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**FIGHTING ETHNO-NATIONALIST TERRORISM: A  
NORTHERN IRELAND SOLUTION FOR PALESTINE?**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **FIGHTING ETHNO-NATIONALIST TERRORISM: A NORTHERN IRELAND SOLUTION FOR PALESTINE?**

*In a time when much of the world appears focused on the specter of religious extremism, it is important not to forget the threat posed in many parts of the world by ethno-nationalist terrorism. From the LTTE in Sri Lanka to various organizations fighting in Palestine to the Irish Republican Army in Northern Ireland, ethno-nationalist terrorists are similar in that they seize on the grievances of ethnic minorities and mobilize these communities against their respective governments. This paper will focus on case studies of two of the most enduring political problems of the last century; the 'troubles' of Northern Ireland and the Palestinian Question. In each of these cases, ethno-nationalist terrorism has led to the death of many innocent civilians. Whereas intermittent terrorist activity continues in Israel and the Occupied Territories, peace appears to be here to stay in Northern Ireland nearly a decade after the signing of the 1998 Good Friday peace accords. Beginning by examining the shared commonalities of motivation and historical origins of the respective terrorist groups, the paper will then discuss the various strategies that have been used to in countering terrorism and peacemaking in these areas.*

**KEYWORDS:** Terrorism, Northern Ireland, Arab-Israeli conflict, Palestine, Ethnic Conflict, Peace negotiations.

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# 1. FIGHTING ETHNO-NATIONALIST TERRORISM: A NORTHERN IRELAND SOLUTION FOR PALESTINE?

"Whereas political terrorists use violence in a symbolic manner and religious extremists use it to make a theological statement, violence is the *raison d'être* of ethnic terrorism. It keeps an idea alive."<sup>1</sup> In a time when much of the world appears focused on the specter of religious extremism, it is important not to forget the threat posed in many parts of the world by ethno-nationalist terrorism. From the LTTE in Sri Lanka to various organizations fighting in Palestine to the Irish Republican Army in Northern Ireland, ethno-nationalist terrorists are similar in that they seize on the grievances of ethnic minorities and mobilize these communities against their respective governments. This paper will focus on case studies of two of the most enduring political problems of the last century; the 'troubles' of Northern Ireland and the Palestinian Question. In each of these cases, ethno-nationalist terrorism has led to the death of many innocent civilians. Whereas intermittent terrorist activity continues in Israel and the Occupied Territories, peace appears here to stay in Northern Ireland nearly eight years after the 1998 Good Friday peace accords. Beginning by examining the shared commonalities of motivation and historical origins of the respective terrorist groups, the paper will then discuss the various strategies that have been used to in countering terrorism and peacemaking in these areas. I will make some generalized conclusions on what I believe are the root causes for ethno-nationalist terrorism and advocate some strategies to move forward towards a solution. I will argue using the successful example of the Good Friday peace accords that inclusion of the terrorist group into the political process, ending the economic deprivation on the ground and the making of tangible concessions on both sides has the real potential to bring an end to terrorism in the Palestinian territories and Israel.

Any analysis into Palestinian terrorism must begin with a brief overview of the Palestinian Question. The Question of Palestine, according to eminent political scientist Mark Tessler, is "a confrontation between two peoples... (over) a territorial foundation for the exercise of national rights...often involving a clash of legitimate competing interests."<sup>2</sup> The foundations of the conflict were laid by the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. The concept of a Jewish state came from the Zionist movement of 1896, which saw ostracized "European Jews, separated from their ancient homeland for nearly 2,000 years want to create their own nation."<sup>3</sup> It was the British who, in the 1917 Balfour declaration promised "a Jewish national

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<sup>1</sup> Jonathan White, *Terrorism-An Introduction* (New York: Thomson Wadsworth Press, 2003):187.

<sup>2</sup> Mark Tessler, *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994): xiii.

<sup>3</sup> Jonathan White, *Terrorism-An Introduction* (New York: Thomson Wadsworth Press, 2003): 96.

homeland in Palestine...anxious for Jewish wartime support.”<sup>4</sup> Palestine had reverted from the Ottoman Empire to direct British mandate and remained that way even as “thousands of Jews displaced by the Nazi holocaust flocked to Palestine, demanding for an independent state”<sup>5</sup>. As the British mandate in Palestine came to an end in 1947, it was decided that the mandate be partitioned into Jewish and Arab states. Whilst the Zionists accepted the partition, the Arabs rejected it and war broke out as the new state of Israel was invaded by Arab armies.

