Reinventing Democratic Diplomacy for Resolving Intractable Conflicts and Cleavages

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Democratic diplomacy was made popular by American president Woodrow Wilson, most notably in the first of his famous ‘fourteen points’ included in his speech to Congress on January 1918. The idea was that transparent diplomatic discussion, responsive to the views and criticism of the electorate as expressed in the free public discourse, would supersede the pre-WW1 system of secret diplomatic alliances that dominated European politics and was deemed to be the source of instability. The mythical ‘world public opinion’, it was thought, would force governments to adhere to higher standards of morality and justice and would eventually lead to a much safer and more peaceful world.

Developments between the world wars have brought much disillusionment to proponents of this idealistic concept and it mainly prevails today only in a new guise of ‘public diplomacy’. In this incarnation, the choice of public diplomacy over secret diplomacy is perceived as motivated by utilitarian rather than normative considerations – a tool to influence public opinion rather than to express the ‘true’ preferences of the electorate.

Despite of that, this paper suggests that in both intrastate and inter-entity ethno-national conflict it would be beneficial to evolve the ‘hypothetical future’ most democratically preferred by both sides to the ethnic conflict. The mechanism to achieve that may be viewed as an elaborate and radical ad-hoc form of democratic diplomacy where opinions of the electorates evolve to become well-considered and well-informed and directly influence evolving ‘hypothetical futures’ proposed in a sort of a competitive open tender. Some of the theoretical merits of such an approach are greater likelihood to identify a jointly agreed ‘hypothetical future’, higher quality solution leading to wider support, more public legitimacy and a substantial contribution to mutual ripening, to a better fit between ethos and reality and to internal stability.

Initial empirical findings from an in-depth questionnaire administered over the Internet to 61 Israeli citizens, selected from a panel to demographically represent the Israeli population, show that despite little previous exposure to the ideas of democratic diplomacy, only 10% would like to leave the current mechanism for negotiation with the Palestinians as is, while 90% opted for various options that make diplomacy more democratic. Such a reform would also wield wider support and greater faith in agreements achieved thus.

Introduction

For the past six years I have been working on formalizing and grounding an intuition that intractable conflicts and cleavages, like the Jewish-Palestinian conflict or the Greek-Turk conflict in Cyprus, stand much better chance of being resolved satisfactorily by dedicated deeply democratic mechanisms than by the conventional mechanisms of negotiations between leaders or representatives of the conflicting parties, which, if successful are then subject to parliamentary or popular ratification (See Tzur 2004 & 2008).

In an effort to make what I’m proposing more accessible, I colloquially began to term it Democratic Diplomacy, as it calls for institutional involvement of the people

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1 An introduction and a fuller list of papers and works, mostly in Hebrew, are available in http://www.ideonea.com/prod/index.htm.
of both sides in proposing possible agreed future scenarios, considering and deliberating then, rating them against each other and evolving them until a Democratically Preferred Future Scenario (DPFS) emerges or until it becomes clear that no scenario of coordinated progress is democratically preferred by both sides over the status-quo.

Not versed in the history of diplomacy and foreign policy, I have never encountered the term Democratic Diplomacy before – neither in the public discourse nor in the professional literature I covered – so I initially assumed I can use it as is. In fact, when just beginning thinking about this paper, I wanted to simply title it Democratic Diplomacy and present the case for interrelating the terms in general and in the context of resolving intractable conflicts in particular. Just for the sake of prudence, I ran a search on the term “Democratic Diplomacy” and discovered that I was nearly a hundred years late in coining it.

This discovery sent me on an unplanned quest to understand the original use of the concept of Democratic Diplomacy in the early decades of the twentieth century, identify the context and reasons for its rise between the world wars, its fall after WW2 and what begins to look like a possible reincarnation in a different form today. In the paper I summarize the quest and identify what bearing the findings may have on the prospects of democratically resolving intractable ethnic conflicts in today’s world.

Against this historical political science backdrop, I will then present initial empirical findings from an in-depth recent Internet survey of a representative sample of Israelis. These findings clearly indicate that, from the polity’s point of view, there is great support for a democratic reform in the mechanism of evolving and approving an agreement with the Palestinians. Moreover, respondents not only normatively prefer a reformed mechanism but they also expect it to yield faster and more long-lasting results.

If clear public support for democratization of diplomacy exists on both sides of a conflict, this by itself is a compelling reason for considering such a reform. A mechanism that enjoys wide legitimacy has better chances of producing a sustainable solution and discouraging ‘spoilers’. In considering the shape of such a reformed mechanism, we should be guided, among other things, by insights from the history of democratic diplomacy.

Democratic Diplomacy
Jönsson & Aggestam (2007) identify six common meanings of the word ‘diplomacy’: content of foreign affairs as a whole (roughly the same as foreign policy), conduct of foreign policy (statecraft), management of foreign policy by negotiation, use of diplomats organized in a diplomatic service, the intelligent and tactful manner for conducting relations and the art or skills of professional diplomats. They then proceed to suggest an overarching definition of diplomacy as a transhistorical international institution that, like war, perpetually influences relations between polities throughout history.

Adding the not less vague term ‘democratic’ to create the term ‘democratic diplomacy’ leaves many interpretations possible. In fact the term is rarely used in the literature (It has no definition in Britannica or Wikipedia and only 161 mentions in the google scholar search engine compared to 8,500 for ‘public diplomacy’) and people who use it do so in a variety of meanings.

