REFLECTIVE DIGITAL DIALOGUE: A CASE STUDY ON IRAN-ISRAEL
CONFLICT

by

Sahar Namazikhah
A Dissertation
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Do not be too quick to assume your enemy is a savage just because he is your enemy.
Perhaps he is your enemy because he thinks you are a savage.
Or perhaps he is afraid of you because he feels that you are afraid of him.
And perhaps if he believed you are capable of loving him,
he would no longer be your enemy.

Thomas Merton
Seed of Contemplation

Dedication

To Maryam Rezaie,
My high school teacher, my forever teacher.

Acknowledgements

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Terminology

Throughout this dissertation, readers will see the *other* when referring to the enemy and/or the other side.

Abstract

REFLECTIVE DIGITAL DIALOGUE: A CASE STUDY ON IRAN-ISRAEL CONFLICT

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Dialogue as an intervention approach to conflict resolution employs a variety of setting, techniques and mechanisms to forge understanding and bring participants to a new notion of self and other. This dissertation shares knowledge based on mechanism and settings of an innovating dialogue model initiated in the field of conflict resolution, named Reflective Digital Dialogue. This model has been applied to the case study of Iran-Israel Dialogue (IID), where citizens from the two countries with high-level hostility join each other in an online dialogue.

The IID is a multi-year effort to collect, examine and apply data on a dialogue intervention approach that grew out of Iranian-Israeli conflict and the personal experience of a group of citizens from the two counties and the author as a participant of that conflict. In the years since data gathering aspect of this project concluded, the author has sought to apply various theoretic and conceptual tools from an advanced education, as

well as personal reflection, to develop an in-depth understanding of the large amount of data collected in the IID project into this dissertation. This research seeks answer to what kind of shifts happen when Iranian and Israeli citizens engage in a digital dialogue? It also shares knowledge and experiment of the IID model, whether the model used in the IID viable to connect mutual trust and understandings among citizens from enemy states. Compiling and coming to understand the important lessons contained in the lived experiences of the multiple participants in the IID project has involved a multi-year effort of applying newly learned theoretic and conceptual approaches.

The resulting dissertation demonstrates three stages of shifts in the dialogue. The case study examines the evolution of three stages of shift, including trustbuilding, sharing fears and perception of the other and taking collaborative actions. The research also shares the challenges of online dialogue as experienced in this digital model.

Chapter One

Introduction and Overview

In January 2012, the negative rhetoric of war between Israel and Iran's political leaders raged in the media once again. Israel pressured the United States for a joint air strike on Iran. Being an Iranian-born journalist acutely aware of the sensitivity of the conflict as well as a doctoral student in the field of conflict resolution, I felt it necessary to rely on my past and present experiences to initiate some possible steps toward war prevention. Scholars, journalists and civil society activists from Israel and Iran was invited to participate in a digital dialogue to brainstorm about the escalating conflict between the two Nations. The primary goal was to determine the possibility of creating a people-to-people bridging mechanism geared that would build in some contributions toward conflict prevention. The path forward included the creation of a venue to empower the parties to develop a mutual understanding that might form the basis for connecting the two people.

The Iran-Israel conflict has persisted more than forty years. Both countries, political systems ensure that disconnection cleavage and hatred remain deeply-rooted in their societies. Iranian and Israeli citizens are not only forbidden to communicate with each other, they are also not allowed to cross their respective borders. Furthermore, phone and internet connections between these countries' citizens are highly monitored by the two side states' intelligence services.

The innovative Iran-Israel Dialogue (IID) was initiated in March 2012 between Israeli and Iranian scholars, practitioners, journalists, civil society and human rights activists in response to their government's ramped-up rhetoric of war and obvious attempts to create an umbrella of fear about the *other* over the two countries' citizens. The intention is to channel anxieties about war into an opportunity for mutual understanding amidst the hostile rhetoric and war mongering of political leaders.

Although the dialogue first started as an action toward preventing war, based on suggestions of some of faculty and conflict resolution practitioners in the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution of George Mason University and agreement from the IID working group, it evolved into a systematic research and practice project. More precisely, it applied the methods and techniques of dialogue methodology to measure how the dialogue transforms the group's thinking about the *other,* and how shifts occur through the process.

This dissertation examines the practice and research methodology applied in the IID project. The IID is a new model of dialogue added to the field of conflict resolution. It is a digital model spanning four years and based on an ongoing series of dialogue between participants from the two enemy states. The IID is an experiment that explores the potential of online dialogue - between citizens from disconnected countries with high levels of hostility - to shift perceptions about the *other*.

The research demonstrates that despite the deteriorating relations between the countries over time, the IID engaged in constructive conversations amongst citizen participants and developed messages that could potentially pave the way for a reduction

of the escalating conflict between the two countries. In the IID, the selecting of the participants is an essential part of the dialogue model. In fact, selecting of the participants helped the dialogue to get to the outcomes and results explained in this dissertation. This digital dialogue was piloted with a group of participants who all had access to computer and internet. They were educated (bachelor's degree and higher) and they were not pro-war.

The research further explains that this digital dialogue model pioneers a special form of new international communications between enemy countries in the field of conflict resolution. It determines if and how Reflective Digital Dialogue could trigger shifts between citizens from two hostile countries and measures evidence of change occurring among the citizens who participated in the dialogue. It aims at creating and implementing an innovative digital dialogue between citizens of two countries hostile to one another—Israel and Iran. The monthly online Iran-Israel Dialogue sessions - discussed in detail thereafter - served as a bridge to directly converse with the "unacceptable other," thus allowing the participants to discuss the status quo and devise feasible ways to decrease the tensions at the citizen level despite persistent boundaries encouraged and enforced by the governments of the two countries.

This research does not intend to undertake a broad or comprehensive review of the Iran-Israel conflict, nor does it suggest solutions or problem-solving paths for it. Rather, it intended to create and then examine a dialogue model between Israeli and Iranian citizens. It articulates the IID and the Reflective Digital Dialogue model and explains the methodology applied to the research process, findings and reflection of both

practitioners and participants on the dialogue. It seeks answers to particular research questions through the means of dialogue in the field of conflict resolution: What kind of shifts happen when Iranian and Israeli citizens engage in a digital dialogue? What model of dialogue is possible in such a context? Is the model used in the Iran-Israel Dialogue viable to connect mutual trust and understandings among citizens from enemy states? What occurs when people participate in an online group with people, most of whom they have never met? The research guides the reader in the step-by-step research process that is used, from its conception to data collection and analysis to answer those questions.

This doctoral dissertation shares key questions about the participants' reflections and interactions and reveals bridging mechanisms between the citizens from enemy lands sitting at the same table for the first time in conversation. It presents the observation and documentation of their interactions and actual changes that occurred among the participants following four years of their participation in the innovative Iran-Israel Dialogue project. It attempts to highlight both the theoretical and practical aspects of the use of digital dialogue with out-of-government citizens of countries on the verge of war, thereby encouraging more comprehensive and extensive comparative peace work on the subject of dialogue contributing in conflict prevention in the field of Conflict Analysis and Resolution (CAR).

The results and observations gathered from the Iran-Israel Dialogue project add to the rich literature in the field of CAR by experimenting and analyzing dialogue strategies and techniques for this very case study, with a focus on a change of perspective that appeared among the participants (more fully explained in Chapters Five through Seven).

Ultimately, it is the intention of this research that this project adds to the literature on digital dialogue, for which existing scholarship is significantly lacking in our field. The story of the unfolding dialogue follows.

Definition and Importance of Dialogue

The definition of dialogue has evolved through centuries until now, when dialogue is considered as exchanging ideas and establishing conversation with the goal of understanding. Stearns (2018) in a recent publication on dialogue defines dialogue through indicating what is not dialogue; "the place for a power play, for monologue, for an effort to treat other participants merely objects to be persuaded" (p. 11). He mentions "[m]utual recognition, exchange of meanings, forging of new understandings" (p. 10) as the core features assigned into dialogue that differentiate dialogue from other conversational interactions.

Dialogue as one set of intervention and technique in the world of conflict resolution has been defined in hundreds of pages and narratives. Allen (2018) experiences dialogue as a catalytic process that is able to lead planning. She focuses on dialogue "as a conversation aimed at increasing mutual understanding" (p. 204) where each participant in a dialogue is counted as a meaning maker.

The Iran-Israel Dialogue specifies the definition of dialogue as when a group of individuals participate in a series of conversational exchanges to increase understanding and learning directly from one another. Dialogue is an open way process, in which participants share their feelings, interests, fears, concerns, beliefs and needs with the hope

of presenting themselves directly to the other participants of the dialogue and hearing directly from them. Dialogue is able to make personal transformation.

United States of Institute of Peace defines dialogue as occurring "usually with the help of a third-party facilitator. Facilitated dialogue is a face-to-face process, often among elites. It takes place at a meeting site, whereas other third-party assisted processes may occur indirectly or by means of proximity talks."[1] Dialogue has a track record of being an important component of various conflict resolution processes and a constituent of conflict prevention (Kaufman, 2005; Saunders, 2002, 2011). This is further explained in the literature review of Chapter Two.

The importance of dialogue becomes readily apparent when people of conflicting parties experience the results of dialogue amongst themselves. The change process is now fairly predictable: through dialogue, conflicting parties witness the breakdown of negative stereotypes, begin to get to know about each other, define how they need to hear each other, and then figure out the best ways of changing or healing from the *status quo* (Ellinor, & Gerard, 1998; DeRouen & Goldfinch, 2005). Moreover, the conflicting parties begin to attach meaning to their personal relations and thereby attain a deeper level of understanding of one another (Bohm, 1990). By working toward a common goal—such as paving the way toward bridging the two peoples in the Iran-Israel Dialogue—participants have the opportunity to experience their own effectiveness (Isaacs, 1999; Saunders, 2002; Voorhees, 2002).

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[1] USIP, Dialogue. Retrieved on July 12, 2015, from http://glossary.usip.org/resource/dialogue

The philosophy behind the Iran-Israel Dialogue is that every citizen can be a powerful tool of diplomacy and peacebuilding (Saunders, 1999, 2011; Christakis 2006, 2009). In this set, dialogue participants can become messengers of peace and diplomats to each other's civilization. These citizen-diplomats can also activate a critical "early-warning" system against war by identifying and explaining the fears and concerns of people within each other's cultures. This second role is defined as an effective preventive action plan (Ackerman, 2003; DeRouen & Goldfinch, 2005).

Alice Ackerman (2003), whose case of the Republic of Macedonia has become a valuable resource for conflict prevention through dialogue, raises these important questions for a preventive conflict process: "Who does the warning, who is to be warned, and what kind of warning is most useful?" (p. 342). Ackerman (2003, 2000), Lund (1996), Saunders (1999) and UNGA (2001) make the case that those who initiate the "early warning" will be the people, not the government. They convey their mission through dialogue, first with themselves, then with the social networks around them.

Dialogue for conflict prevention is informed by a closer look at the field of preventive diplomacy. Michael Lund (1996, 2002, 2009), a preventive diplomacy theorist, investigated the first discussion of the concept coined by United Nations (UN) Secretary General Hammarskjold in 1960 (2009, p. 288). Three decades later, UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali, whose doctrine of pre-conflict prevention and early warning deepened the discussions in the field, expanded this discourse as an important element in international relations (Steiner, 2004; Lund, 1996). He defines preventive diplomacy as any act that prevents conflicts from breaking out, and any act that prevents

conflicts that have already started from escalating (Boutros-Ghali, 1992). It is another intention of this research to examine how citizens from conflicting parties take steps as an early response toward conflict prevention.

Interest in War Prevention

My interest in the problem of war is rooted in personal experience. Three stages of my life have coincided with actual war and violence. I was born during a revolution, raised in Iran during the Iran-Iraq war and witnessed the cruel results and violence resulting from sanctions on people of a country rather than on a government.

Iran's revolution in 1979 was a period of time filled with protests, violence and losses. My entire teenage years overlapped with eight years of actual war, living in underground shelters and watching fighter planes maneuvering, striking and dropping bombs on fearful and innocent people. The Iran-Iraq war did force my generation to experience anxiety and fears at an age where life should be filled with carelessness. Instead, I grew up overwhelmed with the news of an increasing death toll, chemical weapon victims in the hospitals and children left behind after their parents are killed.

Later, when I started to build my career as a young journalist, as a citizen living in Iran, I learned how international sanctions[2] spearheaded by the United States are harming Iranian people and civilians rather than the government. Systematic sanctions aim at the destruction of the target country (here, the country where I was born) but also destroy the lives of innocent civilians before it does harm to the State. I interviewed fathers, mothers

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[2] The imposition of United States sanctions on Iran began since November 1979 by Jimmy Carter's administration.

and husbands waiting in a long line at a pharmacy for drugs and medications crying for their child, wife and newborn baby in need of a special (but unfortunately affected by sanctions) drug. I saw the cruelty of sanctions on people's lives - not on the government. Sanctions to me are literally the definition of a justified massacre by the sanction imposer/s. In my personal experience, sanctions could be defined as a modern violence and indirect war, well able to kill civilians in silence. These violent events impacted my notions on war – in any definition – silenced war and violence.

In my 30s, when I studied my graduate studies and then my post-graduate studies in conflict resolution and becoming more and more academically knowledgeable about diplomacy, the techniques and skills of war and violence prevention, a potential Iran-Israel war is on the table for at least three countries' politicians (namely United States, Israel and Iran). I felt a responsibility to do anything possible based on science and knowledge toward war prevention.

Individually, I wrote an article entitled "Iranians and Israelis Call for an End to Fear" further to an invitation of the publisher Common Ground News Service (Namazikhah, 2012). There, the campaign of "Israel Loves Iran" initiated by an Israeli was raised as the best opportunity to highlight the need of the two people for ending fear created by the two sides' politicians. Following in those footsteps, the IID was created.

Background of the Dialogue

The concept for Iran-Israel dialogue first occurred to me while attending a United States Institute of Peace (USIP) small symposium on *Women in Religious Peacemaking* in July 2010. A number of critical themes emerged from the discussions at the

symposium. In January 2012, USIP, the Berkeley Center at Georgetown University and the World Faiths Development Dialogue hosted a second conference on this topic, again at USIP's headquarters. That meeting brought together a small group of academics and practitioners to discuss papers distributed in February 2011 during the first symposium. These papers reflected some of the themes that had previously emerged between those participants. The 2012 symposium's aim was to bring authors together to discuss their work and provide feedback in a small group setting. They opened the second half of the meeting to hold a discussion of the common themes addressed in the publication of the symposium.

I listened to scholars and practitioners present the results of their studies and practices related to women, specifically during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. The scholars openly criticized the Bush Administration and the foreign policy of the United States that cost thousands of lives. These policies, they pointed out, required emergency calls for NGOs and humanitarian agencies to join conflict resolution processes, aiding civilians—specifically women and children—in the victim countries. Addressing the negative rhetoric between Israeli and Iranian governments happening at the same time as the symposium, I invited them to think about the current example of Iran and Israel conflict and focus on conflict prevention before being obliged to engage in conflict resolution. Why do we wait to witness death, victims and actual wars, and then engage in conflict resolution processes when so much damage is already done? Why not engage in conflict prevention when it is still possible? As an Iranian journalist who is born and raised in Iran, I heard every day about the Israel-Iran conflict and enmity. I knew the

depth of hatred between the two governments and how serious the war could be for the two nations. In that discussion I strongly felt the courage to initiate any possible action to prevent a third war post-Afghanistan and Iraq. I could rely on my huge network throughout the world, owing to my seventeen years of journalism work, to mobilize pro-peace activists.

This symposium occurred at the same time as the negative rhetoric with war messages between Israeli and Iranian political leaders was raging in the media. Israel had angrily invited the United States to jointly strike Iran. One could only imagine thousands of victims in a likely war between Israel-US and Iran. I reminded the participants that a strike on Iran will make us witness another Iraq and Afghanistan disaster. I asked with great passion: "do we want to wait to see so many victims once again, and only after then engage through conflict resolution? Why wouldn't we empower women peacebuilders as conflict preventers?"

I didn't see any Israeli participants in the symposium, but I met with an American feminist activist attending the conference representing *The Center for Religious Tolerance*. She had worked for more than thirty years as a social change agent. Twenty of those years are spent healing trauma and networking between Israeli and Palestinian women. I invited her to hear my idea of a dialogue to empower citizens to become involved in taking steps toward conflict prevention and peacebuilding. She enthusiastically endorsed the idea of the dialogue and believed journalists, practitioners and scholars could take a central role. Later, we created a list of potential participants from the two countries and planned for inviting them and starting the dialogue (selection

of the participants is explained in detail in Chapter Four.) We knew that we could not guess how many of the invitees would participate in the dialogue project and how many of them would commit to the project to the end. The American friend made a list of about twenty Israelis and Palestinians who are already active in peacemaking, including professors, social activists and feminists. On my side, I made a list of Iranian journalists, activists and academic scholars who seem to be interested in peacebuilding and the dialogue project. Details related to how we came up with the last list and opened the dialogue with the selected group are explained in Chapters Three and Four.

Components of the Dialogue

In the field of conflict resolution, the components of the conflict resolution process are considered in a spectrum of at least four phases, including 1. Identification and analysis of the problem, 2. Joint shaping of ideas for solution, 3. Influencing the other side, 4. Creating a supportive political environment (Kelman, 2017, p. 121). IID examines the needs to leverage its key goals through 1. Creating a trusting and secure environment between the conflicting parties, 2. Identification of animosity and where and how that started and developed, 3. Understanding of the real reality of the *other* and stop dehumanizing the enemy, 4. Brainstorming for bridging to the *other* (individually and intercommunity*)*, 5. Joint thinking about ways of overcoming fears, 6. Taking collaborative action with understanding of the necessity of the continuation of the discussions at the meantime of taking each action. These components are explained in chapters five through six, and how they correspond to the three stages of shift (trustbuilding, sharing fears, and collaborative actions.)

Summary

The introductory chapter of this doctoral dissertation shares the concept of the Iran-Israel Dialogue project. It presents how and why this dialogue is born, including a detailed story of my interest in initiating this project. During its four years run (2012-2016), the IID project explored ups-and-downs related to international events – ranging from a domestic election in Israel, Iran and the United States to a UN meeting and agreement, such as Iran Deal (Namazikhak, 2016). These are explained and evaluated throughout the eight chapters of this dissertation. This research presents a new model of dialogue, named Reflective Digital Dialogue, in which the participants experience three stages of shift and change; they first experience the first stage, trust-building, then in the second stage they share their fears and concerns, and then they move to a new stage (stage three) for collaborative actions.

The literature review chronicled in Chapter Two discusses the concept and practice of dialogue in the field of conflict analysis and resolution (CAR.) After a historical review of the history and concept of dialogue, Chapter Two generates the question of the ability of dialogue to bridge enemy nations and result in positive change within the participants. It reviews three models of dialogue practiced in the field and compares them with Iran-Israel Dialogue, discussing where they share similarities and where they differ. In this chapter, theories of change and how IID is expected to create change in individuals and positively expand those changes in perception and images of the *other* to society are also addressed.

Chapter Three articulates the methodology of the research. It focuses on how IID intended to bring citizens from two countries exhibiting a high level of animosity to the same online table of dialogue. This chapter explores how the IID case study provides a tool to shape a clinical procedure and let the researcher observe and interpret the conflict within a methodological frame. The primary question of the research "what kind of shifts happen when Iranian and Israeli citizens engage in a digital dialogue?" is addressed. How the employed methodology helps answering this question through a dialogue between two groups of people who are forbidden for any contacts during more than three decades is then described and discussed.

Chapter Four consists of an overview of the design of the IID and its implementation. It explores the formulation and development of Iran-Israel Dialogue phase-by-phase and how this facilitated dialogue set the stage for observing three successive shifts. It also elaborates the role of founder, facilitators and organizer with a focus on impact of those positioning and the approaches they use during IID. This chapter reflects on the dialogue model of IID which is named Reflective Digital Dialogue and elaborates on the characteristics of that model.

Chapter Five explores how IID builds relationships between citizens coming from two hostile governments and their non-stop hearing of their respective government agenda as to why the *other* is *the* enemy. The case study reveals the importance of including trustbuilding in a dialogue and addressing the conundrums raised by the group participants. It then explains the techniques employed during this stage and the first occurrences of shifts seen in IID, where the participants experience the stage of

trustbuilding. It elaborates why this paving stage is necessary in digita

l dialogue to establish and evaluate before going to the second stage (sharing fears and

concerns.) The trustbuilding stage corresponds to a series of conversations between the

Iranian and Israeli participants. The various nuances of exploration of this stage are also

explained in detail in this chapter.

Chapter Six includes a detailed discussion of the IID's goals from its inception up

to now and corresponds to the second stage of the shifts observed in the dialogue. More

precisely, this corresponds to the stage where the participants reach such a level of trust

and safety that they start to exchange their perceptions about one another and what their

fears about each other are. It is at this stage that the participants go back to their

childhood memories at a time when these fears are injected into their mind and negatively

impacted their perceptions about the *other*. This chapter also reflects on how the

participants reach a deeper level of understanding of the *other*. With the trust they have

built, they try to help one another to get a more balanced image of their respective

country, culture, fears and concerns.

Chapter Seven explores how the third stage shift and collaborative action take

place in IID and what preparation and techniques during that stage are practiced. It

describes an assessment done by the participants through reflective practice, where they

share what change they feel in themselves through participating in the dialogue. It also

shares how some unpredictable events shape the dialogue even while the participants are

the main decision-makers of their dialogue.

The concluding Chapter Eight pulls together the key findings and conclusion. It suggests paths forward for further research and practice of online dialogue in the field of conflict resolution. While reviewing some questions that still need to be explored in the field, it shares detailed questions and experiences on facilitation in dialogue as well as the ethical dilemmas that IID facilitators are faced with. What is the responsibility of the practitioner in such situations? Do practitioners accurately measure the risks of initiating digital dialogue? Where is she demanding too much from herself or from participants? These are a sample of questions that are discussed in the final chapter as well. After sharing the emotional stress in implementing such a project, the final chapter also shares the limitations of the digital dialogue model with the readers, particularly those who are interested to apply the IID model to their dialogue intervention approach or initiate online dialogue between people in enemy states.

Chapter Two

Review of the Literature

The Iran-Israel Dialogue (IID) initiative is designed to understand how systematic digital dialogue can bridge two hostile countries—with closed borders to one another—through their respective citizens. Although citizen dialogue cannot guarantee a permanent solution to international conflict between states, this project attempted to examine whether digital dialogue permits the citizens of two conflicting states to forge personal relationships and allow opportunities for mutual understanding of concerns and fears related to conflict.

IID participants come from two countries involved in a long and proxy war. Relations between Iran and Israel have shifted from commercial ties during the Pahlavi dynasty (Parsi, 2007) to escalating hostility in pre-and-post-revolution of Iran in 1979. The two countries have closed all commercial and diplomatic ties with one another and have forbidden their citizens from connecting with the other side.

This research has built its components on the conduct of an online dialogue between citizens of the two countries, answering the research question: What kind of shifts happen when Iranian and Israeli citizens engage in a digital dialogue? The other questions that are discussed in this research are in regard to the IID model conducted during this doctoral research: What model of dialogue is possible in such a context? What occurs when people from enemy states participate in an online group with people, most

of whom they have never met? Is the model used in the Iran-Israel Dialogue viable to connect mutual trust and understanding among citizens from enemy states?

The IID research investigates how these citizens from two hostile countries interact with and react to each other. It also explores how the participants of the dialogue feel and how opportunities to share feelings, fears and concerns impact their relationship and lead them to take collaborative actions.

This chapter reviews the pertinent scholarship on dialogue including the philosophy of dialogue, briefly from the era of Plato to a more elaborate discussion of the scholarship of the 21st century, and three contemporary models of dialogue particular to the field of conflict analysis and resolution.

This literature review also addresses the advantages and disadvantages of digital dialogue, the role of dialogue in change, and how media is able to escalate conflict and/or contribute to conflict prevention through systematic dialogue.

This chapter helps the readers to understand how the IID model applied tools and techniques in the field of CAR to help the creation of change in the participants of the dialogue and how the IID model differentiate from other models of dialogue used by other practitioners. It also reviews literatures on building trust.

Philosophy of Dialogue

The concept of dialogue has blossomed over the centuries since the Dialogues of Plato, written in the 4th century BCE. The idea of dialogue has been defined and developed in the modern philosophical and social science field by philosophers such as Martin Buber (1878 – 1965), Mikhail Bakhtin (1895 – 1975), Jurgen Habermas (1929 –

2007), Paulo Freire (1921 -1997), and practitioners such as David Bohm (1917 -1992),

Harold Saunders (1930 – 2016), and Alexander Christakis (1937 – present).

Martin Buber's philosophy of dialogue (1970) sees the existence of mankind

based on dialogue and established the foundation of dialogue in the modern world. He

discusses through the philosophical construct of "I and Thou" that dialogue categorizes

modes of interaction, conscience, and being through which an individual may interact

with other individuals and all of reality. The way a person exists is understood only in

conjunction with the actualization of that existence through a relationship with the world

and other subjects. The essence of contemporary dialogue has been established by this

very philosophy: We as individuals are able to handle our personal relationship in this I-

You culture, which creates a "we." When individuals listen to each other, try to

understand each other, and think together, they aim to make decisions together, which is

the most important step toward conflict resolution and conflict prevention. Creation of

this bridge is the main goal of every dialogue. Building this bridge is the very initial goal

of the dialogue in this doctoral research, where the citizens of two hostile countries who

have been forbidden to travel to one another land and/or have connection come to a

dialogue and connection for four years and brainstorm toward taking collaborative action

and prevention of war.

Mikhail Bakhtin is known as the father of "dialogism," or dialogical analysis.

This Russian philosopher wrote his most complex theories in exile, where he discovered

the importance of dialogue as opposed to the monologue of his solitude. To Bakhtin

(1985), a dichotomy exists between monologism, defined roughly as conversation only

with yourself, and dialogue, or conversation with others. Dialogue brings about change in individuals' relationships and society; as a result, dialogue has the ability to extend individual and cross-cultural borders, which we witnessed in IID and it is explained in the next chapters of this dissertation.

Bakhtin assumes that interaction based on diverse perspectives is essential for human communication. Bakhtin and Buber both create their philosophy upon the belief that the individual cannot exist outside of dialogue, where individuals come to understand each other.

Jurgen Habermas's communicative action theory (1985) examines the discourse of dialogue. Its root is an action of a collective nature that individuals undertake on the basis of argumentation and mutual deliberation. It is possible that his notion of 'communicative action' forms the main context of dialogue. As Habermas defines it, truth and facts, norms and values, and subjective self-expression articulate themselves through language. These are the main elements that interact to create context. According to Habermas's framing, individual participants in dialogue are "rational persons" who have the capacity to listen, discuss, and reach a decision with the "other." Habermas defines a rational person as one who "is ready to come to an understanding and reacts to disturbances by reflecting on linguistic rules" (Habermas, 1985, p. 21). The context frame of Habermas around dialogue is applicable to IID, where the "rational persons" from two sides of conflict come to the same table and take communicative action forms of dialogue and keep on that table to hear from the other, try to understand the other and reach a level

of understanding and solidarity (see Chapter Five and Six) that announce their readiness to take positive actions for conflict prevention (see Chapter Seven.)

The definition of dialogue has taken a journey through all these centuries until the modern world, where dialogue is now considered as exchanging ideas and establishing conversation with the goal of understanding. It is an open way process, in which participants share their feelings, interests, beliefs and needs. United States Institute of Peace defines dialogue a conversation process with the help of a third-party facilitator. In that definition, "[Facilitated dialogue] takes place at a meeting site, whereas other third-party assisted processes may occur indirectly or by means of proximity talks."[3] The emphasizes on the help of a third-party facilitator in a dialogue is what IID insists on, too – particularly, for a dialogue between people who carry lots of misunderstanding and misrepresentation of one another (e.g. here, Iranians and Israelis who are officially disconnected by the laws of their own governments.) Such a dialogue needs a third-party to facilitate the conversation and the process of understanding between the participants. A "facilitated-dialogue" is one the characteristics of IID that is discussed and compared with the other models of dialogue in the next sections of this chapter.