The events of the Israeli War of Independence led to more than half of the indigenous Arabs of Palestine becoming refugees, under disputed circumstances.<sup>6</sup> More than 60% of the new state of Israel's land area was land formerly occupied by the Palestinians.<sup>7</sup> Dispossessed of their homes and land, the majority of the displaced population lived in squalid UNRWA camps which “were places of desperation, degradation and insecurity. Conditions were appalling; there was little sanitation, no sewage, and only basic medical facilities. Little work was available for the refugees, and this demoralized them even more.”<sup>8</sup> Except for the Jordan, no other country was willing to naturalize the refugees by bestowing citizenship, for largely political reasons. It was largely this atmosphere of absolute hopelessness, despair and deprivation in the face of repeated Israeli victories that gave rise to the Palestinian Liberation Organization, one of many groups that would soon take part in terrorist activities in the pursuit of liberating Palestine. Formed in 1968, it asserted, in its National Covenant, that “armed struggle is the only way to liberate Palestine.”<sup>9</sup> In an interview, Yasser Arafat, the founding leader of the PLO said that their “struggle is part and parcel of every struggle against imperialism, injustice and oppression...which aims at establishing social justice and liberating mankind.”<sup>10</sup> After the 1967 War, Israel introduced a host of new regulations, increased land confiscations and expanded Jewish settlement to densely populated and suburban areas. This further increased young Palestinians anger at being denied “assertion of economic, cultural and political liberties.”<sup>11</sup> The atmosphere of economic and political deprivation and dispossession amongst both the Palestinian refugees and those living in the occupied territories conquered by Israel during the 1967 war led the Palestinians in 1987 to begin a spontaneous uprising or Intifada. Palestinians began confronting the Israeli security forces with “barrages of petrol bombs

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.,:99.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.,:100

<sup>6</sup> See Carla Klausner, *A Concise History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., 2005):111. Israel's official position is that the Arabs left voluntarily in response to radioed calls to leave by invading Arab armies. The Palestinians instead argue that they were forced to flee their homes by a combination of Jewish terrorism and coercion by the Israeli military forces. New revisionist Israeli scholars like Benny Morris have confirmed the Palestinian position to be historically accurate and the Israeli position as patently false.

<sup>7</sup> Carla Klausner, *A Concise History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., 2005):110.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.,: 110.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.,: 163.

<sup>10</sup> Walter Laquer, *The Israel-Arab Reader* (NY: Bantan Books, 1969):385.

<sup>11</sup> Anat Kurz, *Fatah and the Politics of Struggle* (Portland: Sussex Press, 2005):112.

and stones."<sup>12</sup> The PLO and other organizations like Hamas capitalized on the anger and resentment amongst the masses to justify their own acts of terrorism against Israeli military and civilian targets. This led to massive retaliation by Israel against the Palestinian general public, thus establishing a recurring cycle of violence that exists till the present day.

The historical antecedents of the Irish troubles are similar to the Palestinian Question in that it also has its origins from the settling of an alien population in their lands. Modern Irish terrorism, which began in the 1960s, has its roots deep in history. Most of Ireland's Protestants were descendants of settlers who "emigrated from England and Scotland to various parts of Ireland with the encouragement of English governments...in the sixteenth and seventeenth century."<sup>13</sup> Communal divisions remained strong, and the majority of the Protestants were Unionists, who identified themselves as British and not Irish.<sup>14</sup> A result of the Irish War of Independence led by the newly formed Catholic Irish Republican Army (IRA), Britain partitioned the country whereby the twenty six southern countries became the Irish Free State. Northern Ireland remained under British rule with a certain degree of self governance and a population of which two thirds were Protestant.<sup>15</sup> However, the Catholic minority population in Northern Ireland never felt comfortable living in the new entity and faced economic deprivation, political exclusion and despair in much the same way as did the displaced Palestinians:

They were clearly regarded second class citizens, as intrinsically dangerous to the state, and as being less deserving of houses and jobs than their Protestant neighbors. The representatives of Catholics were deliberately and efficiently excluded from political power or influence. It was institutionalized partiality, and there was no means of redress for Catholic grievances, no avenue of appeal against either real or imagined grievances.<sup>16</sup>

Prolonged grievances amongst the Catholic community led to a major civil rights movement in 1969. The Unionists reacted with heavy hands and civil rights marchers were attacked and gassed by the Royal Ulster Constabulary.<sup>17</sup> As the violence intensified, the British Army was deployed.