One thing is clear though. Until WWI, diplomacy in all of its meanings, even in democratic states, was professionally practiced outside the public eye and locus of democratic interest. Democratic diplomacy linked the previously unrelated concepts, giving the people some foothold on diplomacy and perhaps also transferring some of
the principles guiding the internal conduct of liberal democracies (like the basic equality of people) into the international (or even the inter-collective) arena. McGrew, in a recent account of the related (and more modern) concept of transnational democracy notes that:

Until comparatively recently, democratic theorists rarely ventured beyond the state since prevailing orthodoxy presumed a categorical distinction between the moral realm of the sovereign political community and the amoral realm of the anarchical society… theorists of modern democracy tended to bracket the anarchical society whilst theorists of international relations tended to bracket democracy. Of course, there were exceptions. Classical liberal internationalism, expressed in the ideas of Bentham, Woodrow Wilson, and proponents of functionalism, such as Mitrany, advocated a more democratic international order… In its earliest manifestations liberal-internationalism presented a radical challenge to the prevailing realpolitik vision of world order: that is of might as right. From Locke, through Bentham and Mill, to Woodrow Wilson the essence of the liberal-internationalist project has been the construction of an international order based on the rule of law and cooperation between states.

This section reviews some of the (few) writings discussing democratic diplomacy and examines their understanding and analysis of the term and its implications.

**Roots (1918-1920)**

Democratic diplomacy was made popular by American president Woodrow Wilson, most notably in the first of his famous ‘fourteen points’ included in his speech to Congress on January 1918.

Open covenants of peace, openly arrived at, after which there shall be no private international understandings of any kind but diplomacy shall proceed always frankly and in the public view.

The idea was that transparent diplomatic discussion, responsive to the views and criticism of the electorate as expressed in the free public discourse, would supersede the pre-WW1 system of secret diplomatic alliances that dominated European politics and was deemed to be the source of instability. The mythical ‘world public opinion’, it was thought, would force governments to adhere to higher standards of morality and justice and would eventually lead to a much safer and more peaceful world.

While Wilson and others, like British conservative Robert Cecil who wrote:

> everything depends on public opinion. This means that the public must have an opinion on international affairs and its opinion must be right” and when defending the Versailles Treaty "What we rely upon is public opinion… and if we are wrong about it, then the whole thing is wrong.

wanted to reform international anarchy by curtailing secret diplomacy, British Liberal-Radical and Labour internationalists demanded more. They wanted popular or democratic control over foreign policy (Milen-Penn, 1995).

Democratic diplomacy was first practiced in the Paris Peace Conference following the end of WWI. The one-year long (18 January 1919 – 21 January 1920) conference brought together national delegations, usually headed by elected presidents, prime ministers or senior ministers and not by professional diplomats. This condition of ‘permanent conference’ was institutionalized in the ‘league of nations’ inaugurated at the end of the conference.
While public enthusiasm and hopes from the new way of handling foreign affairs were initially very high, it soon became clear that it too is far from ideal. Rather than look at radical institutional solutions to the real problems standing in the way of implementing the ideal of democratic diplomacy, the pendulum began to gradually sway back towards elitism and professionalism under the impression that the ideal is not effectively practical and the masses cannot be trusted to make the right decisions.

However, as the fundamental logic of democracy could not be openly denounced and no one wanted to advocate a return to oligarchic diplomacy, if even for the real concern that people in democracies would no longer be willing to fight and die for foreign policies they haven’t sanctioned, a range of syntheses between the old and new diplomacies began to emerge.

**Council on Foreign Relations: ‘Scientific’ Policy and Public Education (~1920)**

Bleichman (2007) reviews the establishment of the influential Council on Foreign Relations in the United States as the elitist response to the perceived pitfalls of the conference. Wilson’s top adviser, Colonel Edward M. House, originally assembled a group of notable academics and intellectuals including Sidney E. Mezes, Walter Lippmann, Isaiah Bowman and others that were commissioned in 1917 to secretly research what would be the best ‘scientific’ policy in the interest of all nations for after the World War would end. The motivation to prepare so well for the peace conference was the belief that world public opinion would appreciate such thoroughness and reward America with increased influence over the outcome.

In the conference however, it became obvious that the delegations were much more concerned about the heated public opinion at home than about the ‘cold scientific’ recommendations of the experts they brought with them. Moreover, the public spoke in many voices – it both demanded punishment for the perpetrators of the dreadful war and that there would be peace – thus putting many of the top leaders in precarious positions of possibly losing their political majorities.

Founders of the CFR concluded that public opinion has proven disturbing rather than helpful and that the mass media found the conference boring and therefore didn’t perform its role in informing the public. Their solution was to form a body that undertakes to educate the public, or rather the elite, to develop the ‘right’ opinion, which would be self-consistent, based on the correct facts, ‘scientific’ and objective.

In their mind, the educated public would not choose a policy, but rather affirm the policy that ‘reason dictates’. In other words, their version of democratic diplomacy was not that all people should be educated to be able to make up a well-informed and well-considered mind on foreign affairs but rather educated to recognize that they must put their faith and support in the technocratic experts who would ‘scientifically’ reach the right conclusion. Such an educated public opinion would become a progressive engine – the authoritative will of the nation fit for serving as an immediate and active force in negotiations.

**Harold Nicolson: Diluted Democratic Diplomacy (1935)**

I must begin with a few definitions and a few axioms. I shall be using the word “diplomacy” in its most general sense, meaning thereby the practice, rather than the theory, of international relations. I shall be using the term “democratic or modern diplomacy” as signifying a system under which the execution of foreign policy is subjected to the immediate, rather than to the ultimate, concurrence of the sovereign electorate (Nicolson, 1935)
Harold Nicolson was a British diplomat from 1909-1929, and he witnessed the birth of democratic diplomacy first hand as a junior diplomat to the Paris Peace Conference. At the time of writing he was on the verge of ‘changing sides’ and starting a 10-year career as a Member of Parliament. In his paper “Modern Diplomacy and British Public Opinion” from which the above quote is taken, he goes on to say

I shall proceed from the axiom that democratic diplomacy has in Great Britain superseded professional or oligarchic diplomacy… the system of democratic diplomacy has many virtues and several faults… its virtues are obvious and I hope enduring, its faults are obscure and, I earnestly believe, transitional.

