating in Macedonia (ANA).	85	Discrimination against minority ethnic groups in employment, education and language rights	80
2	Incomplete disarmament of NLA by NATO	78	Activities of Macedonian party police and paramilitary groups operating in Macedonia (Lions, Poskokos).	67
3	Many illegally held weapons in the region	74	Bribery and party political corruption that undermines the democratic foundations of the state	66
4	Serious organised crime including businessmen, paramilitaries and politicians	70	Poor economic opportunities for all sections of the society	61
5	Bribery and party political corruption that undermines the democratic foundations of the state	65	The failure of the Macedonian economy	58
24	Activities of Macedonian party police and paramilitary groups operating in Macedonia (Lions, Poskokos).	13	The FA goes too far regarding the requests for reforms	6

Interestingly the results for the ‘problems’ question were very similar to results gained for equivalent questions run in Northern Ireland.³¹ There Protestants would typically list the activities of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the decommissioning of illegally held weapons as their top priorities while Catholics would list discrimination and the failures of the state police service as their number one concerns. Conversely both Protestants and Macedonians saw their police as their guardians and consequently placed them at the bottom of their ‘problems’ lists. Perhaps that is why, when I showed the Northern Ireland work to Macedonians and Albanians they were most enthusiastic about doing a similar piece of research for themselves. Co-operation with the local people was never a problem once they knew

the issues that they raised would be properly addressed and that all the results would be put into the public domain.

Table 8. Top five and last Macedonian and Albanian priorities for peace and stability.

	Per cent 'Essential'	Macedonian		Albanian
1	Effective measures against paramilitaries and organised crime	83	State funded University in Albanian	85
2	Strengthening the rule of law	75	Full implementation of the FA	84
3	True court independence	75	Strong measures to prevent ethnic discrimination	82
4	Free and fair elections	72	Free and fair elections	80
5	Rebuild the houses of displaced people and secure their safety	72	Local government development	78
24	State funded University in Albanian	1	Build new communities for displaced peoples in Macedonia	12

Inevitably, in the 'solutions' question each community placed items at the top of their 'wish lists' that dealt with their particular communities 'problems'. Remarkably a 'State funded University in Albanian' came in at the very top of the Albanian list at 85 per cent 'essential' and at the very bottom of the Macedonian list at only 1 per cent 'essential'. Such polarisation was indicative of deep social divisions that needed to be addressed. But both Albanians and Macedonians also put 'Free and fair elections' near the top of both of their lists at 80 per cent and 72 per cent 'essential' respectively. On this point they shared a common concern so when this issue was explored in much more detail with a range of measures that could be taken to ensure free and fair elections a series of policies were identified that would gain the support of all sections of society (Table 9).

Table 9. Requirements for fair and free elections

	Per cent 'Essential' or 'Desirable'		
	All	Macedonian	Albanian
Parties should cease all violence and intimidation during elections	93	94	97
The politicians should avoid using language and speeches that incite ethnic hatred	88	85	98
All the political parties should sign a pledge for fair and free elections	88	87	92
International monitors should be pro-active in the maintenance of international standards for fair and free elections	81	78	89
The news media should avoid publishing and broadcasting stories that incite ethnic hatred	80	75	95
The police, army and paramilitary groups should stay out of the electoral process	79	77	87
International monitoring teams should be deployed in Macedonia at the earliest opportunity	76	74	88
There should be a campaign to educate and encourage citizens to vote	76	78	73
International monitors should be present in each polling station	60	60	60
International forces should be used to monitor and close the border to paramilitary groups intent on disrupting elections	58	69	21
International forces should be used to monitor the voting process throughout Macedonia during the elections	50	51	51
A policeman should be present in each polling station	42	51	13

The international community took note, appropriate actions were taken, the forthcoming elections were a success and Macedonia, not for the first time, avoided

being drawn into a war that had been so disastrous for her neighbours.³² Given the degree of ethnic tensions present in Macedonian society the First President, Kiro Gligorov, must take much credit for keeping his people out of the Balkans war. I had an opportunity to spend an hour with him going through the draft questionnaire before it was run. He took a very keen interest in it and remarked how thorough and relevant he thought the questions were when compared to the surveys he had been used to seeing prepared by the contractors for the US State Department. Later that year, when I had an opportunity to raise this point with EU staff in Brussels one senior diplomat remarked that he had once sat on the lawn of the US Ambassador's residence in Skopje drinking cocktails while composing such questions for inclusion in such polls. This methodology clearly does not meet the standards for engagement by interested parties recommended by Campbell, refined for public opinion purposes in Northern Ireland and now replicated in Macedonia. Additionally, unlike the State Department polls, all the results were published in the local press to stimulate critical discussion and maximise their public diplomacy impact. Finally the results were also published as a review 'Forum' article³³ in *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics* so that Campbell's standards for 'adversarial...interpretation of results'³⁴ could also be met. Public opinion polls, in particular, seem to lend themselves to this most creative of academic formats (also see 'Forum: Northern Ireland').³⁵