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<sup>12</sup> Anat Kurz, *Fatah and the Politics of Struggle* (Portland: Sussex Press, 2005): 116.

<sup>13</sup> David McKittrick, *Making Sense of the Troubles: The Story of the Conflict in Northern Ireland* (Chicago: New Amsterdam Books, 2002): 2.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*: 4.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*: 7.

<sup>16</sup> David McKittrick, *Making Sense of the Troubles: The Story of the Conflict in Northern Ireland* (Chicago: New Amsterdam Books, 2002):17.

<sup>17</sup> Jonathan White, *Terrorism-An Introduction* (New York: Thomson Wadsworth Press, 2003): 89.

Catholic neighborhoods were surrounded and gassed by military forces and the British Army openly took the side of the unionists.<sup>18</sup> It was this severe military repression that changed the course of the conflict in Northern Ireland. By exacerbating years of exclusion and discrimination, it set the stage for a return of support and resurrection for the long dormant IRA, which now emphasized the elimination of British soldiers and reunification of Northern Ireland with the Republic of Ireland. Just as in the case of Palestine, disproportionate retribution, political exclusion and military repression had led to support for a popular liberation movement in Northern Ireland. Over the course of the next twenty five years, the IRA would undertake a campaign of "shooting, bombing, intimidating, killing, and maiming which would, by the 1994 ceasefire lead to the deaths of over 3,000 people in the conflict."<sup>19</sup>

Based on the historical origins and manner of conflict, it is clear that there are many similarities between these two cases. Both the Palestinian resistance groups and the IRA have obtained support for their acts of terrorism and thrived on the situation on the ground that existed in Palestine and Northern Ireland. Widespread resentment by a minority population against the majority due to very real political, historical, economic and social grievances led to the emotions of hate that fuelled the rise of these violent groups into prominence. The case of Northern Ireland highlights how the failure of a peaceful civil rights movement to bring about change was a major catalyst in the revival of fortunes for the IRA. Likewise, the lack of improvement in the quality of life of people in the occupied territories led to the rise in support for terrorism in Palestine. This underscores how hopelessness in both cases forced the public to move from peaceful resistance to backing violence. The government responses to terrorism, however, differed and here I examine how and why the Northern Ireland peace process has brought a seemingly lasting peace whereas the Israel-Palestinian process has failed to do so.

In 1992, after years of inconclusive talks between the parties, Martin McGuinness, a leader of the Sinn Fein, the IRA's political wing wrote to the British Prime Minister John Major stating that they "wish to have an unannounced cease-fire in order to hold dialogue leading to peace."<sup>20</sup> The British responded saying that there had to be a cessation of violence to begin negotiations. Amidst continuing intermittent violence, extensive negotiations by all parties involved (the Irish and British governments, the Unionists and the IRA) led to the 1993 Downing Street Declaration that emphasized compromise and give and take. Section 4 of the declaration stated that "the British government agrees that it is for the people of the island of Ireland alone, by agreement between the two parts respectively, to exercise their right to self-determination on the basis of consent, to bring about a united

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.,: 90.

<sup>19</sup> Brendan O'Brien. *The Long War: The IRA and Sinn Fein* (Dublin: O'Brien Press, 1993): 85.

<sup>20</sup> Jeremy Smith. *The Making of the Peace in Northern Ireland* (Great Britain: Pearson Group, 2002):164.

Ireland, if that is their wish.”<sup>21</sup> It was this fundamental compromise from all parties in writing this statement that led to the beginning of peace in Northern Ireland. The British had firmly stated that the Irish had a right to self-determination and Ireland had agreed that any decision on reunification would only occur with the consent of the north, a process that required rewriting two articles of its constitution. The IRA had agreed to the eventual cessation of violence and terrorism and in August 1994, declared a “complete cessation of military operations.”<sup>22</sup> It was through five years of dialogue from 1988-93 that the peace process began on the right note. Compromise, tangible changes of position and concessions on all sides acting as the catalyst for further talks.