While heralding the triumph of democratic diplomacy only 16 years after its advent and defining it broadly to mean public involvement in the execution of public policy, his contention is that democracy has not yet learned how to exercise its sovereignty in a responsible manner because the public has considerable but uncoordinated knowledge, potential good sense, much unnecessary suspicion and a really alarming degree of perplexity.

More important than the lack of knowledge is a feeling of being incompetent and unknowledgeable. Nicolson proposes that the British public should be assured that all is required of them is balance, patience, trustfulness and good sense (what he calls elsewhere “habits of correct and fundamental thinking” and today would probably be called deliberated and considered opinion) and not detailed knowledge of foreign affairs. If people would become less afraid of diplomacy they would also give it a more responsible and continuous attention. Basically he urges for creating the conditions that would allow citizens to express their normative preferences, for example by abandoning elitist jargon and publishing some internal policy analyses and memoranda.

Nicolson claims that citizens’ perplexity is caused by lack of direction. In the 19th century the direction was clear and common to all Britons and parties – guarding the empire and establishing new markets. In the 20th century the British citizen has become torn between nationalism and internationalism, right and left, which causes confusion and an inner conflict – between citizens and within each citizen. The doctrine of power competes with contradictory doctrine of peace, and the latter actually implies the end of the empire. In Nicolson’s view, as people are not educated to understand complexity and processes they tend to take a middle indecisive position rather than understand that the “principle of war is slowly dying and the principle of peace is slowly gathering life” and therefore peace should be a strategy but war may need still to be unavoidable tactics.

Nicolson goes on to discuss the public’s lack of confidence in Cabinet Ministers. In his view, politicians have no time to be deliberate, have little experience of foreign psychology and are always more sensitive to immediate triumph rather than the ultimate interests of the state. The displacement of the professional diplomatist who is permanent, patient and persevering is for Nicolson most unfortunate. What he goes on to suggest then is that negotiation will return to being secret and be left to professional diplomats (who have to work in order to regain the public trust they lost after WWI) while foreign policy will be public and determined by politicians, who will also publicly debate and vote all treaties and agreements.

Nicolson claims that under democratic diplomacy “policy becomes inevitably inconsistent, uncertain and vague”. Commitments made by negotiators, in fact even by the American President, may not be worth much as the elected representatives may not approve them. Nicolson rushes to offer a solution “no country should promise to pay more than its democracy is certainly prepared to deliver” but disregards that his
medicine may be worse than the disease as it would severely limit the potential to reach any agreement which necessarily requires both sides to move beyond their 'comfort zone'.

Even if negotiators promise only what Parliament would ratify and the electorate would be willing to perform, still the electorate do not feel responsible for commitments undertaken in their name. As far as Nicolson is concerned, once a treaty was properly approved and entered into, it should be illegitimate to question it or advocate its repudiation. This proposal is understood from the foreign affairs point of view but much less so from the point of view of democracy and ultimate people’s sovereignty, particularly if the agreement was ratified thanks to political maneuvers.

To summarize, the only mechanism of public involvement in foreign policy that Nicolson discusses is the personal participation of elected representatives in negotiation (they, particularly in the English system, supposedly being sensitive to the preferences of their constituencies) in which he finds serious faults. Rather than look at other possible mechanisms, he simply proposes to limit public involvement only to setting broad policies and agreement approval, basically sending democracy away from the agreement formation stage and taking standard negotiation or bargaining for granted as the only available method of agreement evolution which in his words “a trained professional can handle better than the most gifted amateur”.

**Legislating Democratic Control over Foreign Affairs (1945)**

David Levitan, writing in 1945 discusses the legal and constitutional mechanisms for democratic control over foreign affairs in the US system of government and how they should be exercised to give maximum effect to the will of the people, “speaking through their chosen representatives”.

The paper doesn’t discuss if the will of the people may indeed be developed, properly expressed and adequately represented under this system. Levitan takes it for granted and questions how the US should go about decisions in foreign affairs. In particular is the Senate limited to “advice and consent” or should it be actively participating throughout the negotiation? Conversely, if the President entered into a treaty, as he allowed to, does this treaty bind Congress even if it requires legislation or appropriation, which are under the jurisdiction of Congress?

Without getting into the peculiarities of the US constitution, this paper demonstrates that even if democratic control is construed to be indirect, through chosen representatives, so we have in fact an elected President and a ‘constituency’ numbering only a few hundred Members of Congress and Senate, the same institutional problems and conflicts inherent in democratic control and involvement arise.

An important conclusion from this is that the basic underlying problem may be one of institutional design. In absolute monarchies and dictatorships the leader by definition speaks for his subjects, well fitting the simple paradigm of nations as unitary actors, upon which foreign relations have been traditionally based.

A much more elaborate institution is required to eventually reach unitary action when many people or indeed the entire polity have to be involved. Institutions and system of government developed within the states may not be up to the challenge because, unlike internal decision-making to solve a given more or less well known problem, other equally complex polities are involved who are also in the process of their own decision-making and are part of the ‘problem’. The cross dependency between these two processes means that in reality diplomacy demands two or more complex polities to make up their ‘collective mind’ simultaneously. Designing a fitting analog of ‘negotiation’ is the challenge here.
Disenchantment (1960)
Writing in 1960, Cesar Spulveda, a high-ranking Mexican diplomat is already disenenchanted by democratic diplomacy.

Certain colorful and attractive new forms of negotiating among nations, which arose shortly after World War I, combined with the disrepute into which classical diplomacy fell in those years, led to the neglect of diplomatic method, which seemed to have come to its end. With inordinate optimism it was felt that substitutes for diplomacy were superior and more efficient, and that it was reasonably possible to dispense with it as an instrument for reducing conflicts among the world powers.

For him, diplomacy is clearly the work of diplomats. He goes on to discuss the history of democratization of diplomacy as trying to “bring into the international field practices, formulae and ideas which through the years had been applied to the internal affairs of the state as essentials of a liberal democracy.” and describes the league of nations as a great and original experiment which provides for a system of “diplomacy by conference”, entirely opposed to the comfortable method of negotiation of the preceding times. This state of permanent conference (now applied in the UN) is what he defines to be democratic diplomacy.

