

*Moonis Ahmar*

## **RETHINKING THE CONCEPT OF PEACE PROCESS**

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### **Abstract**

This paper aims to critically examine the concept of peace process in the post-Cold War era by responding to the following questions: What are the contradictions in the theory and practice of peace process? Is the concept of peace process useful in the just resolution of conflicts? What are the limitations in peace process? The basic argument which this paper tries to make is: peace process is facing a serious credibility crisis because of long delays in negotiations, non-implementation of agreements and attempts made by the powerful party to keep things as they are. Looking at various case studies of peace processes in the last 10 years, it seems that the emphasis has not been on resolving critical issues but on freezing such issues so as to reduce the intensity of the conflict. As a result, basic irritants, which cause violence and the outbreak of hostilities, are not removed but temporarily shelved. Given the credibility problem of the peace process, there is a need on the part of the protagonists of peace to contemplate on how to address that issue.

### **1. Introduction**

Peace Process is at the crossroads. The term peace process assumed significance when it was applied during the mid-1970s to avoid another round of hostilities between the Arabs and the

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Israelis, to carry out disengagement of troops between Egypt and Israel, and Syria and Israel, and to create conditions for establishing peace in the Middle East. In the aftermath of the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, it became a reality that neither Israel nor the Arab countries including the Palestinians can destroy each other. The feeling that the only way for the resolution of their conflicts was by peaceful means gave an impetus to the concept of peace process. Earlier attempts made by the Arabs and the Israelis to seek a military option for the accomplishment of their objectives had failed and the "war fatigue" along with its political and economic implications made it impossible for them to continue the standoff. The cases of South Africa, Cambodia, Northern Ireland and Bosnia-Herzegovina also prove how the "breaking point" stage had compelled warring parties in such conflicts to move from war process to peace process.

The signing of Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel in 1978, followed by the signing of peace treaty between the two countries in 1979, gave an impetus to the task of peace process in the Middle East where a step by step approach was undertaken to resolve intractable conflicts between the Arabs and the Israelis. After the end of the Cold War, peace process emerged as a mechanism of conflict resolution in other troubled spots of the world. While the concept of peace process was initially understood in the context of bilateral and multilateral conflict resolution, in the post-Cold War era, it also assumed the task of resolving internal conflicts. Based on ideal principles, peace process demands an exercise of maximum degree of patience and mutual sacrifice of interests. There is no short cut to peace and peace process, given an opportunity to warring parties to lower the temperature for the resolution of their conflicts.

With the launching of peace processes in Cambodia, South Africa, Northern Ireland, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Middle East, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Sri Lanka, expectations from peace process also began to multiply. Theoretically speaking, peace process aims to engage warring parties in a series of negotiations so as to create conditions for the peaceful resolution of disputes. Peace process is a time consuming affair and the parties involved in the process are supposed to be patient and prudent.

Critics argue that in most cases, the outcome of a peace process is more mistrust and confusion than the resolution of a conflict, because the intentions of the players in that process are not fair. The peace processes in South Africa, Cambodia and Bosnia-Herzegovina yielded positive results in the sense that negotiations among warring parties led to cease-fire, holding of elections and transfer of power to elected representatives. However, in the cases of Palestine, Northern Ireland, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Sri Lanka, one can see violation and annulment of agreements, growing mistrust among warring parties, imposition of an unfair deal on the weaker party and the prolonged stalemate. As a result, growing disillusionment from the negative outcome of peace process tends to raise a number of questions about the usefulness and credibility of the concept of peace process. Frustration resulting from stagnation and stalemate of peace process questions the need to follow this concept as a mechanism of conflict resolution. This paper aims to critically examine the concept of peace process in the post-Cold War era by responding to the following questions:

1. What are the contradictions in the theory and practice of peace process?
2. Is the concept of peace process useful in the just resolution of conflict?

### 3. What are the limitations in peace process?

The focus in this paper will be to call for rethinking and redefining the concept of peace process in the light of contradictions, gaps and failures witnessed in several case studies. Instead of holding endless negotiations and experiencing long delays in the implementation of agreements, the focus in a peace process should be on reaching a just settlement in a reasonable period of time. If the powerful party(ies) involved in a peace process tries to take advantage of its position and wishes to maintain status quo by holding series of negotiations without any positive results and in the end offering an unfair deal to the weaker party(ies), it could be counter-productive.