The Models of Dialogue

The previous section explored the philosophy of dialogue that has shaped the discourse since the fourth century BCE. This section examines theories and practices of

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[3] See the definition of dialogue on USIP website. Retrieved on Oct 3, 2016 from http://glossary.usip.org/resource/dialogue

dialogue by three of the four[4] prominent practitioners and scholars who have contributed to the model of dialogue in its current form: the Bohmian Dialogue of David Bohm, the Sustained Dialogue of Harold Saunders, and Structured Dialogue of Alexander Christakis. These models were studied closely during the implementation of Iran-Israel Dialogue (IID). Other studies related to dialogue are found less in direction and purpose of IID. For example, Paulo Freir (1921-1997) discussions are mainly focus on pedagogy and he does not claim representing a new model of dialogue, the way scholars in the field of CAR practice it in conflict situations.

Deep study of different models of dialogue by prominent practitioners and scholars gave me some details to dig-in advantages and disadvantages of the models as well as comparing-eyes to find out communalities and differences between them. This comparison lens assisted me to read first-hand experience of other practitioners and not being concerned about "is there anything doing in any stage of IID wrong?". In fact, those models showed that courage is the key. In IID, we learned to let the participants shape their own dialogue, and the facilitators only observe and facilitate (where it's needed.)

In this section of Chapter Two, three models of dialogue by three practitioners are analyzed. First, it explains Bohmian Dialogue by David Bohm. Then, it reviews significant details of Sustained Dialogue built by Harold Saunders. And at last, it articulates Structured Dialogue initiated by Alexander Christakis. In the end of this

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[4] Because this research project focuses on the use of dialogue in conflict, details on the Brazilian educationalist Paolo Freire's model is not included in this proposal. Freire (1970, 1997) emphasizes the importance of exploration of dialogue and the possibilities for liberatory practice in education.

section, It explains how these models contribute in Iran-Israel Dialogue. Also, the differences and similarities between Iran-Israel Dialogue and these three models (Bohmian Dialogue, Sustained Dialogue, and Structured dialogue) are discussed in this very chapter. Also, the detailed comparison between the IID and each other model is explained in next sections of this chapter.

Bohmian Dialogue: Free and Flowing. David Bohm is not only a significant theoretical physicist who contributed to 'philosophy of mind', 'quantum theory' and neuropsychology in 20th century, but also is famous for building his dialogue model in exile, when he had to leave the United States, first become a Brazilian and then British citizen. His dialogue is also known as "Dialogue in the Spirit of David Bohm". In Bohmian Dialogue there is no pre-defined purpose nor any facilitator. These are the two main conditions in Bohm's definition of dialogue, which liberate creativity.

In Bohm dialogue, in contrast to what the IID experienced, sharing beliefs, concerns and interests - participants "suspend" their beliefs, opinions and interests. Instead, they build on other participants' ideas. For Bohm (2002) dialogue is an unending process of movement and unfolding, as he elaborately defines in his work. As a result, dialogue can be a free flow of meaning. This occurrence of communication may be between people, likened to a stream flowing between banks, in which ideas flow back and forth between the participants' points of view. In the Bohmian concept, individuals, by creating a dialogue group, build a "micro culture," which includes people hailing from different "subcultures." Therefore, this group creates a "microcosm of the whole culture"

(2004, p. 15). He believes that "our ordinary thought in society is incoherent" and this is individuals who creates "a coherent movement of communication" and change (p. 16).

After four decades of dialogue practice and research, he concludes that a dialogue group "is a microcosm of society, so, if the group - or anyone - is 'cured,' it is the beginning of the larger cure" (2004, p. 18). Based on Bohmian theory, "shared meaning" is very powerful to change the whole society and dialogue is able to facilitate the change.

The effects of dialogue can be felt when subcultures start to share meaning and opinions with each other. Especially when a dialogue is cross-cultural—like the Iran-Israel Dialogue—one can witness how cultures share meaning and definitions and how the dynamic of the dialogue can move towards meaningful stages. IID witnessed these shifts, as elaborated in Chapters Five to Seven in detail.

For Bohm, "shared meaning" is also very powerful in changing a society, and dialogue is able to introduce this change to society through individuals. Bohm, like Saunders (1999, 2000, 2002, 2011), believes in the impact on the individual and society (Bohm & Peat, 1987). It is where the IID plan and hopes comes from, to generate the change from individuals to a society (also see theories of change in this chapter.)

A necessary characteristic of dialogue for Bohm is that it must be free, without rules (Bohm, 2004; Bohm, Factor, & Garrett, 1991). However, he arguably sets detailed rules for dialogue.[5] For Bohm (2004), dialogue has no facilitator, no moderator, and no predetermined topic. Neither does it have an agenda, nor hierarchy, nor predefined

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[5] See his article (1991) with Donald Factor and Peter Garrett which explains concepts such as "duration," "size," "numbers," etc.

purpose. The Bohmian model delves deeply into the collective process of "thinking together," and identifies all factors which could potentially create hierarchy in a dialogue. As William van den Heuvel observed, "Bohmian dialogue is anarchy" (1996, para. 1).

By contrast, I argue that Bohm did not follow his own advice. Studying his dialogues shows that his presence with his collaborators (read co-facilitators) initially frames a facilitated dialogue for Bohmian Dialogue. He guides, he plans, he gathers the participants and he is there throughout each dialogue as a figure and leader. According to Bohm's collaborators, Bohm himself played the role of facilitator, finding it necessary at least "in the beginning" of the session.[6] Donald Factor (1994), the other collaborator in Bohm's dialogues, highlights in an open letter that the presence of a facilitator is "inevitable" (para. 3). With these definitions and "rules" for dialogue, Bohm and his partners conclude that dialogue is subversive, therefore its process must be a subversive one (Bohm, 2004; Heuvel, 1994; Factor, 1994; Bohm & Factor & Garrett, 1991).

On the other hand, the IID experiment showed that creating a group dialogue - particularly for participants from hostile counties with a long history of fears and misperceptions - without a facilitator is not useful. In the case of IID, bringing the participants from two hostile countries who used to imagine each other as "enemy" needed a third party to facilitate the entire discussions and confrontation in the dialogue. In fact, the IID needed a facilitator from the introduction and opening stage throughout

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[6] William van den Heuvel, who witnessed most of the dialogue practice sessions organized by Bohm, also confesses, "If I remember correctly, David Bohm had the notion of a facilitator being someone who helps the dialogue on its way but as it gets moving, the facilitator slowly dissolves into the background and re-emerges as an ordinary participant. That means the facilitator is only there to introduce the dialogue." (William van den Heuvel, 1994, para. 2)

the closing stage in every session. Even with the presence of the facilitator, some of the discussions seemed hard to facilitate and there were some disagreements amongst some of the participants that needed skillful facilitation to let the discussion flow. The need of presence of a facilitator was the point that most of the participants too mentioned in the interviews done for this research in February 2016. As a matter of fact, from the beginning of the dialogue project, there was an ongoing concern that somewhere misunderstanding between the participants could affect the entire progress of the dialogue and a trained facilitator is definitely needed to facilitate the dialogue.

In *On Dialogue,* Bohm defines dialogue as the space where people communicate without "any conclusion and judgments." In Bohmian dialogue, there is not any conclusion. This practitioner and his collaborators also consider dialogue as a safer way for conflicting parties to share different views from even various religions, cultures, opinions, etc., if and only if they do not push for any "conclusion or solution" (Ellinor & Gerard, 1998, p. 21). I would agree with these scholars that a dialogue process should not press for solutions, and solutions should evolve on their own.

IID research explores whether or not dialogue processes allow for opportunities to modify or move the group in interesting and different ways. Perhaps each session of dialogue comes to new conclusions and these can be discussed and then integrated into the process of the next session such that each session of dialogue informs the next that follows. If a dialogue has no conclusions, then what is the purpose of dialogue? Why do we initiate dialogue? What should bring a group of individuals to the same table? What

participants conclude in each conversation suggests whether they are coming closer to the main goal of the dialogue.

William Isaacs (1999), founder of the *Dialogos* firm in Cambridge and London, has a broader definition for dialogue than Bohm, although he was a co-facilitator and a friend of Bohm. The difference in Isaacs's theory is the theme of "dialogue in action," developed through the study of dialogue in the context of international wars and peacemaking.

He gives a very important example of the effectiveness of dialogue initiated by the people, when John Hume, Irish Nobel Peace Prize winner, and other citizens unaffiliated with the government-initiated dialogue and succeeded in stopping the Northern Ireland conflict. Five governments, 20,000 troops, and 15,000 policemen failed to stop the conflict for 25 years, but Hume's dialogue approach worked. Peace was achieved (p. 21). Informal talks and dialogue between President de Klerk with Nelson Mandela from his prison cell during the 1980s and early 1990s is another example that highlights the effectiveness of dialogue in stopping conflict. This evidence makes us hopeful about the effectiveness of dialogue in a large-scale conflict, such as Iran-Israel conflict.

Sustained Dialogue: Diplomacy through Citizens. One of the dialogue models and theories in our time is presented by Harold Saunders, named "sustained dialogue." Like Bohm, Saunders (1999, 2000, 2002, 2011) believes in the spirit of dialogue and its impact on the individual and society. He examines dialogue as the process for changing conflictual relationships, based on 40 years of dialogue during the Cold War between

Russia (formerly Soviet Union) and the United States (Saunders, 2001, 2011; Voorhees, 2002).

The common approach between Saunders's "sustained dialogue" and the Iran-Israel Dialogue model is a strong emphasis on the role of citizen dialogue in solving governmental conflict. Saunders (1999) specifically criticizes a lack of attention to the power of citizens in peacebuilding, especially in governmental and traditional academic approaches, stating that they focus too much on official governmental channels and interests. This criticism embodies the philosophy and foundation of Saunders's "sustained dialogue."

Saunders (2002) argues that policy complexity through traditional scholarship in international relations is less important than what citizen participation can produce for peace. Through believing this fact, he established and generated this theory to get the citizens involved into a peace process and his dialogue model fundamentally formulated on the participation of citizens in peace dialogues.

His scholarship suggests that international systems of power change, and they increasingly engage individuals and international civil society. Therefore, one should have broader participation in dialogue and an understanding of policy processes by citizens. Saunders further observes that citizens might use creative and non-institutional tactics to solve chronic political and social problems (p. 73). As a diplomat and policymaker, Saunders (2011) argues that a "changing mix of people and ideas" continuously constructs policy. Participants in dialogue are part of the process of policymaking. He explains:

Around every major problem is a group of citizens in and out of

government who are continuously thinking about policy toward that

problem. Problems are reframed, ideas are generated and exchanged, and

many of the important [ones] enter that 'mix of people and ideas' around

the president. When the president makes a policy judgment, even he

probably cannot pinpoint the specific source of his judgment. (p. 255)

If we assume that Saunders's main innovation is to put the concept of the

"citizen" at the forefront of dialogue to present a "citizen-centered" approach, O'Hara

and Wood (2005) consider dialogue to be "person-centered." At its core, their approach

presents the same idea. In fact, Saunders, O'Hara, and Wood emphasize the critical role

of individuals in the spirit of dialogue. In O'Hara and Wood's person-centered

interpretation, dialogue also builds transformational learning, as each individual transfers

his knowledge through dialogic conversation to the other. They believe dialogue provides

opportunities for participants, "to develop the expanded capacities for individual and

collective consciousness that will be crucial for human survival through the turbulent

time ahead" (p. 132). O'Hara and Wood also evaluate the benefit of dialogue for

individual participants.

In Saunders's sustained dialogue, participation may also be prevented by fear.

This point is of particular importance when dealing with security and inter-society

concerns such as the Iran-Israel Dialogue faced with. In every single session of the Iran-

Israel Dialogue, there were concerns about the security of participants regarding their

government hostility and restrictions to contact with the other country. It is vital not to put any participants in real danger.

Reviewing the forty years of experience provided by the Dartmouth conference and inter-Tajik dialogue, Voorhees (2002)—Saunders' colleague—emphasizes, "the role of civil society is critical in building an enduring basis for the nonviolent resolution of conflict" (p. ix). To Saunders and Voorhees, through dialogue people conduct the work of interactive conflict prevention within the whole body politic, and can involve many other actors, including governments and non-governmental actors. These two dialogue practitioners demonstrate that a series of meetings between members of two hostile countries could produce change in the policies of their governments. They confidently recommend that sustained dialogue can be adapted for use in other conflicts (Saunders, 2002, 2011; Voorhees, 2002). The IID research's goal is not focused on the ability of the group to transfer change created in the group to the two governments, policy and decision-makers. The evolving model of IID suggested in Chapter Eight includes the examination of this path and whether such change transferring from a closed group of dialogue – here IID - to the governments' level – with Iran and Israel conflict characteristics - can be observed.

Structured Dialogue: Disciplines and Framework. Alexander Christakis, a social scientist whose reports in his books (2005, 2006, 2009, 2013) elaborate how the design of structured dialogue has been developed over 30 years with a broad range of cases focusing on organizational conflict as well as conflicts engaging the international arena.

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To Christakis, change through dialogue is possible. His methodology for change is mainly called "dialogue," but when he talks about dialogue, he means a highly "structured dialogue." Contrary of Bohm, he emphasizes on the necessity of sharing concerns and hopes in a dialogue. He believes that, through sharing concerns and hopes, participants "engender enthusiasm and good feelings" (Christakis & Bausch, 2006).

Christakis' model—in contrast to Bohm's—has a hierarchy. He separates the whole of the dialogue into two bodies: leadership and stakeholder. Both leadership and stakeholders create the content of the dialogue that results in lasting change (Christakis, 2006, p. 195). Operational beliefs about change depend on the beliefs expressed or implied by the leadership (p. 19). The role of facilitator and leadership is therefore vital in structured dialogue; a group dialogue needs a manager or facilitator who is "content neutral" (Christakis, 2006, p. 106). Christakis bridges scholarship and practice, explaining the scholarly conclusions in terms of actual examples from experience and practice. In the discussion of the facilitator role, he explains that the skills of a facilitator, or in his terms, a "dialogue manager," must be specific to each and every individual dialogue. In Structured Dialogue, the dialogue manager explains the entire process of the dialogue to each participant separately.

For Christakis (2009), the reason for using the structured dialogue system is to ensure adequate and equal representation of the stakeholders involved in a problematic system. If participants agree to follow a framework or allow facilitation to occur, the dialogue can be better disciplined and better equipped to address the problem in question than a traditional dialogue such as Bohm's that is normally either unstructured or has

limited structure. However, it has been observed that these unstructured practices are insufficient when looking to solve problems, due to a lack of diverse perspectives (Christakis, 2006, p. 181).

The Iran-Israel Dialogue had structure and a facilitator. In some sessions, we invited guest facilitators, or, a better name, co-facilitator. In this regard, the Iran-Israel Dialogue is similar to the "structured dialogue" style. The facilitator's role is to evaluate past sessions, create future agendas, frame and sometimes re-frame conversations. The Iran-Israel Dialogue also values technology and the Internet to enable dialogue sessions and to overcome geographical boundaries between the participants, and also decrease the financial cost of the project. However, the Iran-Israel Dialogue has no hierarchical level between facilitator/managers and participants/stakeholders, as Christakis' model would recommend. Among the models and approaches reviewed, the Iran-Israel Dialogue is a model close—however different—to the structured dialogue of Christakis and sustained dialogue Saunders, and far from the Bohemian style as described above - for example about the role of facilitator. However, all four models are similar in the main goal, which is creating a conversational exchange between a group of participants with a concentration on deepening the understanding.

Building Trust

In group practice, the role of facilitators, leaders and interveners are much emphasized for building trust amongst conflicting parties. Palus, Chrobot-Mason and Cullen (2014) contend the necessity of trustbuilding in building relationship and define trustbuilding as one of the six main objectives of their leadership model. Through

elaborating the concept of trustworthiness, Taylor, Daymond and Willard (2018) discuss

trustbuilding and explain that in building relationship, the ability of trustbuilding,

compassion, and integrity of the facilitator and consultant are important characteristics in

the early establishment and development of trust building. This research explains in

Chapter Five how trustbuilding in IID evolves from the relation between the facilitator

and participants as well as among the participants from the two conflicting parties. As

Engelhard & Pesch (2018) point out, trustbuilding among individuals promotes the

development of interpersonal relationships and bonding between individuals in a group.

IID benefited from this phenomenon (see Chapter Five for more details).

Media for Conflict Prevention

Beside dialogue, using media as an effective model twoard conflict prevention has

been recognized among many scholars (Gowing, 1997; Manoff, 1997; Van Geelen, 2002;

Bratic & Schirch, 2007; Himelfarb & Chanalowski, 2008). Because of the scale and

speed with which the media can reach people, it has the potential to affect large-scale

change in individuals and in society (Himelfarb & Chabalowski, 2008; Bratic & Schirch,

2007; Bratic, 2006; Gowing, 1997). It is why the Iran-Israel Dialogue includes a series of

Iranian and Israeli journalists who brainstorm in each session to figure out the most

effective ways of using media in and regarding the goals of the dialogue project.

In the last few years, an academic bridge between the fields of conflict resolution

and communication studies has highlighted valuable research and scholarly discussions

on the effectiveness of media for conflict prevention and conflict resolution. Van Geelen

(2002) warns practitioners in the field of conflict resolution that "efforts at conflict

resolution and prevention should take the media situation into account. Ignoring the media in conflict situations can endanger all other peace-building efforts" (p. 3). In the field of conflict prevention, some scholars even recognize media as a more powerful tool in conflict prevention than dialogue (Anderson, Chigas, Olson & Woodrow, 2004). Anderson and his colleagues (2004) point out that media can affect change in socio-political or institutional structures. Other researchers compare effectiveness in change between dialogue and media (Batric & Schirch, 2007). An advantage of media in this regard is its ability to reach an audience of thousands or more, where dialogue and training involve a relatively small focus group at a time (Batric & Schirch, 2007). Robert Karl Manoff, one of the pioneers of the study of "conflict and media," highlights potential roles of media in the prevention and management of conflict (1998). He discusses the media's methods of framing and conveying information, and the power they have to change attitudes which, when harnessed effectively, can have a profound, positive impact on conflict resolution efforts.

Some researchers such as Bratic and Schirch (2007) analyze the media as a tool that can be employed as an agent of change for attitudes and behavior. Some other researchers observe the media's role in conflict escalation to be more prominent and recognized than its potential role in peacebuilding (Wolfsfeld, 2004). Although the media's role in peacebuilding is often overlooked, the methods by which the media can best be used for this purpose have not been determined. According to Van Geelen (2002), the difficulty in developing a methodology lies in the complex, qualitative nature of the media's impact on beliefs and attitudes, making its effects challenging to measure and

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analyze. In IID, the group used media as an instrument and utilized it to transfer its

gained knowledge to its communities (read details of shaping and dynamic of

collaborative action stage in Chapter Seven.)

Professionals in the fields of conflict prevention and peacebuilding may find that

the media is a valuable tool, when used strategically in conjunction with other approaches

(Bratic & Schirch, 2007, p. 26). The media can effectively reduce hostilities and bring

peoples closer together. However, it is important to choose when and where to involve

the media in peacebuilding efforts. Media presence would, for example, potentially

highlight areas of conflict and add pressure to sensitive negotiation efforts. Tone and

intention of the media may play a positive or negative role, depending on whether its

commitment is to peace and diplomacy, the revenue their products make, or the influence

of an outside organization, such as a government. In fact, what theoreticians and

practitioners in both fields conclude is that an independent, balanced media is necessary

if the media is to have a positive role for conflict prevention. For the reasons discussed

above, the Iran-Israel Dialogue project intentionally included professional journalists

from the two countries. They brainstormed when and how they and their media can

strategically intervene and plan for peacebuilding through this dialogue project. They are

also in discussions about how to impact their networks.

Digital Dialogue and the Contemporary World

One of the most specific characteristics of the Iran-Israel Dialogue is its nature as

an online dialogue. Here, it is necessary to emphasize that this research does not focus on

online discussions on social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, YouTube,

microblogs, etc. However, the author hopes that other researchers will do more academic research on social media engagement as they represent alternative avenues worth exploring for dialogue to take place.

Returning to IID research, though many researchers have focused on face-to-face dialogue (Pruitt, & Thomas, 2007; O'Hara & Wood, 2005; Rowell, 2002; Cissna & Anderson, 1994), few practitioners and researchers discuss the role of digital dialogue in our increasingly digital contemporary world. This research, while searching for literature on similar online dialogue models and research in the field, faced a significant lack of literature. A gap in the literature on how online dialogue might influence building peace and taking steps toward conflict prevention also existed. The literatures available on online dialogue are practiced in the field of education, learning about the relation between teachers and students (Bures, Abrami and Schmid, 2010; Bound, 2010) or other aspects of testing participants – psychology-based - through internet groups (Newell & Dale, 2014; Mitsuharu, 2007) which are far from the IID nature and context. Indeed, IID is focused on the dynamics amongst citizens from countries with high level hostility and history of decades of disconnections; therefore, discussions such as trustbuilding among parties or collaborative actions among them, etc. and their corresponding results are different both theoretically and practically.

Christakis (2006) is one of notable practitioners in the field of dialogue and international peacebuilding who is well known for his implementation of a series of mass-scale dialogues using the Structured Dialogic in the Civil Society Dialogue project

in Cyprus conflicts[7] as well as in the Act beyond Borders project[8] in the Middle East. Christakis points out that digital dialogue has some advantages that increase accuracy and facility of a dialogue process. His team conducted a computer-based system for dialogue, which - for example - keeps track of the participants' presence and talks and records each session of dialogue. However, Christakis, a cyberneticist, does believe that "the use of computer software in the intensely human endeavor of designing good living and working situations raises hackles for some distrusters of technology" (p. 49).

Holman, Devane, and Cady (2007) discuss that "reflective thinkers are often more comfortable online than face-to-face, feeling more engaged and valued. A common space for group activity forces the issue of organizing collective information for historical access" that they had previously lost (p. 555). The authors highlight key differences between online and face-to-face dialogue. They discuss that in the online form of dialogue, a) trust is formed and withdrawn differently, and b) relationship formation follows a different path. They explain that online dialogue prompts people to create "loose bonds" more easily, while forming intimate relationships more slowly. Another major characteristic of online dialogue is its ability to accelerate change simply by making information and connections available and accessible (p. 247). Successful online interactions can affect relationship building, knowledge building, increase transparency,

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[7] More than 300 Cyprians participated in this dialogue project following the negative outcome of the referendum in Cyprus for the reunification of the island Annan Plan.
[8] Civil Society Acts beyond Borders project was implemented by Future Worlds Center from January 2010 until December 2013. It was co-funded by the European Commission, European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). See more at http://www.actbeyondborders.net

allow direct participation, and flattens hierarchy (Holman, Devane, & Cady, 2007, pp. 241-242).

Linda Ellinor and Glenna Gerard (1998) also approach online dialogue in their studies, although they didn't develop this topic. They indicate "although online groups allow people in distant locations to communicate, they do not guarantee that the communication will result in community or collective learning" (p. 285). It is important not to forget the importance of questions they raise concerning online dialogue, which can significantly help online dialogue practitioners in data analysis. These important questions are: What occurs when people participate in an online group with people, most of whom they have never met? How do cyberspace conversational practices compare with their face-to-face version? What is it like to practice dialogue in this medium? How might the guides apply? What shifts in intention and attention might be needed to participate in this medium? What elements are important in a design that facilitates quality-learning conversations? How can what we learn here be translated to face-to-face dialogue? (p. 284)

Ellinor and Gerard also raise the problem that there is a tendency in online conversations to sidetrack to one-on-one conversations (pp. 289-290). These researchers recommend in their final analysis that "the online medium may represent a significant opportunity for us to learn about listening on other wavelengths, tapping into synchronicity, and trusting that somehow our sustained collective attention and listening will eventually discern the meaning that we are weaving together" (p. 287).

An internet-based collection on dialogue, named *Laetus in Praesens*, by Anthony Judge[9] is a comprehensive academic online database about dialogue studies publishing in eight languages. Judge has collected over 1,600 documents of relevance to dialogue, governance, and strategy-making on *Laetus in Praesens*. Anthony Judge, Director of Communications and Research of *The Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential* project, gives researchers and academicians access to all the documents and his data collections on the *Laetus in Praesens*. One of the debatable articles of this online database articles titled *Forthcoming Major Revolution in Global Dialogue* (2013) concludes that although the Internet has increased the rate, variety, and quantity of dialogue, it does not succeed in increasing the depth and quality of dialogue. It is important to note that at this time it only considerers dialogue in "chat rooms" (para 10) and therefore excludes "virtual" face-to-face dialogues, such as what we are implementing in the Iran-Israel Dialogue.

Laetus in Praesens raises a thoughtful discussion concerning "interactive communication." In the case of online dialogue, *Laetus in Praesens* criticizes the lack of direct human interaction. It raises a number of concerns comparing online dialogue with the face-to-face method and direct communication (para. 8). It also mentions the lack of sufficient time in online dialogue. In face-to-face dialogues, such as Saunders's (2011), annual sessions are organized as one- or two-day gatherings. In the case of the Iran-Israel Dialogue, monthly sessions were organized, where there are no massive transportation costs, travel arrangements, or life disruptions

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[9] Laetus in Praesens: Anthony Judge. See https://www.laetusinpraesens.org

Theories of Change and Practice of Dialogue

Christopher Mitchell (2006) specifies that the field of CAR has neglected "the literature dealing systematically with the connections between change and conflict." (p. 2) During the past years working on the Iran-Israel Dialogue project, the research also confronted with a paucity of research and practice in the CAR field, most obviously on research and practices that contribute in conflict prevention processes. These limitations turned to an encouragement in this research to collect literature from other fields to study how it might apply in the CAR field and open new chapters of research, theory, and practice of change toward conflict prevention in the field.

Theories of change (Nan, 2010; Taplin et al., 2013) are considered in the Iran-Israel Dialogue research project. Specifically, the theories of "sustained change" (Schein, 2003) and "open system theory" (Emery, 1999) are able to uncover useful information about which techniques and strategies must be executed during planning and phases of the process to observe change.

According to Austin (2004), a change in behavior, decision-making, interpersonal relations, and the ability to cope with the issue occur as the results of change within the individuals. The Iran-Israel Dialogue testing model is also a skill-improving tool. In this project there is a belief that the participants will sharpen the skills of dialogue and communication with/from the *other* as well. This research project observes the shifts and changes among the participants.

Some researchers express doubts about the effectiveness of dialogue for change (McPhail, 2004; Kersten, 2006). On the other hand, scholars such as Schein (1992, 2003)

and Ford (1995) emphasize of the effectiveness of it for change. Ford believes that change is a phenomenon that starts and occurs within communication (p. 543). Schein (2003), another theoretician of change describes dialogue as a central element of change and "any model of organizational transformation" (para. 3). Schein describes dialogue in the context of changes that are occurring in the organizational world. He believes change through dialogue can be stated as a set of propositions (Schein, 2003, pp. 27-28). In *On Dialogue, Culture, and Organizational Learning,* Schein elucidates that dialogue is able to facilitate and create new possibilities for valid communication and stimulate change (p. 28).

Dialogue enables individuals to prevent further conflict by forming a group consciousness (Bohem, 2004). These trained groups will then transfer their learned knowledge to the next layers of their networks and communities. The first lesson for such a community is moving from "I" to "we," where individuals from enemy countries start to consider both negative and positive commonalities, such as shared fears, national or international interests, or even the fundamental right to exist. Such a group consciousness is built through a dialogical approach. This leads some scholars in the dialogue field to call dialogue an approach to consciousness (Friedman, 2005; O'hara & Wood, 2005). This trained consciousness creates a path for change, collective decision-making, cultural creativity, and the creation of new agreements and relations through citizens and individuals in the future.

The Iran-Israel Dialogue project is designed to encourage Iranian and Israeli participants to formulate avenues of change that travel through the people of the two

countries. Most likely, change happens first in individual participants (Emery 1999).

Then, Open System Theory (OST) suggests that the next level of change will include the

participants' network and society. In IID, each participant is selected also based on the

size of their network. For example, each professor had a large network of students and

faculty and institutes they deliver lecture in Iran and Israel. Every Iranian or Israeli

journalist in IID is surrounded by a million readers and audience. IID social and political

activist are connected to thousands of other activists in their circle with frequently

meeting and update about "what they are doing." Thus, every IID participant could turn

into a messenger of peace to their network. The Open System Theory confirms that when

we change one part of a system, we are then able to change the whole system (Emery,

1999; Holman, Devane & Cady, 2007, p. 98).