The solution to the Northern Ireland question and IRA terrorism could not have come without the significant involvement of the United States through the respected former Senator George Mitchell. Mitchell acted as a tactful, honest broker in the negotiations. President Clinton himself visited Belfast in 1995 “to celebrate the absence of violence.”<sup>23</sup> Mitchell settled the deadlock that led to intermittent terrorism continuing in the ceasefire period from 1994-1999 through excellent negotiations with all the parties and by forcing the Unionists and British to agree to the IRA’s position for talks before the decommissioning of weapons.<sup>24</sup>

In negotiations with an ethno-nationalist terror group like the IRA, there is always a limited time frame for a breakthrough, after which the group will slide back towards violence and terrorism. As the terrorism scholar Jerrold Post comments, “For the terrorist group, the highest priority is survival. To succeed in achieving its espoused cause would threaten the goal of survival.”<sup>25</sup> Just as the pace on talks began to slacken, moderate IRA leaders like Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness lost control to IRA hardliners, who “announced the end of its 18 month ceasefire by detonating a bomb at Canary Wharf in London, killing two people and injuring 100.”<sup>26</sup> Yet, despite this setback, the negotiations continued. In dealing with a terrorist organization, the leadership, time and political capital invested by British Prime Minister Tony Blair must also be commended. He and Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern indeed had the “resolve to grasp difficult problems and (were) iconoclastic enough to think flexibly and fertile on all issues.”<sup>27</sup>

The final stretch of the peace process was pushed by a deadline set by Senator Mitchell for the parties to conclude a final agreement. After days

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.,:170.

<sup>22</sup> Jeremy Smith. *The Making of the Peace in Northern Ireland* (Great Britain: Pearson Group 2002): 180.

<sup>23</sup> David McKittrick, *Making Sense of the Troubles: The Story of the Conflict in Northern Ireland* (Chicago: New Amsterdam Books, 2002):207.

<sup>24</sup> Jeremy Smith. *The Making of the Peace in Northern Ireland* (Great Britain: Pearson Group, 2002): 192.

<sup>25</sup> Ed. Walter Reich, *The Origins of Terrorism* (USA: Woodrow Wilson Press, 1998):38.

<sup>26</sup> Jeremy Smith. *The Making of the Peace in Northern Ireland* (Great Britain: Pearson Group, 2002):192.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.,: 193.

of negotiations, the various heads of state gathered for a tense and often fraught all-night session which eventually produced the 10 April 1998 Good Friday Agreement.<sup>28</sup> The agreement ensured a new 108 devolved member Northern Ireland Assembly with a new devolved executive involving a power sharing between the Unionists and Nationalists, new bodies for human rights and equality, and several British-Irish and North-South coordinating bodies. Decommissioning of all paramilitaries would occur within two years whilst most terrorist prisoners could expect release within two years.<sup>29</sup> It was an agreement designed as a compromise solution for all parties, and was approved by twin referendum in both Ireland and Northern Ireland. Even though there were occasional spots of violence after the agreement, and many unresolved issues, it appears that in general the peace is here to stay due to the inclusive nature of the agreement in providing a workable solution for both the aggrieved Catholics and the Unionists of Northern Ireland:

The Good Friday agreement was based upon a consensus of both communities. It introduced a constitutional system within which all people and groups in the province could feel they had ownership of. It was inclusive rather than exclusive, and it recognized the region's many different and conflicting identities rather than championing just one. And although the political violence had ended...the agreement helped to copperfasten the end of politically motivated violence by locking representatives of those groups into the political structure.<sup>30</sup>

Overall, it appears that the involvement of a tenacious broker in Mitchell, steadfast commitment by the Prime Ministers to the process despite continued acts of terrorism and an inclusive process designed to bring the terrorist group into the political process were the main factors helping to ending violence in Northern Ireland. The fact that the agreement was a result of all parties making tangible compromises, and that it was one that gained acceptance amongst the wider publics through a referendum highlight its acceptability across the board. Ethno-nationalist terror groups like the IRA can only fight on if they have the backing of the majority of their constituency. The widespread approval of the agreement and the inclusion of the group in both the peace process and the resulting local assembly in Northern Ireland ensure that there are dividends for the group in giving up its arms and an option for its members to move into the political arena. The British government, by engaging in a process that will eventually lead to the

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<sup>28</sup> David McKittrick, *Making Sense of the Troubles: The Story of the Conflict in Northern Ireland* (Chicago: New Amsterdam Books, 2002):219.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*,: 221.