## II. Why Peace Process?

It is argued that when there is a "war process" there should also be a "peace process", so that decades of violence and bloodshed going on in various conflicts could be stopped and conditions created for the peaceful resolution of disputes. Prior to the introduction of the concept of "peace process" in the terminology of International Relations, warring states and individuals followed paths to the peaceful resolution of disputes but in a less methodological and professional manner. The advent of "peace process" made it possible for parties in conflict to embark on comprehensive methodology for the gradual easing of tension and resolution of conflicts. The need to launch a peace process becomes imperative when,

- The warring parties in a conflict are exhausted because of decades of confrontation.
- They feel their conflict as a zero sum game.
- Domestic economic situation gets worse as a result of conflict.

- The country's public opinion forces its leader(s) to abandon the path of confrontation.
- The regime decides to start the process of negotiations because of pressure.
- There exists a substantial international pressure to choose the path of negotiations than conflict.
- The country or the ruling elite has reached a breaking point.
- An alternate to peace process is endless destruction.

Contrary to temptations and compulsions to launch a peace process, arguments against launching the peace process becomes significant when,

- Either party thinks that it may win a war or can gain an upper hand in continuing the conflict.
- People at the helm of affairs have a vested interest in continuing with the war process.
- The regime feels insecure and vulnerable if it abandons the path of confrontation and follows the road to peace.
- The parties involved in a conflict do not see any incentive in embarking on a peace process.
- There are no external or domestic pressures to launch a peace process.
- The warring parties feel that they do not pay a price if they continue to follow the destructive path.

### *Stakes in a Peace Process*

Why the countries or groups involved in a peace process attempt to sustain the process? What are the threats and dangers, which are present if peace process is abandoned? As a result of following the path of peace process, following stakes seem to act as a deterrent if the road to peace is abandoned.

- No party would like to revert to the era of confrontation and violence because it could ruin prospects for economic recovery and gains. Because of the peace process, the outside world embarks on investments and aid in a country that was earlier involved in violence and bloodshed.
- As a result of peace process, the traders and businessmen develop a legitimate stake in sustaining the environment of peace as the collapse of negotiations or agreements could hurt their economic interests.
- A peace process, despite its weaknesses and gray areas, provides breathing space to the warring parties. Return to the era of violence could only mean more destruction and bloodshed.
- The peace process gives hope for a better future to people who have suffered endlessly because of wars.
- It is also possible that if the peace process is abandoned by the parties involved, the international community will not render support and assistance, which it used to provide as a carrot for continuing the process.

It is on these grounds that regardless of upheavals in the Palestinian-Israeli peace process, neither Israel nor the PLO has followed the road to overt confrontation. While PLO knows that because of its stakes in the peace process, it cannot re-launch *Intifada*, the Israelis are aware that another round of hostilities with the Palestinians will have serious domestic and international repercussions. Therefore, it is by default that once launched, it becomes difficult to roll back the peace process.

During the Cold War years, the two superpowers' decision to play a dominant role in world affairs did not create conditions for launching any peace process to solve the East-West tussle going on in Europe and various parts of the developing world.

Antagonistic countries had no problem in getting the support of either superpower in order to sustain their conflicts. However, things changed in the post-cold war era with the demise of the Soviet bloc. Many Third World Countries were left with no backing. Post-Cold War trends demanded that adequate attention should be given to democracy, human rights and market economy, and that the process of conflict resolution be given priority with a major role of third party mediation. It was the post-Cold War changes in the global order that gave impetus to peace processes in Cambodia, South Africa, Middle East, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Northern Ireland. With the demise of the Soviet bloc, there was not enough temptation and justification left for the United States to continue its involvement in various regional conflicts.

### **III. Launching the Peace Processes**

Charts 1 and 2 will highlight peace processes in the Cold War and in the post-Cold War era. Interestingly, some of the peace processes that were launched during the Cold War years like Northern Ireland, Cyprus, Kashmir, Israelis and the Arabs, are still going on in the post-Cold War era. The only difference is that unlike the Cold War years, in the post-Cold War era one does not see the involvement of superpowers in such conflicts.