In this so-called “democratic” diplomacy, foreign policy and diplomacy proper are confused, mingling in a manner, which is not conducive to the proper functioning of either… politics as an alternative for diplomacy, with the resulting disregard of the latter.

As the latest outgrowth of ‘democratic diplomacy’, he includes summits by heads of state or foreign ministers, which he sees as “triumph of politics over values in the art of negotiation” – moderation and conciliation are abandoned for diatribe, he thinks that in every international negotiation public debate it fruitless and ill-fated and sometimes divides nations forever. Moreover, it creates a particular problem when dealing with dictatorships.

Spulveda, while paying homage to democracy is much more poignant than the other writings in his criticism, even when he echoes previous arguments. He describes the inherent conflict between national internal political interest and the needs created by external relationship with other countries. Then he laments the vagueness and elasticity of ends and objectives in a democracy, its lack of continuity in programs, excessive drama in attitudes, ignorance on the part of the people and even of governmental agencies. Well-informed sections of the people do not devote intellectual efforts to foreign affairs and instead display lack of interest and apathy. Objectives of other countries are unknown or ignored, while certain forms of knowledge are distorted and generalized and cause even more damage.

Like Nicolson, Spulveda also notes the irresponsibility of the people in exercising their control. They may either not approve negotiated agreements or else cause instability by electing a party that opposed a signed agreement, thus eroding group accountability that may turn into anarchy. Democratic processes introduce inefficient delays compared to autocracies as negotiators must regard public opinion, consult with agencies and even with the opposition. While the people must be accurately informed, the press shows the most opposed views and most extravagant attitudes, while distorting certain aspects or opinions. Nevertheless, democratic statesmen must pay homage to the whims of the media and thereby their freedom to negotiate is severely limited. Finally, the habit of high-level ‘summitry’ creates expectations that may not be met, leads to misunderstandings and breeds confusion.
Clearly developments between the world wars have brought much disillusionment to proponents of democratic diplomacy. The power of the public to influence their government through indirect control and its “negative veto” power is still recognized, appreciated and addressed by the much more used term ‘public diplomacy’ (and the existence of such departments in most major foreign offices) but the idea of direct public involvement to express the ‘true’ preferences of the electorate in negotiation has been virtually abandoned.

Post Cold War Developments (1989-)
The collapse of the bloc system has triggered the rise of regional and local forms of organization challenging the traditional exclusive role of the nation-state as well as growing importance for NGO’s international organizations and multi-national companies on the world’s arena. This in conjunction with globalization, cosmopolitanism and advances in communication technology has sparked a new interest in combining democracy and international relations. In the words of Mcgrew:

It is only in the post Cold War era that the historically estranged literatures of international relations theory and democratic theory have begun to exhibit a shared fascination with the idea of democracy beyond borders, that is transnational (or global) democracy.

While transnational democracy could have been called ‘democratic diplomacy’, it luckily wasn’t. Therefore I will not go into it in depth here, except for noting that it establishes the very important idea that one doesn’t have to be a citizen in a nation in order to have some influence, thus providing a much better model for today’s complex and inter-dependent world and in particular normatively supporting joint decision mechanisms of the type I’m working on.

It is also worth to mention a very recent use of the term "New Democratic Diplomacy – a worldwide attempt to make peace by involving civil society and giving voice to muted voices” announced in the Hague Appeal for Peace conference in May 1999 (see http://haguepeace.org). The charter of this initiative stresses Peace education, defined as a participatory holistic process that includes teaching for and about democracy and human rights, nonviolence, social and economic justice, gender equality, environmental sustainability, disarmament, traditional peace practices, international law, and human security. In a sense the wheel (or more optimistically the spiral) has completed a full revolution and progressive circles are again harboring a Kantian belief that world peace may be established by education and citizen participation. Unfortunately, no clear mechanism is proposed for how this commendable fit is to be performed.

What can be Learned from Democratic Diplomacy
Examination of the history shows that the core principle of subjecting foreign policy and in particular foreign agreements to democratic guidance and control has prevailed. However, an effective mechanism for doing so hasn’t emerged within the confines of representative-elitist democracy as practiced in the heyday of the movement between the two world wars. This has caused considerable backlash so today the norm is that democratic control is exercised mainly postfactum, usually in the form of Parliamentary ratification process for international treaties and agreements.

This state of affairs is far from ideal in many respects. In particular it creates an inherent conflict between the negotiators and their constituency, which, as Putnam (1988) has shown, adversely affects both the chances of a good agreement and
internal political stability. I contend that the price is too high to pay, particularly when deep salient conflicts that endanger the world peace are at stake. I believe that with careful analysis, drawing upon participatory and deliberative practices and addressing the true desirables of democratic diplomacy as it should be, it is possible to design an institute that would get much closer to the ideal without suffering from the chronic illnesses of the approach that was tried and partially failed.

**Reinventing Democratic Diplomacy in the Context of an Intractable Conflict**

The literature I reviewed is predominantly occupied with the inward facing aspect of democratic diplomacy as viewed from within a well-established liberal democracy. Except for a few passing notes about the need to understand the other side, it keeps very silent about what may be happening when both sides exercise democratic diplomacy and even more so about the possibility of applying democratic diplomacy to ethnic conflicts where the collectives involved are people not usually organized as two separate and independent states.

When it comes to resolving intractable ethno-national conflicts, democracy itself often seems to be more a liability than an asset. Lay people see the opponent as an existential threat and not as a potential partner and have been socialized in the ethos of conflict for generations so they are not expected to easily reorient their beliefs, develop trust and be willing to take the apparent risks in supporting an agreement that would likely give them much less than they have persuaded themselves is rightly theirs (Bar-Tal, 2007, Gawerc, 2006, Kaufman, 2006).