However, sessions in which participants explore the realities of the past, present,

and future of the conflict, and explore and take shared ownership of the possible solutions

will be necessary to effect sustainable change at the systemic level. Holman, Devane &

Cady (2007) discuss that sustaining the result of change in a system could be eased and

generated through an appreciative inquiry (AI) (Watkins & Mohr, 2001; Cheldelin &

Lyons, 2003; Cooperrider, 2005) method (p. 85).

Cooperrider et al (2000) and Van Oosten (2006) explain how AI effectively

creates sustainable change on a wide scale. The theoretical underpinnings of AI relies on

the use of questions (inquiry) about participants' individual past experiences to help

inform ways they might collectively move a system toward a desired positive change. In

the Iran-Israel Dialogue case study, we employed AI in the first stage of the dialogue

(read Chapter Five on the first stage) to allow determining whether or not this is an effective approach for the dialogue group. The data analysis allowed us to observe and record a) measure of curiosity among the participants, b) willingness to bridge and dialogue with the other side (Watkins & Mohr, 2001).

However, there are some critiques on AI as well. Some practitioners (Egan & Lancaster, 2005; Miller et al., 2005) share their case study and point out that focus on positivity in AI can invalidate the negative organizational experiences of participants in a group and does not let potentially negative – but important – stories be shared. In IID, we are not concerned about this issue owing to the second stage of the dialogue focused on sharing the dark stories, fears, concerns that the participants have and how those fears were shaped in the participants (see Chapter Six on this.)

Theoretical Framework

Based on the literature reviewed in this chapter, dialogue can be utilized for change amongst conflicting parties and it is useful for any model of organizational and group transformation. We do not expect resolving a conflict using only a dialogue approach, but it is a tested useful strategy to prepare the conflicting parties for constructive conflict resolution and/or moving toward conflict prevention. Structured and skillful dialogue is able to create trust among conflicting parties as well as positive change amongst them. Online dialogue - the model of which is conducted in IID – presents many advantages such as the ability for relationship building, knowledge building, increasing transparency and being useful where face-to-face dialogue is not possible, such as the case of Iran and Israel whose citizens are forbidden for direct

meeting and connection. Some disadvantages also exist compared to face-to-face dialogue, which include different and longer process for forming relationship and trust among the conflicting parties (see details in Chapter Five and Eight.)

Summary

This chapter analyzed how dialogue is defined in history and later in the contemporary field of CAR. It explained the characteristics of the Iran-Israel Dialogue, where it is similar and/or different with the three models of dialogue designed by Bohm, Saunders and Christakis. As the Iran-Israel Dialogue is a digital project, the chapter reviewed the advantages and disadvantages of digital dialogue and explained that the performance of the experimented digital dialogue in this research with the belief in digital dialogue as the best possible option for this case in which participants come from two hostile countries that have forbidden their citizens to travel to one another's country and meeting in-person in either country is not possible. Furthermore, this chapter covered the literature about change and how this theory covers the goal of the Iran-Israel Dialogue; change in participants and their view to the *other*.

After brief reviewing the philosophy of dialogue from the beginning of Plato era to the 21st century, three models of systematic dialogue were analyzed, which were particularly built to mitigate conflict with a particular goal on changing thoughts and behavior of the participants towards the other side of the conflict. It explained how the process of change starts within individuals and is expandable to the next level such as community and society. How media can/should be used as a tool in the process toward conflict prevention also is another discussion of this chapter. Through this discussion, it

is explained the purpose of inviting Iranian and Israeli journalists to the Iran-Israel Dialogue. It also reviewed the advantage and disadvantages of digital dialogue and explained how advantages of digital dialogue is benefiting the Iran-Israel Dialogue when the two people are forbidden to travel to each other's country.

The next chapter – Chapter Three - presents the research methodology and Chapter Four explains the Iran-Israel Dialogue conduct in detail. In these two chapters, readers will read more detail about how this sensitive project is formulated considering the security of the participants as well as online technical requirements regarding each country's conditions. This dialogue project presents it with the intention that future conflict resolution practitioners can replicate the methodology should war-rhetoric become ramped-up between other nations as it is between Israel and Iran.

Methodology

This chapter explains the research methodology of Iran-Israel Dialogue (IID). It outlines the IID model, explains the selection process for the participants (the complexity of selecting the IID participants is explained in detail in the next chapter which is focused on research design and conduct of the dialogue in detail), and presents the methodology for content analysis utilized in the research process.

The purpose of this research project is to determine if and how systematic dialogue could work to witness shifts between citizens of two hostile countries, and to measure evidence of change occurring among the citizens who participated in the dialogue over an extended period of time. This chapter guides the reader in the step-by-step research process used, from its conception to data collection and then discusses the data analysis techniques.

This research is a case study of reflective practice of the IID. It is exploratory research on online dialogue. We selected the IID group with these characteristics; the participants are all educated (bachelor's degree or higher), they had access to computer and internet, and they were not pro-war. Data is gathered through transcripts from recorded sessions of the IID and interviews with the IID's participants. The data coding stage is conducted and analyzed based on two steps, including a) reading each transcript to identify which sessions present specific stages of shift, b) coding the data focused on specific keywords commonly used in the literature review, discussions in the three stages

of shifts and those conceptually relevant to the research question. Through content analysis, the research attempted to interpret the origins and endurance of the fears expressed between Iranians and Israelis.

The IID is primarily designed to bring together citizens representative of two countries whose governments are engaged in war rhetoric. The IID is an academic-based structured digital dialogue that took place in a relatively secure and isolated setting, free from governmental and diplomatic rules and protocols. One of the strengths of this work is its longitudinal nature. Over a period of four years, the facilitated dialogue regularly scheduled dialogue between the Iranian and Israeli participants, monitoring evidence of change that appear among the group's participants.

Prior to finalizing the IID design, some existing scholarship on dialogue were reviewed (see Chapter Two.) In general, that literature argued that building bridges between people of two hostile countries through dialogue is possible and could occur with desired outcomes (Kelman, 2017; Saunders, 1999, 2002, 2011; Schein, 1992, 2003). Because the topic of dialogue between hostile countries with the goal of monitoring behavioral change is interdisciplinary, a methodology combining traditional conflict resolution practice techniques and human behavioral studies approaches is selected (LeBaron, 2003; Avruch, 2016; Kelman, 2017). This is important because the IID gives special attention to the cultural, religious, and political sensitivities that existed between the participants in the dialogue.

This chapter presents the methodology used to specify an appropriate unit of analysis for analyzing the IID dialogue. It developed a coding system for a two-stage

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content analysis to determine an evaluation standard for assessing changes occurring over a four-year period of time of the dialogue. It is explained in detail in the next sections of this chapter how the research methodology utilized content analysis to interpret the dataset and analyze qualitatively observable shifts in messages of the participants that are produced during the IID project.

The IID case study is an examination of its own group process, including group atmosphere and flow over the years of the dialogue. The atmosphere and flow of the talks varied based on the political events occurring simultaneous to the date scheduled for each talk. For example, during the Gaza war in 2015, a very intense discussion between the participants took place, the details of these are included in Chapter Six.) The IID observed that similar events related to the fundamental causes of the Iran-Israel conflict are able to change the dynamic of the discussion, shape and reshape the flow of the dialogue, often resulting in a new phase of change and compassion among the participants following a hard and intense argument among them (it is explained in Chapter Eight.) The events and topics that unfolded and needed facilitation intervention are included in Chapters Five to Seven as well.

The IID case study also provides a tool which shapes a clinical procedure to observe and to interpret the conflict within a methodological and formulated process. In such a model of dialogue, we are engaged in a system and structure allowing the observation of the behavior of the participants—towards each other, the entire project, and the facilitator/s—as well as the interpretation of the causes and dynamics of the

conflict and needs of the participants. Examples of this are included in Chapter Four and discussed more fully in Chapters Five to Seven.

Finally, instead of teaching the participants the theories and practice of conflict resolution using in dialogue approach or intervention techniques (e. g. active listening, engaging, etc.,) the participants are guided through a facilitation process whereby their own observation and subsequent positive interpretation would shape a more constructive dialogue. For example, at the opening of sessions, where the facilitator would notice any progress in the previous session/s as to whether any development of trustbuilding, compassionate listening from the participants for each other, or quality fears and concerns sharing had occurred. The facilitator then highlights these and expresses how such events are defined in the conflict resolution field and/or as a technique to elevate the quality of a dialogue.

Research Problem and Primary Questions

This project is designed to examine an innovative digital dialogue model, called Iran-Israel Dialogue (IID). This model is chosen to explore because, in the field of conflict resolution, there is a gap in the literature between theory and practice that does not give clear guidance about how to conduct and implement such a dialogue online. Therefore, this research brings pieces of literature and practices of other practitioners together to create the model that is piloted here.

This research addresses what is believed to be the citizens initiatives of dialogue as a path not only in the field of conflict resolution, but more importantly, as an avenue toward conflict prevention. While it may be true that direct citizens' dialogue cannot

provide permanent solutions to major international conflicts between states, it empowers citizens to develop mutual understandings and form the basis of new paths forward. This project aims for observations of shifts among hostile countries' citizens coming to the same table to dialogue with one another for the first time and reflect on the change they observe in the dynamic of the dialogue.

The research attempts to explain the process of establishing and developing an inter-state dialogue through citizens. It then aims to examine and articulate the theoretical, methodological, and practical foundations of an ongoing experiment in a dialogue model and how the process of the dialogue impacts participants of the two countries and their understanding of one another. Based on an analysis of the data from the dialogue conducted within the Iran-Israel Dialogue - from March 2012 through November 2015 - the research examined whether bridging is possible and explored the challenges and difficulties throughout the process. It addressed the main research question:

- What kind of shifts happen when Iranian and Israeli citizens engage in a digital dialogue?

The other questions raised in this research are in regard to the IID model conducted during this doctoral research:

- What model of dialogue is possible in such a context?
- What occurs when people from enemy states participate in an online group with people, most of whom they have never met?

- Is the model used in the Iran-Israel Dialogue viable to connect mutual trust and understandings among citizens from enemy states?

While examining if the model designed for the Iran-Israel Dialogue facilitate connection among enemy states' citizens, the research question captures three key aspects of the dialogue's influence on citizens of countries with high level of hostility: 1) How long and what factors are necessary to make the two parties' citizens trust one another, feel safe to share thoughts and fears, and view yesterday's enemy as today's potential friend, 2) Do any changes in behavior and thoughts towards the other side and change between the participants occur through the dialogue? And 3) How can citizens as main actors of early-warning take action along with the other side's citizens moving toward conflict prevention? (These three aspects are elaborated in chapters five through seven in order.)

Research Methodology

The methodology of the IID research is established through qualitative research based on grounded theory. Multiple ways of data collection are used including transcripts of the dialogue sessions, and interviews with the participants. Also, as this case study is based on reflective practice, the notes from facilitator taken during observation of the session and facilitation of each session are used. Furthermore, notes and reflections on one-on-one meetings with the participants (out of the dialogue sessions) are considered.

As mentioned before, this piloting model was a practice project and later we learned from the practice about the value of research for this project and realized turning

it into research could help the field of conflict resolution. Then, we formatted the project into research, got the approval of Institutional Review Board, conducted interviews with participants, and kept collecting the data.

When the research process of the IID began, these are considered; a) transcribing the audio/video sessions of the IID (collecting the data), b) coding the data based on specific keywords (e. g. fear, concern, war), c) analyzing the data and comparing the codes (e. g. named constant comparative method of data analysis, Robson, 2011, p. 149), and d) identifying analytical leads and tentative categories to develop through future data collection. Here, the term "future data" is used because simultaneous data collection is carried out throughout the ongoing dialogue between the Iranian and Israeli citizens; therefore, analysis of the data simultaneously occurred and continued until the end of the dialogue. Glaser and Strauss (1967), the originators of grounded theory point out that this is a routine practice in qualitative research and grounded theory.

The IID project is analyzed based on concrete data and moved towards rendering the data in the explanatory theory (e. g. theory of change in this research) (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2015; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The concrete data and methods concluded with the analysis of the documents and transcripts, observation, and interviews with the participants about the fears they feel in regard to the other, and the changes they feel or observe in themselves during and/or after the dialogue. Interviewing the participants was done to collect some additional information and data and foster conceptual categories.

Research Characteristics and Features

This research—first and pragmatically—follows the flow of the dialogue methodologically. Second and conceptually, the researcher steps back to assess the results and the theoretical foundations of dialogue through the selected focus group of the IID. The IID project was initiated in March 2012 between a selected group of Iranian and Israeli scholars, journalists, feminists, civil society and human rights activists in response to their respective governments ramped up rhetoric of war with obvious attempts to create an umbrella of fear over the two countries' citizens. The intention is to channel anxieties about war into an opportunity for mutual understanding, amidst the hostile rhetoric and war mongering of political leaders (see appendix A.) This chapter articulates the methodology of studying the IID project with a focus on 40 recorded sessions of dialogue as well as in-depth and open-ended interviews with the participants from the two countries.

Content Analysis Inquiry Methodology

The pilot project of the Iran-Israel Dialogue is designed to understand intangibles and meanings in interactions between Iranian and Israeli participants and to document the evolution of behavior and change between people of these two hostile countries toward each other. With these goals, a series of mixed qualitative research methods were selected that included tape-recorded, fully transcribed session discussions, and in-depth and open-ended interviews with participants. Textual, content and discourse analyses (Herrera & Braumoeller, 2004; Jonstone, 2007; Mackee, 2013) are also a significant part of this research project.

The research utilized content analysis within the discourse analytic approach (Herrera & Braumoeller, 2004) to analyze any shifts in the language, word usage, and context in the talks between Iranian and Israeli participants. It also utilized discourse analysis (Burman & Parker, 1993; Braumoeller, 2003; Jonstone, 2007) to interpret these data sets. This methodology is employed for this particular research project because the methods for analyzing the phenomena of dialogue and contributing in conflict prevention are qualitative and interpretive.

Mackee (2013) discusses textual analysis as a post-structural methodology, referring to it as the only methodology for gathering data about sense-making practices (p. 6). Textual analysis of these transcriptions helped to evaluate, measure, and compare the change in tone, insights, controversies, agreements and disagreements between the participants. As Botan et al (2000) point out, the textual analysis methodology is able to describe, "the content, structure, and functions of the messages contained in texts." (p. 225) Textual analysis is utilized to gather information about how Iranians and Israelis make sense of their conflict, international attitudes toward their hostility, and their own personal and societal fears about each other that they express in their speech and conversation. For example, we looked for observed and measured evidence that the participants continuously restructured their thoughts, ideas, and relationships, as a benchmark of change. This data-gathering process is selected as the best way to understand the methods by which members of various cultures and subcultures make sense of who they are, and how they fit into the world in which they live (Mackee, 2013, p. 1).

Because the group is smaller than twenty participants, the researcher is afforded

the opportunity to conduct lengthy in-depth interviews with each participant. Interviews

are scheduled over a four-week period. These in-depth and open-ended interviews helped

to "provide additional information that is missed in observation and can be used to check

the accuracy of the observations" (Maxwell, 1996, p. 76). This "triangulation" (Maxwell,

1996) —or, the collection of information from a diverse range of individuals and settings,

using a variety of methods—of simultaneous observations and interviews, provides a

more complete and accurate account than either method could provide alone.

Text Format and Transcription

Among forty-one sessions of the IID held from March 17, 2012 to September 18,

2016, thirty-five sessions are audio recorded with permission of the participants. We

began recording the dialogue on the seventh session. Those sessions that are not recorded

mostly are testing sessions to choose which software and platform is user friendly to the

both sides' participants and comfortable to set our ongoing dialogue on it. In fact, those

primary sessions also focused on introductory and administrative aspects of the proposed

dialogue as well as navigating ways to connect all participants from three countries (Iran,

Israel and the United States) into one conference room and keeping them connected

throughout the session.[10] The participants agreed to use Skype software. Failing landline

connections (e. g. the sixth session is held through George Mason University land-line),

other software such as PalTalk (used in the fourth session) required a platform that is

reliable.

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[10] Sometimes some of the participants connected to the IID session while traveling.

Prior to audio recording the sessions the facilitator asked the participants if they are comfortable with audio recording. She shared the transcribed text of each session that is recorded and asked them to correct or edit the transcript if they believed any part of their contribution is misunderstood. Usually corrections are caused by technical issues in recording such as losing their voices in some part of their comments. Among thirty-five audio recorded sessions, twenty-seven sessions are transcribed for this research. Those nine un-transcribed sessions are related to events of leaving or graduation of an intern who was in charge of transcribing the sessions and hiring a new intern. The transcriptions are all human-generated. We employed both full verbatim (e. g. the transcription follows the speech exactly and includes all utterances such as "mm-hmm", "you know", etc. In full verbatim also timestamping of transcribing is on speaker change) and clean verbatim (e. g. the transcription is edited and does not includes speech errors, false starts, and various filler words such as "mm", "uh", "you know", etc.) for transcriptions. Those full verbatim versions are done by a transcription company. We tried to test the full verbatim style and check whether we are missing any important part of the talks in clean verbatim. Comparing the two styles, we did not find specific or meaningful differences that could impact the analysis of the texts and coding.

Content Coding and its Challenges

In the simplest example, a set of instructions for what words or phrases constitute "fear," "war," "enemy," "concern," "hatred" and also "hope," "communality," "understanding" and "change" are studied. Then, it is determined how the participants

expressed their "fear" and feeling through the three stages of the dialogue - trust-building, sharing fears and concerns and collaborative actions.

Twenty-one transcripts of the recorded sessions were randomly chosen and coded. Based on these findings from twenty-one samples of the transcripts, analysis was done with a focus on how the participants use the word "fear" in the first phases, and how they use that word after two years participating in the dialogue project is studied. This way, the keyword search list was made finding words that, a) conceptually are relevant to the research question of the study, and b) commonly used in the literature. See figure 1 in Chapter Six that shows the codes and the network between them helped the analysis of some significant relations between fears of the two sides as Iranians and Israelis.

First, Nvivo software[11] was chosen for qualitative data analysis (QDA) that provides the researcher facilities and tools to organize and structure the coding process. In the first round, after coding all transcripts of the dialogue sessions, a significant error occurred. One box in programing the code was not marked and the unfortunate result was no data appeared. The entire coding process, reading line-by-line the transcripts, coding them again had to be redone. The codes from this second analysis to a file on a MacBook were saved. Alas, the file did not appear when we returned to use it. Not even help from Apple's genius bar resulted in finding the coded data. Nvivo headquarters staff (in Australia) were also unsuccessful in determining what had happened.

Then, seeking expertise from other doctoral candidates utilizing qualitative research software, the idea of turning to Atlas ti software popped up. The transcripts

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[11] https://www.qsrinternational.com/nvivo/products

were ultimately coded by Atlas ti that organized themes with each networking between codes and notes. Chapters Five through Seven provide the results for the coding and created categories.

Data Analysis

The methodology allowed this research to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of Iranian and Israeli individuals' life cycles, their behavior toward the *other*, and individual and group change through this project. The research is comprised of actual data collection, including interviews and transcription texts. In-depth interviews with the participants were held, in which the interviewees are asked to tell their stories and narratives as best as they could recall before and after their participation in the dialogue project. In addition to providing their narratives, interviewees are also asked:

- What are the changed views they have about the other side?
- How they can spread the change retrieved from the dialogue to a larger social network?
- How to make that transition of change from individuals to the societies?
- What they believe are the challenges of this transition?

Reflective Practice

Reflective Practice (Cheldelin et al. 2004; Kensella, 2003; Schon, 1984) approach is used in IID both by the facilitators and participants. This methodology is employed in both my facilitation approach throughout facilitating the IID sessions as well as another facilitator who used this technique to have the participants reflecting on themselves and

reflect on whether they feel any changes in themselves, towards the Iran-Israel conflict, and the other participants during the dialogue (see details in Chapter Seven.)

Cheldelin et al. (2004) discuss that "[t]he core premise of reflective practice is that knowledge generated by practitioners reflecting on their own experience is of at least equal value to knowledge derived by academics from empirical research." (P. 71) In facilitating each IID session, verbal and self-reports as well as notes taken based on personal observation of the participants needs, feelings and concerns during the sessions are an integral part of the reflective practice.[12]

Mitchell (1981) points out that "[m]embers of parties involved in a conflict situation are likely to possess complex cognitions and evaluations about themselves and their own party; the opposing party, its leaders and membership; and the environment within which the conflict situation arises"(p. 72). Observation of these behavior and feelings, if expressed directly or indirectly, also are listed on my notes. As Mitchell (1981) also explains that these behaviors "necessitate a more detailed consideration of the nature of conflict attitudes, their causes and common features, the manner in which they develop and change over time, the way in which they affect various forms of conflict behavior, or act as a hindrance or help in efforts at finding a solution to the conflict." (p. 73) In fact, studying Michell's (1981) chapter titled "Four psychological dimensions of conflict" from his book *The Structure of International Conflict* specifically assured me

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[12] When I saw, for example, a participant is in silent during a session, I would use skills to get her/him engaged and return her to the talk, too. Unless in check-in (the first section of the sessions that the participants share their feeling in that day) she announces that she feels sick and she is here to be present and only listen rather than talking.

about the importance of the psychological changes, behaviors, tones, and other complex cognition.

A step more taken through Reflective Practice is holding individual meetings (online) or through email with the participants to hear their opinion in an open time (not limited in an hour of IID session) about the sessions, their feeling, any concerns they might have about the facilitation and facilitator/s. For example, in a meeting with two Iranian professors, we reviewed the Iranian's needs for such a dialogue such as what topics they are interested to discuss with Israeli participants and what topics could further connect the two sides' participants. Such a brainstorming meeting was also held with two Israeli professors. In another type of meeting highlighting more examples of such caucuses, I was called by an Israeli journalist participant who was concerned about the political affiliation of other Israeli participants and whether we had done any background check. I explained to her - as she had been invited to the IID in the second year of the dialogue and still had some questions that we had cleared up in the first sessions –that a biography of each participant is shared with all other participants and everybody could study more about the other participants through their website and social media addressed in the biography. I reminded her that she has received an email from me including the bio of the participants as well as the transcript of the latest sessions in her inbox if she needs to study the participants' point of views and bios. She confirmed that she needs to find and study them, and she will ask me if there are any questions she might have yet.

Not forgetting, these caucus meetings and talks helped the reflective practice stay far from the critique of Kinsella (2003) where she argues that "[w]hen we put an

emphasis on individual reflection, we fail to consider the account of "others" within the community within which reflection occurs." (Kinsella, 2003, p.1) The way IID facilitators remained available to the participants twenty-four-seven to hear their reflections, concerns, and suggestions (provided they are willing to share them outside of a session) helped the most sensitive thoughts to get a thorough review and be included in next sessions' topic, if applicable.

None of the caucus meetings and talks are shared with the group unless the person in the meeting suggested to share with other participants in a formal IID session. Nevertheless, the recommendations, suggestions, and concerns are all considered in next IID sessions and/or topics without mentioning details of the caucus.

The IID and Its Characteristics

The online dialogue that is designed for the Iran-Israel Dialogue (IID) has its own advantages for people forbidden to connect to each other or travel to one another's land because of state laws.[13] Through digital dialogue sessions, the participants are able to

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[13] There is a long list of countries that have rules pertaining to their own citizens that forbid them to travel to some other countries naming them as "enemy states". For example, "Under Israeli law, [some countries such as] Iran, Pakistan, Iraq, Libya, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Yemen are designated 'enemy states' and an Israeli citizen may not visit them without a special permit issued by the Israeli Interior Ministry. The original list was set in 1954 and was updated only once on 25 July 2007 to include Iran. A 2008 amendment to the Nationality Law of 1952 designated 9 countries which are considered an enemy of Israel: Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Sudan, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen as well as the Hamas-administered Gaza Strip. Acquiring citizenship or establishing residency by an Israeli citizen in one of these countries can result in loss or replacement of citizenship. But, Afghanistan accepts Israeli passports, and there is diplomatic relationships between Afghanistan and Israel via the Embassy of Israel in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. In addition, Iran, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen do not allow entry to people with evidence of travel to Israel, or whose passports have either a used or an unused Israeli visa. As a consequence, many countries will allow for a second passport to be issued to citizens wishing to circumvent this restriction although the Israeli immigration services themselves have now mostly ceased to issue entry or exit stamps to foreign nationals." Israeli Passport, In Wikipedia. Retrieved on Feb. 15, 2017 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israeli_passport . Also, on the inside of the back-cover of Iranian passports bear the inscription: "The holder of this passport is not entitled to travel to occupied Palestine [referring to Israel]."

connect to the same conference room hearing the participants from the other country that they are forbidden to travel to. Having studied carefully models of dialogue utilized by other scholars and practitioners, the IID model became a hybrid model similar to the Structured Dialogue (Christakis, 2006, 2009, 2013) and the Sustained Dialogue (Saunders, 1999, 2002, 2011) explained in detail in Chapter Two. The IID, however, is also different from the two models. Here similarities and differences with those models, as well as other top models of dialogue in the field of conflict analysis and resolution are explained.

Although the IID is similar to the spirit of Bohmian dialogue in bridging and communication, it is in contrast with the Bohmian in terms of the necessity of the presence of a facilitator. The Bohmian model emphasizes freedom and "no-rules" in the dialogue. This would not be useful in the IID model based on: a) examples of incidents discussed in chapters five-seven that show facilitation is crucial, b) interviews with the participants confirmed that facilitation in such dialogue is necessary. Considering the nature of IID with the participants coming from three-decade disconnection and stereotyped mind about the other side, it is critical to have trained facilitators in the IID as it is created for use with citizens of enemy countries, and the discussions were heavily laden with participants' strong emotions that arose when discussing sensitive issues. With time limitation and restricted meeting dates, the dialogue sessions needed to be facilitated and diverted to an amicable discussion. Thus, in contrast to Bohmian dialogue, the IID utilized a facilitated dialogue with structures and timelines. These two—structure and timing—do not limit nor break the flow of the dialogue. In fact, based on the four years

of my experience in facilitating the IID, the presence of a facilitator is critical for a

dialogue between hostile countries' citizens with decades of negative thoughts and

misunderstanding about one another. This is further discussed in Chapter Five.

The IID differs from the Sustained Dialogue particularly in terms of frequency

and framing, although they both exhibit similar features related to their belief in having a

facilitator for an easier and facilitated dialogue. I met with Harold Saunders, the founder

of Sustained Dialogue (SD) on several occasions during 2013-2015 to discuss the two

models of IID and SD. There are some details about his dialogue model that I needed to

clarify after reading his books on SD. During our first meeting in October 2013, we

exchanged insights and more detailed information about the two models of dialogue we

created. We first discussed the frequency of the two dialogues and why and how they are

formulated based on limitations and the nature of conflict between the parties, his,

annually and mine, monthly. He was "fascinated" that the IID called for frequent monthly

meeting. The SD, as he explained, took place annually in the form of a conference. As

mentioned earlier, the IID is formulated initially as a bi-weekly format but later moved it

to a monthly format, taking advantage of a digital model, in which the participants gather

in an internet-based conference room. Because SD's participants gathered annually in an

in-person conference it surely needed more years to achieve its goals. The span was two

decades. The IID started in 2012 and completed in 2016.

Another important difference between the two models is that the SD operated

under a government umbrella and funding, unlike the IID. The SD is a multi-track

diplomacy frame for Track I (governmental) and Track II (non-governmental)

participants, while the IID is a multi-track diplomacy frame, a combination of Track II

and Track III (citizens) diplomacy.[14]

The Structured Dialogue of Alexander Christakis, although requiring facilitators

for dialogue, also relies on a computer-based structure with programmed software

(previously explained in Chapter Two.) In contrast, the IID is an internet-based digital

dialogue. Of note, Christakis's dialogue is especially detail-oriented in terms of defining

a hierarchical level between the facilitation team and the participants and stakeholders.

The IID strives for no hierarchical levels between the facilitators and the participants. In

contrary, the IID insists on spreading a leadership role among all participants (this is

articulated in detail in this chapter.)