Harold H. Saunders, an important player in the Middle East Peace Process, argues that the phrase "peace process" has no definition in the literature of political science or international relations. That we (Americans) coined it in 1974-75 using it perhaps imprecisely at first because we needed a short hand expression. Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy and the mediated agreement held the headlines and public attention, but the

negotiations were not all that was happening during those trips. Defining the term peace process, Saunders argues that,

Peace process is more than conventional diplomacy and negotiations. It encompasses a full range of political, psychological, economic, diplomatic, and military actions woven together into a comprehensive effort to establish peace between Israel and its neighbours. Progress toward peace depends on breaking down the barriers to negotiations and reconciliation - the other walls. If we ignore the politics of breaking down these barriers, the mediator and negotiator may never have a chance.<sup>1</sup>

### CHART : 1

#### PEACE PROCESSES IN THE COLD WAR YEARS

PEACE PROCESS	RESULT
Korean Peninsula	Negative
Cyprus	Negative
U.S-North Vietnam	Partially successful
Northern Ireland	Negative
Kashmir	Negative
U.S-Soviet Union	Partially successful
Egypt-Israel	Successful
Israel-Jordan	Unsuccessful
Israel-Lebanon	Unsuccessful
Israel-Syria	Unsuccessful
Israel-Palestine	Unsuccessful
Namibia	Successful
Nicaragua	Successful
Afghanistan (during the Soviet military intervention)	Partially successful
Iran-Iraq	Partially positive

1. Harold H. Saunders, *The Other Walls The Arab-Israeli Peace Process in a Global Perspective* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), Revised edition, p. 3.



## CHART : 2

## PEACE PROCESSES IN THE POST-COLD WAR YEARS

PEACE PROCESS	RESULT
South Africa	Successful
Cambodia	Successful
India-China	Partially successful
Israel-Palestine	Partially successful
Israel-Jordan	Successful
Israel-Syria	Unsuccessful
Israel-Lebanon	Unsuccessful
Somalia	Unsuccessful
Cyprus	Unsuccessful
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Successful
Northern Ireland	Partially successful
Tamil-Sinhalese	Unsuccessful
India and Pakistan on Kashmir	Unsuccessful
Afghanistan	Unsuccessful
Tajikistan	Unsuccessful

Peace process could be defined as a mechanism whereby conflicting parties attempt to resolve conflicts by following a step by step approach. Since peace process is a package in order to create conditions for building trust among warring parties along with holding of dialogue, reaching a settlement and coping with post-settlement challenges, the most important factor involved in this situation is time. Particularly, if the objective is to reach a settlement based on the principles of justice and fair play, the actors involved in a peace process need to bear in mind the

difficulties present in this regard. It is not only time, mutual trust, patience, perseverance and prudence, which act as cardinal principles in any peace process but also the will of the parties involved in that process to resolve a conflict.

John Darby and Roger Mac Ginty examine ordeals in a peace process in the following words:

A peace process is often compared to climbing a mountain, but a mountain range is a better metaphor, and the first peak is usually the ending of violence. All previous expeditions have failed. There are no obvious tracks to the top, not any maps to provide guidance. The climbers, previously preoccupied with the art of war, are unaccustomed to compromise and must pick up the skills as they go along. They must rely on each other's cooperation for survival. To make matters worse, the mountaineering team is composed of people who have previously been at each other's throats, often literally, and who must now overcome their suspicions and fears to accomplish a common track for the first time. For many, the ending violence is more than enough. Unprecedented peaks emerge through the mists and demand the immediate attention of the climbers. Each peace process has its own distinctive terrain and its priorities.<sup>2</sup>

The lesson, which one learns from the tests and ordeals of a peace process, is that the participants should have strong nerves and determination to face predictable challenges. Most important, like climbing more and more peaks of a mountain, the feeling of giving up or abandoning peace process should not occur. The problem, which one has been facing in different peace processes, is after experiencing stalemate or a failure in talks it is believed

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2. See, John Darby and Roger Mac Ginty, *The Management of Peace* (Forthcoming). According to the two authors, peace processes are often regarded as following three phases: first, the ending of violence; their negotiations leading to a political/constitutional agreement; and finally what is often referred to as post-settlement peace-building.

that the peace process has failed. Whereas, temporary setback in talks should not be considered as a failure of a process.

#### IV. Theory and Practice of Peace Process

Theoretically, the peace process is a mechanism or a set of negotiations where the parties involved attempt to avoid war or a war-like situation and wish to settle conflicts peacefully by using techniques like diplomacy, bargaining, secret and open negotiations, tradeoffs and mediation.<sup>3</sup> In order to launch a viable peace process, it is essential that the parties involved should have substantial political will and determination and should be above paranoia and suspicion to manage disputes through a process of dialogue. Hence, a peace process should be largely indigenous in nature, with possible external assistance if desired by the parties concerned. Concepts, ideas, theories and approaches about the peace process launched by different thinkers and experts cannot be disregarded but all such things change according to the situations. Western concepts about the peace process may be applicable in intractable conflicts in developing countries, but the ground realities of the particular area may not endorse the total application of such concepts.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, peace process is an exercise where groups or countries with conflicting interests seek to avoid further confrontation through a series of negotiations. Stretched over a period of months and years, peace process

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3. Moonis Ahmar, "The Concept of Peace Process," paper presented at a workshop on, "Peace by Process: Lessons for India and Pakistan from the Middle East," organized by the Center for Asian Studies, University of Cairo, Giza, Egypt February 11, 1999.