**Inter-entity vs. Intrastate – a not so Useful Distinction**

For **inter-entity** conflicts, (like the conflict between Israel and the Palestinian authority and the Cypriot conflict since 1974), the situation is basically similar to that between states, but aggravated by the existential, identity and religious dimensions that are much more dominant. The leaders’ need to ‘sell’ any agreement to their polities adversely affects their flexibility to negotiate due to what Putnam (1988) termed ‘The two level game’. Moreover, the polities have effective veto power. In particular, electing a leader who would ‘drag his feet’ or turn a blind eye towards the extremists may suffice to deteriorate and eventually derail even a signed agreement.

For **intrastate** ethnic conflicts (like the Jewish-Arab conflict within Israel and the Cypriot conflict before the 1974 war), straightforward majoritarian democracy mutes the ethnic minority, leaving its members to choose between acquiescing to the majority preferences or struggle to gain ‘self rule’ and ‘collective political rights’.

Conventional wisdom in political science distinguishes intrastate from inter-entity conflicts and prescribes different means for containing, managing and resolving each type. Intrastate conflicts, by virtue of the overarching common citizenship, call for stressing the common identity, strengthening the contacts between members of both groups, better laws to protect the minority individual rights and in some cases the creation of consociational or federal power sharing institutions. The end goal is to get the individual citizen on both sides more content and less belligerent.

Inter-entity conflicts are managed as if they were international conflicts, with the state-like entity being the basic unit of analysis. The citizens of each entity are given only secondary importance as their entity leaders are considered to be their agents.

I claim that the inter-entity intrastate distinction may be artificial and unnecessarily constraining in the quest for the ‘greatest common good’. The intractable ethno-national conflict may be a more stable phenomenon than the current
borders shaped by the conflict wars, especially if these have not resulted in total and irrevocable ethnic separation.

Consider the Cypriot conflict. If both Turk and Greek citizens preferred a separation, it would have been very difficult to peacefully identify, define and implement their preference prior to the 1974 war. Afterwards, even if both populations preferred unification, defining and implementing this preference became increasingly difficult due to the negotiation being between the entities’ leadership and being influenced by interests of external powers.

The Palestinian-Jewish conflict is another example in point. It illustrates the difficulty arising when the interim political entity rather than the involved people is the overriding unit of organization. The inter-entity and the intrastate part of the conflict are clearly linked and should optimally be resolved together. However, no paradigm provides for such a linkage and in reality each part impedes progress with the other.

**The PROD Process for Finding the Democratically Preferred Future Scenario**

In Tzur (2008) and elsewhere I suggested that in both intrastate and inter-entity ethno-national conflict it would be beneficial to evolve the ‘hypothetical future’ most democratically preferred by both sides to the ethnic conflict (DPFS). If a compelling future agreeable to both sides is identified, it is highly likely that whatever is the current democratic political organization; it will have a tendency to gyrate towards this future.

The PROD mechanism I proposed to identify the DPFS may be viewed as an elaborate and radical ad-hoc form of democratic diplomacy where opinions of the ‘ad-hoc electorates’ evolve to become well-considered and well-informed and directly influence evolving ‘hypothetical futures’ proposed by anyone who cares to propose them (most likely elite groups) in a sort of a competitive open tender. This happens on both sides simultaneously thus providing a mechanism for joint decision where internal and external understandings and agreements develop over the same period with a built-in feedback.

In Particular, the publics are involved directly in agreement formation in several ways. Firstly, any person or group is free and in fact encouraged to propose and develop a future scenario. Secondly, large statistically representative mini publics (Goodin and Dryzek, 2006) who are allocated proper conditions for studying and deliberating the issues serve as their side’s formal delegation and thirdly, through bi-directional modern communication and mass media channels that would act to bring the scenarios to ‘life’ and provide close-ups on the other side as represented by their delegation, (see e.g. Tzur, 2004), everyone is encouraged to get cognitively and emotionally involved to whatever degree he or she desires. This openness contributes to higher legitimacy of the process and its results as well as for much higher considered and deliberated involvement.

Instead of negotiation that necessitates each side to form a position and then stand by it competitively against the other’s side position, the method of evolution incorporated in PROD only calls for each person in each delegation to rate the various proposed scenarios and optionally provide a rational for his/her ratings. This channels the competition away from the relationship and into between the scenarios themselves and even more importantly avoids the need for building a consensus within each group.
Because the ratings of each delegation are transparent, the people and delegations on both sides have an opportunity to learn the unfiltered and unbiased preferences of the other side. The collective is given a voice much different and much more credible than what its leaders are normally saying, thus providing a way for citizens to distinguish founded fears and suspicions from their halo.

The public involvement and a competitive bid as a replacement for negotiation are applicable to any high-stake democratic diplomacy, not necessarily in an ethnic conflict. More peculiar to ethnic conflicts is the much greater freedom future scenarios have in simultaneously addressing bilateral and ‘internal’ issues. A scenario may provide for internal rearrangement (such as ‘state building’) or even complete reconstitution of the groups and their relationships – a near impossibility when it is the self-preserving entities that are negotiating.

Each side in a conflict is much more heterogeneous than it seems. For example, in what is called the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, one may find very different groups: Israeli Arabs, religious orthodox Jews, Christian Arabs, minorities within minorities, refugees, Jews of the world, Palestinian Diaspora etc. Rather then try to make each side homogenous and unitary so that it can ‘negotiate’, PROD allows for overlaps in interests of sub-groups to be identified and add to the total support of scenarios containing them within both populations.

Finally, Coleman and Lowe (2007) discuss what contributes to people’s personal resilience to the detrimental effects of being a part of an intractable conflict. PROD by its design is an experiential process that encourages and cultivates many of these factors without being ‘educational’: cognitive complexity, tolerance for contradiction, constructive engagement with others, intergroup contacts, nonviolence approaches, openness and uncertainty, ability to view both sides of the conflict, resistance to categorization, differentiate ingroup and outgroup, ability to tolerate dissonant information, resisting simplification of issues/solutions, actively seeking contradictory information, creative/discovery orientation, actively challenging own assumptions about conflict and position and multiple contradictory identities but with super ordinate identities associated with fairness and justice.