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Following the success of the Macedonian poll CDRSEE teamed up with the BBC World Service Trust to undertake a programme of public diplomacy and good governance in Bosnia and Herzegovina.³⁶ This project, funded by the European Commission and Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, included a poll to explore public opinion and the state of the Bosnian peace process. Using the same 'problems' and 'solutions' methodology employed in Northern Ireland and Macedonia detailed results were obtained for literally hundreds of policies that could be implemented to strengthen and consolidate their peace and move the country forward along the path to EU membership. Subjects covered included the causes and consequences of the war, problems with the Dayton Agreement, political culture and elections, inter-ethnic relations, public corruption and the criminal justice system, the economy, education, the role of women in society, the media, domestic governance and the role of the international community. With only a few exceptions there was a great deal of agreement about what the major problems were and what needed to be done by government and the international community to remedy the situation. A notable exception was who was to blame for the war, and, to a lesser extent, the shape of a final agreed constitutional settlement for Bosnia and Herzegovina.³⁷ Again, for comparative purposes, I shall focus on the constitutional issues here.

The peace agreement 'hammered out' in Dayton in November 1995 was designed to bring an end to the war by rewarding the military and political leaderships of the Bosniak, Serb and Croat factions with a share in federal power and administrative control over their respective enclaves. The result was an unstable peace with ultimate authority rested in the hands of the Office of the High Representative,³⁸ a constitution that few understood and a system of government that, for the most part, simply did not work. Although the Dayton Agreement stopped the violence it could not also be the legal foundation upon which to build an efficient, modern and economically sound state ready to take its place as a new member of the European Union. The people of Bosnia-Herzegovina understood this very well and knew what had to be done to put

matters right. Their priorities for constitutional reform are listed in Table 10. There is no need to give an ethnic break down, as the highest level of ‘unacceptable’ recorded was only 4 per cent.

Table 10. Options for constitutional reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina

All of Bosnia and Herzegovina Per cent ‘essential’, ‘desirable’, ‘acceptable’, ‘tolerable’, ‘unacceptable’	Essential	Desirable	Acceptable	Tolerable	Unacceptable
Fewer levels of government	47	31	17	3	2
Establish a Constitutional Commission to advise on reform	45	32	16	4	2
Simplify government services to municipal level	44	39	13	3	1
Do not duplicate services in Entities, Cantons and Municipalities	44	34	15	4	2
Reform the Constitution through Parliament	41	32	17	6	3
Zagreb, Belgrade and Sarajavo should cooperate to join the EU together	51	27	15	4	4

A first attempt was also made to take a look at some constitutional packages as had been done in Northern Ireland. The question and results are given in Table 11. The least popular option was the break up of the state at 59 per cent ‘unacceptable’ (71 per cent for Bosniaks, 36 for Serbs and 72 for Croats) while the most popular option was regionalisation in accordance with European standards at 24 per cent ‘unacceptable’ (17 per cent for Bosniaks, 28 for Serbs and 39 for Croats). This option was more acceptable than the status quo of the Dayton Agreement at 32 per cent ‘unacceptable’ and compares favourably with 40 per cent ‘unacceptable’ for what was essentially the Belfast Agreement (27 per cent for Catholics and 52 per cent for Protestants, Table 3).

Table 11. Question: ‘There has recently been quite a lot of discussion about possible changes to the Dayton Agreement and the need to reform the Constitution. With regards to possible future political and regional changes to the system of government for Bosnia and Herzegovina please indicate which ones you consider to be ‘Essential’, ‘Desirable’, ‘Acceptable’, ‘Tolerable’ or ‘Unacceptable’.’

Per cent ‘Unacceptable’	All	Bosniak	Serb	Croat
Bosnia and Herzegovina as it was before the war during the existence of the SFRJ	26	11	32	60
Bosnia and Herzegovina with decentralised regions in accordance with European standards	24	17	28	39
Bosnia and Herzegovina as a decentralised state with powers going to the Municipalities instead of the entities and cantons which will go	37	17	52	66
Bosnia and Herzegovina as it is now with two entities and the District of Brcko	32	40	10	60
Bosnia and Herzegovina with three entities - each for 3 constiutal people	39	55	22	22
The abolition of cantons and a federation between Bosnia Herzegovina and Republica Srpska as two entities	41	40	31	69
Bosnia and Herzegovina made up of just cantons without entities or a District	38	22	53	51
Bosnia and Herzegovina made up of a large number of federal units with equal powers	39	25	47	58
Bosnia and Herzegovina as it is now with two entities and the District of Brcko but with the higher levels of responsibilities given to the state	35	34	25	62
Separation and union of some parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina with neighbouring states	59	71	36	72

These changes to the constitution are clearly ‘doable’ and when asked ‘Do you want the people of Bosnia and the international community to negotiate, agree and implement a programme of political, social and economic reform from all the options reviewed here?’ 94 per cent said ‘yes’.