4. *Ibid.*

requires substantial patience among the parties concerned before the results of that process could be achieved.<sup>5</sup> Some of the examples of peace process are: Korea 1951-54, Indo-China 1969-73, Cambodia 1986-92, South Africa 1990-94, Afghanistan 1982-88 (During the Soviet military intervention) and 1988 to-date, Egypt-Israel 1977-79, PLO-Israel, 1991 to-date, Jordan-Israel, 1991-94, Syria-Israel, 1991 to-date, Northern Ireland, 1994 to-date and Bosnia-Herzegovina 1992-95.

- Some of the theoretical requirements of peace process are as follows:
- Willingness of the parties to break the inertia and initiate the process of dialogue.
- Expression of mutual trust and confidence on each other's intentions and to discourage paranoia.
- Clear intentions to achieve objectives identified in a peace process.
- Conscious of the time factor and able to comply with the deadlines set in the agreement.
- Political will to sustain the process of negotiations and restrain impatience.
- Following the step by step approach to address various issues.
- Identification of critical issues and moving from less contentious to critical issues.
- Developing points of understanding.

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5. James A. Schellenburg, *Conflict Resolution Theory, Research And Practice* (Albany: State University of New York, 1996), p. 10.

- Taking public opinion into confidence before reaching any settlement.
- Utilizing the services of mediator.
- Learning lessons from other peace processes.
- Highlighting the positive side of negotiations.
- Engage media, intelligentsia, political parties, businessmen and hard-line religious groups in peace process.
- Cessation of propaganda warfare against each other.
- Controlling border tension.
- Maintaining better lines of communications in the process of negotiations.
- Avoiding stalemate.
- Strive for a mutual win-win-situation.

### *Contradictions*

In practice, one can see that some of the requirements in a peace process are not fulfilled because of the vested interests involved thus creating frustration and resentment in circles that expect better results. Based on experiences of peace processes, one can figure out five major contradictions in the theory and practice of peace process. First, it is felt by the weaker party involved in a peace process that an unjust settlement could be imposed because the other party wants to keep things as they are. Although in theory, a peace process is supposed to be just and fair, in practice it may not be so. For example, the Palestinians assert that Israel, as the stronger party, is not interested in seriously resolving critical

issues like the formation of an independent Palestinian State, the status of Jerusalem, the return of refugees and the release of Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails. Second, long delays in peace talk often lead to stalemate in a peace process. Again, it is the powerful side, which wants to delay things so as to gain time and strengthen its hold over the territory, which is in dispute.

While peace process requires a lot of patience but when endless time is spent on unproductive talks and delaying tactics are used by either side, the credibility of peace process is at stake. Peace talks between Sinn Fein and the Unionists in Northern Ireland dragged on for several years. The "Good Friday" agreement<sup>6</sup> signed between the warring Catholic and Protestant groups on April 10, 1998 with the mediation of former U.S. Senator George Mitchell also bogged down on the issues of decommissioning of weapons and devolution of power. After hectic talks involving Sinn Fein, Unionist Party, Britain, Republic of Ireland and George Mitchell, the U.S. mediator, it was agreed to implement the "Good Friday" agreement.<sup>7</sup> According to a Pakistani scholar, "the problem with peace efforts spread over a long period of time is that governments and people begin to suffer from 'a peace fatigue.' When they achieve positive results they begin to lose interest in the matter. Governments too feel the need to show restraint. When the course is delayed, they start distancing themselves from the process. Another problem is that while negotiations spread over months or years (never days or

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6. See, *Washington Post*, April 10, 1998.