<sup>30</sup> Jeremy Smith. *The Making of the Peace in Northern Ireland* (Great Britain: Pearson Group, 2002):231.

departure of its forces from Ireland made an excellent decision in learning the lessons of 1967 and focusing its energies in negotiating with the IRA instead of trying futilely to suppress them by military force. It is only through such farsighted leadership that the cycle of alienation and violence be broken. Turning to the Israel-Palestinian peace process, it is clear that it is a lack of such leadership and compromise that has led to continued outbursts of terrorism and discontent over the years.

For many years, the Israeli government refused to negotiate with the PLO and other ethno-nationalist terrorist groups because they called for the destruction of the state of Israel. It was during this period that the PLO and its client organizations began a series of internal attacks and transnational terrorist tactics including "an outbreak of skyjackings, assassinations, letter bombings and kidnappings abroad."<sup>31</sup> By sponsoring the Black September Organization, the PLO turned to asymmetric warfare to "extract revenge, release psychological frustrations, and publicize the Palestinian cause...by carrying out terrorist actions that victimized scores of civilians and innocent third parties."<sup>32</sup> The most infamous action by the Black September group was the death of 17 Israeli athletes taken hostage during the Munich Olympic Games. During this period, Israelis responded to the terrorist acts by massive acts of retaliation that further disaffected the general Palestinian community. By 1987, after a quarter-century of enduring what Egyptian President Mubarak called "extreme economic hardship and deprivation,"<sup>33</sup> Palestinians began taking part in the Intifada uprisings. Israel again attempted to impose a military solution on both the problem of Palestinian terrorism and the general uprising. Prime Minister Golda Meir's strategy continued unchanged throughout the occupation period, where she believed the solution was simply to track down and eliminate the terrorists wherever they could reach them.<sup>34</sup> According to Carla Klausner, Palestinians were subjected to an almost total curfew in the West Bank and Gaza, Palestinian children were shot and beaten by Israeli soldiers, and the death rate of rock throwing Palestinians in the first year of the Intifada was enormous.<sup>35</sup> This only furthered the cycle of violence and increased support for the more radical extremist wing of the PLO as Israel's actions showed that they had no interest in understanding of the legitimate grievances and interests of the Palestinians.<sup>36</sup>

A breakthrough to the conflict appeared possible when, largely due to the involvement of the United States through Secretary of State James Baker, Yasser Arafat and the Palestine Liberation Organization recognized

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<sup>31</sup> Bard O'Neill, Towards a Typology of Political Terrorism: The Palestinian Resistance Movement, *Journal of International Affairs*, 32, 1 (1978): 25.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*,:26.

<sup>33</sup> Carla Klausner, *A Concise History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.,2005):235.

<sup>34</sup> Bard O'Neill, Towards a Typology of Political Terrorism: The Palestinian Resistance Movement, *Journal of International Affairs*, 32, 1 (1978):27.

<sup>35</sup> Carla Klausner, *A Concise History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., 2005):250.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*,: 232.

the existence of Israel in 1988.<sup>37</sup> This major concession to the PLO's long stated position proved to be the impetus for a change of heart by Israel as well. The events of mutual recognition and Israel accepting the PLO as a partner in negotiations set the ball rolling for the historic 1993 Oslo Accords, where:

Peres, insisted "We want to live with the Palestinians in peace. They are human beings like us. We don't want to rule over them..." As the world watched in wonder, Norwegian Foreign Minister Holst carried a letter from Arafat to Rabin recognizing Israel, renouncing violence, and pledging support for repeal of clauses objectionable to Israel in the PLO charter. Rabin, for his part, signed a letter recognizing the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people and accepting the PLO as a negotiation partner.<sup>38</sup>

As a result of the agreement, the PLO was soon allowed a limited version of self-rule in the West Bank and Gaza and the Israelis began a limited military redeployment away from West Bank towns. Mr. Arafat's letter unambiguously stated that "the PLO renounces the use of terrorism and other acts of violence and will assume responsibility....to assure their compliance, prevent violations and discipline violators."<sup>39</sup> Just as in the case of Northern Ireland, it was the principle of including the ethno-nationalist group into the political process, recognition by the occupying power of the legitimacy of the grievances of the extremist group's constituency and tangible compromises on all sides that led to a cessation of terrorism in the occupied territories. Unlike Northern Ireland, however, the interim agreement of 1993 has not had the follow through required for a permanent peace in Palestine and Israel. The failure of both sides to continue making tough compromises and the tendency of Israeli governments to continue keeping the "military solution" on the table have led to a failure in the peace process, renewed alienation, a second Intifada and renewed terrorism in the Occupied Territories and Israel.