In Northern Ireland the Downing Street Declaration (1993)³⁹ and Framework Documents (1995)⁴⁰ outlined many of the central features later found in the Belfast Agreement, completed in 1996. People knew what was coming. Similarly, numerous reports have heralded the need for reform in Bosnia-Herzegovina⁴¹ and the opinion poll briefly reviewed here suggests the people are ready to make the necessary changes. However, following the publication of the poll the High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, while echoing some of the main conclusions of the survey also squarely placed the responsibility for such reform with the people and their politicians:

The Dayton Agreement was not designed for state building but to end a war. It ought to be changed, perhaps, but that is not the business of the international community. This issue will be decided by the citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina because it is their country. (Paddy Ashdown, 2005)⁴²

Their country ‘yes’ but not altogether their constitution and like the people of Northern Ireland they may well need some help. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Democratization Department run an extensive program of public opinion polling in Bosnia-Herzegovina⁴³ in support of reform and although I was given access to much of their recent work when I was there a senior manager pointed out that a great deal of it was not published and they did not undertake research projects in partnership with local politicians. However, the manager thought that this might now be a good idea. I can only hope that this has been done as the results of this poll suggest that, as in Northern Ireland, such engagement can be used to explore and define the steps that need to be taken to achieve reform with, critically, strong support from the general public.

Israel and Palestine

I first went to Israel in 1968 just after the 67’ War and for six months worked as a diving instructor at the Red Sea resort of Eilat. It was largely my experiences as a young man in this country that prompted me to make a career of peace studies. With a post-doctoral fellowship from the Canadian government I returned to Israel in 1987 to complete a comparative study of the processes of social integration amongst Eastern and Western Jewish children who went to school together in Jerusalem and Catholic and Protestant Christian children who went to school together in Belfast.⁴⁴ The study was done using a Smallest Space Analysis programme developed for this purpose⁴⁵ at the Israel Institute of Applied Social Research (IIASR) later know as the Louis Guttman Institute following his death in October of 1987. Given the greater cultural differences of Jewish children migrating to Israel from very different parts of the world we discovered the children in Belfast were integrating better than the children in Jerusalem.

The IIASR/Louis Guttman Institute is worthy of a special mention here as perhaps the first organisation to regularly monitor the state of a peace process using public

opinion polls and most of the work still done in Israel and Palestine follows in that tradition of tracking key indicators of inter-ethnic attitudes and values. Indeed much of the peace and conflict monitoring around the world is shaped by this experience. Significantly these questions, for the most part, were designed by social psychologists to achieve objectivity through carefully constructed neutrality while in Northern Ireland politicians designed the questions and neutrality was achieved by working across the breadth of the political and social spectrum with an emphasis on options for policies.

Following the conclusion of the Belfast Agreement in 1998 and the 'Mitchell Review' of the Agreement in 1999 Atlantic Philanthropies awarded me a two-year fellowship in 2000 to explore the possibilities of applying the methods developed there internationally. With the assistance of this grant I made arrangements to visit Jerusalem again in 2002 and as my research there had previously been done through Jewish institutions I now made a point of affiliating myself with a Palestinian institution. The Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA) in Jerusalem arranged for me to give seminars there and at their offices in Ramallah. Through these and other meetings it soon became clear that a group of suitable people could be brought together to design and run polls similar to those undertaken in Northern Ireland. Naomi Chazan, who was then the Deputy Speaker of the Knesset and a past Director of the Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace as well as Ghassan Khatib, Director of the Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre (JMCC) and who later become the Minister of Labour in the Palestinian Authority cabinet, both expressed a keen interest in such a project. The Director of PASSIA, Mahdi Abdul Hadi, was particularly interested in running a poll that explored the possibilities for elections in the Occupied Territories. Some questions were drafted and with the support of the French government he was to fly to Paris to examine these issues further but when his colleagues were stopped at Israeli check points and prevented from joining him at the airport the project was brought to a close and elections were not held until after Arafat's death in 2004. Freedom of association and freedom of expression is a minimum requirement for this kind of peace research and this condition could not be met at that time.

Regrettably the public opinion polling and peace research is not well coordinated between the two communities in Israel and Palestine or even between the academics and the politicians within each community. These omissions lead to results that fail to realise their full potential by examining only one side of what may be a common problem and/or leaving out what may be the most critical or important questions that need to be addressed. Here are three such examples that deal with some of the most difficult issues in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process: the future of the city of Jerusalem, refugees and the right of return, and public support for a negotiated settlement.

The future of the city of Jerusalem

I was invited to attend The International Conference on Jerusalem organised by the Arab League at the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House) in December of 1999. At that conference a very moderate and clearly pro-peace with the Palestinians American Jewish researcher from Maryland University, Dr. Jerome Segal, gave a very good paper on public opinion and which communities considered which districts of Jerusalem to be of particular importance to them.⁴⁶ This programme

of research was undertaken with a view to building a consensus around an eventual division of the city as part of a final settlement. Now this is probably the only realistic solution to this particular problem but unfortunately, at that time, the negotiating position of the Palestinians was for an open shared city along the lines of UN resolutions 181 and 303. But Dr. Segal had neglected to test his options against this particular scenario so all of his findings were dismissed as irrelevant and, for all intents and purposes, the \$125,000 that the Ford Foundation had put into the project was wasted. I suggested to Dr. Segal that he should now repeat his research but this time he should engage with both Israeli and Palestinian politicians and negotiators but, perhaps understandably, Dr. Segal was very disappointed with the reception his research received and decided to move on to other topics. His already low opinion of politicians sank to newfound depths. But politicians have to deal in the real worlds of their electorates and if events had followed similar experiences in Northern Ireland, and if Dr. Segal's proposals for the future of Jerusalem had proven the lesser of other evils when considered alongside the unworkable ideal of an open and shared city then the politicians just might have reluctantly accepted Dr. Segal's conclusions. Indeed, an earlier poll undertaken in 1995 by the Israel Palestine Centre for Research and Information (IPCRI) indicated that this would be the case.⁴⁷ An opportunity was lost because the policies of Campbell's *adversarial stakeholder[s]* were not included in the research design.