7. See, news item, "Pressure mounts in N. Ireland to solidify deal" *AFP*, November 24, 1999

weeks) are going on, any unpleasant development can take place, which can retard the process or stop it altogether."<sup>8</sup>

Third, in theory an agreement signed by the parties involved in a peace process should be implemented but unfortunately in practice, in some cases either there is a delay in the implementation of an agreement or the agreement is not implemented at all. The Palestinian-Israeli agreement of 1994 had set five year interim agreement to reach a final settlement. But the then Israeli government of Benjamin Nethanyahu did not implement the agreement. In case of India and Pakistan, the two countries had signed the Lahore Declaration in February 1999 to normalize their bilateral relations along with holding of talks for the resolution of the Kashmir dispute. Neither there was a follow-up to the Lahore Declaration nor were there talks between New Delhi and Islamabad for the resolution of the Kashmir dispute. On the contrary, in 100 days after the signing of the Lahore Declaration, both India and Pakistan were involved in a mini war over Kashmir. The failure of the parties involved in complying with the agreement questions the usefulness of a peace process. Fourth, in theory, expression of mutual trust and confidence and avoidance of paranoia is obligatory in any peace process. But

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8. Talat A. Wizarat, "Peace Processes: A Comparative Study," Paper presented at a workshop on, "Peace by Process: Lessons for India and Pakistan from the Middle East," organized by the Center for Asian Studies, University of Cairo, Giza, Egypt, February 11, 1999. According to the same author, even if the peace process gains momentum it is difficult to maintain it. Governments have to simultaneously deal with a variety of issues. They cannot be expected to attack the same degree of urgency to the peace process if it is spread over a long period of time. Some governments can also deliberately use this shortcoming of the mechanism to gain time. It is also impossible to keep the momentum in times of elections or other emergencies.

while going through the cases of Arab-Israeli, Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka and Indo-Pak peace processes, it appears that despite years of negotiations and the signing of agreements to end hostilities and establish peace, there is an absence of trust and confidence. Paranoia still looms large among the parties involved in the peace process. Had this not been the case, positive and concrete results would have emerged from such peace processes. Finally, in theory win-win-situation is ideal in any peace process because neither party will lose or gain at the expense of the other.

The major problem in the Arab-Israeli, Northern Ireland, India-Pakistan and Sri Lanka peace processes is that some parties still want to win and are unwilling to give concessions. With such an approach, the conflict remains unresolved because the weaker side is not willing to give up and the powerful wants to win under the shadow of negotiations. Nonetheless, peace process is a long-drawn out affair, which is based on the will of the parties concerned to find a peaceful solution of their conflict. It is based on reciprocal measures. Among its ingredients are measures, which form part of a package. One party may not be happy with what is expected to give away but may willingly do so in return for some reward that it badly needs.<sup>9</sup>

Given the structural differences between the developed and developing world, one should be ready to face further erosion of peace process because,

- For the developing world, the concept of peace is different than their counterparts in the developed world because in latter's case peace is attainable. Developing countries are not

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9. *Ibid.*



only coping with conflicts with their neighbours but also conflicts within their societies. Since in most cases such conflicts are violent in nature, the perception about peace process appears to be unrealistic. While developed societies are not passing through serious structural problems and other challenges at the political, economic, cultural and security levels, developing countries face an entirely different situation. For them peace process is unrealistic because their conflicts cannot be resolved in that manner. Their main challenge is basic survival and they cannot afford the luxury of a peace process.

In the developing world, hard liners possess an upper hand and their opposition to peace process is not unknown. Because of this reason, hard liners have managed to create obstacles in the Arab-Israeli, Indo-Pak, Tamil-Sinhali and Afghan peace processes. Interestingly, hard liners from different sides argue that steps in the direction of peace process weaken and marginalize their position. Unlike the moderates, the hard liners possess the capability to create an embarrassment for the upholders of peace by launching terrorist acts. In case of the Middle East, it is not only Hamas from the Palestinian side which is against the peace process, but extremist Jewish organizations in Israel, including the Likud Party hold hard feelings against peace moves. The same is true in case of Northern Ireland where extremist elements in Catholic and Protestant communities view peace process as threat to their interests.

Unlike the developed world, the concept of peace process has not emerged as a field of study in developing countries. Knowledge and awareness about peace process and its theoretical

dimension is marginal in many parts of developing world. Therefore, like the concepts of conflict resolution, confidence-building measures and peace research, peace process is also called an American-Euro centric concept unable to meet the requirements of the developing world. The following chart will help understand contradictions in theory and practice of peace process.