Studies of the literature on dialogue (Bakhtin, 1985; Bohm, 1985, 1987, 1990,

2002; Christakis, 2006, 2009, 2013; Saunders, 1999, 2002, 2011; Schein, 1969, 1978,

1990, 1992, 2003) and comparing the three models of dialogue (Bohmian, Sustained, and

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[14] According to the USIP website these are defined as follows: **Track 1 diplomacy:** Official discussions typically involving high-level political and military leaders and focusing on ceasefires, peace talks, and treaties and other agreements. **Track 2 diplomacy:** Unofficial dialogue and problem-solving activities aimed at building relationships and encouraging new thinking that can inform the official process. Track 2 activities typically involve influential academic, religious, and NGO leaders and other civil society actors who can interact more freely than high-ranking officials. Some analysts use the term **track 1.5** to denote a situation in which official and non-official actors work together to resolve conflicts. **Track 3 diplomacy:** People-to-people diplomacy undertaken by individuals and private groups to encourage interaction and understanding between hostile communities and involving awareness raising and empowerment within these communities. Normally focused at the grassroots level, this type of diplomacy often involves organizing meetings and conferences, generating media exposure, and political and legal advocacy for marginalized people and communities. **Multitrack diplomacy:** A term for operating on several tracks simultaneously, including official and unofficial conflict resolution efforts, citizen and scientific exchanges, international business negotiations, international cultural and athletic activities, and other cooperative efforts. These efforts could be led by governments, professional organizations, businesses, churches, media, private citizens, training and educational institutes, activists, and funders. Retrieved on February 2, 2015, from http://glossary.usip.org/resource/tracks-diplomacy

Structured Dialogue) with the IID show that there are three crucial requirements for such

an approach as the IID, and they should be strategically designed and implemented

phase-by-phase. The three phases are: 1) building trust among participants, 2) involving

participants in a leadership role toward the expected outcomes and goals of the project,

and 3) observing and analyzing changes in every phase.

Building Trust (Phase I). Trust is one of the most essential ingredients of a

dialogue between two hostile countries. From the get-go, trust—and how to build and

develop it in a way that lets participants act and interact productively and safely—was my

central concern. A great deal of time was spent during the IID studying scholarship,

strategies and stories for building and keeping trust throughout the project. Nothing

would have progressed without trust between the participants, and without the

participants' trust in me and the dialogue project. As a matter of fact, the entire IID, the

relationship between the participants, and the relationship between the participants and

the facilitator fundamentally depended on trust.

Bringing citizens of hostile countries to the same table of dialogue—from two

countries with the highest measure of enmity, hatred messages and rhetoric of the states

for thirty-five years—needs a structural and ongoing trust building strategy. As a matter

of fact, to conduct such dialogue to answer the research questions, building and keeping

trust throughout the dialogue is a key factor experimented in the IID. Kelman (2017),

after working thirty years on Israel-Palestine conflict, shares his experience and insights:

"the development of mutual trust is equally essential in efforts to resolve conflict and

transform the relationship between enemies into a relationship characterized by stable

peace and cooperation" (p. 171).

The strategy that is applied to build trust from the earliest stage of the IID is to

share a strong message with the invitees in the invitation stage. We made sure that the

invitees contemplated the importance of preventing war between Iran and Israel, and how

contributing in this war prevention is in their own best interests. Those invitees who

understood and agreed with the initial message of the IID and concluded that their own

best interests are met in such a peace project, agreed to join and demonstrated

commitment to participating in the IID.

Leadership Role with Participants (Phase 2). As mentioned earlier, involving

the participants in a leadership role is the second phase. This was planned strategically.

Not only did the participants feel they are being heard for their suggestions they had for

the dialogue, they also had full authority to: 1) suggest and choose the topics, 2) agree or

disagree with new candidates for participating in the dialogue[15], and 3) participate in

framing the sessions (e.g., when, where, why, how.)

Involving participants into the leadership role is a planned strategy alongside trust

building. This role empowered them and gave them motivation to create a safe, secure

and comfortable atmosphere where sharing needs, interests, fears and concerns came

more naturally. A constructive collaborative relationship then followed. The participants

were encouraged to feel free to communicate with one another outside of the dialogue as

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[15] Before I invited new participants, I sent biographies of the candidates to the current participants. I asked them if anybody disagreed with new candidates or felt unsafe for any reasons.

well as using social media connection. As will be explained in Chapter Four and Five, the participants were also assisted to connect with one another and meet up in person in the United States. These meetings and communications helped them to collect information and data about one another to strengthen their mutual trust during the IID process. As Chapter Five and Seven address, the participants also initiated some collaborative actions such as co-authoring and co-researching in their common field of study. We were subsequently informed that most of the participants referred to the IID (without sharing details) with their students, colleagues and/or network as a peace project they were working on and transfer their perspective and new perception on the *other*. Therefore, another primary goal of the IID (spreading the message of dialogue between Iranians and Israelis to a larger network) is met.

A mid-evaluation was carried out through the distribution of a questionnaire in October 2014. Participants were asked to answer a series of closed- and open-ended questions (see Appendix B). In particular, they were asked to address topics such as timing and frequency of the next session(s) and whether they agreed with adding new participants. The reason that the facilitator raised these specific questions in parallel to the main goal of the mid-evaluation is to evaluate each participant's potential change in their outlook on the IID when compared with their initial feelings at the beginning of the project.

The mid-evaluation—alongside the second phase (involving the participants in leadership roles) provides a few advantages: 1) a questionnaire is logistically easy to distribute and analyze, 2) it is relatively low cost and does not require a software or

internet-based template, and 3) it offers reasonable freedom for the respondents when they address the open-ended questions.

Some scholars have argued that a questionnaire may present more problems than benefits, but those concerns did not occur in the IID. For example, Kapland and Saccuzzo (2009) state that the conductors of a questionnaire may never know if any of the respondents have any questions about the questions, nor get feedback whether some of the respondents understood the questions well enough to answer appropriately. In the IID, all participants had immediate access to the facilitator to ask for clarification if a question is not clear. The content of each of the dialogues are also recorded as an audio record, transcribed into text and sent to the participants after every session. The facilitator designed the questions (as seen in Appendix B) to be short and simple (and none of the participants reported any need for clarification.)

Observing and Evaluating Change (Phase 3). There are hundreds of group and individual-based inquiries and emails addressing insights about the IID process. Also, individual one-on-one video talks with the participants after most of the sessions are organized in order to hear participants' thoughts on different aspects of the project. These includes observation on (i) their own feeling (e.g., concerns, hopes, ideas for a better performance of the dialogue, any feeling change when compared with before attending the dialogue), and (ii) their feeling about the entire sessions. These brainstorming sessions and talks served as a series of valuable consultations which benefited IID and helped strategizing and mapping the process. Notes from the talks are taken and considered at the next sessions.

Group Dynamics

Most of the participants of IID are out of the field of conflict resolution. Receiving information about the techniques that they are – consciously or not – using in the dialogue would encourage those who are applying the techniques to train the others to learn and use them. Through the facilitated dialogue, the facilitators learned that a short sentence in an opening or closing section is able to develop techniques for untrained participants, such as "I am happy to see how trust is getting rooted in this dialogue and how participants share their hopes, fears, concerns, needs with their peers and learn how they can express their feeling without censorship and still with no harm to others." Or, "When I was reviewing the audio and transcript of the previous session, I learned how you used companionate listening and active listening techniques in response and comments on D.'s emotional moments," session held in Oct 2014.

There was a significant need of out-of-session-meetings with the participants and one-on-one meetings for brainstorming with them throughout the dialogue series. Those private talks – caucuses - usually took place for answering some questions of a participant if s/he requested a talk out of group session or a brainstorming on enhancing the IID, connections, themes, topics, etc. In such meetings, the facilitator would grab the opportunity to highlight any suggestion or behavior of a given participant that had helped the IID meaningfully or, conversely, behaviors that damaged other's trust or emotion.

A clear example took place after the 30th session when the facilitator texted a participant and said thank you for suggesting to stay five more minutes to hear and finish E.'s talk [the other country's participant] and not leaving the session at the scheduled

time. This resulted in developing the ability of a deeper connection to the *other*. The facilitator added: "I can tell that E. feels her talks and opinion are heard and furthermore they are interesting to the group. This does matter so much in a dialogue." These kinds of comments and positive feedback from a facilitator are able to enhance the quality of the connection in a group and already indirectly train them for a quality dialogue.

Limitations and Resolution

In addition to documenting the transcripts from the sessions and reflective practice, IID implemented a third methodology by holding a series of interviews post-dialogue. These interviews are done as a "retrospective" (Siemen, 2012). Retrospective - meaning "look back" in Latin - in social science research means to take a look back at events that already have taken place. Those interviews have been added to the methodology to partially make up for the lack of a pre-test. As the dialogue turned to research project from the sixth session (explained in Chapter One and Eight), we missed a pre-survey opportunity before each participant attended the project. That pre-test survey could have helped to measure the effectiveness of the dialogue on participants before and after their participation in the sessions.

Through those interviews with the IID participants, the effects of the dialogue, change they feel through IID, the participants difficulties and facilities in the dialogue and their thoughts on the facilitation style and facilitators are discussed.

The other potential limitation and also strength in IID is that the researcher, facilitator and convener of this project is the same person – the author of this doctoral dissertation. As such, the research is mixed with my personal interpretation, insights,

knowledge, and observation (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The complication of tackling

multi-roles by one person, plus my Iranian background in such a project is discussed at

length in Chapter Four (conduct of the dialogue) and Chapter Eight (discussing findings

and limitations of the research.)

Summary

This chapter explains the research methodology of the IID based on the primary

research question: What kind of shifts happen when Iranian and Israeli citizens engage in

a digital dialogue? It leads us to an overview of the design of the IID model and explains

the selection process for the participants and presents the methodology for content

analysis within the grounded theory approach. The content coding challenges are also

discussed.

In Chapter Four, the conduct and design of IID is discussed step-by-step in detail.

The nature of the IID and how it integrated with the design of IID, selection of the

participants and the complexity of it, role of facilitators as well as their positioning, and

how facilitation approaches are integrated into IID are discussed in the next chapter as

well.

Chapter Four

Conduct of the Dialogue

This chapter answers the question of how the Iran-Israel Dialogue (IID) is conducted. The design of IID is explained in detail in the next sections of this chapter which will cover the stages of dialogue design, role of facilitators, positioning of the facilitators and a detailed synthesis of an IID session. Taken together, these explain how a session is conducted from beginning to end.

The IID has several features and strategies that I will explain here before delving into the articulated stages of the performed dialogue and methodology:

Dialogue format. The IID is the first digital and structured dialogue between Iranians and Israelis in the field of conflict resolution. I formatted the dialogue based on my knowledge about the two countries, literature in the field regarding the practice of dialogue, advice from seasoned practitioners[16] who successfully conducted similar dialogues and formulating the important details such as the length of each meeting based on the number of participants and style of the facilitation. The central idea of the IID is the creation of a series of direct communications between the two countries' participants. Since the two countries citizens were forbidden to travel to the others' land and because

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[16] During the implementation of the IID, I reached out to more practitioners in the field whose their main concentration was on dialogue, such as Harald Saunders, founder and conductor of Sustained Dialogue, and Susan Allen, Associate Professor and Director of Center for Peacemaking Practice in School of Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University. Saunders' Inter-Tajik Dialogue as well as 50 years of dialogue between Russian and American citizens (celebrated in Dartmouth Conference in 2010) qualified him as one of the best reviewers of IID during in-person meetings that I had with him. Allen's experience in terms of her many years of dialogue and workshops in the South Caucasus and Easter Europe was invaluable to frame the questions we attempted to answer in this dissertation.

frequent meetings in a third country—such as the United States where the facilitators

reside—would be too costly, I used a digital format inviting the participants on video and

audio-based series of monthly meetings to discuss pre-designed and planned topics (see

Appendix A).[17]

     Setting. All meetings were conducted on a telecommunications application

software product named *Skype*. I chose this internet-based software with the consent of

the participants for some experimented and tested reasons: 1) two other approaches,

including landline phone calls as well as PalTalk desktop, failed to provide reliable

connectivity and ease of use for the participants, 2) Skype was already being used in Iran,

Israel and the United States, therefore, the participants were familiar with the basics of its

video and audio features, 3) the Skype application not only provided video-audio

conference calls, but also screen sharing and instant messaging services between

participants, allowing them to message privately to one another or publicly on the group

window to all participants, 4) participants were able to exchange digital documents such

as relevant images, texts, videos and links, and 5) this software is powered by both

Windows and Mac systems, thus enabling IID participants running either system on their

computers to enter the conference. Participants were also able to connect to the

discussion using their mobile devices if they were away from their desk or out of town,

which was often the case.

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[17] The first meetings were held bi-weekly. In the second and following years of the dialogue, we moved to
a once-a-month format. I initiated the change to monthly meetings as I wanted a commitment from the
participants for their presence in the meetings and believed it was more likely to happen with monthly
meetings. In 2016, the participants committed to a quarterly meeting. This ultimately turned out to be the
right timing.

Sponsorship. One of the most important features of the IID is that the participants were not part of any governmental or diplomatic sponsorship. This strategy is intentionally employed to remove any suspicions among the participants about whether or not any government or intelligence agency is behind the dialogue, which further allowed the establishment of primary trust among the participants that no governments were involved and thus could not manipulate or interfere with the process and/or security of the dialogue. The School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (S-CAR) at George Mason University is the home base for this research because: 1) S-CAR is an academic organization, independent of any federal governmental or intergovernmental agencies, 2) as an academic organization it is able to provide a professional and secure umbrella for the IID, 3) there is no exchange or receipt of money, funding, donations, or the like involved with the School or me as the creator and facilitator to raise any financial or coercive doubts about the study, and 4) as an academic institution, S-CAR provided an opportunity to engage for the purpose of transcription unpaid interns who are interested in learning techniques and skills to facilitate dialogues so as to enhance their abilities and resumes for future employment.

Safety and security. The dialogue is a closed and non-public group. From the beginning, we established and maintained ground rules as to how we would agree to meet as participants in these dialogues. For example, we agreed that emails among the group were only for internal group use and nobody would forward any information or content outside the group. Also, the group decided that any change or solution must emerge from group consensus and internal decision-making. We also agreed we would not accept any

requests to publicize the project. I rejected any media interviews with journalists –

including several that some of the participants wanted me to accept as the inventor of IID

- and I did not meet with any of their friends. During the four years of implementation of

the IID, I also avoided publishing any articles or stories about the IID either in academic

or non-academic journals, or in any other forms of media. I participated and presented the

role and impact of experimental facilitated digital dialogues in two conferences in the

United States and both conferences came after the closing of dialogue sessions in 2016.

Still, I did not share any specific details about the participants, nor did I share any

information about the kind of information needed to get consent from the participants.

From the very beginning of the dialogue, participants from both sides needed assurance

about their safety for connecting to the "other side" participants. The biography of the

participants were internally shared in advance and the participants were able to freely

choose their participation and reasoning for sharing the amount of information they were

comfortable discussing in each session.

Invitations to participate. The invitation process to be part of the dialogue

("participants" of this research) contained its own necessary strategy. Inviting subjects to

such a sensitive connection and dialogue between the two nations needed a strong and

ongoing strengthening process to build and maintain trust. The establishment of trust was

essential to the IID and formed the vital and essential foundation of the dialogue. As an

Iranian journalist with a vast network of experts, peacebuilders, professors, journalists

and activists, I made a list of Iranians whom I knew were anti-war and interested or

already active in the field in peacebuilding. To create a similar list for Israeli participation

I sought the assistance from an American friend who worked in peacebuilding and trauma healing in Palestine and Israel for more than twenty years. Details about her and her organization are discussed later in this chapter. She worked with me to create the initial list of potential Israeli subjects.

Participants. All participants were perceived as prestigious and progressive members within their own countries. They were selected from academic organizations, media, and social and civic institutions. Ultimately, the IID consisted of a distinguished group of university professors, journalists, social activists and feminists. The IID participants necessarily had to be people out of the governments, but nonetheless had potential access to their country decision-makers and were active in the political and social decision-making, including elections and other political-social tasks.

Frequency and meetings. We held forty-one sessions of dialogue during the period ranging from May 2012 to September 2016. The frequency of the sessions varied from every other week the first year to monthly during 2013-2015. In 2016, the dialogue was held quarterly according to participants' availability.[18]

Interpersonal atmosphere. The IID design is primarily based on a series of free, open and informal meetings that created a trusting and secure channel for the participants of the two sides to share their opinions, questions, doubts, concerns, hopes, fears, thoughts and insights and receive the respect of the other participants individually and as a group.

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[18] In September 2016 after the second session of the year, with brainstorming and advice of the committee members of the research, IID sessions paused and I started reviewing the data collection, coding, analyzing and other steps to write the results of the research project and defend the dissertation.

Facilitated Dialogue. All dialogue sessions were facilitated by a third party. I designed the session to be facilitated not only by me, who had acquired proven techniques, skills and knowledge for facilitating a dialogue, but also by two guest facilitators[19] who were American professors in my doctoral program. These two practitioners possess many years of knowledge and expertise in dialogue and facilitation and agreed to facilitate some of the IID sessions. Ultimately, the IID participants obtained the advantage of facilitation from knowledgeable mentors and skillful facilitators that the variety added depth and perspective to the dialogue.

Selection of Participants

Background leading to the IID: As more fully discussed in Chapter One, scholars and practitioners employ the approach of dialogue as a tool for change in individuals, and at a broader level, in societies. The IID project methodologically utilized dialogue between a selected group of Iranian and Israeli scholars, journalists, and social activists. Change among participants is then assessed and measured.

The IID participants were selected among citizens of Iran and Israel. The idea for this innovative dialogue occurred in January 2012 when I attended a small symposium sponsored by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) on "Women in Religious Peacemaking." The symposium brought together a group of scholars and practitioners to release the results of their commissioned studies and practices about women during conflict, specifically during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. This symposium occurred at

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[19] In total, nine of the IID sessions were facilitated by the two guest facilitators. Cheldelin facilitated the sessions 8, 26 and 31. Gopin facilitated the sessions 19-22 and 24-25.

the same time the negative rhetoric involving war messages between Israeli and Iranian political leaders was raging in the media.[20] Israel had angrily invited the United States—and later Europe[21] to jointly strike Iran.[22] I received the invitation to attend the USIP symposium through the *Center for Religions, Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution* at George Mason University, where I was working as a program director. I was the only Iranian in the symposium. I didn't see any Israeli in the meeting. I learned that there was an American feminist activist attending the conference representing *The Center for Religious Tolerance*. She had worked with Israeli and Palestinian women for more than two decades and had a network of Israelis inside Israel, which I lacked. I invited her to consider my idea of a dialogue to empower citizens to become involved in conflict prevention. She enthusiastically supported the idea of the dialogue between Iranians and Israelis aimed at contributing to prevention of war.

The American friend and I spent a month selecting Iranian and Israeli scholars, journalists, social activists, and practitioners, and identified 10 likely participants to launch a dialogue, which later coalesced into the Iran-Israel Dialogue. We reviewed each of the possible participants' publications and backgrounds in peace projects and conveyed the concept of the dialogue and its goals to each of them. We then formally invited them to the dialogue table. The invitation process itself made for new experiences, including some unexpected ones. For example, among the invitees were two

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[20] Will Israel attack Iran? (2012, Jan 25). *New York Times.* Retrieved on May 30, 2018, from https://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/29/magazine/will-israel-attack-iran.html
[21] Israel: Iran 'is not irrational' (2012, Jan 16). *B. B. C*. Retrieved on May 30, 2018, from http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid_9678000/9678459.stm
[22] Obama's dangerous game with Iran (2012, Feb 13). *Newsweek*. Retrieved on May 30, 2018, from http://www.newsweek.com/obamas-dangerous-game-iran-65711

feminist professors teaching in high-ranking universities, one in California and the other in Washington D. C., both well known for their progressive books and anti-war approaches. They rejected participating in the dialogue with similar reasoning: "I don't sit with them [Israelis] at the same table. They are just after war and not dialogue." We heard similar responses from the Israeli side, refusing to sit with Iranians at the same table to dialogue. On the other hand, as Palestine and Palestinian victims from the war with Israel are the main point of Iranian anger at Israel and we decided to include some Israeli-Palestinian representatives among the participants. We fortunately had the opportunity to have some of them in select sessions of the IID, whereas someone else refused to attend and stated: "Dialogue with Israel is a waste of time. We [Palestinians] have had hundreds of dialogues with them [Israel]; did it solve anything?" Some of these disappointing answers could have discouraged us to even begin the actual dialogue. We held our first session with three Israelis and four Iranians, as well as one American to review the objectives of the dialogue, on March 17, 2012.[23] In that first meeting, the participants came with a draft of manifest (See Appendix A), which became later attached to invitation email to new invitees. Specifically, it was a call to dialogue with the goal of bridging, addressing fears and overcoming national divisions.

      Complexity of Participants Selection. This research project is a single case study (George & Bennett, 2005; Yin, 2009). I convened the initial group of the IID in

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[23] Later the quantity of participants increased. For example, in the ninth session, the number of participants increased to six Iranians, seven Israelis, and two Americans. The quantity of participants usually changes session to session. In the third year of IID, however, we reached stable committed participants who stayed with IID to the end. They included five Iranians and five Israelis, three professors of universities, a rabbi, two journalists, four academic practitioners, researchers and activists.

February of 2012. Prioritizing the desire of the participants to develop and shape a peace

project guided the invitee list for the dialogue. The list included a mix of Iranians,

Israelis, Palestinians,[24] Israeli-Palestinians, Iranian-Americans, Palestinians of the

occupied territory, Palestinian-Americans and an American (my partner in collecting the

list of invitees.) My American partner whom I met at the symposium in January 2012 was

involved in peace projects in Israel and Palestine and invited the Israeli side. I took the

lead and invited Iranian participants to the dialogue table.

We spent a month selecting Iranian and Israeli scholars, journalists, social

activists, and practitioners. We identified twenty-two likely participants to launch the

Dialogue. We aimed at three levels of political and social actors, including high-level

active citizens who are linked to officials as an advisor or consultant, mid-level leader

citizens who are founders or otherwise active in NGOs, scholars, journalists, and

Fulbright millennials.[25] We reviewed their publications, peace activities and personal

background. We reached out to explain to them the concept of the dialogue and its goals,

then invited them to the dialogue.

During the selection process, we added three more criteria to the framework for

participant selection. These three criteria included political and civil society affiliations,

peace works and interpersonal compatibility. In 2015, based on the demand of the

participants, we invited a Palestinian participant in two of the sessions. The Palestinian

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[24] While we were making the list, we consulted with a few Iranians and Israelis in our initial list trying to determine who else they thought we needed to invite for such a dialogue. We heard from both sides that the presence of Palestinians in some of the sessions could be helpful as one of the main causes of the conflict between Iran and Israel was Palatine.

[25] Those of the young generation whose birth years range ranging meet from the early 1980s to the late 1990s.

guest was invited to IID, as some of the Iranian and Israeli participants had suggested the inclusion of Palestinian participants to discuss second round of recruiting Palestinians, especially around the Gaza war time (2014), but we learned that they didn't commit to such dialogues between Israelis and Iranians and left the dialogue table very soon (the issue of Palestine discussed between Iranian and Israeli participants is explained in detail in Chapter Six).

Changing the Name of the Dialogue

Although we built the pilot dialogue with a gender focus, selecting women from the two sides to participate in what was initially called "Iran-Israel-US Women's Dialogue" in October 2012 we added some change to the dialogue. To emphasize the inclusion of participants regardless of gender, race, religion, ethnicity, sexuality and disability, we decided to remove the word "women" from the title of the dialogue and add Israeli and Iranian men to the team dialogue too. We found that excluding men from the dialogue was unnecessary for such a peace project, particularly considering that the project is not a gender-based, and then on, all participants from Iran and Israel with any general categories could be considered. From the first meeting, we announced that no decision would be made without consensus of the group. Before adding any new participant, I shared the bio of the candidate with the other participants and asked their consensus for sending a formal invitation with the manifest and goal of IID to the new invitees. As we added new participants and the leaving of some of them, the name of the dialogue changed to better suit the group dynamics. As you see above and in the

Appendix A, in the first manifest, the dialogue was named "Iran-Israel-US Women's Dialogue."

In the sixth session, [26] we decided to invite male participants from both sides, and this decision promoted us to remove the word "women" was removed from the title. The subsequent departure of our only American participant, due to her responsibility in her organization and frequent travels, prompted us to remove the word "US" from the title. The resulting title conveyed a more specific and direct talk between Iranian and Israeli participants. The name of dialogue was shortened to "Iran-Israel Dialogue" and has been known as the IID since.

Role of Convener

The performance of the IID took me for an exploratory journey throughout the dialogue and allowed me to explore two simultaneous roles, namely as both convener and facilitator. Both roles will be explained in detail in this chapter.

In this section, I will explain a synthesized session of IID and how it shaped my role as a convener. Every IID session needed consideration for both preparation and performance. I would categorize those steps as follows: a) preparation, b) sending out the reminder and invitation to the participants including the preliminary agenda of the next session and the transcription of the previous session for review and any needed corrections, c) testing digital equipment and checking whether any software/application updates are needed, d) pre-performance of the session and individual follow ups with invitees, and e) performance of the session. Each stage can be explained as follows:

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[26] October 2012

▪ The preparation phase includes preparing the transcription of the previous session to attach to the invitation and reminder email sent out to participants for the next session.

▪ The reminder email was sent out to the IID participants a week before the session, including the exact time and day of the next session taking into account the respective Time Zone of Tehran and Tel Aviv, the topic of the next session (itself suggested or created in the previous sessions), a summary of what was discussed in the previous session and what will be discussed in the next session and finally the transcript of the previous session attached to the email. All participants' names and emails were organized as the direct receiver of the email ("To" box) using the alphabetical order by first name.

▪ To check the digital and practical performance of the session, I checked whether any updates or new rules have been added to the digital portal and Skype application. If so, I need to inform the participants and add some instructional paragraphs to the invitation email explaining how they could update their device before the meeting.

▪ For pre-performance of a session, I check if any of the participants are traveling abroad and I need to consider their Time Zone for the session and if they are/not able to attend to that very session. This stage would also be explained as a pre-check of present and absent participants too. There were many occasions when I learned one or a group of the participants would be practicing religious, national or family traditions. If so, it would be added to the invitation email as an opportunity to "learn about the other." I learned from these inclusions that both sides were curious and

interested in learning about these lifestyles and details about one another's culture.

At the time of the actual meeting, I would be online at least fifteen minutes before

the start time of the meeting, to make a new conference room for the session and

then start adding the participants to the conference room as soon as I see their name

and appearance on Skype. Each person's arrival is announced by the Skype

application and their Skype ID turns On, indicated by a green light.[27] The

management of this last stage depended heavily on the actual internet access and

speed that specific day for a given participant as well as whether they are traveling

and possibly on roaming connection or using airport internet that would significantly

reduce the quality of connection. Over the course of the IID, we witnessed that

participants' Internet connections and ability to conduct our dialogue via digital

channels improved significantly; therefore, I did not need to assist some of the

participants as much as I did in the first sessions.

▪ Each session is formulated for a length of an hour, starting with a check-in section.

This strategic section helped the facilitator and participants to get informed about the

feeling and mood of all others that very day and avoid any misunderstanding. For

example, the group could determine if anybody was in a celebratory mood and happy

or in mourning because of the loss of a loved one, which allowed us all to adjust our

tone and communication style. The second section of each session would include the

discussion of the topic and questions, as provided in the invitation email in order to

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[27] To avoid interruption from other friends and connections, some of the participants preferred to Skype on an "invisible" setting and would then message me to announce that they were on and I could then add them to the conference room, even though their Skype light had not turned green to announce their presence.

allow the participants time to think or study about it before attending the session), where the main dialogue between the two sides' participants takes place. The last section of the session included a summary of the discussion, review of new questions and themes arising from that session, the group consensus for choosing next topics/questions to be discussed and any heads up relevant to the next session. The closing section encompassed roughly the last five minutes of each session.