It was earlier mentioned how the Canary Wharf bombing in Northern Ireland was a sign by the terrorists that they could not wait forever for a political solution to emerge. In Northern Ireland, the bombing acted as a catalyst to move towards a final solution. In Palestine, however, despite the active involvement of the United States in the peace process, final status negotiations that occurred in Camp David in 2000. Arafat refused to accept Israeli Prime Minister Barak's rather generous proposal to give the

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<sup>37</sup> Barbara Smith, "How the chance for peace slipped away," *New Statesman*, 12 July 2004, 23.

<sup>38</sup> Carla Klausner, *A Concise History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., 2005):263.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*; 269.

Palestinians 90% of the West Bank, 3% compensation for the settlements from Israel proper, and his willingness to break from traditional positions on the issue of Jerusalem.<sup>40</sup> He instead did not “budge an inch on any of the Palestinian positions...and demanded the right of return of all the refugees and their descendants displaced by Israel’s creation in 1948.”<sup>41</sup> Unrealistic and maximalist positioning led to a complete breakdown of the bargaining process. Despite fifteen days of intense negotiations that often lasted well into the night, all the efforts of President Clinton and the U.S. government could not force a solution upon the two groups which both could agree on as a compromise.

The result of this failure of negotiation saw the outbreak of second Intifada and resulting Israeli retaliation that saw over 2600 Palestinians and 875 Israelis killed by the end of 2003.<sup>42</sup> Extremist groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad have seen Israelis and Palestinians die in increasing numbers through Palestinian suicide bombings and retaliatory Israeli air strikes. The Palestinian Authority has lost the capacity to control its extremists, even if it had the will.<sup>43</sup> Israel has since reverted to its old ways of dealing with terrorism through military force with a realist perspective, taking back control of the West Bank, constructing a wall dividing Jewish and Arab areas and conducting incursions into the Gaza Strip.

What lessons can be drawn from the successful Good Friday agreement in Northern Ireland vis a vis the failed peace process between the Palestinians and the Israelis? First of all, Northern Ireland shows that an ethno-nationalist conflict, no matter how intractable and historically rooted as it seems, can be solved to the begrudging if not total satisfaction of all parties. In the case of Palestine, it is useful to quote Akbar Ahmed who argues that:

The West needs to recognize...expressions of revolt and movements as movements against corruption and lack of justice, not as anti-Western. Unless some resolution takes place...in these areas the unending cycle of violence will continue. The world needs to focus on resolving these problems and not on responding to them with increasing force; it has been established in human history that violence simply creates more violence.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Barbara Smith, “How the chance for peace slipped away,” *New Statesman*, 12 July 2004, 23. This account has since then been disputed by several persons present in the negotiations who argue that what was offered to Arafat was much less and that the 90% figure is misleading.

<sup>41</sup> Carla Klausner, *A Concise History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., 2005): 338.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*; 360.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*; 361.

<sup>44</sup> Akbar Ahmed, *Islam Under Siege* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005): 158-159.

Indeed, part of the impetus for a successful peace between the British government and the IRA came from the honest recognition by the British government that a military solution was unworkable. They learnt from the lesson of 1967 that trying to quell terrorism through military deployment only worsened the resentment amongst the Catholics leading to renewed support for the terrorist IRA. Once this mindset was changed, the British were able to continue negotiations with an avowedly terrorist group despite there were breaches in the ceasefire. The Canary Wharf bombing and the subsequent British reaction of *agreeing* to resume talks rather than return to a military solution mindset is an important lesson for Israel. Israel must realize that the only way to move forward in peace negotiations with ethno-nationalist Palestinian groups is to continue a policy of engagement regardless of intermittent terrorist attacks during the negotiations. It must decide once in for all that a true solution will only result from negotiations and not by brute military action and continue on a policy of engagement with Palestinian actors.