### CHART : 3

#### CONTRADICTIONS BETWEEN THEORY & PRACTICE OF PEACE PROCESS

<b>THEORY</b>	<b>PRACTICE</b>
Just settlement of disputes	Imposition of an unfair deal
Holding of mutual trust and confidence	Paranoia and mistrust
Better communication	Stalemate
Time line	Prolong delays
Clarity in objectives	Confusion
Win-win approach	Unilateral gains

Will the contradictions in the theory and practice of peace process justify the abandonment of the concept of peace process? Is there a way to bridge gap in the theory and practice of peace process? Critics argue that when the parties involved in the peace process deviate from the path of justice the outcome is resentment, and in some cases rejection of peace process by the weaker party. It has been rightly stated that "no peace process can lead to a success unless it addresses the concerns of the concerned parties. Either side should not monopolize the agenda. Although there is a tendency among stronger parties to project their own concerns without any regards for the interest of the weaker party, unless the major concerns of all major parties are included, the peace process

will not lead to positive results.<sup>10</sup> One major flaw with the peace process is that in most cases the emphasis is not on the contents<sup>11</sup> but on the process. By not giving proper attention to the contents, the outcome is distrust and disappointment from the peace process.

## V. Peace Process and Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution is an end in itself and peace process is a major step in that direction. If there is a serious flaw in the peace process, the goal of conflict resolution is in jeopardy. But there is no short cut to the resolution of conflicts and peace process, as a challenging and an uphill task is its integral part. Peace process is not only useful in the termination of conflict but also in dealing with complications in the post-conflict period.

All the four important phases of peace process i.e. creating conditions for the cessation of hostilities, the holding of negotiations, signing of an agreement and coping with post-settlement challenges are relevant in conflict resolution. What is more important while examining the linkage between peace process and conflict resolution is the manner in which the former is carried out by the parties concerned. If one party tries to use peace process to create a stalemate or to impose an unfair deal, the situation could be detrimental to the task of conflict resolution.

The most important phase in a peace process is when a peace treaty is signed and the implementation process is undertaken. It is in that juncture when the real test of peace process begins. When a peace treaty is based on unfair terms and is rejected by some

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10. *Ibid.*

11. *Ibid.*

segments of society, its implementation process also becomes problematic. Therefore, "the odds of peace treaties failing are especially high in cases of civil or intra-state conflicts where effective political authority is either non-existent, fragmented and faction-ridden, or too weak to overcome the self-sustaining patterns of hostility and violence that characterize struggles to assert political identities."<sup>12</sup> In such a situation, a peace treaty will become either highly unpopular or impossible to implement. Against this background, success of a negotiated settlement depends on the following factors:

1. Coordinating military and political timetables and being mindful of timing.
2. Acting so as to avoid overloading the circuits with premature elections and to facilitate the demilitarization of factions.
3. Keeping the initiative in the hands of peacemakers rather than letting warlords retain vetoes and hostages.
4. Determining the shape of the deal before embracing abstract target dates or procedural benchmarks.
5. Avoiding excessive expectations that discredit the peace and its sponsors and embolden cynics who prefer to live off war.
6. Maintaining coherent leadership of the implementation process and using the leverage it offers to force decisions where a settlement remains from complete.<sup>13</sup>

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12. Chester A. Crocker and Fen Osler Hampson, "Making Peace Settlements Work," *Foreign Policy* (Washington DC) 104, fall 1996, p. 55.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 71. The two authors substantiating their argument on the implementation process as a key for the resolution of conflict argues that, "in any implementation process, a control role remains for imaginative

The following chart will examine the linkage between peace process and conflict resolution.

**CHART : 4**

**LINKAGE BETWEEN PEACE PROCESS & \ CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

<b>PEACE PROCESS</b>	<b>CONFLICT RESOLUTION</b>
Step by step approach	Dismissal of war as an option
Cessation of hostilities	Dealing with post-settlement challenges
Role of external factors	External incentives
Obstructions from hard liners	Lack of support from hard liners
Support from people essential	Popular support required
Reducing the enemy image	Neutralizing the threat perception

It has been proved in cases of PLO-Israeli treaty of September 1993, the Wye River Acord of November 1998, and the Good Friday agreement for the resolution of Irish problem in April 1998 that the real challenge in any peace process is the implementation of the agreement. It is in that crucial stage when the conflict resolution process may be derailed. The question is, when a peace process fails to produce positive results and a general sense of disillusionment prevails because of stalemate,

improvisation and the spontaneous solving of problems that are certain to arise. This is why top-flight leadership is essential in complex, political-military undertaking. Similarly, a well-led implementation can transform the climate that develops among the parties, making possible compromises and deals that would have been unthinkable before the settlement. Everything hinges on all parties taking the implementation phase seriously. A good test is to ask, who is going to make sure that the whole complex operation works? Unless responsibility rests somewhere, implementation will be rocky." *Ibid.*, p. 57.

then why have peace processes not been abandoned? Joseph Alpher argues why the Arabs and the Israelis, despite their bitter experiences in the peace process, have not reverted to war process. According to him,