Role of Facilitator

Main Focus. As the main facilitator, I focused mainly on trust building and maintaining the created trust amongst the IID participants. There are three main criteria that I kept reminding the participants of throughout my facilitation of IID:

▪ The main goal of us here on the IID project is to create connection(s) between the two side's citizens and level up to "understanding" each other;

▪ Dialogue is not a debate and there is no winner or loser. We are here to "learn" from each other and "share" about ourselves;

▪ Keeping the expectation of the participants at a realistic level is vital for IID. We do not claim a peace settlement between the two governments of Iran and Israel with this dialogue;

▪ We are here at IID to open windows to consider respectfully with maximum positive friendship essential questions such as "who are you," "who am I," "who do we want to be," "what is my fear," "what is your fear," and "what can we do to wipe out fears of our peoples?"

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These main approaches in facilitation also helped the participants improve their personal skills in dialogue such as; active listening, reflective listening, speaking with compassion, and sharing fears and concerns without insulting the "other."

Flowing Approach. Another characteristic of my facilitation is an open and flowing approach which I employed in IID. For example, although there was a chosen topic for each session, I would follow the concerns and/or thoughts of participants that had arisen based on current events related to Iran and Israel. If a topic like "cultural communalities and differences in the two societies" was supposed to be discussed but an unexpected Gaza war between Israel and Palestine that week had affected the participants and they wanted to share their thoughts, I would let the topic be raised and discussed. I would name this style a flowing approach in facilitation, where the facilitator openly let the participants create their own topic based on events around them and facilitated their own dialogue.

Role of Coach

A facilitator assumes different roles in such an emotional and sensitive intervention. In addition to the two roles discussed above, an occasional third role as a coach also arose in IID. The combination of the facilitator and coach roles required me to be cautious of the recognition and differentiation between the two roles in order to avoid any harm and confusion with the main role as a facilitator, and therefore keep helping the individuals to maintain their confidence and patience in a long-term committed participation.

The role of coach appeared when a few participants privately shared with me their feeling about the group. I in return felt the need to become a coach for a few moments toward them. For example, a participant emailed the facilitator to share that she does not feel confident enough to continue participating in the dialogue. She wrote "'I don't feel I'm knowledgeable enough." She was mostly focused on social change and women issues and explained that she feels "as an outsider" when the dialogue goes through political discussions. I acknowledged such feeling and gave the example of another participant who was not interested in the social and cultural topics but stayed engaged when topics that are in his interest came up. That example of the existence of similar feeling felt by other participants brought her to a new confidence level. She was encouraged to keep the practice of active listening skills throughout those topics which are not in her interest and observe the value of patience in such long-term project by letting the group explore its interests in different topics and discussions.

Facilitators Positioning

Throughout the IID, three skilled facilitators engaged in the dialogue. Each facilitator was selected based not only on their proficiency in the field of conflict resolution, but also on their religion, gender and age; in other words, their position and identity.

First facilitator: I took on the role of "an Iranian journalist" who initiated the Iran-Israel dialogue. I did rely on my huge network as a journalist for initiating such a project. I am also equipped with expertise and academic knowledge to convene such a dialogue as a doctoral student in the field of conflict analysis and resolution. These

criteria enabled me to initiate this dialogue project. Having Iranian nationality could account for my interest in an Iran-Israel conflict prevention project and being a journalist without political affiliation is an asset to demonstrate neutrality to participants. Furthermore, facilitating the dialogue as a skilled facilitator practicing in the field of conflict resolution gave more authenticity to the program and participants in that they will be part of standard academic practices.

Second facilitator: Sandra Cheldelin, the first guest facilitator was a professor in conflict resolution at George Mason University with decades of experience in dialogue and peace projects. As such, she rose to the appropriate level of authenticity and professionality for such a dialogue project. She was also invited to facilitate the dialogue based on her gender and activities – a woman and feminist – thus allowing most of the feminist activist participants in the IID to relate to her. Finally, her non Iranian or Israeli nationality allowed her to be perceived as neutral. This gave me an opportunity to observe whether neutral nationality for a facilitator in IID introduced any bias. (This will be discussed in Chapter Eight).

Third facilitator: The second guest facilitator – Marc Gopin – was also invited to facilitate some of the IID sessions based on his background and position. He is a Rabbi, which built a connection to the Israeli participants, as well as a professor in the field of conflict resolution with decades of experience in teaching peace through tours in Israel and Palestine. As will be explained in detail in Chapter Five, his Jewish identity, as well as years of traveling to Israel and living with Israelis for some peace projects and teaching in the field connected him to Israeli participants during his facilitation.

Positioning of the facilitator in IID was chosen and planned intentionally with consideration of the role of identity in conflict resolution (Avruch, 2010 & 2016; Black, 2003). This set of three facilitators' identities helped the dynamics of the sessions as well as trust building.

Facilitation Approach

Based on participation of three facilitators in IID, three facilitation approaches could be observed. My approach as the main facilitator was focused on a reflective practice approach (see Chapter Three). The first "guest" facilitator's approach could be analyzed as an Appreciative inquiry style (Cheldelin & Lyons, 2003; Watkins & Mohr, 2001; Cooperrider, 2005) and reflective practice (Cheldelin et al., 2004: Kensella, 2003: Schon, 1984). The appreciative inquiry (AI) concept comes from this idea that human systems move in the direction of the questions they most appropriately, positively and consistently ask themselves (Cooperrider et al., 2000). Thus, in AI, asking appropriate and positive questions that encourage participants to think about the inquiries they have in their mind and enable them to imagine next steps and vision the future for themselves is vital. As Van Oosten (2006) discusses, "a change process rooted in AI begins by spotlighting the organization's core strengths, then linking to them as a way to magnify vision, creativity and energy for change." He also explains that "AI searches for the life-giving forces or the best of "what is" to inspire the collective vision of "what might be." The ultimate goal is to create a desired image of the future" Van Oosten (2006).

Although each session of dialogue had a core topic, she tried to extract next themes of the dialogue from the questions of the participants that they suggest or

indirectly express that they like those questions to be discussed. For example, a topic to discuss women's rights in Israel and Iran was suggested by IID's feminist participants. While discussing this topic, it flourished to some additional themes such as divorce rights for women in the two countries, sexual abuse and law (i.e. definitions and restrictions in the two countries law), as well as common concerns of Iranian and Israeli women in their own society. This way, the themes of dialogue are chosen by the participants while also being engaged in shaping the next topics for the dialogue; this not only met their own expectations as they benefited from the IID discussions but also kept the IID strategically managed and driving towards its main goals.

The second approach that she used is known as reflective practice. She utilized the reflective practice as an evaluation in the third year of IID. She applied the reflective practice among the participants by asking them to reflect on what change they feel through the IID. See the evolution and results of this technique in details in Chapter Seven.

IID's second guest facilitator focused on relating the present and past of the Jewish and Iranian nations to highlight the commonalities between the two nations. As a Rabbi, he benefited from his knowledge of the Torah to relate the present fears of Israeli society, shared and discussed by IID Israeli participants, about Iran's attack on Israel, with a positive history about how Iranian and Israeli nations used to collaborate with each other in ancient times. He could relate the discussion of fears of Israelis about Iranian attack discussed by one of the participants to the stories of the Iranian king who saved

Jews and supported them financially to rebuild their Temple in Jerusalem.[28] He discussed

how an Iranian King named Cyrus the Great, who has been mentioned twenty-three times

in the Torah, liberated the Jews. The facilitator's reminder to participants that Iran has

hosted the second largest Jewish population in the Middle East after Israel was another

strategy integrated into the dialogue that employed statistics and numbers.

These historical and religious-themed approaches in facilitation were not

perceived as a Rabbi preaching and were successful in drawing up a list of commonalities

between Iranian and Israeli nations in religion, culture and solidarity. These topics also

resulted in holding a celebration of a mutual event between Iranian and Jewish people at

George Mason University. On March 28th, the Center for World Religions, Diplomacy,

and Conflict Resolution (CRDC), where I was in charge of the Iran Program at the center,

initiated this event and invited the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North

America (FEZANA) and National Iranian American Council (NIAC) and held a shared

panel and celebration in honor of the presence in Washington of the Cyrus Cylinder[29] and

its significance for the peaceful interaction of civilizations based on universal human

rights and human dignity. The invitees all gathered to celebrate and reflect together

during the Jewish Passover, and immediately following Norouz, the Iranian New Year,

demonstrating the peaceful interaction of two ancient civilizations united in their

common devotion to the legacy of Cyrus the Great.[30]

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[28] In the Bible Cyrus is shown as Yahve's object, who give to him the power to create his kingdom and the will to release captive Jews and help them to rebuild their temple.

[29] The Cyrus Cylinder is a 9 inches by 4 inches clay cylinder, which it is thought to be the world's first, written, human rights charter, inscribed 2,600 years ago in by the Persian Emperor Cyrus The Great. It has been displayed in the British Museum and loaned to be exhibited in the United States March–October 2013.

[30] See photos of the event on https://crdc.gmu.edu/iranian-jewish-dialogue-on-the-cyrus-cylinder/

Main Skills Used in Facilitation

 Throughout the IID facilitation, I needed to employ some facilitation techniques and skills more often than others, such as:

 Summarizing, which enhanced a concise overview of the most important points from their talks, verifying that we were all on the same page in terms of understanding the speaker and ensuring that highlights of the speaker' talks are captured correctly,

 Reframing, which was needed to reframe the semi-negative comments to a positive and effective frame,

 Detecting underlying feelings, which also built an IID culture where the participants acknowledge and make statements recognizing the feelings of the *other,*

 Companionate listening, which was more than just active listening and occurred very effectively in those sessions where the emotions of some of the participants ran high.

Reflective Digital Dialogue

 As IID conducted the digital and the internet-based dialogue between this group of Iranian and Israeli citizens, IID built a new model in dialogue (see Chapter Two about IID differences and similarities with other practiced dialogue models in the field). The dissertation chair and I started to think about naming this model of dialogue, based on its nature as a reflective practice and also being digital and chose "Reflective Digital Dialogue."

Reflective Digital Dialogue is an approach of facilitated dialogue in conflict resolution. This model is specially considered for dialogue between hostile countries, which is inherently more emotional, defensive in nature, and can be subject to unpredictable outside events related to the conflict that could negatively or positively impact the participants' behavior and opinions inside the dialogue. Particularly, based on its internet-based nature and digital conduct, the model can be employed for dialogue among those enemy states that their citizens are forbidden to travel to one another country and gain the benefit of in-person meeting and connection

It is built using some specific characteristics, such as the creation of open space for the participants to engage in decision-making and suggesting topics and themes for each set of session and a commitment to prepare conflict parties for collaborative actions and peacebuilding.

This model of reflective conflict resolution is particularly designed for complex and protracted conflicts in which their citizens are forbidden to travel to each other's countries and a face-to-face dialogue is forbidden by their enemy states.

Reflective Digital Dialogue allows the actors (here, the participants) to self-reflect and figure out changes in their perception about the *other* throughout the dialogue. This self-reflection approach is considered to prepare the actors for joint thinking, collaborative actions and walking towards deescalating conflict.

Three Main Stages of the Dialogue

As explained in detail in the previous chapters, the Iran-Israel Dialogue (IID) project started in 2012 with a group of Iranians and Israelis sitting at the same table of

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dialogue. During the 2012-2016 timespan of the IID implementation, the two sides' citizens experienced ups and downs in their own emotions, as well as their thoughts about the *other* as well as their own fears and concerns. During this process, they gradually experienced a willingness for collaborative actions.

Stage 1: Trustbuilding	→	Stage 2: Sharing Fears	→	Stage 3: Collaborative Action

Figure 1 – Stages of shift

As figure 1 above shows, the IID witnessed three stages; 1) trust-building (including two phases of appreciative inquiry as well as Storytelling to develop trust building amongst the participants. See Chapter Five for detail of each phase), 2) sharing fears and perception of the *other*, and 3) moving to collaborative actions. The interdependence of these three stages is reflected in the table 1 above where some sessions required participants to be in more than one stage at a time in order to enable a productive and up-to-date discussion (see the explanation next to the table 1).

Chapters Five through Seven will further elaborate on stages one, two and three, respectively. Those chapters will articulate the observations, analysis and findings of the stages. They will also describe implementation, how the two sides' participants acted and reacted throughout the stage and how some nuances of each stage occurred and paved the road for implementing the next stages.

Trust-building. In the trust-building stage, I employed the *appreciative inquiry* approach (Cooperrider et al., D., 2000; Watkins & Mohr, 2001; Cooperrider, 2005) to enable the dialogue group to build on the positive aspects of a situation instead of just looking at the negative side of problems. I also designed a set of sessions for *storytelling* so that participants from each side tell the story of their individual life, where and how they grew up, and what are their own individual narratives of their personal stories. The storytelling and how it helped to remove the gap between the participants and pose a realistic narrative of each individual story to the group will be explained in detail in Chapter Five.

The atmosphere of the dialogue taught me that as long as the participant do not feel safe and trusting in each other they will not move to the next stage that was designed to share their fears and concerns. The trust-building stage created a comfort and safety in the group and prepared them for the next stage, namely sharing fears and talking about the core of their perception about the *other*.

Sharing Fears. Sharing fears and concerns by the two sides' participants who came across each other through a dialogue for the first time could not be accomplished without implementing the trust-building stage. When the participants felt trust and enough safety in the group, they started to move on to sharing their fears and where they do or do not see their concerns and fears understood by the other side. The details of this stage will be discussed in Chapter Six followed by quotes and conversation of the two sides regarding their fears and, more importantly, how those fears have been shaped in them and in their society.

Collaborative Actions. This stage was in fact the fruit of the two previous stages designed in IID. The participants who, through three years of ongoing dialogue, practiced many of the IID dialogue's skills and techniques, such as trust, humanizing the enemy, compassionate listening, increased capability to hear the perception of the *other* about themselves and share their honest perception and fears about the *other,* in order to reach a fulfilling stage that lead them to collaborative action for the first time in their life.

The design of this stage of IID was not based on the promise of a concrete and predictable achievement. We would either reach this stage or not. I strived to keep the atmosphere of the dialogue open and the participants engaged and involved in the core of the two previous stages and let the next stage occur naturally.

This research does not define the stage of *collaborative action* as the goal of the IID. As explained in the previous chapters, bringing the two sides of citizens to the same table of dialogue was unique enough in the history of Iran-Israel conflict and in the field of conflict resolution. Furthermore, it is assumed that designing the open space for the dialogue while designing necessary preparation and structural stages could enhance unpredictable positive achievements during the IID.

Conflict Chronology and Topics

It was important to maintain careful records of each session over the 4 years of dialogue. To do this, I created an Excel spreadsheet with 41 rows and 5 columns[31] as briefly presented in table 4.1 below in this chapter (see the complete table in Appendix

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[31] In the original spreadsheet there are 12 columns, including date of sessions, present participants, the kind of software used to hold or record the session, status of coding on Atlas ti and NVivo, and some other notes. For security purposes, some information about the participants such as name, sessions date, etc. are not disclosed.

C). The topics varied from Session Date and Topic Discussion Title, to notes about simultaneous events in the world and most valuable results from the particular session. There are some empty boxes, where there were no significant events. This spread sheet was an important record to use while coding and analyzing the data outlined in the next chapters.

This table provides a list of the topics that are chosen ahead of times as well as the themes that were arose from the participant's suggestions, thoughts, and inquiries are highlighted chronologically and discussed.

Table 1: A sample of Chronological Events and the IID Sessions

Session	Stages	Topic/Discussion	Simultaneous Event	Important Points by the Participants	Most Valuable Results/lesson
1	1	Why dialogue?	- Israel urges Obama to strike on Iran	Showing interest in doing something to prevent war and peacebuilding.	-Published the first piece on March 27, 2012 on Iran-Israel Peace on Search for Common Ground, translated to seven language including Hebrew and Farsi.
2	1	Testing and line conference call	Rise of negative rhetoric between Israeli and Iranian leaders.		Difficulties in reaching the Israeli participants through land line phone.
3	1	Testing PalTalk as platform for dialogue	Report on Iran's nuclear capacity by UN nuclear inspectors		PalTalk didn't work for all participants. There were technical difficulties with this software, so we never really got a conversation going.
4	1	Further testing of PalTalk		Agreement: PalTalk too cumbersome	PalTalk conversation went well but needed assistance of a staff for guiding the participants, and bringing each Israeli participant into the conference room
5	1	What will be discussed in IID?		Participants start sharing their individual fears, concerns, and experiments. This way, we will not go through big foreign policy	- Clarifying that each participant talks on behalf of her own - and not people of her country. Building self-safety for each participant. - Chose Skype for the next sessions.

				issues and will not think that we are here to "resolve" the problem of the world. We are just individuals to dialogue with each other as one Iranian or one Israeli.	
6	1	What are your insecurities and concerns regarding the possibility of war between Israel and Iran? How do your people look at this confrontation? What hopes do you have on possible ways forward toward peace?	Opened the main question on major fears among Iranian and Israeli society about the other side.	Decided to remove "women" from the title of the dialogue and invite male scholars, journalist and peace practitioners to the dialogue.	Opening this topic needed some work in advance that done in the previous sessions, from clarification of "why we are here" to continuation of trustbuilding process.
7	1	Continuation of the topics from the previous session.			The focus question for discussion was: What are the major fears that you have as an individual and as a citizen of Israel/Iran/US about the other country and/or the situation? The overall goal of the question was to surface and discuss the fears that underlie the rhetoric of war.

Here, two things are worth noting. First, although the topic of each session was emailed in advance to the group, many international and domestic events such as the Israel-Palestine conflict (e. g. two rounds of Gaza war during four years of IID), elections in Iran, Israel and the United States impacted the IID and the topics of the sessions. Those events altered the course of the discussion and the corresponding topics as the participants felt the need to address them.

Second, during some sessions you notice the coexistence of more than one stage at a time. For example, in session 29, while discussing a collaborative action (stage 3), the Gaza war triggered further discussions which required sharing fears (stage 2) from the Israel side. Such stages overlapping was seen in several other sessions as seen in table 1.

Next chapters, including Chapter Five through Seven contend how these components correspond with three stages of shift occur during IID.

Summary

This chapter articulated the design of the IID and how the IID was conducted for the citizens of Iran and Israel who come to dialogue and connection for the first time. The chapter also elaborated how facilitators and their respective facilitation approaches were integrated into the IID model. It identified the characteristics of Reflective Digital Dialogue and the advantages of this model to be used for dialogue among other enemy states (e. g. the US and North Korea). This chapter also provided the readers a list of sessions, topics, points of interests and learnings from each session in a chronological table (see table 1 above).

In the next chapter (Chapter Five), the research data analysis on the first stage of the three stages of IID model is presented followed with a discussion of significant findings, and how the shifts occurred and how the participants got prepared for a smooth move to the next stage.

Chapter Five

Building an Uneasy Trust

Trust is a vital ingredient for building and maintaining relationships in the field of conflict resolution. In dialogue, as an intervention approach to conflict resolution (Deutsch et al., 2006), also plays an important role. Conversely, violation of trust precipitates destruction of relationships (Kelman, 2017; Grant & Baden-Fuller, 1995, 2004; Khanna et al., 1998; Hamel, 1991, Deutsch, 1958) and maintains conflict at disconnection and – in conflict – at the enmity level. On the other hand, trust can be ephemeral, contextual, subject to change and re-prioritization so essentializing it may limit understanding and analytic potential. That's why practitioners cannot make prior assumptions about trust, nor assume the lack of it in a group as per se problematic. (Tøth & Søderberg, 2018, p. 52). The trustbuilding stage as well as the complexities of trust observed in IID are contended in this chapter.

Indeed, the building trust process varies in practices. In an exchange relationship (Clark & Mills, 1979) such as Iran-Israel Dialogue, one of the goals is to bring the participants to a level of relationship such that they feel comfortable sharing their needs and exchanging their concerns and perceptions of the *other* regardless of the deep underlying disconnection between their governments. In order to establish an appropriate level of relationship, we first needed to build trust amongst participants who were coming from several decades of distrust. More importantly, we needed to maintain that trust throughout the dialogue to keep it and the exchange alive.

This chapter articulates the stages of trustbuilding that were formulated and implemented in IID to pave the road for the participants to move to the next stage, namely sharing fears and concerns (explained in Chapter Six). First, it describes the techniques used in this stage, such as appreciative inquiry (AI) and diverting the discussion to correct data. Second, it analyzes how the trust was shaped among the group and future themes and topics to discuss came up. It then theocratizes and conceptualizes the linkage between trustbuilding and learning, as observed in the IID group.

Herbert Kelman (1978, 1997, 2004, 2017), who practiced building relations between Israelis and Palestinians for three decades confirms that, "The development of mutual trust is equally essential in efforts to resolve conflict and transform the relationship between enemies into a relationship characterized by stable peace and cooperation" (Kelman, 2017, p. 171). The IID brought a group of citizens from the two hostile countries to sit at the same table for dialogue and aimed at building that mutual trust to enable positive changes. In order to establish such a mutual trust, different techniques were employed that will be discussed in this chapter.

Preparation of Trustbuilding through Appreciative Inquiry

As reviewed in Chapter Two, appreciative inquiry (AI) (Cooperrider et al, 2000; Van Oosten, 2006) was employed in IID for building trust in the primary stages of IID. AI assists a facilitator in guiding a group to build on positive aspects of a situation instead of focusing on problems. IID participants were encouraged to think about what they have in common. Facilitation through AI shifts perspectives from concerns and enmity to a

focus on positive thinking and commonalities. This positive atmosphere was needed in

IID to soften and balance the thoughts of citizens coming from two hostile countries.

The participants explored the first discussions of IID through the implementation

of the 4D model of AI (e. g. definition, discovery, dream, design.) The AI approach

guided the participants to imagine what positive aspects they expect to focus on in IID

(definition) and discuss the realities of past, present and future of the conflict (discovery).

They then take the shared ownership of the possible solutions to the conflict (dream) and

commit to maintaining an open dialogue to discuss as many dimensions of the conflict as

possible (delivery). AI also influenced trustbuilding in IID by generating a sustained

connection and preparation for change at both the individuals and group level (Holman et

al., 2007).

AI was applied through the facilitation approach. During the sessions' openings,

the facilitator emphasized positive thinking and hope for finding commonalities first

before going through sessions on sharing fears and concerns. This inquiry set up a

platform for the next questions and inquiries from the participants. They started to think

about possible positive sides of the *other* and whether IID is able to provide informative

sessions about the *other* for themselves. The full disconnection between Iranians and

Israelis since Iran's 1979 revolution has made the citizens very curious about the reality

of the other side. Hearing this very reality from the *other* in a direct relationship such as

one provided in IID encouraged the participants to ask questions and feel motivation to

seek further information.

IID participants went through inquiries based on the pictures they desired to see coming out of this dialogue. The discussions in 2012 primarily focused on their desired outcomes and expectation. In fact, the manifest they collected (see Appendix A) was discussed and improved through this part of the talks. The questions and inquiry that were collected through the AI approach got the participants engaged in decision-making of the topics and themes. This practice made the participants realize that they were the main players in both decision-making and creating the next chapters of their dialogue. This greatly moved the dialogue toward their respective desired outcomes.

Through AI, the participants learned about each other's motivation to attend IID. This knowledge of common goals and motivation formed the foundation of trustbuilding between them. Of note, we had two participants who did not find common desire and preferred to leave the dialogue. Conversely, we witnessed a renewed motivation among the majority of the participants who felt that dialogue with the other participants aligned with their own desire and goal. Their participation in collecting questions and inquiries increased and they showed more enthusiasm for developing the IID.

The list of inquiries that they collected during AI and decided to follow up on is listed here:

- What are our common hopes?
- What are our common characteristics?
- What are our common cultures?
- What are common celebrations and festive?
- What are our common stories?

- Is it right what I think about you?

- How should I identify you?

- What are our common religious customs or traditions?

This series of inquiry and questions built a bridge between them, formed the basis for the emergence of trust and enabled a commitment to move to the next stages. One of the Iranian participants confirms in the research interviews out of the IID, "[when the group expressed the topics and questions they like to be answered] I observed exchange of joyous explaining who I am, what I do, what are our celebrations, what is the ceremony of our today's celebration." He noticed many similarities amongst Iranians and Israelis in the expression of their emotions "I learned that both sides have similarities in emotions, feelings and expressing their feelings." He also points out that he was surprised to learn that Israelis have similar questions and curiosities about what they want to know about the other side's individual lives, society, ceremonies, etc. "It created a window to [show] us we are all the same," he adds.

Representation of Culture & Identity. Focusing on positive discovery and what is the positive image the participants wish to imagine for IID led to the creation of a list of sub-topics and themes that the participants were willing to further explore. The first topics included representation of culture and identity. Theorists and practitioners in the field of conflict resolution contend that humans possess basic needs to define themselves through identity and culture (Avruch, 2016, 2010; Schirtch, 2005). In fact, culture and identity presentation "defines the metaphors and languages people feel comfortable using to talk to about conflict." (Schirtch, 2005, p. 45) This practitioner explains that people

also try to represent their culture and identity and make sense of self as well as find common ways of being, rules of interactions and values with the other members. In IID, the group used culture and identity representation as bridging to the *other* and taking steps toward building peace. As Schirtch (2005) discusses, "while culture is often viewed as an obstacle to addressing conflict, particularly by theorists rooted in the material or social dimension of conflict, symbolic approaches use culture as a resource for building peace." (P. 45) The IID participants bridge to each other by representing "this is who am I and how I live."

Therefore, some of the sessions of IID in this stage focused on those very themes. Among those themes, including cultural commonalities, celebrations and traditions, retirement and other life stages in the two countries, some dark themes emerged such as divorce and "Women's rights in Israel and Iran."

These latter themes still motivated the participants to discover their mutual suffering and priorities to improve their respective societies. For example, the participants discussed the many common factors and obstacles faced by Iranian and Israeli women. One of these obstacles shared, discussed and compared by the IID participants was the poor rights of divorce for Iranian or Israeli women. They discovered that in both countries, men are the final decision-maker in a divorce: "Many problematic issues such as a woman wanting a divorce, but the husband not letting her, mean she can stay in this situation for many years because he [the husband] is the one who has to agree."

Furthermore, when the participants presented their historical and main celebrations, they found common symbols between Nowruz (Iranian New Year) and Passover (Jewish celebration of a commemoration of liberation) that they previously had no idea about. They also found a common attention and respect for parents in both Iranian and Jewish culture, such as a commitment to taking care of them in elderly ages.

Storytelling

In conflict resolution and organizational development, there is much research and scholarship revealing that storytelling positively expands specific areas in groups including constructive trust, motivation, inspiration and positive influencing (Auvinen et al., 2013; Kornelsen, 2013).

IID applied storytelling as a strategic approach for trustbuilding among the participants with the hope of empowering the dialogue and supporting self-reflection and interactions in the group. Every other session was dedicated to one Iranian and one Israeli participant to be the storyteller. No specific guideline or "how to tell your story" was provided. The participants chose their own style for storytelling and framed their own narrative. However, they mostly framed their story around where they were born, what situation (political, economic, and societal) they grew up in and how they became who they are now and what made them so.

Amongst all the stories that participants shared and learned details about each other's lives, jobs, thoughts, social and political views, two stories impacted this stage of IID more significantly than any others. One shed light on the reality of Holocaust in a

tangible sense and the other illustrated a realistic image of the history of Iran-Israel

conflict and the misunderstanding of the cause of the conflict in the current world.

One of the Israeli participants story went through being born in a Holocaust

survivors camp. This story impacted both sides whether Iranians or the young generation

of the Israelis. Discovery that 'one of those camps' newborns is here with us' created a

huge connection, compassion and closeness among the participants. Iranians were now

seeing themselves with a Holocaust survivor generation in a real and direct dialogue.

She shared with the other participants that she was born to two people who were

Holocaust survivors. Both parents were in the Nazi death camps, notably in Auschwitz 2

and they survived the death march and so on. The parents met in Italy after the war. In

Italy in the south where there were many displaced survivors brought together by Israeli

organizations from all over Europe after the war. They were survivors 1-3 years old as

well.

The idea was that they would then move to Israel. At the time, Israel was ruled by

the British mandate. The British did not want the refugees and survivors to come to

Israel. As she told the story, "They sent illegal boats to Cyprus. They sent us to Cyprus

for another 6 months and then we came to Israel when the state was founded, and the

United Nations confirmed its existence." She continued, "There were 40,000 or 50,000

other people, Jewish Holocaust survivors. They were very young people because the very

young children and old people were murdered. Some of the young survived. They came

to Italy and they were young, they met, they fell in love and married, and they brought

many babies and children that were born during the south of Italy—I was one of them [newborns]."