A second lesson from Northern Ireland is for the Israelis to realize that any peace process cannot be expected to provide instant dividends. The issues are too divisive and long standing for a magical solution. Trying to resolve the issues of 'Right of Return', the status of Jerusalem and final borders at a single conference is to paraphrase Gerry Adams, a 'shore too far.' The Northern Ireland peace process succeeded because it moved methodically from issue to issue between the periods of 1993 to 1998, where high level negotiations continued despite continued problems and standstills. The same strategy could be applied for Israel-Palestinian negotiations, where issue to issue negotiations could reach better solutions rather than attempting to settle everything at once.

Thirdly, the Northern Ireland peace process succeeded because it included all the major parties involved in the conflict. Negotiations in Israel cannot proceed by continuing to exclude representatives from Hamas, now in government in the Palestinian Authority. Israel should make an effort to get Hamas to observe a truce and engage into negotiations, for excluding groups from negotiations only pushes them towards acts of terrorism. Northern Ireland has shown that including an ethno-nationalist group into the political process of conflict resolution gives them a stake at their nation's future and turns them away from acts of violence. According to terrorism scholar Mohammed Hafez, who believes in the theory that political repression forces groups towards terrorism, this is something the United States

must impress upon the ruling elites of its allies...Exclusive politics is a recipe for disaster, but inclusive politics is the key to survival. All groups that are willing to participate in democratic politics should be actively encouraged to do so. Political institutionalization requires opposition groups to abide by conventional

means of conflict resolution and shuns strategies that threaten their legality and legitimacy. Institutional access will also encourage Islamists to advance reconciliatory ideological frames that discourage the wholesale rejection of the system.<sup>45</sup>

By working towards a solution that saw a great level of involvement for the Sinn Fein in both the Northern Ireland Assembly and the new executive, the IRA leaders were given a viable alternative to terrorism with tangible dividends. Israel too should provide Hamas and other rejectionist groups a place and a stake in both the interim institutions in Palestine and in the final Palestinian state that will emerge in the end of negotiations. The dividends of this inclusive policy have born fruits in Northern Ireland, thanks in part to patience. In October 2006, the historic verdict of the Independent Monitoring Commission has unambiguously declared that the IRA has dismantled its military structures, fully disarmed and is bearing down on the remaining criminal activities of some of its members.<sup>46</sup> Hence, an inclusive policy can bring these ethno-nationalist groups in Palestine from beyond the pale to renounce their guns for a stake in their nation's future.

The role of the United States in both situations must also be analyzed. In the case of Northern Ireland, the active involvement of the U.S. was highlighted by their sending of an accomplished statesman, Senator George Mitchell to act as an honest broker between the parties to achieve a viable solution. By all accounts, Mitchell played a very positive role in the successful Good Friday Agreement. In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the United States has failed to be a consistent partner for peace. During the Clinton era, an enormous effort was put in by President Clinton and the Department of State in bringing the parties together. The successful breakthroughs in the process achieved in 1993 are testament to what the United States can achieve in the conflict should they truly use their massive influence and political clout to try and achieve a solution. However, the disengagement of the United States from the peace process following the failure of Camp David during the Bush administration shows a drop in political will. The case of Northern Ireland emphasizes that the United States, as a global power, must engage as a broker and mediator in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to push the parties towards a consensus. Solving the Northern Irish question required a tremendous investment in political capital, time and energy. The U.S., Europe and all parties interested in seeing the end of violence in Palestine should invest their political capital there. By sending mediators on the ground, they send a strong signal, like Senator Mitchell did, that the international community is anxious and impatient for a solution.

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<sup>45</sup> Mohammed Hafez, *Why Muslims Rebel* (United States: Lynne Reiner Group, 2004): 208.

<sup>46</sup> Bagehot, *The Economist* 381, 8499 (October 14, 2006):64.

The final lesson that can be drawn from the Northern Ireland peace process is the importance of all parties to recognize that behind all terrorist activity is a constituency of disaffected people with genuine grievances. Subsequently, only a comprehensive political solution that address and alleviate these grievances can divert support away from terrorist groups. Even staunch Unionist leader David Trimble acknowledged that Northern Ireland was a "cold house for Catholics", with institutionalized inequality resulting in Protestants enjoying advantage in many walks of life.<sup>47</sup> Israel's occupation of the territories has resulted in a similar set of grievances mobilizing the Palestinians against it. Unless there is a solution which addresses these grievances and ensure that Palestinians can achieve a basic standard of living, employment and education in a viable Palestinian state, there will always be a resentment that inevitably leads to support towards terrorism. Israel and the Palestinian negotiators should look at the Good Friday Agreement which made specific inter-state joint commissions to look into issues such as Human Rights and addressed some of these grievances that exist within the disaffected Catholic minority. For instance, any permanent cessation of violence in Palestine can only be achieved through a viable solution to the plight of the long alienated and disaffected Palestinian refugees.