Refugees and the right of return

All wars create refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Sometimes they get to return to their homes when hostilities are ended but all too frequently they do not. Most of the conflicts reviewed here have generated refugees and IDPs, sometimes generation on generation only to become pawns in the politics of peace negotiations. International law is clear on this point. In Cyprus, across the new Balkan states, created from the break up of the former Yugoslavia and in Israel and Palestine all the refugees and IDPs have the right to return to their former residences but, in practice, only a minority percentage will ever get the opportunity to do so. In all these conflicts a path has to be found between the ideal of international law and the pragmatism of a negotiated settlement. Unfortunately, in Palestine, these two perspectives on the refugee problem have been researched independently of each other. For example an IPCRI poll undertaken in 2001 has a strong focus on the legal right to return with a little over 90 per cent of refugees interviewed not willing to accept compensation in place of the right of return.⁴⁸ On the other hand a poll undertaken by Khalil Shikaki of the Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research (PCPSR) explores various pragmatic options for negotiation and comes to the conclusion that a majority of refugees, as much as 90 per cent, would accept compensation in place of the right to return.⁴⁹ These very different results precipitated a fierce debate in Palestine and the Palestinian press around the world.⁵⁰ Shikaki's questions were condemned as misleading by the NGOs who represented Palestinian refugees with whom Shikaki claimed to have collaborated. In this case a joint project between these various '*adversarial stakeholder[s]*', to use Campbell's term, would have solved this problem and the funders of these projects should insist on such participation and co-operation in the future.⁵¹

Public support for a negotiated settlement

With the winding up of the IIASR/Louis Guttman Institute in 1996 Professor Tamar Herman and the Tami Steinmetz Centre for Peace Research at Tel Aviv University

took the program of monitoring the Israel Palestine peace process forward. They do excellent work in the best traditions of the IIASR/Louis Guttman Institute and I made a point of visiting them when I was there in 2002. Herman gave me a copy of a then soon to be published paper 'Divided yet United: Israeli-Jewish Attitudes Towards the Oslo Process' which she co-authored with Yuchtman-Yaar.⁵² It is a very good paper in terms of its analysis of the extensive time-line data collected at the Tami Steinmetz Centre and they conclude that:

These shared values mark the red lines that policymakers cannot cross without risking the total loss of public support, as occurred in summer 2000 when Barak's far-reaching peace proposals were rejected by the majority including many in the pro-Oslo camp, leading to his government's collapse. (Hermann and Yuchtman-Yaar, 2002)

They go on to say that similar properties of public opinion may be found elsewhere and in this they are also right. A few days later Ghassan Khatib at the JMCC⁵³ showed me very similar time-line data for the Palestinian population from which it was possible to conclude that if Arafat had gone any further at the 2000 negotiations then he would also have crossed red lines that would not have been supported by his followers. In this case there was nothing wrong with the research design or the questions asked in either Israel or Palestine. In this case, unfortunately, Campbell's *adversarial stakeholder[s]* did not co-operate to jointly participate 'in the interpretation of results.' If peace negotiations are to be successful then realism is required on both sides and all parties need to know where everyone's red lines are. Israeli and Palestinian public opinion researchers must do this if they genuinely want to make a contribution to the achievement of peace and again international funders should make this a condition of their continued support.

What amounts to little more than token efforts are made to create co-operation between public opinion and peace researchers in Israel and Palestine. For example the Tami Steinmetz Centre and the JMCC do joint projects⁵⁴ but when it really mattered, as noted above, that co-operation breaks down. The research is often superficial when looked at alongside the Northern Ireland work and although the public opinion research done there does suggest people do want an agreement around security and a two state solution, the research is not done as a collaborative enterprise with party negotiators in an effort to pin down the details of an acceptable accommodation. The 'people' are not brought along in and with negotiations in a pro-active public way so that when deals are attempted they tend to fail for lack of public preparation. Regrettably President Clinton's efforts may have failed because of this lack of pre-negotiation problem solving and 'stage setting' and it seems very likely that future efforts may similarly fail if negotiating practices are not changed.⁵⁵

An official from the US Consulate in Jerusalem once asked me what I do when I get the wrong result. He was a little surprised that I publish everything. I tried to explain that it was not possible to get a wrong result if the questionnaire covers all the issues fairly and if the sampling is accurate. He did not seem to understand. He wanted to put his finger in Campbell's galvanometer and 'cherry pick' the meter reading he desired. This approach to public opinion and peace research does not work and must be abandoned.⁵⁶ Cyprus is another sad example of this kind of failure.