That newborn in that camp is now successful in her career teaching hundreds of students every year as well as a brilliant dedicated peace activist who suggested encouraging ideas to build more closeness and clarity among the IID participants. She was liked and trusted by all IID Iranian participants.

The story of an Iranian participant whose memory goes to an Iran-Israel soccer game hosted by Iran[32] before the Islamic revolution illustrates a discovery and new understanding among the participants about the real background of the conflict. She remembers the day of the Iran-Israel soccer game, how some of people threw drink cans when Israeli players entered the field and treated them very poorly. She explains this action as a protest of Iranians toward Israeli attacks on Palestinians. The Iranian crowd in the stadium made the soccer game their protest.

This memory took the IID participants back to the history and background of the conflict, which, contrary common belief, was not started after the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran. Rather, the conflict roots can be traced to pre-Islamic Revolution in Iran. Therefore, the post-revolution Islamic state did not coincide with enmity towards Israel, nor did it trigger the Iran-Israel conflict. Rather, it has a background deeply rooted in Palestinians destiny (read more about this in Chapter Six on fears of Iranians).

One of the Israeli participants who introduced himself as "a pro-Israel whose children serve in Israeli army" shared in interviews that how these methods in IID help

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[32] Iran vs Israel, Asia Games, 15 September 1974, in Arayamehr Stadium, Iran.

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him in understanding the reality of the Iranians, what he had no idea about before the dialogue, "I learned what's going on in Iran, which is portrayed as our enemy. I learned how we can break the serotypes." This Israeli participant emphasizes that one of the most important outcomes of going to personal stories and hearing directly from the *other* breaks the serotypes created in the hostiles societies towards one another.

Narrative Therapy. The storytelling sessions formulated in IID were not only beneficial for trustbuilding and reducing gaps between the participants, they also constituted a narrative therapy for the storytellers (Goodcase & Love, 2017; Kryger, 2017; Morgan, 2000). The feeling of comfort and making connection to the group could be seen after each storyteller shared her/his story. In every storytelling session, more interactions, compassionate comments, and questions were observed that show how deeply the storyteller is being listened to and understood. In session seventeen, a young Israeli shared his story that how his family story is centered around his grandfather as a Holocaust survivor who was born in Berlin and grew up as an active Zionist and died a week before the dialogue session. This story not only brought up tradition of mourning in Jewish culture in Israel (asked from Iranian participants asked for more detail on the ceremony and the group found commonalities between the two cultures' mourning process), but also allowed him to share the challenges between his generation and grandfathers' generation:

> [During my grandfather's mourning ceremony] I heard stories about how
> for him, the Zionist dream [is] to build the country and the state was really
> engrained in his soul and what led him in life…I was thinking about this a

lot and thinking in many ways, about myself as a third generation

Israeli…this story that my grandfather lived and that many of his

generation lived, the story of building the country and making a dream

come true, isn't my generations story and is not my story. Today we

confront more the question of not "how to build the country?", but "how

we define this country's identity?"…I still do not really have a story--at

least I do not have a big story to tell…Today we do not have a story like

my grandfather had. We do not need to fight and be prepared to die. We

just have to live. I think it is in many ways a much harder challenge

because many people have different ideas about how people should live in

Israel. That is when tensions rise.

Those narratives shared directly by the citizens of each country enabled the

participants to share about their reality, thoughts, culture, and people far from what the

other side heard from the society or politics. As David Bohm points out, "Most of our

basic assumptions come from our society, about how society works, about what sort of

person we are supposed to be, and about relationships, institutions, and so on. Therefore,

we need to pay attention to thought both individually and collectively" (Bohm, 2004, p.

11).

Through the storytelling, the participants find the opportunity for direct talks and

sharing about who they are, where they are coming from and how their identity has been

shaped in dialogue. Here, dialogue and narrative are used together as techniques for

positive change (Cheldelin, 2006). Through storytelling and receiving direct narrative,

the IID participants create a space in themselves to accept the *other*, where we observe expected shifts unfold. They now individually feel heard and understood and have also heard the other side's stories. This builds trust between them and prepares them for the rest of the dialogue.

How Shifts Happen in the Trustbuilding Stage

The IID participants confirm the positive impact of the storytelling technique and the trust built among them. One of the Israeli participants wishes citizens from the two sides could be in direct talks and hear directly from one another and suggests circulating what they are hearing about the reality of one another to their networks in Iran and Israel:

My impression is that Israelis [citizens] are not as able to see the nuances that are being described here [in IID] and I think that there is a sense from Israelis [citizens] that Iranians are all pretty much promoting the same policies [of their government] in regard to Israel—whether it be over the nuclear policy, supporting Hezbollah or Islamic jihad…From my perspective, it is very helpful to hear these nuances to be able [and] to explain them to those who I interact with.

Here we see a shift in the participants where they decide to distribute their positive observation to their community and network. A double purpose of the trustbuilding also appears when the participants separate the government's narrative from their own. They bond and confirm how they consider each other after hearing these stories. An Iranian participant comments on an Israeli participant:

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I just wanted to add this to A. [an Israeli participant] that he said that he

[now] thinks the Iranian government does not really represent the people. I

think this is true of any state, especially the ideological state. I don't think

Israel's government represents its population and certainly there is

complexity.

This realization occurs after the trustbuilding stage was implemented in IID and

this chapter discusses the types of shift appearing through this formulated stage in the

next sections.

As explained before, this dissertation focuses on a step-by-step explanation of a

new model of dialogue in the field of conflict resolution and does not intend to measure

the shifts occurring in this dialogue. Here, the shifts that happened did so at two levels

(Carstarphen, 2003) in IID: the individual level, and the group level.

At the individual level, we observe personal connection, acceptance, appreciation,

becoming able to feel the *other*'s pain, becoming able to feel one's own pain (some of the

storytellers became emotional while sharing their sometimes painful stories), empathy,

increased understanding of the *other*, increased understanding of self (narrative therapy),

improved perspective, improved perceptions, developing positive thoughts about the

other, change in feeling toward the *other*, understanding and empathizing with the *other*.

At the group level, we observe the appearance of a kind of readiness and

preparation amongst participants for the next stages of the dialogue, including sharing

fears and discussing negative feelings (see Chapter Six) and collaborative actions (see

Chapter Seven). This readiness and preparation were not observed before implementing

the trustbuilding. Through employing AI as well as Storytelling techniques as part of IID, we observe the appearance of an emotional positive impact within the group.

One of the Iranian participants explained in post-IID interviews how he shifted from an insecure participant in the first meetings to feeling more comfortable and trusting, "I was suspicious about the whole idea [dialogue with Israelis]. I didn't have a trusting feeling in the beginning. I had fears and insecurity. [One the other hand] out of the talks I was concerned about emails and communications with them. I didn't have any idea what type of Israelis will participate …As time went more [ahead,] I felt more secure and free to share my thoughts in the talks." She adds, "Now, I find myself in social media interacting with the Israelis, greeting their birthdays and being friends with them." She confirms that "personal stories [storytelling] built trust significantly." She explains this stage let her see the positive side of the Israeli participants, "Now, I see them more human being." An Israeli participant shared a similar sentiment in a different interview, "Now, I look at Iranians as human being…I found them very intelligent people." These confirmations from the participants of both sides shows how trustbuilding and techniques used for implementing this stage in IID helped connection, removing misperceptions about the *other*, making the individual participants reach a level of trust and security in the group.

Sign of Success in Trustbuilding

Another scholar's work that is used in this research for validating the success in trustbuilding is that of Herbert Kelman's thirty years of practices among enemy countries (Kelman, 1978, 1997, 2004, 2017). Through the trustbuilding stage, IID participants

come to non-adversarial conversations. More important, they reach a level of joint-thinking (Kelman, 2017) and conclude the conflict between their countries is a shared concern. From this step, they walk toward searching for joint effort, solidarity and united actions (see Chapter Seven explaining how this stage and shifts happened in IID).

Among one of the most important shifts occurring through the implementation of trustbuilding, participants meeting each other in person outside of IID constitutes a glaring example. For example, academic faculties met in a third country (United States). At that time, the author of the research had the opportunity of hosting an Israeli participant and inviting two other Iranians who were available to meet in person in Washington D. C. The meeting created a three hours long deep conversation and then continuation of talks around a dinner table at an Iranian restaurant. The Iranian and Israeli participants also met with another facilitator of IID, which created more deep conversation and connection in the group.

In the trustbuilding stage, another shift also appeared when one of the Israeli participants emailed her counterpart (an Iranian faculty) to co-author an academic article on women's rights in Israel and Iran. She cc'd me on the email where I learned about this huge shift and desire for co-work that had developed through trustbuilding.

All of the participants who were interviewed out of the IID sessions emphasized that they felt change and shift in themselves and the group gradually, although they had felt insecure, distrust and nervous in the beginning. One of the Israeli participants says, "first, I was nervous, worrying about to be able even doing it [dialogue with Iranians]. Later, I felt change in 1) trust, which it got better and better, and 2) understanding the

other members… I loved the storytelling sessions that thought [us] about the personal story about the *other.*" She continues that how she observed building trust in the group is going ahead and connect the participants more, "It was nice to see the people [the participants] try gradually to bridge and be open."

Complexity of Trust

As discussed in the opening section of the chapter, trust is contextual and subject to change. In IID, we observed the complexity of trust and the dynamics around it. While the participants bridge to the other side, they become concerned and distrustful of their own side. In behind-the-scene talks and as well as interviews with the participants, distrust among same side parties rather than distrust to the other side became apparent. Two of the participants confidentially contacted the facilitator to share their concern about political affiliation of two other participants from their own country. Another participant shared her insecure feeling regarding the presence during the sessions of one of the same-side participants. According to her, she feels that this other participant "bullies" her and forces her to divert her talks toward defending their own country.

Furthermore, in most of the interviews, the participants shared that they felt more tensions amongst same side participants. It was also revealed that in one side, a third-party intervention got involved between two same-sided participants. "I observed many tensions between [X] and [Y] that I found myself very often after the [session] texting both of them to calm them down. Because there was so much tension going on there," explained a participant, sharing his role as a reconciling third-party between his same side's participants who were arguing in the dialogue.

In fact, as learned in these shared stories, the conditions of trust are prone to, or likely to be affected by change. Trust is contextual and changes from individual-to-individual whereas unpredictable conditions might dictate a change. Building trust in dialogue is also not guaranteed, at least not until the personal experience of the individuals in a group are discussed in a safe and secure conversation and environment such as the IID provided.

Ups-and-Downs of Trustbuilding While Learning

This research does not claim that trustbuilding created in the first stage of IID stayed stable throughout the dialogue. Many outside events, such as Israel-Palestine war, the Israeli and Iranian elections triggered a kind of defensiveness among the participants. It is what Kelman (2017) also observed in his *Interactive Workshop* practices between Israelis and Palestinians "mutual distrust may be re-aroused by events that occur in the interim between meetings. Renewed suspicions may be generated by reports of the actions or pronouncements of one of the participants or a group of participants, which are perceived as reversals by participants on the other side. Furthermore, renewed distrust may be generated by events on the ground that bring old fears to the fore and reinforce earlier assumptions about the other side's intentions" (p. 192).

Other researchers and practitioners contend the linkage between trustbuilding and learning that in a group interactions and practice, learning is commonly influenced by individuals' trust (Qui & Haugland, 2018; Foss 2009; Abell et al. 2008). By adopting Cohen and Levinthal's (1990) notion of absorptive capacity to address transferring knowledge and group learning, Qui & Haugland (2018) flip the coin and explain the

other aspects of learning process such as when trustbuilding also faces the dilemma of simultaneously promoting group learning. Each group experiences its own unique learning process while engaging in the process of exchanging, receiving, and absorbing knowledge about the *other* and introducing self.

Another observation is worth sharing. IID participants seemed to frequently test each other's authenticity and reliability. Through their indirect questions and requests for confirmation of their understanding, they seemed to test whether the other side's participants recognition of their basic needs and rights (e. g. "I am not sure if this feeling and fear makes sense to our Israeli friends", "Am I heard correctly?"). They also would differentiate whether a speaker represents significant population of the other country for that specific opinion (e. g. notes from facilitator observation at the 29th session).

In facilitation capacity during the IID, we learned that a facilitator should not be worried about each negative circumstance. In fact, a part of building trust among the participants creates its own positive results in the end. Also, the strategy of participants to test one another should not be too much of a concern to a facilitator. She should let the participants feel free to employ their own techniques and strategy for trust testing. For example, if a participant prefers to be an observer for one or a few sessions, instead of participating in the discussions, and during that observation, hearing the discussions style and getting to know other participants opinion or points of interest, the facilitator needs to meet that need and let the participant feel comfortable to choose when is convenient to her/him to engage into a discussion. Participants seem to need – beyond a facilitator's techniques and skills - to test whether they are in a safe and desired atmosphere to

continue the dialogue and build a connection. They need also to choose the level of their participations in discussions based on their own recognition.

Summary

This chapter elaborated the first stage trustbuilding formulated for IID. It included the corresponding approaches (e. g. appreciative inquiry) and techniques (e. g. storytelling and narrative therapy) that were employed. This chapter also explained how this stage prepared the participants for what came next. The next stages of IID, including "sharing fears" and "collaborative actions," will be discussed in chapters six and seven, respectively.

Chapter Six

Sharing Fears and Concerns

The dialogue discussions shed light on the fears Iranians and Israelis hold about the *other*. Instead of remaining confined to a regional conflict, the conflict between Iranian and Israeli governments has exacerbated to a level of hatred among the two nations. This hatred has now spread within their respective citizens making them be fearful about the other side. Now almost forty years after the Iranian Islamic Revolution (1979), the two former allies[33] have succeeded in their strategies to spread hatred and fears against one another. These feelings cut deep in both nations. Iranian and Israeli citizens are living in fear about the other side attacking them, while at the same time struggling with their own domestic conflicts.

Iranians have to deal with a hard-economic situation while Israelis live with the daily fears of the Israel-Palestine conflict. This conflict has separated the two nations to an unprecedented level. Both governments' plans for keeping the two nations far from one another have been implemented well; citizens from each country are forbidden to travel to the other and will be interrogated and/or labeled as a spy if they do. This separation, along with fears and hatred being injected into the two nations has made their

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[33] In 1950s Iran and Israel were partners based on their own strategic and geopolitical interests. The Suez crisis in 1956 made Iran and Israel close. Parsi (2007) explains Iran helped Israel – who was suffering Arab States' refusal to sell oil to Israel – to construct an oil pipeline from Eilat in southern Israel, named "Eilat-Ashkelon" pipeline. Also, Iran had a large Jewish population, which was the main interest of Israel to bring and add that Jewish community to its establishing Jewish State. Iran, on the other side, was willing to use the Israel relation with the United States (pp. 19-20).

respective citizens very unfamiliar about the realities of the other sides. Up to this day, dehumanization is seen in the rhetoric of both sides' political leaders.

Iranian and Israeli citizens grow up in a system led and planned by ideological governments and learn how the *other* is dangerous to their nation. It has taken years and years for some of these citizens to start thinking individually and independently about the Iran-Israel conflict, far from any manipulation by the Iranian and Israeli political systems. "As for me, it took a long time to realize that Israel is not a person. We, as primary school students, would chant against Israel every morning before going to class," an IID Iranian participant reveals. "I used to imagine how Israel will kill our children, women and men, as we watch Palestinians under Israeli attacks on Iran's state TV," she continues, "Later on, I heard similar stories in the United States (where I started my graduate studies), how Israeli citizens are manipulated by their media, political system and leaders about Iranians and are encouraged to be afraid of them." Similar narratives were frequently expressed during the IID sessions and the memories were exchanged between participants on both sides.

This chapter explain the second stage of shift in the IID that the participants explore sharing their fears and concerns with each other. The trustbuilding stage designed in IID (explained in the previous chapter) allowed the participants to move to the second stage to feel trust and be comfortable sharing fears, concerns, and their perceptions about the other side voluntarily. There, we could meet the goals of the IID project, namely letting the two sides' citizens share their fears and learning from it, identifying where their fears originated and how these were negatively affecting generation after generation

in their respective country. These constitute the main theme of the next pages in this chapter. Indeed, this chapter reviews those fears and hatreds as discussed and expressed in IID sessions.

The IID sessions concentrating on tracking the fears of Iranians and Israelis and their historical causes enable meaningful themes and questions to arise. Some of those questions developed from the main topic are:

- What are your insecurities and concerns regarding the possibility of a war between Israel and Iran?

- How do your people look at this confrontation?

- What hopes do you have on possible ways forward and toward peace?

- What are the dominant narratives from the Israelis about the Iranians and vice-versa?

- What would it take to change that dominant narrative?

These questions led the participants towards new discoveries about Iranian and Israeli citizens' fears, where they learn they are not alone in experiencing such fears and concerns and the other side has developed similar fears and concerns as well.

Gradual Process of Preparation

Amongst the IID participants, it took a year of dialogue for the participants to feel safe sharing their fears, rethinking their experiences in the past and going back through their memories to discover "when did the first hatred of the *other* start?" Then, they exchanged childhood memories and learned how the education systems in both countries ideologically and strategically manipulate their citizens' thoughts about their "enemy"

and spread fears and hatred from a very young age. The focus question about fears and concern was: What are the major fears that you have as an individual and as a citizen of Israel (or Iran) about the other country and/or the situation? The overall goal of the question was to identify and discuss the fears that underlie the rhetoric of war.

In topics related to discussing fears and concerns, we clarified that everyone talks on behalf of their own experience and views, and not people of her country. We asked them to share their individual fears, concerns and experience. This way, the dialogue would not go through big foreign policy resolutions and participants would not think they were here to resolve the conflict between Iran and Israel. Rather, they needed to see themselves as individuals speaking to individuals.

Fears of Iranians

Observing the fears expressed by Iranian participants led us to three main major Iranian fears, which can be summarized as follows; a) fear of Israel pushing the United States to participate in strike on Iran, b) fear of Israel already having nuclear warheads and not signing the international treaty of the NPT, c) Israel misrepresenting Iran in every possible international and national meeting, and d) fear of being treated as a Palestinian and the way Palestinians are treated by Israelis.

Israel Pushing the US to Attack Iran. The Iranian participants opened their discussion and sharing their fears about the attempt of Israeli lobby and political leaders to push the United States to attack Iran. They addressed when Israeli President Benjamin Netanyahu again invited President Obama to air-strike on Iran in 2012-2013. One of the Iranian participants shared her feeling that most people in Iran see that huge willingness

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on Israel's part for an aggressive action and strike on Iran. Indeed, after eight years of war with Iraq (from September 22, 1980 through August 20, 1988), Iranian people understand the negative consequences of war on people and their personal lives.

Another Iranian participant noted that during the Iran-Iraq war, Iranians were united in not initiating a war. She firmly believed that the war would not have happened if Saddam Hussein had not invaded Iran; however, Iranians would retaliate if attacked and any attack inside the borders of Iran would be considered an act of war. This statement could be clearly understood as we will not attack you, but, if you attack us, we will attack back.

This statement triggered a significant back-and-forth and elicited various reactions amongst the participants. A comment from an Israeli participant expressed that Israel would not and could not initiate a war with Iran without the support of the United States and the international community. In contrast, another Israeli participant commented "the current government in Israel feels empowered enough to do something drastic even without international support." The latter comment neutralized the reassurance provided by the former and reframed it in a negative way from the Israeli to Iranian's side, implying "be afraid anyway!" This part of the dialogue focused the entire session on exchanging actual concerns about any possible war between Iran and Israel.

Discussions about Iranians' fears mostly related to the United States involvement into the Iran-Israel conflict. Participants who have experienced living in, or frequent traveling to the United States were afraid about the military-industrial complex, the Republican-controlled Legislature having a lot of control over political decisions and

President Obama (during the IID project) not being able to exert a moderating influence. Furthermore, some factions in the United States clearly support military intervention and this increased the concerns of Iranians regarding another war forced on Iran.

Israel already Having Nuclear Bombs. Iranians also expressed concerns about Israel possessing nearly 400 nuclear warheads and declining to sign the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)34 despite international pressure to do so (saying that would be contrary to its national security interests). But Iran has signed the NPT and was years away from making its first nuclear weapon. The following is a quotation representative of comments similarly expressed many times by multiple Iranian participants:

> I wish that the Israeli people would reserve the right for Iranians [to be fearful] of Israel because of its massive amount [number] of nuclear weapons... Iran is - at best- four years away from building a nuclear weapon even if they had the intention to do so (and they always said that they don't). This fact alone has caused so much fear and anxiety in Israel. So, how come they [Israelis] don't think that other people in the world shouldn't be anxious or concerned about the massive number of nuclear

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[34] Since 1970, the year of NPT into force, 191 countries, including Iran have signed the NPT. Israel, Pakistan, and India did not sign it and North Korea announced its withdrawal in 2003. "The NPT is a landmark international treaty whose objective is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and to further the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament. The Treaty represents the only binding commitment in a multilateral treaty to the goal of disarmament by the nuclear-weapon States. Opened for signature in 1968, the Treaty entered into force in 1970." United Officer for Disarmament Affairs.

weapons that Israel already has in his hands and the fact that it does not

sign the NPT? (An Iranian participant says)

Misrepresentation. Another concern expressed by Iranian participants was about

the misrepresentation of Iranians by Israel in international and national speeches.35 One

Iranian participant stated that Iran does have a problem in the way it has been represented

and has chosen to represent itself over the past few years. At the same time:

> I think as we saw with the case of Netanyahu's interview, that the Israeli
>
> establishment has gone so far overboard with its overrepresentation of Iran
>
> that in the process they have begun to believe their own rhetoric. The way
>
> Iran is represented is obviously very different from the way that Iranians
>
> perceive themselves. It is very important for Israelis to understand that
>
> inside Iran, there is no doubt that the Israelis are considered to be the
>
> aggressors in this relationship, or lack [thereof.] On one hand, Israelis are
>
> wondering why Iranians do not perceive themselves to be the aggressors
>
> in this relationship. [On the other hand,] there is less of a concern in terms
>
> of Iran's worries about disappearing from the map, if I may be permitted
>
> to use that terminology.

This Iranian participant expressed a feeling of "unfairness" from the international

arena, namely why are they not concerned about Israel attacking Iran in light of

Netanyahu's message to Obama in support for an air-strike, whereas Ahmadinejad's

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35 IID session, Oct 2013.

speech[36] was a concern? When comparing talks from both side's presidents, she felt a lack of equity from international players.

The Importance of Palestine to Iranians. The issue of Palestine constitutes another important fear among Iranians. From stories of their childhood and examples that they raised during discussions, Iranian participants who were born around the Islamic revolution (aged between 30-40) carry this sentiment and fear of Israel even more acutely. They describe how they feel empathy for Palestinians who "are victims of Israeli occupation" and this rises fear that Israel is willing to destroy and occupy Iran, as it did with Palestine, if they don't defend their country. This generation grew up after the revolution, watching the frequent news reports on state TV and radio showing sobbing mothers and fathers carrying their innocent infant dead in their arms, or bulldozers knocking down Palestinian villages and homes. An Iranian shared:

> The government of Iran – my country – has defined Israel as the 'against
>
> us' one. Through how Palestinian peoples suffer under the Israeli
>
> regime… I remember that every morning before going to class we used to
>
> chant "down with Israel" before exercising together and going to class. As
>
> a seven-year-old girl, I did not know that Israel was not a person and is a
>
> country. But every night through television and through the radios I
>
> realized that Israel was *that one*, and that phenomenon that was pressuring

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[36] In December 12, 2006, Haaretz, an Israeli media, reported that in that conference, Ahmadinejad said: "Thanks to people's wishes and God's will the trend for the existence of the Zionist regime is [headed] downwards and this is what God has promised and what all nations want. The Zionist regime will be wiped out soon the same way the Soviet Union was, and humanity will achieve freedom." Retrieved on December 13, 2018 from https://www.haaretz.com/1.4939096

Palestinians lives. I saw Palestinian children defending themselves with small stones against Israeli soldiers with big guns… I considered Israel as an enemy that was killing and wanting land. It was my childhood concept about this country. (An Iranian shares)

This Iranian participant explained that she remembers from her childhood how she learned to be afraid of Israelis and look at Israel as an enemy. She expressed that watching news reports and images of Palestinian people increased her empathy and compassion for them, while at the same time imagining that Israel, emboldened by the Palestinian conflict, could initiate a new war and provoke great suffering to Iranian people.

The cause of conflict being seen and discussed in the two Israeli and Iranian communities are different, though. Further to the Iranian participant's talk above, an Israeli participant commented that when he is talking about the history and reason of conflict between Iran and Israel with his children, he tells them that it goes back to the Shah's era. Another Iranian generation interrupted him to emphasize how much the problem of violence in Palestine is serious for Iranians:

Recently, I was curious to learn more about the history between the [two] countries but when I found out more, I was shocked with all of the negative perspectives from Iranians toward the Israeli people and the high degree of negativity that comes from the history of Palestine and what has happened between those two people. It is more about the history of Palestine and less about the other issues and the Shah time.

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Yet another Iranian participant raised a new point in this topic. She argued that her generation believes Israel was training the Shah's army on the latest methods of torture and suppressing civilians:

The memories of the [1979's Iran] revolution do not shape the narrative as much as the Palestinians' pictures. I do not know what is in the history textbooks right now because I was born two years after the revolution, but I remember reading how Mossad trained the Shah's secret service and how they taught them to torture the revolutionaries. I heard a myth that the 25th of Shahrivar - a day in September just a few months before the revolution succeeded - there was a massacre in one of the famous squares in Tehran. Hundreds of people were killed, and some Iranians say, they swear to God, that there were people with Stars of David on their clothes and they were shooting people. They [meant] that Iranian soldiers would never shoot fellow Iranians. They believed that they brought Israelis from Israel to kill people. There are these kinds of myths going on. I want to say in recent years and especially for the newer generations, the Shah period and the Revolution is not so important for shaping the mindset and discourse as much as the cruelty and oppression of the Palestinians is. (Another Iranian participant shares)

The Iranian participants clarified that they see Palestinians as victim of Israel. One of the Iranian participants wrapped up the feeling of Iranians towards Palestinians that, "When Israel is discussed in relation to Israeli-Palestinian relations and from a

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variety of news sources, it is a touchy issue anyways with Iranians because they feel that the Palestinians are the victims in that dynamic."

Fears of Israelis

Through the IID sessions discussions of fears, the fears of Israelis could be categorized into three main categories: a) fast progress of Iran to reach nuclear weapons, b) Iran not recognizing Israel as a state and acknowledging its legitimacy,[37] c) Holocaust denial by the former Iranian President, and d) support of Iran for Hezbollah,[38] which is seen as the enemy of Israel.

Iran Accessing Nuclear Bomb. The most frequently expressed fear related to Iran possessing nuclear weapons. The narrative of one of the Israeli participants is important to highlight here, as he describes the image held by Israeli people -- of Iran accessing nuclear weapons -- as being equal to another genocide. This point raised by that Israeli participant was followed by a few seconds of silence amongst the Iranian participants in a 'we cannot believe this comparison' kind of way.

Here is the exchange between two participants relating to the cartoon-like drawing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu brought to the UN General

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[37] The Iran's Supreme Leader has clarified the stand of Iran toward the issue of Palestine frequently: "The Islamic Republic's proposal to help resolve the Palestinian issue and heal this old wound is a clear and logical initiative based on political concepts accepted by world public opinion, which has already been presented in detail. We do not suggest launching a classic war by the armies of Muslim countries, or throwing immigrant Jews into the sea, or mediation by the UN and other international organizations. We propose holding a referendum with [the participation of] the Palestinian nation. The Palestinian nation, like any other nation, has the right to determine their own destiny and elect the governing system of the country." October 2, 2011
[38] Hezbollah is a Shi'a political party headed by Hassan Nasrallah. It is known as a militant organization based in Lebanon.