The Arab interest in the peace process reflects security concerns in view of the Arab perception of Israel as a threat but it is also to a large extent political. The Palestinians see negotiations as a vehicle for state building; Syria and Lebanon wish to recover territory, while Syria strives to expand its regional sway; Jordan seeks to regularize its sensitive relationship with Israel and Palestinians alike. World interest is mainly economic, ensuring regional security so as to guarantee the viability of oil-supplying Gulf regimes, strategic stabilizing the Middle East Arabs race and security trade routes and key alliances; and religions - for example concerning Jerusalem. The interest of Israel in this process, and of Israel alone, can be defined almost exclusively in terms of security. From the standpoint of a large majority of Israelis, it is the preoccupation with security that will for a long time to come, continue to direct the country's attitude towards peace with its neighbours.<sup>14</sup>

It goes without saying that despite contradictions, limitations and gaps, there exists a need to follow the approach of peace process. Peace cannot be established right away because it requires a process where step by step the warring parties attempt to build blocs for peace. If the process is fair it will not be painful but if unjust practices are pursued, the task of conflict resolution will become more complicated. Peace processes in the Middle East, Northern Ireland, Afghanistan, Kashmir and Sri Lanka point to the bitter reality of the problems which contribute little to the resolution or the management of conflicts in the post-cold war era but only help in maintaining the status quo.

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14. Joseph Alpher, "Israel's Security Concerns in the Peace Process," *International Affairs* (London) 70, 2 (1994), p.220.

## VI. Limitations

No peace process is perfect and given the intractable nature of conflicts there are several limitations which the parties involved in a peace process may face. These limitations are the outcome of gaps and contradictions in a peace process and may be broadly divided into following categories :

1. Structural and
2. Psychological.

There are four important factors, which play an important role in the first category. First, peace process is too broad and general and incorporates several requirements. Divided into several processes, it becomes difficult for the party(ies) concerned to sustain their involvement. For example, the Afghan peace process will not only include creating favorable conditions for cease-fire, cessation of hostilities, but also non-intervention from outside world including arms embargo, demilitarization and demobilization of armed groups, holding of elections, transfer of power to elected representatives and the monitoring of post-settlement matters. Because of the stretched and prolonged nature of peace process, its viability is questioned.

Second, the role of mediator in a peace process is ambiguous. Is the mediator supposed to help warring parties to build trust or to use its clout to prevent a stalemate? Should the mediator provide incentive to the negotiating parties or withdraw in case of a deadlock? In some cases mediation ends up in failure of the peace process because either the mediator loses interest in the peace process or either party may question the impartial role of the mediator. Third, in the absence of a reasonable time framework, in some cases peace processes may drag on for years without resulting into a logical conclusion. Because of bitter

experiences in some peace processes, particularly in case of the Middle East, there exists an element of irresponsibility while dealing with so-called deadlines and schedules. Fourth, there is the question of mutual trust and confidence. It has been witnessed that even after passing through a major phase of the peace process, there is the lack of trust and confidence between the parties concerned. Because of the absence of such an important requirement that peace process ends in fiasco. The Irish, Arab-Israeli and Tamil-Sinhala peace processes are suffering from that structural problem.

As far as psychological dimension of peace process is concerned, the major point is the feeling that it is a very cumbersome process because of the possible stalemate and freezing of the core issue. The weak party in a peace process is psychologically influenced by the possible unfair and unjust treatment that it may get from the powerful party and feels compelled to adopt a hard line position. Because of the unfair outcome of some peace processes, one gets the impression that by launching a peace process it is the weaker party, which will suffer.

Paranoia and past injustices add to the psychological barriers in a peace process. When one party is unwilling to forget the pain of the past caused by another party and still fears that history may repeat itself, talks and negotiations in a peace process may not continue. John Darby and Roger Mac Ginty are right when they argue that,

One of the difficult tasks in any peace process is how to confront the sins of the past without compromising the need for reconciliation. In the early Oslo negotiations, the negotiators agreed not to dwell on past grievances. Other negotiators have built into the timetable what might be described as a venting time, to allow the inevitable bitterness to be expressed and then hopefully, set aside. The South African Truth and



Reconciliation Commission was established in 1995 and did not shrink from identifying atrocities from all sides, and the Northern Ireland Victims' Commission made a number of recommendations to identify and support victims of the troubles. Both arose from the same root, the need to acknowledge feelings of hurt and loss and the importance of grieving and other attempts to find ways of disassociating these feelings from guilt and acrimony, not an easy task.<sup>15</sup>