**Israeli Public Perceptions on Reforming the Mechanism of Agreement Formation and Approval with the Palestinians**

The preceding section discussed the PROD process as a specific mechanism for agreement formation in an intractable conflict and analyzed some of the rational for it, mostly in the context of implementing democratic diplomacy. In this section I will briefly describe initial results from a study designed to examine how the Israeli public evaluates the effectiveness of the current mechanism for achieving agreement with the Palestinians and how this perceived effectiveness might change if participatory and deliberative democratic reforms are introduced. One specific set of such reforms amounts to a partial version of PROD, but many other alternatives have been proposed. The presentation here is meant only to provide enough background to understand the results of the study. A full and detailed account of the experiment, along with a methodological discussion, will be part of my MA dissertation.

The current mechanism for agreement formation and approval, as agreed upon in the Annapolis convention in 2007, is rather standard ‘closed door’ diplomacy. Israeli and Palestinian negotiation teams composed of officials and lead by politicians conduct a series of bi-lateral meetings in an attempt to reach an agreement. If an agreement is reached it will later have to be approved by the governments and
parliaments of both sides\(^2\). The international ‘quartet’ – The UN, the EU, Russia and most importantly the US – are supposed to ‘oversee’ the bi-lateral process and help it get over the unavoidable hurdles.

The participatory and deliberative democratic reforms put to the judgment of study participants addressed three key areas: Approval of the agreement, where reform options included new elections, referendum and personal citizen signing of the agreement; Method of Evolution, where an open competition of evolving agreement proposals was suggested as an alternative to bilateral bargaining; and Identity of Decision Makers in the Actual Formation of the Agreement. Six alternatives were proposed to the customary “Political leaders exercising their best judgment” – “Leaders implementing an on-going public consultation process”, “Parliaments”, “Public voting”, “Public opinion polls”, “Statistically representative mini-publics given suitable conditions for studying and deliberating the issues” and “Team of experts”.

**Method**
The study was conducted via the Internet on 22-23 September 2008. It consisted of a sample of respondents filling out an online questionnaire developed specifically for the study.

**Participants and Procedure**
Sixty-two participants were selected by an Internet survey company from its existing panel of more than 20,000 Internet users, recruited to participate in Internet surveys. The sample was selected so as to approximate the Israeli population in key socio-economical factors (gender, age, ethnicity, religiosity, education, geographical area and income). It should be clear however that with such a relatively small sample, only the marginal distributions could be approximately controlled. Participants spent up to an hour filling an online questionnaire composed of 40 questions (117 specific information items) and were rewarded for their efforts.

**Instrument**
Online questionnaire in Hebrew divided into 3 main sections and several auxiliary sections. Most of the questions asked the respondent to express agreement with given statements on a scale of 0-totally objects to 10- totally agrees and optionally provide a textual explanation. A few strictly qualitative questions were also included in an attempt to better understand the respondents’ positions and the level of knowledge, understanding and analysis they applied to the questionnaire.

The first main section described the current mechanism for formation and approval of an agreement between the Israelis and Palestinians and then asks the respondents to state their agreement with a series of 10 items related to its quality (some examples: “The mechanism should be activated immediately with no pre-conditions”, “Activating the mechanism will increase the internal divide and make it difficult to run the state”, “The mechanism truly represents the preferences of the citizens” and “With this mechanism, an agreement is reachable within a few years”), 9 items related to expected outcome (some examples: “I will be satisfied by the agreement”, “I will support the agreement as much as I can”, “It is legitimate for opponents to physically object to implementing the agreement”, and “Both sides will keep the agreement for several generations at least”) and 4 items related to support of

\(^2\) A legislation initiative, now under way in the Israeli Parliament, the Knesset, is that approval will require a 2/3 majority of Knesset members’ or else new elections or a referendum.
an open border for commerce, tourism, work and residence as part of the agreement achieved through the mechanism.

The second main section divided the ‘mechanism’ into three key areas of approval, method of agreement formation and identity of decision makers. For each area it presented the current situation along with the possibilities for reform described above and asked the respondents to state their agreement with each alternative.

In the third main section, respondents was asked to select the combination of alternatives they most prefers (i.e. to choose the ‘reformed mechanism’) from the presented options (and also an ‘other’ option) for each of the key areas. The respondents was then asked to answer an identical set of items regarding the quality, outcome and open border preferences as previously asked about the current mechanism.

Auxiliary sections included questions from the ‘Peace Index’ for comparison purposes, socio-demographic questions, questions about democratic perception, about the perceived etiology of the conflict, about the perceived importance of the mechanism in resolving the conflict and about prior thinking or knowledge in this area.

Results

One respondent was disqualified (because of expressing agreement of ‘5’ with all statements), making N=61. Also less than 5% of the agreement indications contained only a verbal description without an indication of the user’s selection on the requested 0-10 scale. These missing values were estimated based on the verbal description.

Sample Demography

The sample appears to be fairly representative in most of the parameters (percentage are rounded so they don’t always sum to 100 exactly):

- 44% young people (18-35), 34% middle-aged (36-55) and 21% older.
- 51% women and 49% men, 70% married.
- 10% have less than high school education, 23% have high school education, 28% have post high school education, 30% have a first degree and 10% a second university degree or beyond.
- 56% defined themselves as secular, 34% as ‘traditionalists’ and 10% as religious.
- 25% are of northern Israel, 46% from central Israel and 30% from the south, Jerusalem and settlers in Judea and Samaria (this partition was chosen to isolate people who have more daily friction with Palestinians).
- 89% are Jewish and 11% are Israeli Arabs (5 Muslim and 2 Christians).
- 38% defined themselves as belonging to the political “center”, 21% as “left-center” or “left”, 34% as “right-center”, “right” or “extreme right” and 7% as “other”.