Assembly in September 2012,[39] which the Iranian participant labeled as "ridiculous," but Israeli participant see it as an attempt to raise awareness and preventing another genocide:

Iranian participant (a Ph.D. candidate): "D…! I have to disagree with you. I don't know about the domestic politics and Netanyahu's position on them inside Israel but that ridiculous picture of a bomb he showed in the UN and his ridiculous comment about Iranians wearing jeans or not wearing jeans was like as stupid as Trump. I'm sorry to say that but I see Netanyahu as stupid as Trump, maybe even more. [Chuckles]"

Israeli participant (a Rabbi): "I disagree with you. There I disagree with you. I think the bomb [drawn on a paper shown at the UN General Assembly]—again, the fact that he used the gimmick or not a gimmick put that aside -- but he's absolutely being convinced that this is a life-threatening situation and trying to avoid genocide."

Here we discover a new aspect of the dialogue where even an individual Israeli who has serious critiques of Netanyahu's politics, believes he is defending the Israeli people from another genocide. This seems to be believed by the majority of Israeli participants in the dialogue. However, we also heard from an Israeli (a professor) that " [the bomb drawn on a paper] was ridiculous." This shows two different sides of Israeli citizens' comments on that event. To me as the observer of that conversation, the point the rabbi emphasizes is very sensitive in analyzing what is behind the Israeli fears about Iran accessing nuclear weapons. It shows the undiscussed part of fear of Israeli people

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[39] See the drawing here, reported by Reuters. Retrieved on December 12, 2018 from https://www.reuters.com/article/us-un-assembly-israel-iran/netanyahu-draws-red-line-on-irans-nuclear-program-idUSBRE88Q0GI20120927

behind the fear of a nuclear bomb, which is "genocide" and the entire population of Israelis has suffered from that event.

Iran Not Recognizing Israel as a State. In terms of Israelis criticizing Iran for not recognizing Israel as a state, we heard this comparison by another Israeli participant:

What we get on the news and what we hear and what we read is kind of different intentions, not seeing Israel as a legitimate state**.** And that is a very, very different kind of context. There is no, I think in Israel, there is no thought or intention of not seeing Iran as a legitimate state.

It was revealed in the IID that discussing the fear of Iran accessing nuclear weapon has entered into the families. It was a topic to discuss in Sabbath dinner for one of the Israeli participants. The Israeli participant points out:

Should we allow that [Iranian access to nuclear weapons] [to] happen or should we actually be on the other side, take an action to not have that happen and that's kind of like the more - I would say, what we call Friday dinner discussion[40] on the political level as, as thinking really, how would we feel as a country and people with Iran having a bomb? Will we feel again like we're back to the Second World War?

This question, which was suggested to be discussed at length as a topic from the Israeli participant, could be interpreted that the attempts of Israelis to encourage

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[40] Here he refers to Sabbath which is held weekly on Friday nights by Judaism followers, a combination of rest and worship. It starts from sunset of each Friday to the sunset of the next day, Saturday. On Sabbath, Jewish families mostly get together, pray, have dinner together and discuss important topics. This Israeli participant explains the sensitivity of the issue of Iran to Israelis was such that it became an important topic to be discussed amongst family members during Sabbath.

international community to demand that Iran stop its nuclear development is intended to avoid another genocide, which the Jewish people experienced so dramatically in history, and doing whatever possible to stop repeating another Holocaust.

History and Holocaust. The fear of Iran accessing nuclear weapon seems increased to the eyes of Israelis, particularly, when they receive other negative and threatening rhetoric from Iranian politicians. Studying the relations of Israeli fears shows that this very fear of Iranian nuclear development arose when Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the former Iranian president, delivered the most unfortunate speeches in his presidency which dramatically elevated the fear of an attack by Iran amongst Israelis. Both sentences[41] used by him were cited and addressed as evidence of a reason to be afraid by some of the Israeli participants in IID. Ahmadinejad's denial of the Holocaust on October 11, 2006, at the International Conference to Review the Global Vision of the Holocaust - a gathering of Holocaust deniers in Tehran-dramatically increased the fear of Israeli citizens. An Israeli participant addresses it as a milestone and a new beginning of war messages sent out by the Iranian side: "the issue of Holocaust denial began with Ahmadinejad. The issue of nuclear bombs, genocide and millions of Jews dying has been part of the narrative from my perspective for well over twenty years." He explained that he cannot deny this was said by the Iranian president to his children when they ask about Iran-Israel conflict.

Finding the new era of war messages between the two governments is an area of shared interest amongst participants. An Israeli participant argues:

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[41] See footnote number 4 in this chapter.

I can go back over twenty years and back to high school to remember these key

conversations and what we used to be afraid of was how many years it would take

for Iran to get the nuclear bomb. We knew when they developed the bomb our

lives would be threatened. It did not start with Ahmadinejad in any way, shape or

form. It started way before that.

An Iranian participant interrupted to say that there was no knowledge of a nuclear

program until 2003. The Israeli participant points out:

It has nothing to do with what was officially revealed or not. It had everything to

do with the fact that there was a fear that Iran could get nuclear weapons. Look at

how Israel was concerned with Iraq. Israel is constantly worried about genocide

and Islamic fundamentalists.

The topic of Israelis' fear about genocide is highlighted when an Israeli

participant explains why the mentality of Israelis is to defend themselves without relying

on international community or Americans and why they feel alone:

The vast majority of the Israeli public really, really live right now in 1938.

To understand the real psychological fear, that the whole purpose of the

state of Israel is to not allow the naïve, Western Christian peacemakers

who sold the Jews out in the Holocaust and persecutions beforehand, to all

of a sudden say that Jews are going to rely on them—the purpose is not to

rely on them. For Netanyahu to stand up and say that he is going to protect

Israel even if it is unpopular is exactly hitting that nerve. The amount of

work that the Iranians and the Americans would have to do to say, "we

really are not building this in order to hurt you, it would take a lot of

positivity to create the dissonance to be able to shift mindsets which I do

not see happening yet.

An Israeli participant explains that he is fully aware of fears on shaping the

Israel's foreign policy and the relation to formulate the education system in Israel:

This feeling is not only about Iran. The whole basis of Israeli foreign policy, how

the textbooks are written and the whole society, is built on this whole idea of having

to protect ourselves. People think that we are in an island of people who want to

hurt us. How can we be safe? They say, look what happened when we didn't protect

ourselves? Now we have a homeland and we must protect ourselves. The whole

focus in the news and in foreign policy is based on danger and security. It is a

mentality, an alertness, a vigilance. My five-year-old son comes home from school

and knows much more about who has killed the Jews, who has tried to kill the Jews,

and who might try and kill the Jews.

The Issue of Palestine in Israeli Eyes. Although the issue of Palestine is

presented as one of the main reasons of Iranians' interest to be against Israel, the

Palestinian issue has a different meaning for Israeli participants. Israelis see the Israel-

Palestine conflict as escalated by Iran. An Israeli participant explains:

From my childhood there was a deep fear of Iran for sure—both in school

and our parents were terrified. It was always an Iranian threat that was

behind the Palestinian threat. It was never the Palestinian threat as the

primary issue. It was always described as Auschwitz landing in a nuclear

missile. The blending of the Holocaust and years of persecution of Jewish

communities together with Iranian denial of narrative, history and threats

of genocide that played deeply into fear.

This fear of Iran behind Palestine is explained by an Israeli journalist participant

with a focus on how the supports of Iran for Palestinian resistance has created larger

hypotheses and fears:

It is true that right now Iran is the primary focus of Israel's foreign policy.

Netanyahu introduces it into every speech. However, there is a huge

distrust of the Muslim world in general. There is a fear that Islamic

fundamentalists or Salafists are going to take over the Middle East, erase

Israel and Jews will be killed again. You have to remember that a lot of

people who live here are either the survivors of, or the children of

survivors, from Middle Eastern countries where they were exiled or lived

through war.

This journalist who traveled to the Syrian camps on Jordanian and Turkish

borders shared her vision of the relations between each conflict and how they could

create a possible massive conflict in the region.

Comparing Iranian and Israeli Fears

Iran and Israel seem similar in the pattern of creating 'the fear of other'

systematically and from the early ages among their citizens. Both countries have

successfully created an image of "the enemy" for their citizens. These images and fears

let the conflict be led in the desired direction by the political leaders (Long & Brecke,

2003; Jarymowicz & Bar-Tal, 2006; Rosler, 2013). More specifically, Rosler's research results on Israel-Palestine conflict (2013) becomes applicable to the Iranian and Israeli governments in terms of employing fears among their citizens, where he suggests that "fear can serve both as a barrier and as a motivating factor in conflict." (p. 1)

As the IID discussions revealed, the Iran-Israel conflict goes beyond ideological and religious facts whose analysis is not the objective of this dissertation. The geopolitical causes of the conflict and the importance for the two states to be the first power in the region have been argued in some scholarship (Parsi, 2007). Here with the IID, we deliver a more focused analysis, on how this ambition has directly impacted the lives of the two sides' citizens and their perceptions about one another.

This exchange of fears and history of developing them enabled the participants to identify an important tool that has assisted the two government in creating "the fears of the other" among the citizens. The two sides' participants discussed in IID that the textbooks in school and the planned educational system in both countries have shaped dramatic fears and hatred towards the "other" side among citizens (read in the Fears of Iranians section above, when the Iranian participants remembering to chant "Down with Israel" in school and other official ceremonies).

Figure 2 below is extracted from Atlas ti (the analytic network is made by the software of Atlas ti) presents the points of argument of this chapter in a diagram. It also can explain how these fears encourage the participants for being open to shifts and finding ways toward conflict prevention through the dialogue. There are some relations between fears of the two sides as Iranians and Israelis discussed them in IID.
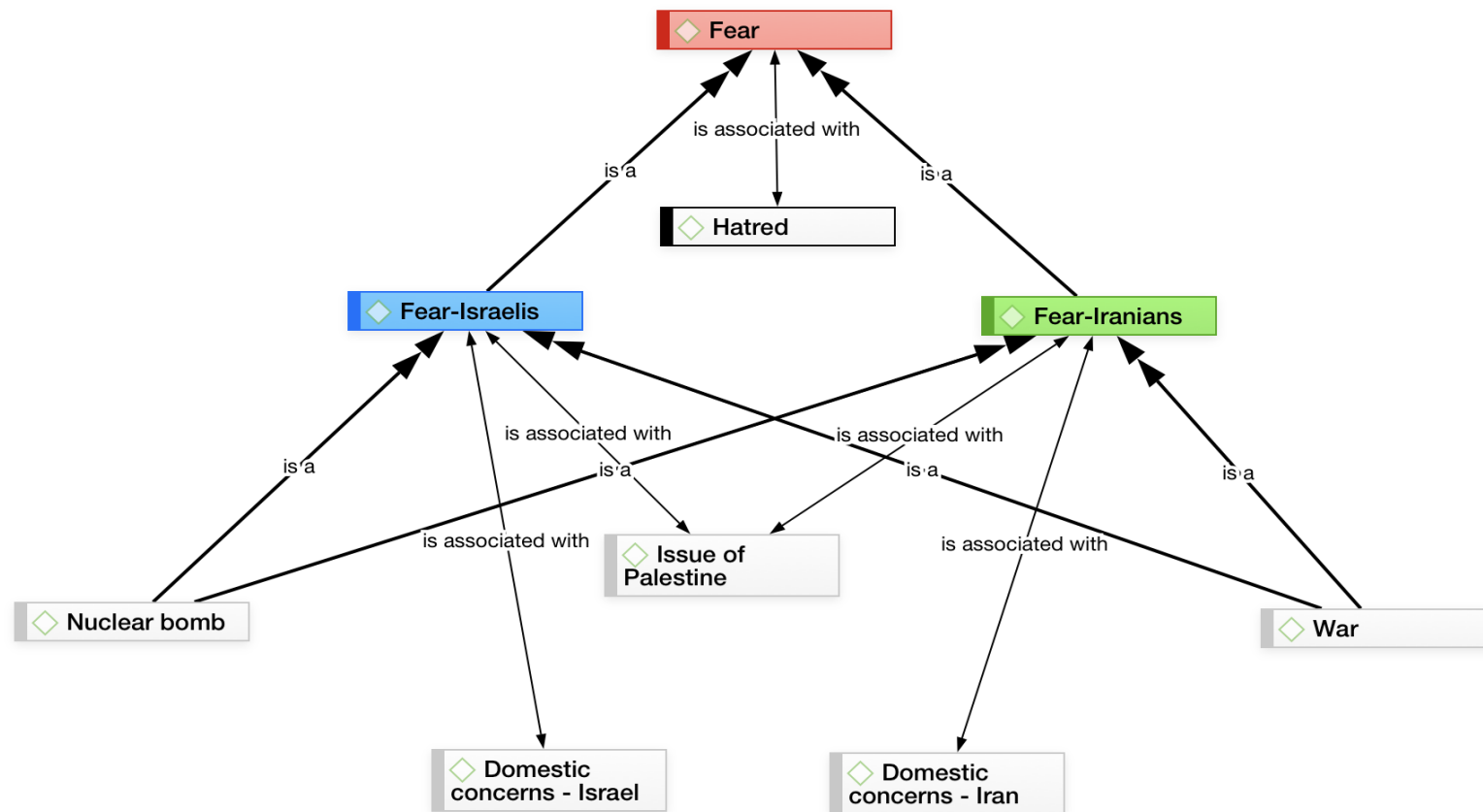
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Figure 2 – Fears and concerns among the two sides citizens

As the figure 2 shows, possible nuclear war between Iran and Israel constitutes a mutual fear for Iranians and Israelis alike. On one hand, Israelis are afraid of Iran building a nuclear weapon and working toward attacking Israel, which could repeat another genocide to Israelis. On the other side, Iranians express concerns about another possible war imposed on them, this time with an Israeli attack using nuclear warheads already in its arsenal, criticizing Israelis why they don't interpret the nuclear attack by Israel as a genocide to Iranians. This fear is enhanced by Israel not signing the NPT. They still do not remove their finger from the issue of Palestine and the way Israel treats Palestinians. For Israeli side too, the issue of Palestine stays on the line and the support of Iran for Hezbollah and Hamas in defend of Palestine and against Israel. Later in the dialogue, the participants share more details of other fears – domestic - they carry. In fact, both sides are dealing with more than just fear of the *other*. Through IID discussions, they open up about how each side is suffering from domestic concerns, conflicts and fears in their daily lives. The pressure of fears of the Iran-Israel conflict plus the two societies' domestic insecurities and concerns worked as a pushing forward vehicle to move to the third stage – collaborative actions (see Chapter Seven).

Domestic Concerns. The Iranian and Israeli participants revealed how they are dealing with domestic conflicts, which affect their personal and family life in a more tangible fashion. Both sides' citizens suffer from daily pressure of domestic fears and uncertainty.

Iranians suffer from domestic economic drama and uncertain future under the mismanagement of the government and international sanctions. Israelis explain living in

terror and how Israel-Palestine conflict has shaped their daily lives. They provided

different examples such as, feeling fearful every day, for example, as an Israeli

participant, mother of three, shared, from the moment of saying goodbye to their children

walking toward their school bus until they arrive to school, they ask themselves "is the

bus going to explode?" an Israeli participant, mother of three shared. Sharing these

domestic fears resulted in a deeper understanding and creation of compassion between

the two sides' participants that will be discussed in the next chapter in detail.

Return to the Issue of Palestine. IID witnessed the negative impact of the

Palestine-Israel conflict on the Iranian and Israel participant's lives during July and

August 2014 when the Gaza war tragically worsened and resulted in the losses of many

innocent Palestinian and Israeli citizens' lives. The Gaza war impacted the IID both

negatively and positively. First, it revealed the mistrust of Iranians towards Israel and

how they perceive Palestinians as being oppressed, losing their children and witnessing

the destruction of their "occupied land by Israel."[42] Second, when through the facilitation

questions, the Israelis were asked to share how they felt in those days and how they

execute their daily lives, the Iranian participants learned about the fears and war pressure

on Israeli citizens and families too. One of the Israeli participants shared her story about

the morning before her for participation in the IID session that day, and how she held her

three children after running under stairs as safe places in crisis and holding the ears of her

youngest son to dull the fearful sound of red alert. She added that every morning that she

is watches her son getting into school bus, she is not sure if she will see him again, or if

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[42] The word occupation frequently was used by Iranian participants during different topics.

the bus will explode or other unpredictable things will happen to her children. Sharing this image helped Iranians to think about the fears on the Israeli side in Israel-Palestine war too.

The Gaza war in 2014, coincident with two sessions of the IID,[43] allowed two series of emotions and feelings. Iranians revealed some reasons behind Iranians hatred towards Israel. Also, the Israelis got the opportunity of sharing their fears during bombs and war with Palestine, which resulted in more understanding and also compassion between the two groups of the participants.

During the Gaza crisis, Iranian participants heard the fears of Israeli citizens too, which are not covered by the Iranian state TV and Radio. The question of Palestinian citizenship was raised by Iranian participants and expressed in a critical way that Palestinians rights are not being met in their own land and why Palestinians - who are the owner of their land in the Iranians mind - should be recorded only as 20.1 percent of the population.

These discussions and topics were followed by reviewing any possible peace between Israel and Palestine, where the Israeli participants expressed deep disappointment and tiredness of this dream:

Israelis and Palestinians almost laugh at peace. The idea of the word is not inspirational, and people do not buy into it. People believe they have been in this

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[43] The July session of IID concentrated Gaza war with the sudden outside event between Israel and Palestine. The IID participants continue discussing about this crisis in the parallel of the ongoing war - until mid-August 2014 -analyzing the Israel-Gaza crisis in detail, the events that appeared following the Israeli and Palestinian teenagers were murdered, and a number of riots broke out on both sides.

movie before, and no one changed the script and it didn't end well before. I do not

put my hopes in this process, because people are just not there. But that is a

different conversation. (An Israeli participant answers about Palestine-Israel peace)

Similar reasoning between Israel and Palestine was expressed by several

Palestinian guests who were invited to some of the IID sessions. We invited Palestinian

guests in two series. The first time in 2012, in the beginning of conducting the IID, as we

believed that Palestine is an important part and cause of the Iran-Israel conflict. But

Palestinian invitees shared their disappointment in the efficiency of dialogue as they have

witnessed many dialogues with the Israeli side that ended up nowhere. The second series

was after the Gaza crisis in 2014 when IID participants suggested to have Palestinians in

the dialogue to hear directly from them about the impact of the war in their lives. In these

series, the Iranian and Israeli participants of IID listened to a Palestinian guest and asked

their questions directly. After those hearings, both sides returned to their own main topic

about Iranian and Israeli fears and experiences of one another.

Summary

This chapter reviewed the IID's participants' expression of fears and hatred. Each

side's fears and perceptions about the other side was followed by the comparison of their

fears, where they have common and different fears. The next chapter will discuss how

IID witnessed some shifts from those fears to share compassion as well as a willingness

to undertake some collaborative actions.

Chapter Seven

Where Hostility Shifts to Collaborative Action

This chapter explains the evolution of the third stage in Iran-Israel Dialogue (IID). In stage three, the participants go through taking collaborative action. After the first two stages – trustbuilding and sharing fears – the participants built a trusting foundation as well as a compassionate connection to the other side. Through the first two stages, the deep understanding of the *other* enabled them to propose and discuss new ideas for taking some collaborative actions and initiate the connection between their societies. The main goal of these collaborative work was to transfer the change and understanding of the *other* from the closed selected group to the two societies in a gradual fashion.

The chapter explores how the third stage shift and collaborative action took place and what preparation and techniques during the stage were considered. It first explains the preparation for the stage that was leading the group to return to accurate information and give an example of how actual data – instead of stereotypes - could enhance the group's understanding of reality. It then describes the two collaborative actions and joint thinking – one, publishing an article translated in both Hebrew and Farsi and two, planning to take action for a second series of publications on nuclear weapons as the biggest common fear between the two countries.

Every section of the chapter goes back to collected data, including transcripts of sessions as well as interviews with the participants, cites from them and share the quotations in the analysis. Through exploring what the participants discussed and

practiced during and after this stage, it also reviews some techniques that the facilitators used in this stage. Two main techniques were employed in the third stage; 1) diverting the group discussion to accurate information – explained as the first section of this chapter – and 2) getting the participants engaged in a reflective practice – explained as a reflective practice and evaluation. The sections of this chapter follow a chronological order; therefore, the latter technique will be explained in the last section of the chapter as it was implemented after the first collaborative action was implemented and discussed by the group.

From late 2013 through late 2014, the IID witnessed the appearance of a third shift which occurred between the citizens from the two countries with a high initial level of animosity. After building trust among the participants (see chapter five) and reaching a level of security and trust to share the reality of each side's deep feeling, fears and perception about the *other* (see chapter six), Reflective Digital Dialogue observed the participants shifting to a joint thinking level in dialogue and expressing a willingness to take collaborative action for bridging their two disconnected societies.

The steps in the collaborative action stage that we observed included some ideas and actions flourishing in IID that were not initially planned. In fact, the dialogue itself facilitates and catalyzes some new paths. Susan Allen, the initiator of Georgian-South Ossetian workshops[44] names this characteristic "Catalytic" (Allen & Greiff, 2013). In those series of workshops, she observes how participants jointly develop ideas for

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[44] The Georgian-South Ossetian workshops are a series called the Point of View Process, named after George Mason University's conflict resolution retreat center where the Georgian-South Ossetian workshop series began.

confidence-building measures that supported progress towards final resolution; the

workshops then catalyze the new confidence building measures "not only developing the

overall ideas, but also working through specific plans for next steps, clarifying who

would do what to set each new confidence building measure in motion. I have called

these workshop catalytic workshops, highlighting their role in starting up new confidence

building measures." (Allen, 2018, p. 209) We observed this process developed in the IID

too and this chapter elaborates how those developments correspond with the group

collaborative actions.

Before taking the journey through the collaborative actions, there was a need to

remind the participants to rely on accurate information to share in the discussions. This

issue was brainstormed among the facilitators and the solution was found using a

technique based on diverting the group to accurate data that will be explained in the next

section.

Preparation for the Third Stage

As shortly explained above, one of the issues that the IID facilitators observed in

the group discussions was that the participants sometimes argue over inaccurate beliefs

and information which raise negative discourses that does not help group connection. The

facilitators decided to pay attention to it during the debates and work on it positively

through the facilitation. The attempt was addressing the group to the correct information.

For example, the views of Israelis and Iranians on anti-Semitism was one of the

inaccurate images and perceptions that the participants had. It seemed that both Iranian

and Israeli sides believe that the measure of anti-Semitism among Iranians is high. This

misperception could be a barrier among the two sides' participants to not trusting in the other side and counting on them to come to plan for collaborative actions with the other side. The facilitators decided to address this issue directly.

Before going through planning for taking collaborative action, the second guest facilitator of IID facilitated a session on anti-Semitism issue and how this is interpreted in Israel and Iran. The entire session was dedicated to this discussion. The facilitator who is a Rabbi shared with the participant the results of an – at that time - newly released poll that indicates that Iranians are the least anti-Semitic people in the Middle East and North Africa (with the exclusion of Israel.)[45] These results and new discovery to the group resulted in a few seconds of silence. Quickly, two of the participants who were surprised by these results Googled the results and the report. The link was quickly found and shared through the text box of the conference room of Skype and circulated amongst the group.

According to this poll commissioned by an international organization fighting anti-Semitism, named Anti-Defamation League (ADL), Iranian respondents scored the lowest (56%) in terms of holding negative views about Jewish people, while in other countries of the region, the figure ranges from 69% in Turkey to 93% in the Palestinian territories. The poll shows Iran at the bottom of the list (number 21), well behind Greece with the highest index of anti-Semitism in Western Europe (with 69% of the population holding anti-Semitic views.)

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[45] Retrieved on November 22, 2018 from http://global100.adl.org

This technique led the agenda and topic of the session to analyzing the poll results. Both sides' participants exchanged more data and statistics related to this positive news. For example, 25,000 Jews live in Iran and the population of Jewish people in Iran is the second biggest population in the Middle East (Iran sits after Israel as the land of Jewish community). The data-sharing technique did not end in the session. The group continued to circulate statistics through the group's email until the next session, related to ancient bridges which used to connect the two cultures, people and communities.

Transfer of Collaborative Ideas

As the main facilitator of IID and from the beginning of the dialogue project, I asked the participants to avoid rushing into solutions to the conflict until they have spent enough time to know each party and identify the group's needs, history of conflict, concerns of each side and difficulties in implementing an idea in the two societies. In the first sessions, I paused some rushed ideas (such as mobilizing some campaign on social media) and made sure some participants who are coming from an activist or feminist background and were thus used to fast planned symbolic actions (such as symbolic gestures, march, campaigns on social media, etc.) to ponder the sensitivity of the conflict and understand the confidentiality of this academic-based dialogue.

Writing pieces pairing Israeli and Iranian members of the IID and then translating them into Hebrew and Farsi and publishing them on media, websites, and prominent blogs was one of the ideas for collaborative actions taken by the two sides' participants. This idea had been suggested by one of the participants in her visit to the United States in July 2013 and meeting in-person with some other IID participants and two facilitators.

This idea was shared with the group in next session held in a short report pointing out the summary of that member's visit and it was also put in consensus in the September session of 2013 to let the whole group make decision on implementation of that idea. Co-authoring between Iranian and Israeli journalists of the group, co-writing between the two sides' academic faculties, publishing an official website by the Iranian-Israeli peacebuilders, etc. were also listed as general ideas.

At the same time the participants reviewed whether the two societies are ready for such publications in the first place. An Israeli journalist amongst the participants analyzed the difficulties of those publications:

I do think that the public is settled in their [defensive] positions. We see how hard it is to change the Israeli public opinion on Palestinians. We cannot break the stereotype that Palestinians are not terrorists. One of the things I try to do in my work is to introduce the public to people from the other side to show what their life has been like and not just to tell them what their opinion should be, but to give them a glimpse into a part of life they have never seen before.

Comparing with two years ago of IID, the group seems reaching to problem-solving ideas. Two years before this brainstorming on the dialogue goals, two of the participants with feminist-activist background insisted on "doing something" and left the group as they learned about the process of the dialogue which is going to take long term and not focused only on taking an action – such as a campaign on social media.

The IID, first, created a trusting and secure environment in the group. Second, the group spent enough time to identify the problem, including the history, cause and the two sides' insights on the conflict. And third, the group analyzed and discussed the problem and barriers for collaborative actions at length, including individual and societal feelings, fears, concerns, perceptions, hopes, and then estimated what should be done before and during a collaborative action.

Shaping the First Collaborative Action

After discussing multi-dimensions of the two societies and whether they are ready to receive any peace message on Iran-Israel conflict, the group reaches a consensus to publish an article with the collaboration of the two sides' journalists and publish it in three languages, namely Hebrew, Farsi and English. The piece was published on the commonalities of the two Iranian and Israeli people which are not being presented in the heavy shadow of conflict and the animosity of the two governments.

The article's comments and feedback by the readers also was discussed in two lengthy sessions of the IID. The article received both positive and negative feedback. Nobody in the dialogue session was surprised with the criticisms and feedback from some readers as they had predicted that a kind of proxy warfare is involved in these actions. The people who have given negative feedback were much more verbal at responding. Perhaps the people who like the article or have positive feedback/ are distributing it, are not writing any specific comments or letter to the publisher. One of the readers criticized the article and interpreted the article as a "parody" in his comment on twitter: "It is better to read this article as a parody of give Iran the benefit of a doubt."

The group went through reviewing other comments and concluded that people who do not want to hear anything positive about the *other* are much more verbal and vocal than others are, in terms of feedback. Some of the negative feedback comments were criticizing a statement in an interview with an American professor of conflict analysis in the article mentioning that "Iran has never created an offensive war." To the participant who was sharing the different feedback on the article, that statement had outraged a lot of Israeli readers. One of the readers commented on this that, "before Hitler invaded Sudetenland and Poland he was also all rhetoric with no history of offensive wars." The discussions on feedback from the readers of article made a new list of topics that the participants saw as needing to be discussed. The group concluded that:

- The article has sparked both positive thoughts and cognitive dissonance,

- Feedback (whether good or bad) is good, because people are finally discussing about it,

- We need to think about the continuation of this - How do we frame these articles differently? How do we frame what other people perceive such as "Iranians believe…" without it seeming that your voice is becoming theirs? How do we anticipate criticisms and feedback and prevent this? But, how do we continue to positively dispel truth and create cognitive dissonance?