If the feeling of forgiveness is reciprocal and above the shadow of doubt, one can expect a smooth sailing in the settlement and post-settlement phases of the peace process. It has been proved in conflicts in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), South Africa, Franco-German rivalry and many other cases that the replacement of paranoia with forgiveness helps in the smooth transition of peace process. The formation of truth and reconciliation commission in South Africa after the dismantling of apartheid and the transfer of power to the black majority was a right initiative in that direction. Failure to express mutual forgiveness can erode prospects for reconciliation between two warring groups or countries. But what happens if one side is not willing to forget the past and stick to the politics of revenge? The problem with Sri Lanka is neither the Tamils nor the Sinhalese are in a mood to forget the bitter past and start the reconciliation process. Same is true in case of fighting in Afghanistan. As a result, one can see sustained violence and bloodshed in that country.

## VII. Conclusion

No peace process is free of challenges, but what is required is to make it more rational and result-oriented. The biggest challenge faced by the peace process is the major contradictions

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15. John Darby and Roger Mac Ginty, *op.cit.*

in its theory and practice. It is true that people have lot of expectations when a peace process is launched but when no substantial progress is achieved and the process ends in a deadlock, the only casualty is peace itself. If a peace process is discredited, then the beneficiaries are those who wish to thrive on conflicts and keep things as they are. Having discussed the contradictions and limitations in peace process, there is a need to initiate a debate on searching ways by which one can see more results than stalemates in a peace process.

The realities in post-war era demand a rational modeling of peace process. This would require the practical demonstration of peace with justice. Sincerity of purpose and political will are the two major conditions for the success of any peace process. If contradictions in the human mind are narrowed and people start thinking above their parochial interests, proper conditions for peace could be created. Problem occurs when promises are broken, trust betrayed, agreements violated and an unfair approach adopted in the name of peace. Unless such practices are changed and players in the peace process adopt a fair approach in resolving conflicts, there exists little likelihood of moving for a secure and peaceful world. Chart 5 will spell out the negatives and positives of peace process.

Given the contradictions in theory and practice of peace process, there is a need to find a new way for re-designing efforts and initiatives for peace making. Although there is no alternate to peace process because of its usefulness in engaging warring parties for the task of conflict resolution, following steps could be taken to revitalize the concept of peace process on rational grounds. First, there should not be high expectations from the outcome of a peace process because frequent breakdown of

negotiations could happen. In order to keep expectations to minimum level, Track-II diplomacy and back-channel negotiations, instead of official talks between warring parties should be conducted before launching the peace process. Such a methodology will prevent any embarrassment, which may occur in the failure of official talks. Second, before launching a peace process, it is essential to make sure that either party will not follow unfair and unjust approach. There will also be a need by the participants of the peace process to agree that they will adopt a serious and professional approach during the course of negotiations. That the focus should be on the contents of peace process; on accomplishing results and not on spending time in endless talks.

#### CHART : 5

#### POSITIVES & NEGATIVES OF PEACE PROCESS

POSITIVES	NEGATIVES
Lowering of temperature	Escalation in conflict
Sustaining the process of dialogue	Stalemate
Time framework	No time line
Identification of critical issues	Marginalization or freezing of critical issues
Trust and confidence	Mistrust and paranoia
Economic incentives	False hopes and expectations
Optimism	Pessimism
Flexibility	Intransigence
Forgiveness	Victimization
Healing process	Persecution
Objectivity	Biases
Reconciliation	Imposition of views

Third, before embarking on a peace process, the countries or groups should make sure that they have required support from the people because the absence of popular support could only invite serious backlash against the peace process. This is so because by keeping people in the dark, a peace process cannot succeed in short or in long run. Fourth, in any peace process the participants should avoid having a feeling that they can win at the expense of the other party. A win-win situation for all the parties involved in peace process should be the consideration. Unless such a feeling is checked, it will be impossible to guarantee a smooth sailing of peace process.

As long as conflicts remain unresolved there will be a need for peace process. There is no short cut to end violence and only plausible way to end or avoid the outbreak of hostilities is by following a step by step approach to establish peace in a professional and just manner. As rightly said by Sydney Bailey, "peace begins within ourselves. It is to be implemented within the family, in our meetings, in our work and leisure, in our localities, and internationally. The task will never be done. Peace is a process to engage in, not a goal to be reached."<sup>16</sup>

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16. Sydney D. Bailey, *Peace Is A Process* (London : Quaker House, 1993), p. 172.