Cyprus

Following meetings and lectures at the Nobel Institute and Peace Research Institute in Oslo (PRIO) I was invited to attend a meeting of the Greek-Turkish Forum in Istanbul in December 1998. The meeting was organised by the PRIO and the Norwegian Foreign Ministry. Richard Holbrooke, President Clinton's Special Envoy for Cyprus was in the Chair. As a negotiator his style was quite the opposite of Senator George Mitchell's. With a merchant banking background Holbrooke liked to press people to make deals while Mitchell, who had been a judge before entering politics, liked to listen and develop a consensus. I made a presentation of my Northern Ireland work to the Greek and Turkish Cypriots present and explained how it was used to help build a consensus around the Belfast Agreement. They subsequently decided they would like to undertake a similar program of research in Cyprus and even settled on the subject for the first poll, the full range of confidence-building measures being discussed at the Forum. We expected strong positive responses to all the matters being raised and from there we intended to go on to deal with the more difficult political issues that would have to be addressed to find a solution to the Cyprus problem in later polls. We had a plan of action.

Unfortunately the US State Department took over the plan and substituted a program of confidential polls of their own that mixed up questions about the future of Cyprus with questions that analysed political support for local politicians and US foreign policy. However, their constitutional questions now followed the format of the questions the State Department had used in Northern Ireland and these produced some quite promising results (Table 12).⁵⁷ Although Turkish Cypriots preferred permanent partition as their first choice at 47 per cent and Greek Cypriots preferred a united Cyprus with proportional representation as their first choice at 53 per cent a clear majority of Greek Cypriots (65 per cent) and almost half of the Turkish Cypriots (47 per cent) considered a bi-communal, bi-zonal entity with strong central government 'acceptable'. These results were as good as the results obtained in Northern Ireland for the Belfast Agreement (Table 3) and clearly could form the basis for a negotiated settlement. With the added benefits of EU entry a deal should not have been too difficult to achieve.

Table 12. Greek and Turkish Cypriot preferences for constitutional arrangements

Greek Cypriot (GC) and Turkish Cypriot (TC) Per cent 'acceptable' Per cent 'unacceptable' Per cent 'most preferred'	GC Acceptable	GC Unacceptable	TC Acceptable	TC Unacceptable	GC Preferred	TC Preferred
Permanent partition into two independent states	6	94	72	20	2	47
Bi-communal, bi-zonal entity with weak central government	6	92	31	54	0	10
Bi-communal, bi-zonal entity with strong central government	65	31	47	38	29	18
United Cyprus with proportional representation	80	16	19	67	53	3
Union of South with Greece and North with Turkey	4	95	27	61	-	-
War to liberate occupied territories	14	85	na	na	7	na
Turkey takes control of island	na	na	27	57	na	7
No change	13	-	31	-	5	3

Regrettably these results were not developed further as part of a proactive program of public diplomacy and were therefore of little value as an aid to the Cyprus peace process. Indeed these polls may have done more harm than good. When I eventually got to Cyprus in 2002 the US Embassy staff believed they were dealing with an intractable problem that was almost impossible to solve because the type of questions that ended up in the media were frequently biased towards the ‘problems’ and away from the ‘solutions’. Here are a couple of examples:

Example 1. In September 2000 *Kibris* published a poll that tracked Turkish Cypriot first preferences for a constitutional solution (Table 13). It indicated a clear move away from ‘two independent states’ towards a ‘bizonal federation’. But the poll did not include the views of the Greek Cypriots and what might have been an ‘acceptable’ negotiated settlement.⁵⁸ Similarly a poll published by Antenna FM in 2002 asked Greek Cypriots about their predictions on the form of a solution that will eventually be found for Cyprus, 34 per cent said two states, 16 per cent said federation, 11 per cent confederation and 34 per cent did not express a view.⁵⁹ On this occasion the opinions of the Turkish Cypriots were not sampled so neither of these polls could be used to help build a consensus around a compromise.

Table 13. Turkish Cypriot preferences for constitutional arrangements

Per cent	December 1999	September 2000
Bizonal federation	28.2	31.7
Confederation based on two states	14.5	27.2
Two independent states	38.5	23.3
Integration of the TRNC with Turkey	8.2	7.7
A unitary state	6.6	5.3
Other	0.6	1.4
No idea/no reply	3.4	3.3

Example 2. *Kibris* also noted that most Turkish Cypriots were pessimistic about the prospects for a negotiated settlement (Table 14).⁶⁰ Similar results to such questions were always to be found in Northern Ireland. After a generation of failed negotiations nothing else could be expected. However, in Northern Ireland, when people were asked if they wanted their politicians to negotiate and agree a settlement an overwhelming majority always responded ‘yes’.⁶¹ But this question was not asked in the Cyprus poll so that the politicians and the international community could always point out that the people did not expect success when they, themselves, failed to deliver. Similarly prejudicial questions were run on the Greek Cypriot part of the island (Table 15).⁶² These questions were designed to provide political ‘cover’.