As an additional indication, the responses of the sample to a selection of questions from the ‘Peace index’ are fairly similar to the ones reported in the ‘Peace index’ data that are based on the more established methodology of random telephone interviews.
Preferences about a reform in the agreement formation and approval mechanism

- **Agreement Approval:** 36% prefer a referendum, 25% the existing situation (the current government + parliament), 20% new elections, 13% a personal signature and 7% ‘other’.

- **Agreement Evolution:** 51% an open tender, 39% the existing situation negotiation/bargaining), 10% ‘other’.

- **Decision Makers in the Formation of the Agreement:** 33% open vote by the public, 16% parliaments, 16% leaders according to public preferences, 13% the existing situation (leaders according to their best judgment), 10% public opinion polls, 8% expert committee, 2% mini public, 2% ‘other’.

In summary, 52% are interested in reforming all 3 areas, 28% want to reform 2 areas, 10% want to reform one area and only 10% prefer to leave all areas as is. The number of areas that the respondent wants to reform was assigned to a variable $R_{\text{Radicality}} (= \text{Reform Radicality})$ that may be seen as a measure of the strength of support for a reform.

**Effects of Reform on Perceived Mechanism Quality**

As noted above, 55 respondents wanted some kind of reform versus only 6 that wanted all the 3 areas of the mechanism to stay as is. The following table summarizes the effect that a reform has on each of the mechanism quality measures.

For example, the first row should be read as follows: On the 0-10 agreement scale, the average of reform supporters is 1.87 higher for starting implementing their preference of a reformed mechanism than for starting implementing the current mechanism. The p-value for a Student’s t-test is 0.00024 – highly significant. For comparison, the average change (difference) among respondents who want to keep the mechanism ‘as is’ is only 0.17 (if the respondents were completely consistent, it should actually have been 0 as their ‘reformed’ mechanism is identical to the current mechanism).

As a more robust and simpler indication, I also calculated how many respondents support (agreement > 5) or object (agreement < 5) each of the statements for the current and reformed mechanisms. The ‘Change in Support’ column indicates that 21.3% more would support starting implementing the reformed mechanism immediately than those who support starting implementing the current mechanism immediately. Similarly, the opposition is reduced by 11.5% (all of these percentages are in terms of the entire sample, not the reform supporters only).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Measure</th>
<th>Average change for reform supporters</th>
<th>Average change for reform opposers</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>Change in Support</th>
<th>Change in Objection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Start implementing the mechanism immediately</td>
<td>+1.87</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.00024</td>
<td>+21.3%</td>
<td>-11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase inner conflict and reduce ability to govern</td>
<td>-1.27</td>
<td>-0.67</td>
<td>0.00221</td>
<td>-9.8%</td>
<td>+26.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faithfully represents the people</td>
<td>+2.98</td>
<td>-0.67</td>
<td>0.00000</td>
<td>+47.5%</td>
<td>-39.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arises concern</td>
<td>-1.69</td>
<td>-0.5</td>
<td>0.00067</td>
<td>-24.6%</td>
<td>+21.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will closely follow</td>
<td>+0.98</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>0.00958</td>
<td>+11.5%</td>
<td>-9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will impact my trust for the other side</td>
<td>+0.81</td>
<td>-0.67</td>
<td>0.00985</td>
<td>+8.2%</td>
<td>-11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arises hope</td>
<td>+2.22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00000</td>
<td>+29.5%</td>
<td>-26.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement proves ripeness</td>
<td>+1.55</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00010</td>
<td>+14.8%</td>
<td>-21.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 - Effects of Reform on Perceived Mechanism Quality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non agreement proves non-ripeness</th>
<th>+0.11</th>
<th>-0.67</th>
<th>0.40190</th>
<th>-1.6%</th>
<th>-3.3%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is possible to reach an agreement within a few years</td>
<td>+2.02</td>
<td>-0.83</td>
<td>0.00000</td>
<td>+31.1%</td>
<td>-29.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For reform supporters there is a significant increase in all of the mechanism quality measures except for “Non agreement proves non-ripeness”. A reformed mechanism is perceived to better represent the welfare and will of the people, if successful, it is perceived to prove ripeness and therefore contributes more to trust towards the other side, it much less threatens internal stability and causes greater involvement and interest. Emotionally it arises much more hope and much less concerns.

All this translates into strong support in immediate activation (65.6% vs. 18% who oppose and 16.4% who marked 5 – without preference), much more than the support for the current mechanism (42.6% support its immediate activation vs. 29.5% and 27.9% who had no preference). Reforming the mechanism also leads to drastic increase in the optimism regarding the possibility to reach an agreement within several years. 59% agree that this is possible vs. 21.3% who disagree and 19.7% who responded ‘5’. For comparison, under the current mechanism only 27.9% agree that it is possible to reach an agreement within several years, 49.2% disagree and 23% don’t have an opinion.

The following ‘sunflower plot’ shows for each respondent how much he or she agrees with the statement the “agreement is reachable within a few years” for both the current mechanism and the reformed mechanism. Where more than one respondent is located, additional lines are drawn emanating from the point for each additional respondent. Nearly all the respondents are above the line y=x so almost all are more optimistic regarding the chances of a reformed mechanism to result in an agreement. In addition, the crowded upper left quartile contains all those respondents who changed their views from pessimistic to optimistic as a result of a reform. Compare this to the lower right quartile that includes only a single respondent that has become more pessimistic.
The great increase in support for implementation and in optimism regarding its ability to bring about an agreement attest to the fact that respondents see a strong and significant connection between the mechanism quality and its ability to advance relationships between the conflicting parties at least into the level of an approved agreement.