Many of the lessons of the Northern Ireland peace process have already been having effect in the Israel-Palestinian conflict. The compromises made by both parties in 1993, where both parties made fundamental changes to their positions represented a great leap forward toward the cessation of violence. The inclusion of the once pariah PLO into the newly instituted Palestinian Authority in 1994 was another huge step towards inclusion of a former terrorist group into the political process. Israel has also clearly begun to move towards a political solution, agreeing in principle for a sovereign Palestinian state alongside Israel and openly admitted that they can no longer indefinitely continue their occupation and subjugation of Palestinians in the territories. Yet, by taking actions such as building a security fence, continuing the building of settlements in the West Bank and cutting off negotiations with the Palestinians and groups like Hamas, Israel has undone much of the progress made towards a solution in the 1990s. It has in many ways moved back to its former mindset of using its superior military ability to exterminate the terrorist problem despite clear evidence that such a strategy is unsuccessful in the long run. Only if Israel moves back towards a continuous program of negotiation, eases restrictions on the ground for ordinary Palestinians and returns to an inclusive policy can it truly move towards a lasting peace and solution to terrorism in Palestine and Israel.

In conclusion, examination of the terrorist problem in Northern Ireland and Palestine highlight enough similarities to apply methods of dealing with terrorism seen in the successful peace process of the former to the failure in

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<sup>47</sup> David McKittrick, *Making Sense of the Troubles: The Story of the Conflict in Northern Ireland* (Chicago: New Amsterdam Books, 2002):232.

the latter case. The cultural differences that undoubtedly exist between the cases in my opinion does not undermine the prospect of successfully tailor fitting the Northern Irish solution to the Palestinian conflict. In this respect, terrorism scholar Fred Halliday rightly states:

Every rebel, like every nationalist, claims to be different. Those who oppose such rebellions may equally feel, and claim that they are facing something distinctive, but here too impressions are misleading. Social and political factors may be at play, but often revolt is based on something equally widespread, the denial of national rights.<sup>48</sup>

This paper has established through the case studies how ethno-nationalist terrorism occurs in areas where rights have systematically been denied and where repressive ethnic majorities have forced minorities into such deprivation and disaffection that terrorism appears the only solution. It occurs when all other means of peaceful means of changing the status quo have failed and where the disaffected constituency, excluded from the political process start seeing ethno-nationalist groups as the only way of redressing their often legitimate grievances.

The relative success of the Northern Ireland peace process has shown, however, that it is possible to reverse the series of events that lead to terrorism. For that to happen, in Palestine, and in all other areas such as Sri Lanka that have faced the scourge of terrorism, however, several steps have to be taken. Firstly, the majority in power must firmly realize that the problem of terrorism can only be solved in the context of a wide ranging political solution that address its the root causes. This subsequently should result in the government completely repudiating massive disproportionate shows of force against the terrorist group and its constituency. This must come with the realization that the military solution to terrorism is no solution at all. Secondly, the cases have shown that the international community and especially the United States must take an active and consistent role in peace negotiations between the parties to hammer out a workable compromise solution. Finally, and most importantly, the only way to truly eliminate the threat posed by an ethno-nationalist terror group and make it give up its guns is to include it in the political process. I do not concede that several of these generalized tactics successfully utilized in Northern Ireland are much harder to implement in a situation like Palestine but this should not discourage these steps from being taken. Already, there has been some progress in Palestine and other difficult areas only because of these steps. The cycle of violence that results from the scourge of ethno-nationalist terrorism will be brought to an end only when there is a just redress of the legitimate grievances of the oppressed

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<sup>48</sup> Mohammed Hafez, *Why Muslims Rebel* (United States: Lynne Reiner Group, 2004): xi-xii.

minority and an effective international engagement to constitute a political solution through a policy of inclusiveness.

## 2. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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