Table 14. Turkish Cypriot ‘Hope placed in talks’ in 2000

	Per cent
Very hopeful	4.9
Hopeful	21.6
Rather hopeful	36.2
Not at all hopeful	35.6
No idea/no reply	1.7

Table 15. Greek Cypriot ‘outcome of talks’ in 2002

	Per cent
Current Cyprus talks will lead to a deadlock	64
Current Cyprus talks will lead to a settlement	27

The public diplomacy dangers of allowing these kinds of questions to be run in separate media polls on the island were brought to the attention of the US Embassy staff in Nicosia, US government officials in Washington and to members of the UN negotiating team in Cyprus. I also pointed out that the US program of polling was relatively undeveloped when compared to the Northern Ireland work and that a lot more could be done with it to make a positive contribution to the Cyprus peace process. But those responsible for the US polling did not seem to understand or just simply did not want to understand so the Greek-Turkish Forum invited me back to the island later that year to talk directly to members of the Greek and Turkish Cypriot negotiating teams as well as representatives of civil society. Although the Greek Cypriot negotiators wanted to go ahead with a poll the Turkish Cypriot government did not. However, the Turkish Cypriot opposition parties (who are now in power) did want to proceed, but in the end, without US support no polls were undertaken and without the benefits of an effective program of public diplomacy both the negotiations and subsequent referendum failed in April 2004, and Cyprus remained divided.

Given their special responsibilities for Cyprus the Foreign Affairs Committee (FAC) of the United Kingdom House of Commons lunched an investigation into the failure of these negotiations and referendum. Fortunately, in the mean time, Alexandros Lordos, a Cypriot psychologist, frustrated by these same failures undertook his own program of public opinion research to examine why the UN plan had been rejected by the Greek Cypriots. It should be pointed out that he did this at his own expense.⁶³ His poll and analysis clearly demonstrated that an agreement could have been reached if better adjusted to the needs of both communities.⁶⁴ The FAC recognized this fact in their report.⁶⁵ Lordos then undertook another poll but this time in the Turkish Cypriot North⁶⁶ and he then presented the results of both polls to the Wilton Park conference on *Cyprus: The Way Forward* in February 2005. Wilton Park is an Executive Agency of the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and they concluded:

[paragraph] 30. The importance of regular opinion polling was underlined at the conference to indicate public opinion on a range of issues at different stages of the negotiations before the public are asked to vote on the whole package. Experience elsewhere has shown that there is often much more flexibility on the part of the public than politicians believe. (Wilton Park, 2005)⁶⁷

Subsequently, on 22 June 2005 the same point was made to the UN Security Council as follows:

Mr. President...[paragraph] 20. There are some important positives to acknowledge. All parties wish to see some sort of resumption of active UN good offices. All parties accept that the UN plan should serve as the document on which negotiations would resume. Political figures on both sides in Cyprus are maintaining cordial contacts with each other in an effort to promote mutual understanding. There are useful contacts at other levels too, whether among

experts on particular subjects or among ordinary people now that they are able [to] cross to the other side. And I was interested to learn that an independent bicomunal survey that polled attitudes to potential changes to the UN plan found the encouraging result among grass roots opinion on both sides that it might be possible to make certain changes that would secure majority support for the plan in both communities. (Sir Kieran Prendergast, 2005)⁶⁸

If the Greek and Turkish Cypriots who had wanted to undertake a program of public opinion research and public diplomacy in 1998 had been encouraged in this enterprise instead of being discouraged, then, it seems very likely that the Cyprus problem could have been solved in 2004. The FAC and Wilton Park reports detail the failures of simply 'doing deals behind closed doors' very well indeed and, unfortunately for the people of Cyprus, stand as a prime example of how NOT to undertake negotiations in the modern world of informed electorates, a free press, adherence to democratic principles and referenda. Fortunately no one has died as a result of these failures in recent years and the international community can now make good on their omissions. But the same cannot be said of relations between the West and the Muslim World and what is called the 'War on Terror'. In New York, London, Madrid and Bali; in Jerusalem, Jenine, Falluja and Baghdad, the death toll mounts.

The Muslim World and the 'War on Terror'

The US Department of State presently undertake an average of two polls a year in most countries where they have a mission.⁶⁹ But the primary purpose of these polls is to gather information on local party political strengths and weaknesses, local social and political issues and international relations with an emphasis on the US and US foreign policy. Additionally the National Democratic Institute (NDI), International Republican Institute (IRI) and USAID sponsor work in support of programs for democracy and good governance that include public opinion polls often undertaken in collaboration with the State Department. Finally other US institutes, such as the Council on Foreign Relations, the Carnegie and Ford foundations, numerous university institutions with US grants, United States Institute of Peace (USIP), Academy for Educational Development (AED) and others all undertake polls on an ad hoc basis. Significantly a June 2003 Pew Research Center 20-nation public opinion survey found extremely unfavourable attitudes towards the United States, and recent U.S. government efforts at public diplomacy to turn the tide met with only mixed success.⁷⁰

With a view to making US public diplomacy more effective in their dealings with the Muslim World the 2003 reports of both the US General Accounting Office⁷¹ (GAO) and the Council on Foreign Relations⁷² (CFR) advocated much greater use of public opinion polls. However the CFR also concluded that:

This report is about strategies to address those leaders and people who are touched by anti-Americanism but who remain reachable. The United States can reach these people by listening to their needs and perspectives, by initiating a genuine dialogue, and by taking into account their cultural and political realities as Washington formulates its foreign policies. (Council on Foreign Relations, 2003)

Domestic researchers in the Middle East also use public opinion polls to explore relations between the different communities in their states, for example Palestine⁷³ and Israel⁷⁴ (reviewed earlier) and Jordan.⁷⁵ The states of Central Asia have also been the subject of a recent study that explores the prospects for reformers and Islamists using public opinion polls as the principal tool of enquiry and analysis.⁷⁶

But none of these polling activities presently support public diplomacy in a sustained way as was done in Northern Ireland. Either because they must focus on the immediate task of gathering information; or developing local democratic institutions; or, as independent enterprises, they fail to connect to local and international political events in a way that can effectively advance the attitudes, values and social relationships they are researching. The CFR observed that:

The imperative for effective public diplomacy now requires much wider use of newer channels of communication and more customized, two-way dialogue and debate as opposed to ‘push-down’, one-way mass communication.... U.S. foreign policy is too often communicated in a ‘push-down’ style that does not take into account the perspectives of the foreign audience or open the floor for dialogue and debate. (Council on Foreign Relations, 2003)⁷⁷

The research methods developed in Northern Ireland and successfully reproduced in the Balkans and Cyprus clearly do not make this mistake and in an effort to achieve the kind of balanced dialogue sought as an ideal by the Council on Foreign Relations I was invited to make recommendations to the US State Department in October 2003 at a seminar arranged for this purpose by the Yaffe Center for Persuasive Communication at the University of Michigan.⁷⁸ Participants included public opinion experts, social psychologists, journalists and media specialists, advertising and public relations executives, political scientists and area studies specialists with a focus on, for example, Middle East public attitudes⁷⁹ as well as public diplomacy policymakers from the U.S. State Department. Remarkably all these experts told the State Department essentially the same thing and that was to listen to what the target audience had to say and to take their views ‘on board’ when formulating policies and communicating programmes of remedial action.

Regrettably this advice has not been followed up with adequate effect. Applications made by myself and with colleagues to the US Institute of Peace (USIP),⁸⁰ UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)⁸¹ and appropriate US and UK government departments,⁸² to critically examine public opinion research as it relates to Muslim communities and the Muslim World, were all turned down in 2004. Disappointingly, the work that has been done falls far short of the standards for applied social research set by Campbell and as such fails to detail adequate solutions to the problems of establishing good relations with and between Muslim peoples and their states. In Northern Ireland similar omissions led to a failure to properly understand the causes of Catholic alienation in the 1970s,⁸³ resulting in two more decades of insurgency and civil war. The US, UK and the Muslim World cannot afford to repeat these mistakes again. But the limited polling that has been done in Britain since the London bombings on July 7 and 21, 2005 do point to the dangers that should have been properly researched and identified following the events of 9/11, 2001.

It is true that, in recent years, the problems of discrimination and social integration, as they relate to the Muslim community in Britain, have been the subject of much well funded independent research.⁸⁴ But the public opinion polls undertaken as part of these researches have failed to ask the critical questions central to an understanding of the problems of alienation and radicalisation of young British Muslims and the society in which they have grown up, been educated, live and work. The primary responsibility for monitoring such attitudes, values and relevant dependent and independent variables rests with the UK Home Office. They started their Citizenship Survey in 2001 with a national sample of 10,000 and minority ethnic booster sample of 5,000. Initially this very extensive poll was run once a year but it was increased to twice a year in 2003.⁸⁵ Data from these surveys are fed into the Home Office Civil Renewal Unit, Active Community Unit, Race Equality Unit and Community Cohesion Unit. Unfortunately none of the questions in these surveys deal directly with support and/or justification for terrorist activity. In particular there are no questions on attitudes towards the foreign policy of the UK and her allies in the Middle East.⁸⁶ Surprisingly the same omission occurs in the 2004 surveys undertaken by the Islamic Human Rights Commission⁸⁷ and the Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism (FAIR).⁸⁸ FAIR reported their findings to the Home Affairs Committee's Inquiry into Terrorism and Social Cohesion and, perhaps in part due to these obvious biases in data collection, they drew no conclusions about either the extent of radicalisation amongst the British Muslim population or the full range of grievances that might lay at the heart of their alienation. In their Sixth Report published in April 2005 the Home Affairs Committee conclude:

[paragraph] 13. We believe that the analysis in the Cantle report remains valid. Key issues in the report, such as the importance of leadership, especially at a local level, the need to overcome segregation, the role of schools and the importance of opportunities for young people and the need for clarity over what it means to be British, are central to the problems discussed in this inquiry. The threat of international terrorism brings a new dimension to existing issues, and perhaps makes their resolution even more pressing - it does not change them. (Home Affairs Committee, 2005)

But political analysts have concluded that British involvement in Iraq has increased Britain's vulnerability to terrorist attacks⁸⁹ and Al-Quaeda have attributed the cause of the London bombings directly to the UK's actions in the Middle East.⁹⁰