The next figure shows the change in agreement for the statement “Agreement is reachable in a few years” due to a reform as a function of the radicality of the reform that the respondent has defined. The regression line

\[ DQ \text{ Agreement} \_ \text{Reachable} \_ \text{in} \_ \text{Few} \_ \text{Years} = 0.9640 \times R \_ \text{Radicality} - 0.4116 \]

Shows clearly (F=7.3064 p=0.00896) that the more a respondent wants a radical reform, the more he/she attributes a greater improvement in its ability to bring about an agreement. This indicates that the motivation for reform is a desire to reach an agreement (rather than for example filibuster an agreement with a cumbersome process).
Mechanism Outcome
The following table shows the effect a reform has on the outcome measures of the mechanism. The values displayed are identical to those displayed in the previous table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome Measure</th>
<th>Average change for reform supporters</th>
<th>Average change for reform opposers</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>Change in Support</th>
<th>Change in Objection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Profound positive change in the relationships</td>
<td>+1.40</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.00112</td>
<td>+18.0%</td>
<td>-18.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will be satisfied by the content of the agreement</td>
<td>+1.36</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.00061</td>
<td>+11.5%</td>
<td>-21.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will support the agreement the best I can</td>
<td>+1.40</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00169</td>
<td>+14.8%</td>
<td>-16.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ll feel committed to abide by the agreement even if I don’t like it</td>
<td>+0.65</td>
<td>-1.33</td>
<td>0.00160</td>
<td>+9.8%</td>
<td>-8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical action against the agreement is legitimate</td>
<td>-0.55</td>
<td>-1.83</td>
<td>0.07434</td>
<td>-9.8%</td>
<td>+6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public action for annulment is legitimate</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>-1.33</td>
<td>0.34060</td>
<td>+3.3%</td>
<td>-1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement will receive wide international and Arab support</td>
<td>+0.33</td>
<td>-1.33</td>
<td>0.19730</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>-1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The current leadership will be capable of implementing the agreement</td>
<td>+0.62</td>
<td>-0.67</td>
<td>0.04257</td>
<td>+11.5%</td>
<td>-3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The agreement will be kept at least for several generations</td>
<td>+1.31</td>
<td>-0.33</td>
<td>0.00003</td>
<td>+9.8%</td>
<td>-21.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Border open for residence</td>
<td>+0.51</td>
<td>-0.5</td>
<td>0.03454</td>
<td>+3.3%</td>
<td>-8.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2 - Increase in Optimism for Quick Agreement vs. Reform Radicality
Table 2 - Effects of Reform on Perceived Mechanism Outcome

The effect of a reform on the respondents’ expectations for what would happen after an approval of an agreement is smaller but still significant in many areas. The success of a reformed mechanism is expected to create more feeling of a deep positive change in relationship – a very important credit of good will for implementing an agreement in the presence of extremists likely to take violent actions against it. The expected satisfaction from the agreement and the willingness to support it (even if one doesn’t like it) rise substantially as well.

An agreement resulting from a reformed mechanism is perceived as binding more even for its opponents, but only to a mild degree. Similarly, the belief in the ability of the current leadership to implement the agreement increases and so is the willingness to agree that the border would be open for residence of people from the other side who don’t challenge the nature of the state in which they choose to live (A reform however doesn’t change the support for opening the border for commerce, tourism and work).

Finally, the optimism that the agreement will be kept for a long time (several generations at least) increases rather significantly if the agreement is to be achieved through a reformed mechanism. In such case, 41% are optimistic, 32.8% are pessimistic and 26.2% incline neither way. This is only a small optimistic majority, but it should be contrasted with the large pessimistic majority under the current mechanism (29.5% are optimistic, 54% are pessimistic and 16.4% had no preference). This result indicates that respondents believe that even the final goal of the mechanism – a long-term stable agreement – significantly depends on the agreement formation and approval mechanism.

Discussion of Results
There is relatively little discussion in Israel around the optimality of the agreement formation mechanism. For many of the respondents it was the first time ever to consider this issue at any depth. Approval has attracted more attention and controversy, with demands for approval by new elections, by special parliamentary majority, by a referendum or by a Jewish majority to replace the current simple majority parliamentary approval.

Despite the differences in awareness, the little discussed areas “who makes the decisions during agreement formation” and “the method of agreement evolution” were surprisingly perceived as worthy of democratic reform to at least the same degree as approval was. This indicates a clear support for a much more democratic diplomacy, at least as far as it concerns resolving the Jewish-Palestinian conflict. by the respondents to the agreement it is surprising that most respondents would like the mechanism to be reformed and believe that a reformed mechanism will be of significantly higher quality and of more effectiveness.

Summary and Conclusion
The idea of democratic diplomacy is, in my opinion, a “diamond in the rough” that has never been polished enough for the world to see it glowing. The particular context of an intractable conflict, where the issues are so salient, everyone’s life is affected, and the interim political units may be weaker than the ethnic or religious affiliation, is

\footnote{One can only guess what the results would have been if respondents were asked about agreement formation and approval regarding e.g. Syria. I would speculate that in this case the preference for democratization would be much lower.}
particularly suitable for an in-depth and serious attempt of realizing the ideal of
democratic diplomacy.

The initial empirical results reported in the paper indicate that more or less
representative respondent think that adding more democracy to diplomacy will make
the latter significantly better and more effective. Each respondent may have preferred
different details for the reform, but the direction was very clear – more democratic
involvement in the agreement formation.

The PROD process is my proposal for such a reform, as on theoretical grounds
it seems to satisfy the most desirables. The idea of replacing negotiation with an open
tender was also favored by respondents but the idea of delegations composed of a
statistically representative mini-public was not. In its stead the respondents opted
more for direct democracy, perhaps indicating that it is more in line with their
intuition of how democracy should be.

It is my sincere belief that on the basis of what was done so far, it is very
possible to design an institution or a mechanism that will meet the approval of both
political scientists and of democratically inclined populations on both sides of a
conflict. Such a mechanism may be tested on a small scale and, if successful, can
contribute a lot to intractable conflict resolution or, in the very least, to increasing
clarity and thus reducing internal conflict.

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