

## **Abstract**

This study is an outcome of a debate raised among societies of violent disputes on peace and the means to achieve peaceful resolutions not violently but effectively. The significance of this study stems from the fact that Palestine has been engaged for years in political negotiations trying to find a solution with inconclusive results. The need for conflict resolution strategies became an essential part in a world filled with injustices and insecurities. Being a Palestinian living under occupation and witnessing people's endurance and perseverance pushed towards exploring this case in comparison to another case to try and define the reasons behind the inability to achieve peace. The major and most significant aim of this study is to contribute in the debate of finding peaceful solutions for countries of violent disputes.

The study at hand is a comparative perspective of Northern Ireland and Palestine/Israel based on two theoretical frameworks that complement each other; Realism and Neo Realism and Conflict Resolution. Comparative study is very significant to consider similarities and differences in the nature and characteristics of a society and a country; Both regions were basically democratic, had experienced colonial rule, had a thriving third sector, small in size, and the populations in both Northern Ireland and Palestine/Israel consisted primarily of two ethnic groups that are part of the conflict. Through out the study, it was noted that the concepts of "peace" and "conflict resolution" should be relative and should be redefined according to the various contexts in which they exist.

The difficulties encountered during research were immense especially during setting up interviews with political activists representing all sides of the conflicts. Those can be summarized as follows:

- The lack of resources covering the theoretical and historical aspects of the Northern Ireland case.
- The lack of cooperation of some targeted organizations or people to hold interviews.

Different interviews were held with political activists representing different political parties in the three countries that enriched the study thus the analysis:

- An interview with Mr. Ahmad Sadaat, the Secretary General of the PFLP, which is considered an oppositional party to the Palestinian-Israeli peace process.
- An interview with Mr. Qadoura Faris, a Fatah activist since 1979, a PLC member and one of the negotiators in the Geneva Initiative.
- An interview with Mr. Yvonne Byrne, the Vice Chair of the SDLP (with responsibility for Policy).
- And finally an interview with Mr. Alban Maginness, an SDLP Councilor in North Belfast.

The result of the study showed that the peace movement in the three countries, which can be identified as a representative body of those who support the peace process as opposed

to those who are against it, did not have a direct impact on the steps towards a peaceful settlement but had a relative impact on producing new vocabulary and concepts that deal with peace, nonviolence and coexistence. It is important to note that power had a big influence on the outcomes of the peace processes for no negotiation method can overcome the differences in power. Thus the collapse of the USSR and the non-aligned block, in addition to the weakness on the international organizations such as the UN and the first and second Gulf Wars, 9/11 events and the so called “war on terror” had a big impact on empowering the more powerful and weakening the weaker.

The Palestinians at this point should find their best alternative for a negotiated agreement. The Geneva Initiative can be the closest and the most ideal settlement taking time and the status quo into perspective. It can contain the nature of the conflict and it calls for a two state solution according to international legitimacy. This initiative can be considered a challenge for the Israeli claim that there is no peace partner from one side and can be considered as a challenge to Palestinian extremism opposing any peaceful settlement without producing logical and pragmatic alternatives.

It is important to acknowledge very close people who were of great support during holding the study. First I would like to note that this study is dedicated to Salam, someone I deeply love and owe so much... someone who was assassinated for Palestine...assassinated for me and for you... I would like to thank my father who was very patient and understanding through the difficult times... a person who is a reason for what I am today. I want to extend my deepest regards and gratitude to friends and family,

especially Dalia, who without her I couldn't have managed, and Nelly the one who was in it all. My friends and cousins, with no exceptions, endured all the hardships with me, everyone with their own print... I will never forget their support.

I would like to thank also Dr. Roger Heacock, my advisor, who encouraged me and was with me in every step..., and to the Professors of the Faculty especially the readers, Dr. Nadim Mseis and Dr. Johnny A'asi, whose comments were insightful...And Dawoud who helped me in designing the power point presentation.

To Palestine ... My Homeland I bow...

Tami Rafidi

19/6/2005