Hasn't Sheik Osama bin Laden told you that you will not dream of security before there is security in Palestine and before all the infidel armies withdraw from the land of Muhammed. (Ayman al Zawahiri, 2005)

Not surprisingly then, following the London bombings, independent polls undertaken by YouGov for the *Daily Telegraph*⁹¹ and by CommunicateResearch⁹² for *Sky News* addressed these politically sensitive issues directly (also see *The Sun*/MORI⁹³ poll). In the CommunicateResearch poll 2 per cent of 462 Muslims interviewed on July 20/21 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with what the suicide bombers did on July 7 and in the YouGov poll conducted between July 15 and 22, 6 per cent of 526 Muslims interviewed said the bombings were justified. These polls are undoubtedly not as accurate as the Home Office surveys but these percentages are dangerously high and could translate into potentially thousands of Muslims willing to become involved in

terrorist activities. With regards to motives only 1 per cent of respondents in the YouGov poll agreed with the statement that ‘Western society is decadent and immoral, and Muslims should seek to bring it to an end, if necessary by violence’ while in the CommunicateResearch poll 61 per cent ‘strongly agreed’ or ‘agreed’ with the statement that ‘Britain’s role in the Iraq war was largely to blame for the London bombings’.

Perhaps influenced by the results of these polls, Dominic Grieve, the opposition Conservative Party shadow Attorney General, expressed the view that the London suicide attacks were ‘totally explicable’ because of the deep anger felt by British Muslims over Iraq. Hazel Blears, the Home Office minister, much to the annoyance of many leaders in the Muslim community, strongly rejected this analysis.⁹⁴

In this case the failure of the Home Office research can best be characterised in terms of Campbell’s *adversarial stakeholder[s]* not being allowed or encouraged to explore ‘measures of feared undesirable outcomes’ in terms of alienation and radicalisation in the context of British foreign policy in the Middle East. Unlike Cyprus, however, this failure has not contributed to a failed negotiation and referendum but to a failure of intelligence, resultant bombings and deaths. There have been calls for a public inquiry to scrutinise the work of the security services in these regards.⁹⁵ Such an inquiry should clearly include a close examination of the public opinion research undertaken by the British Home Office.

To be a little more specific, the work undertaken in Northern Ireland suggests the Home Office program of research should have rigorously explored all the ‘problems’ and potential ‘solutions’ as they relate to Muslim alienation, radicalisation and the growth of the UK insurgency. This should have included both domestic and foreign policy issues developed in questions from interviews with both moderate and extremist Muslim groups as well as with representatives of political opinion, from across the neoconservative/liberal spectrum, in the population at large. Some recent polls have started to do this. The BBC/MORI poll⁹⁶ of 8/9 August 2005 investigates some useful ideas around the issues of identity and multiculturalism while the Muslim Voice poll⁹⁷ of 27 July /14 August 2005 examines the authority and influence of the current Muslim establishment and religious leaders. But all of this is too little too late. The Home Office had the responsibility, opportunity and resources to do the relevant research after the events of 9/11 but failed to do so.

Conclusion: Coming to Terms with the Politics of Peace Research

Providing the standards for applied social science set by Campbell are met 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:

- 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.
- 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.
- 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 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 may wish to consider adding the standards set by Campbell for applied social research to their criteria of best practice, particularly where matters of war and peace, life and death, are concerned. The public enquiry following 9/11 and what may be a public enquiry following the London bombings, now known as 7/7, would seem to require nothing less than the oversight of independent third parties to the relevant research and/or, to use Campbell’s term, the inclusion of *adversarial stakeholder[s]*. Finally, with regard to the special needs of opinion polling and peacemaking some very specific recommendations, not included in my earlier ‘peace polls check list’,⁹⁸ may also be worthy of consideration such as:

- The need for specialised polls run by people with appropriate political and communication skills as well as public opinion expertise.

- For these polls not to be part of wider polls but dedicated research enterprises designed to address matters of particular concern with clear research and public diplomacy objectives.
- For the work to be undertaken with local input but not with just one academic, political or community perspective.
- The need for outside facilitators to be brought in to co-ordinate the research when local representatives cannot work together to produce a common piece of work.
- Publication to make sure the research is made available to academics, journalists and broadcasters for critical review and incorporation into other peace-building activities.

If codes of professional ethics and standards of best practice set by WAPOR were always adhered to then doing what has been suggested here may 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 intervention. 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. Can or should WAPOR do this? Well this, of course, is not for me to say but perhaps, by way of an analogy, the modus operandi of human rights organisations like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International can help provide an answer. Successful law firms, whose wealthy clients may include governments who abuse human rights, give generously to such organisations. WAPOR could follow this example directly and/or encourage her members to establish a pro-active monitoring NGO tasked to make sure public opinion research is effectively used to resolve conflicts, give advise and support to independent practitioners in the field and to undertake interventionist polls when it is considered absolutely necessary to do so. If all of these things are done then there is a very real possibility that pollsters can become peacemakers. The globalisation of conflict and terror seems to require a global response and WAPOR have their part to play.

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