- Need to figure out ingredients that are necessary to create enough cognitive dissonance to get people curious about the other. But not too much, so that people write the article off as "crazy" or "reinforcing stereotypes." What is the exact recipe?

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After reviewing and discussing the feedback, the group also come to a list of "needs to be discussed" questions based on the readers reactions to the article. The questions needing to be discussed were:

- Do Iranians know why they are afraid of Israelis? Is it just the government? Or is there something really threatening them? (suggested by an Israeli participant)

- Half-truths exist on both sides. Perception in Iran is that Israel is the aggressor, has a large nuclear armory, and Iran has not attacked anyone in a very long time. Perception in Israel is that Iran is the aggressor and linked to Hezbollah and Hamas, who continue Iran's proxy wars. Fear and belief of aggression on both sides (Example: S. from Iran "Iran has never done an aggressive act toward another country." And D. from Israel "Exact opposite is the reality in Israel. From an Israeli perspective, all of Israel's wars, even the Six-Day war, were done in self-defense.")

- Concept of a 'New Israeli Jew.' i.e. someone who only feels safe when their enemy has no capacity. Israel found it easy to take away Arab states capacity. Israel does not want to admit there may be an adversary they must come to terms with, rather than defeat (such as Iran). There is no Israeli memory of a moment that they did not simply eliminate an enemy's potential to fire upon them. That is what is creating the hysteria— and in part that they do not have anti-nuclear defense systems— not just the presence of a lot of nuclear weapons.

Furthermore, the group came up with a new series of topics that need to be discussed in next sessions (see the table 1 in Chapter Four.) It was significant to the

group to exchange information and narratives on the meaning of "peace" in the two societies. The group decided that if they intend to walk toward peace and continue the collaboration toward peace, they need to first discuss and know the narrative and concept of peace in each society, and then plan to contribute to that path or try to pave the road. The wisdom of the dialogue group raises to the point of brainstorming on overcoming constraints and a new round of topics and discussion start to evolve.

The most valuable lesson of this collaborative action was that the group reviewed the goal of the action, which was starting to normalize speaking to and about one another. The group celebrated the achievement of examining whether the two societies are ready to talk about one another, by happily stating "Now, we have done this!", an Iranian participant expresses.

They pointed out that they need to continue working on normalizing speaking to and about one another. They also agreed that there is still sensitivity amongst the two societies and that moving forward with normalizing articles about one another need consistency and planning for next publications and topics that need to be written about.

Evaluation through Reflective Practice

In late 2014, the facilitators implemented a self-reflection by the participants to check whether the participants feel any change in themselves through the IID, how much they have improved their relationships to the *other* and how they feel now after two years of dialogue. One of the IID facilitators employed a reflective practice technique that could draw out the participants' evaluation of the IID so far. It was a structured reflective session to evaluate the IID progress. This self-reflection by the participants helped the

facilitators gain an evaluation of the IID's impact and how the process had been implemented as well.

Explaining this structured evaluation in detail, in the 26th session of IID which was held in March 2014, the first guest facilitator applied a self-reflection approach among the participants. She clearly started her opening of the session by introducing an agenda of what that session will include, "I want to do two or three things today. I want to do a check-in in a different way, to see if you could chat with us about what has happened to you being a part of this dialogue process… I want to know what has happened and in what ways have you changed your own thinking and behavior by being engaged in this dialogue. If each of you could speak to this, it would be wonderful."

This invitation and agenda got an immediate response by an Iranian participant: "For me, the most important thing is that now I put a human face on Israeli people." Then she explained:

> The image in my mind from growing up in Iran with all of … the ideology about Israel, was this military idea that most people are soldiers, surrounded by tall walls and no one can enter. It is an unknown territory to me. So now I have been able to put a face on Israel and on Israeli citizens. This dialogue has helped a lot.

An Israeli participant practiced this reflective part and revealed that he sees changes in how his family members feel toward Iranians:

> Very briefly, restating some of the things beforehand about learning from exchanges [in the dialogue], by email or here [today], for me personally, the

greater impact is within certain contexts, with my children or with family members or people that I trust. I have not kept this a secret. I said [to them] that I engage in a conversation without saying any details about it—I don't say where it is or how it is. Just even saying something about Iran that isn't about them killing Israelis or terrorism, I find a really important impact on my peers and friends, that they should realize that there are people who are curious and people who are just living their lives. I have found that this is a really incredible entry point for many of my friends to engage in deeper thinking of the Iranian perspective and to allow people to be a lot more curious. For me that is really where the impact is—through bringing the conversation to different circles without ever getting into more detail. This has been very important and meaningful to me in being part of this.

However, another Iranian participant expressed a different degree of reflection. An Iranian-American citizen traveling between the two countries for teaching and research, she applies her reflection on the Iranian community in the diaspora and Israelis living inside the United States and how the two communities reflect on the Iran-Israel relationship.

What has happened in these discussions for me is similar but different than what was described by ... [the first Iranian speaker, quoted above.] I have known many Israelis throughout my life and I teach Israeli politics in my classes, so I have always been very aware of the diversities, different points of view and progressive politics in Israel. I have also been very worried

about Israeli politics in terms of moving away from tradition and becoming

a closer system, and what has happened in the past few years. It has been

nice to connect to people that, to me, are part of that progressive tradition

and maintain the vibrancy of Israeli society and buck the narratives that

increasingly can be read about Israel. The narrative of Israel in the US has

changed because there is a sense of increased dominance and more hardline,

reactionary groups that are dominating politics in a more intense fashion

than in the past.

This participant with an academic background in political science expected

changes to happen at an official level and amongst the political leaders towards the

conflict. She explained that her goal to attend to this dialogue is not only bridging to the

other side, noting that she already has this bridge by living in the United States and

interacting with Israeli students, faculty, etc. She said what she is really hoping as an

outcome from such a dialogue is the impact of such group on policy makers and

politicians.

Beyond the different degrees of change through the IID that the participants felt

and shared, the implementation of the self-reflection technique on the participants also

helped the facilitators evaluate the implementation of the IID (to that date). This

observatory evaluation was discussed in a one-on-one discussion between the facilitator

and I after that session was wrapped up.

In reflective practice, the practitioner relies on an ongoing evaluation of the

process, where she checks her observation, notes, and feelings, oral or written

conversations with conflicting parties and feedback received by other observers or parties involved in conflict (Schon, 1984; Cheldelin et al., 2004). We kept in mind that there were two participants who either did not participate in the discussion of self-reflection and kept silent (we noted that he was a newly joined member of the IID) or expressed that he does not recognize specific changes in himself since he already has friends from the other side and his participation to IID is "more learning about [the other side] and being connected with them" rather than feeling change.

After exchanging observations and notes taken from that session, we concluded that the structured reflective session was able to help us to evaluate whether the participants feel any change in themselves toward the *other*. The answers of the participants - if we name it participants self-reflection session – could help us to predict if the IID process is stepping forward toward collaborative action. As a matter of fact, this structured self-evaluation and self-reflection was satisfactory to us as the facilitators and in some cases beyond our expectation. For example, the expression that a participant used in term of humanization and "putting a human face" on the other side was more than what we expected to hear.

Humanizing the enemy as a significant change among enemy parties was one of the ultimate goals of this dialogue before we initiated the first sessions and now after the third stage - of the dialogue was discussed. IID discussions centering on fears about the other side and how those fears rooted and developed within them and in their societies (explained in chapters five and six) unveil that the participants report on dehumanization of the *other* as a systematic approach used by the two governments. Participants reported

in interviews and in IID discussions that they feel dehumanization had impacted them dramatically (see the quotations and details in chapter six).

This dehumanization phenomenon is not only relevant to the Iran-Israel conflict. Other conflicts carry this negative indicator as well (Kelman, 2017, pp. 75-78). Kelman's four decades practice on the Israel-Palestine conflict as well as Austria-Slovenia and other countries indicates that through dehumanization "people may fear and hate an enemy; they may be sufficiently angered, provoked or threatened by him to be prepared to take his life" (p. 76).

Dialogue between such impacted citizens has its own requirements in implementation before expecting to reach the goals and objectives of a peace project. For example, the IID not only required that we plan phases for preparation of the participants to come to an appropriate level of continuing dialogue but also correct the images they had about one another. Revealing "now I put a human face on Israeli people" by an Iranian participant and expressing "I got to know Iranians are very intellectual [in contrary to what I had perceived before the IID]" by an Israeli participant is meaningful in terms of objectives and goals defined by IID which was to determine if and how systematic dialogue could work to witness change occurring among the citizens who participated in the dialogue over an extended period of time.

Seunghoon Emilia Heo (2012) who studied behavior and approaches among enemy states shares his insights and experience in *Reconciling Enemy States in Europe and Asia.* He frames a meaningful definition of dehumanization and accepting the *other.* He describes that for such an acceptance to occur between enemies, we need to make

space in ourselves to let the *other* in. This relates to the process of change and acceptance in the IID which occurred through the three stages – explained in chapter five to seven – of the IID process.

The three stages of IID (trustbuilding, sharing the fears of the other, collaborative action) created such an opportunity insofar as the participants took a journey to the world of the *other* to hear their inner feelings, untold stories and thoughts, and through the facilitated dialogue, enabled them to build a new and humanized face for the enemy, transforming them into teammate and partner.

Planning for the Second Collaborative Action

The third stage of the IID stayed alive after the self-reflection of the participant and it went through planning for another collaborative action. The other collaborative work that was initiated by the participants focused on nuclear weapon as the main common fear between the two sides' citizens. While sharing the common fear of nuclear war in stage two (see chapter six), the participants still hold a justifying position and justify why their state believes in nuclear weapons. When an Israeli participant repeated his question to Iranian side "why it is important for Iran to be a nuclear power," the Iranians answered, "why has Israel already built nuclear bombs?"

The justifying positioning remained during stage two. There were back-and-forth questions and answers that concluded with an answer from the Israeli side that they need the nuclear weapons for self-defense and the Iranian side that they need it because an enemy has it and they should be alert. The whole story is about how "we need to protect ourselves against you." This is what Kelman (2017) names it "moral justifying for

violence" (p. 63) that "it occurred for reasons of self-defense against attack or the threat

of attack." (p. 63) But this positioning of violence justification in the IID gradually turns

to a joint thinking in stage three.

In 2015, the group came to understand the deep impact of this huge fear on both

their individual and their societies' lives. This is when two of participants from each side

invited the group to find a solution to this common fear, instead of justifying the

violence. Namely, demand that nuclear weapons to be banned and to support a nuclear-

free world.

Here the group come to understanding not only the harm of this violence to both

nations but also to the world. Kelman (2017) analyzes that in such a stage the

"participants are generally individuals who have come to the conclusion that then enemy

has changed or is ready to change out of pragmatic considerations: that the enemy now

sees its original goals as unattainable and is therefore potentially amenable to a

compromise solution. Such a view is based on a differentiation between the "dreams" and

the "operational programs." (pp. 190-1)

However, what I observed in the IID slightly differs from Kelman's analysis. The

gradual and ongoing conversation and spending of a long enough time for conversations

with focused topics lead the IID group toward compassion and feeling the impact these

common fears had on the other human beings. They feel it necessary to brainstorm in

order to find a solution and end this fear. This shift from self-defense against the *other's*

justification to a joint thinking for a solution to *our* common fear occurred when the

group itself reached this conclusion, as shared by an Israeli during the 36th session of the

dialogue: "I identify very much with what …[an Iranian participant] said that we should think about abolishing nuclear weapons and not so much about what happens if they [the two states] have it or they do not have it. If we could lead against having any nuclear weapons at all, that is what we should go with."

The session continued on discussing those countries (e.g. Japan) that banned nuclear weapons.[46] The participants also jointly thought about:

- What can we do to neutralize fear of the other and fear within ourselves?

- How can we help Iranians see that Israelis are not just soldiers?

- How can we help Israelis see that Iranians are not just waiting to attack Israelis?

- How can we work on our partnerships to tell and share stories that shift and change these stereotypes?

During that joint thinking, the group also concluded a list of needs:

- Need to teach and share basic history, geography and basic understanding of each culture in order to get our people curious.

- Need to humanize people and share knowledge.

- Have rational debates concerning security, nuclear weapons, fear and genocide.

- States should not manipulate this discussion to create fear of genocide or turn it into a discussion of victimhood and the underdog.

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[46] In July 7th, 2017 at the UN meeting, more than 120 countries approved the first-ever treaty to ban nuclear weapons boycotted by all nuclear-armed nations. Only nine countries (United States, Russia, United Kingdom, Israel, China, France, India, Pakistan, and North Korea) opposed this treaty. See https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/politics/g20-summit-120-countries-adopt-nuclear-weapons-ban-treaty-arms-war-prohibition-disarmament-a7828581.html

This brainstorming between the two sides and the resulting collaborative list of what should be done was another victory and step forward in the IID. The group showed it was now mature enough to consider necessary steps before actions and that it believed in working on the two sides' societies change of perception on the *other* structurally, and based on thoughts and not only for rushed actions such as a campaign on social media, as was suggested by some participants in the beginning of the IID. The participants discussed the group suggestion for nuclear fear between the two peoples first, and after finding a mutual solution to it (a free nuclear world), they chose to publish on the idea.

Implementation of this collaborative idea through publications did not happen during the next sessions of the IID which were the last sessions focusing on The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action - also called the Iran Deal - signed between Iran, the P5+1 (the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council - China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, United States, plus Germany), and the European Union on July 14, 2015. This series of talks made the entire last five sessions of the IID discussions. The participants showed their main interests in hearing about Iranian and Israeli feelings on the Iran Deal and the impact of nuclear framework on Israeli and Iranian societies and the ways the peoples talk about it. The ongoing sessions of IID stopped in September 2016, when writing and analysis of the research began.

Summary

Dialogue is not a predictable process. It is filled with ups-and-downs based on the characteristics of the dialogue and every participant who are playing a role in the process. The IID witnessed flourishing of stages and phases that were not in an absolute frame and

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formula. Facilitators strategize for creating connection between participants and allowing

a mutual understanding atmosphere to emerge; in the meantime, the unfolding scenes

give a new perspective and lens for analysis to the facilitators. This chapter shared the

examination of the third stage in the IID and how sub-events impacted the stage and what

steps were taken afterwards. The three stages of IID that were elaborated in chapters five,

six and seven gave a perspective on the mix of planned and unpredictable shifts that

unfold in dialogue. The next chapter will pull together the key findings and suggests

paths forward based on the IID examination. It will share the limitations of the digital

dialogue and research methodology. It will also indicate what can be considered as the

next steps to such a peace project and how the evolving model of the IID can be planned

for further research and practice.

Chapter Eight

Findings and Conclusion

This concluding chapter first restates the research questions and their corresponding answers. While journeying through a detailed summary of the Iran-Israel Dialogue (IID) project and its results, it then explains advantages and disadvantages of the Reflective Digital Dialogue model and suggests the factors that need to be considered in an evolving model of the dialogue. After sharing more findings of this research, it suggests some areas for further research and practice. Finally, it explains the limitations of the research in three aspects; a) setting and design of the dialogue, b) recruiting other types of participants such as pro-war individuals with regard to the Iran-Israel conflict, and c) challenges in internet-based dialogue.

The dissertation seeks answers to the main research question, namely: What kind of shifts happen when Iranian and Israeli citizens engage in a digital dialogue? Through four years of research and practice of dialogue between two groups of citizens from the two countries, this pioneering project finds that three stages of shifts occur. In the first stage, the participants go through the process of trustbuilding and explore whether dialogue with the *other* is safe and worth the connection. In the second stage, they show a deeper connection with each other through sharing deep fears of one another and review the roots and causes of those fears. In the third stage, they are able to take collaborative actions and transfer the knowledge they gain about the *other* to their respective societies. The following sections elaborate details of findings.

Results of the Dialogue

The IID placed citizens at the center of its peacebuilding and conflict prevention process. It brought academic scholars, journalists, and activists from two hostile countries that have been separated for more than three decades to the same table of dialogue. After decades of animosity and hostility between the two countries, these citizens got together through a series of digital dialogue to hold direct talks and learn more about each other's culture, opinions, expectations, concerns, society, politics, and history of the conflict. From the beginning, the IID clarified that the process does not intend to directly lead to a peace agreement between the two governments. But realistically, it continues into the peace building phase through citizens and organizations outside the governments to deal with the complicated task of reconciliation within and amongst the two societies.

The IID began reaching across lines of Iran-Israel conflict to discover what roles the two countries' citizens might or might not play in transforming conflictual relationships between the two countries. They established a reflective series of digital dialogue by getting together every month and talking about their perceptions, observation, concerns, and more importantly, their hope for reducing the huge gap existing between the two peoples.

The original idea of Iranian and Israeli citizens coming to dialogue about a possible actual war between the two nations and brainstorm on what citizens can do toward conflict prevention was theorized and conceptualized in this research. By reviewing the data collected through the transcripts of the dialogue's sessions as well as interviews with the participants in the end of the project, the IID captured evidence that

citizens from hostile countries can gather at the same table virtually to initiate dialogue toward conflict prevention. The unique contribution of this research is creating a new model of dialogue, named Reflective Digital Dialogue, that reflects a process of multi-year digital dialogue between citizens from two hostile countries Iran and Israel and shows they go through three stages of shifts (see figure 3 below.)

Figure 3 – Three stages of shift observed in the IID

As the figure 3 above shows, this research shows that the IID's participants experienced three stages of shift and change during their four-year ongoing dialogue. They first shaped a stage of trustbuilding. Then they share their fears and concerns related to conflict. And in the third stage, when they had built trust and acquired a deeper understanding of each other through sharing and hearing about fears and concerns of each other, they decided to take collaborative action. It showed that this group managed to take collaborative actions to publish on the fears that they need to remove about the *other* as well as planning for taking actions on other needs including publication about the nuclear weapons - as the common fear between the two communities – express the collaborative solution that the group discussed for this common fear. It also showed that most members of this group reported learning about the *other*, the common fears between the two sides

and the positive quality of the other community that they were not aware of before the dialogue such as high levels of education within the other side's citizens and the willingness on the other side to bridge and have a direct connection.

Through the discussions of the ongoing dialogue, they learned from each other what the other country's citizens think about them, how their society thought about themselves, how their society thought about the other's society, how the other side's citizens felt about engaging into direct dialogue and what change, even if small, can this connection can produce. As Lewin (1948) indicates, the dialogue group is considered more than a collection of individuals. The individuals participate in a series of sometimes arduous talk and find themselves with a "shared fate" (Lewin, 1948). In the IID as a reflective and interactive group, the three stages of shifts occur and many more insights and actions beyond the design of the dialogue unfold, such as solidarity, compassion for the enemy and trying to overcome serotypes about one another. Indeed, in such a model of dialogue, the combatant representative citizens of the two sides change to cooperative representatives. These representatives are indirectly trained and learn the role of a cooperative participant and come to the sense of solidarity, instead of staying in a combatant and dehumanizing actor role. The participants experience a cumulative, multilevel, open-ended and continuous process to brainstorm about the possibility of transforming relationships between the two people through citizens.

The IID set three goals through four years of dialogue. The first is to introduce the practical constructs of digital dialogue in order to show that skillful, knowledgeable, and discreet models of dialogue are able to facilitate change between conflicting parties.

Second, this dissertation introduced and illustrated the digital dialogue as an optimal approach toward conflict prevention, with a concentration on establishing bridge between citizens who are disconnected from one another. Third, it discussed how the three shifts in this dialogue happened and ways individuals changed through the Reflective Digital Dialogue, how shifts and political events – domestic and international (e. g Israel-Palestine conflict) impact the dialogue (explained in chapters five through seven) and how changing an individual is able to contribute to transforming change in society.

The IID shows that citizens from high level animosity countries are able to initiate building a bridge, talk directly with each other, and focus on common goals through a facilitated dialogue. This occurred through Reflective Digital Dialogue, which is an innovation brought to the dialogue world and the case study of the dialogue has shown that digital dialogue in such a context is possible.

Figure 4 below explains the variables and outcomes observed in the dialogue process during the multi-year implementation of the IID.
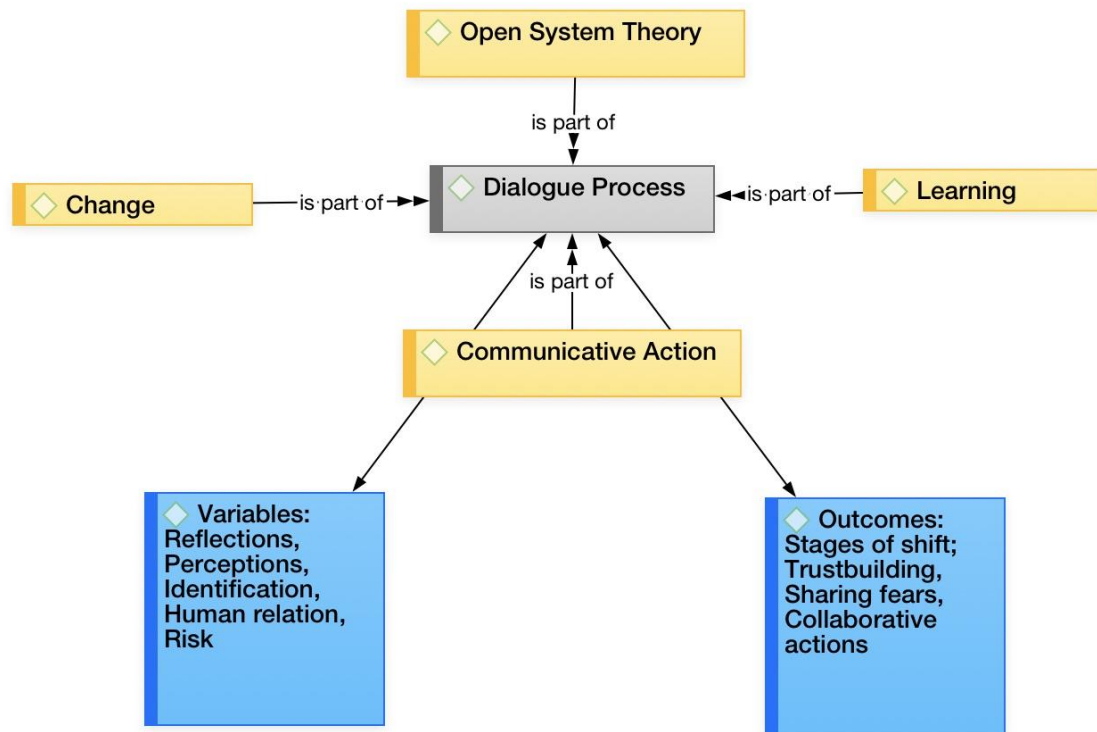
Figure 4 – The dialogue process, variables and outcomes of the IID

As figure 4 above shows, four components shaped the IID process, namely the

open system theory, communicative action, learning and change. The main purpose of the

Open System Theory (OST), developed by Fred Emery (1999), focuses on creating

change that is consciously generated and designed by people and for people. In the IID

process, participants engaged in the dialogue and evidenced communicative action as

they shared perceptions, came to know each other better, developed understanding and so

on. In other words, they announced "we are here to learn." In fact, by engaging in the

communicative action taken in each session of the dialogue, they began to see themselves

on a learning journey. This learning process is not only about the enemy, but also about themselves and how their perceptions about the enemy can change.

Variables discovered in the dialogue process that impacted the dialogue include reflection, perception, identification, human relations and risk taking. By participating in the IID, individuals experienced perceptual changes about the enemy and reflected on themselves in relation to the fellow participants. By entering and continuing the dialogue, they took the risk of sitting with the other side of conflict and in doing so gradually developed a human relationship with the enemy.

Additionally, three stages of shift developed as outcomes of the dialogue process. As chapters five, six and seven discussed in detail, the IID participants went through a trust building stage, where both sides tried to build trust and trustworthiness as a bridge to the other side. After building such a foundation of trust, they started to feel sufficiently safe to share what their perception, fears and concern about the *other* are. The third stage of the IID appeared when the participants acknowledged the connection and trust and then decided to engage in collaborative actions.

Importantly, the whole dialogue process helped the participants reach a new understanding of the *other*, experience a personal transformation and plan to act as a team.

Conceptual Comparison of Reflective Digital Dialogue with other Dialogues

In a recent publication on dialogue, Allen (2018) discusses different approaches to dialogue, including faith-based dialogue, psychological dialogue, and training programs dialogue (pp. 207-211). Reflective Digital Dialogue could be used in all these dialogues,

particularly when concerns or restrictions for participants in-person meetings exist. With security and safety considerations in mind, Reflective Digital Dialogue allows conflicting parties to break the disconnection and meet in order to dialogue on conflict and plan for next steps.

Reflective Digital Dialogue also differentiates from those approaches in other aspects. For example, faith-based dialogues are focused on recruiting participants based on their religious orientation. In contrast, IID is open to all religion, faith, or ethnicity.

When comparing Reflective Digital Dialogue with psychological dialogue (Volkan, 1997; Kelman, 1999), we see some similarities to the extent the facilitator in Reflective Digital Dialogue reflects on attitude and behavioral changes in participants. Furthermore, the facilitator reflects on the participants' behavior, interactions, expressed point-of-interest and concerns to facilitate dialogue and shape the path for better trustbuilding and relations building. However, Reflective Digital Dialogue differentiates from psychological dialogue in terms of its final goal. In Reflective Digital Dialogue, the main goal is not just focusing on "hidden or unexpressed" (Volkan, 1997, p. 211) behavior. It goes beyond psychological interests and tries to observe where the group - after all exchanges – will land and if any tangible outcome can be examined. In IID, the dialogue goes beyond attitude changes and results in collaborative action.

Reflective Digital Dialogue can also be conceptually compared with the other above-mentioned approach which relies on training programs. In the latter, the main goal focuses on training participants and enhancing their conflict resolution skills and technique (Allen, 2018, p. 211), while engaging them in a dialogue form of conversation.

We can see the advantage of such training programs if applied to the Reflective Digital Dialogue, where participants are not being trained on dialogue skills and conflict resolution techniques. In Reflective Digital Dialogue, participants flow according to their own instinct, learning, and the sessions' atmosphere to build the conversations in a constructive manner. However, conflict resolution skills could also help participants manage their interactions with the other group's members and reduce tension in the group. Thus, such skills can also help the facilitator have more balanced conversations (Fisher, 1997, pp. 334-335). As explained in Chapter Four, the IID's goal did not include training the participants. However, the facilitator included indirect skills training in some sessions and with some participants (pp. 83-84; p. 97; p. 100).

The next section explains more in detail the characteristics of Reflective Digital Dialogue to highlight how this model could be explored in other approaches of dialogue in the field of conflict resolution.

Reflective Digital Dialogue Model in the Field of Conflict Resolution

Reflective Digital Dialogue is a theoretical model in the field of conflict resolution. It is process facilitation. It is about creating human connection. It connects humans who were separated for decades. It aims at utilizing dialogue group as a "microcosm of the larger system" (Kelman, 1997, p. 216) to promote change among the enemies. The model could be applied in a wide variety of dialogues between hostile countries or enemy states. The approach is an internet-based dialogue intervention, which enhances security and safety for the participants for whom travel to the *other* country is forbidden. The digital design provides an alternative mechanism to bridge the citizens,

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when there is some desire for connection and bridging among the two sides citizens, but the official political command of the states is focused on disconnection.

Reflective Digital Dialogue is an academically-based, unofficial facilitated dialogue approach. It is a track II diplomacy in the field of conflict resolution and brings citizens of hostile countries to dialogue for direct communication. The two main goals of Reflective Digital Dialogue are to bypass the limitations that the enemy states create around their citizens to avoid any contact and connection with *other* and to promote change in individuals through group dialogue.

A major concentration in Reflective Digital Dialogue model consists of observations and analysis of the ongoing group dialogue. The model is designed to promote change and the sessions are designed to observe change in the participants' attitudes and perceptions about the *other*. It is a reflective dialogue and invites its participants to get involved in the process of decision-making throughout the dialogue. By utilizing this model, examining the process, analyzing shifts and attitudes, and learning from what is happening right here and now, regardless of or based on design of the dialogue and sessions are in the hand of the practitioner.

The purpose of Reflective Digital Dialogue is to explore whether conceptualizing dialogue approaches toward conflict prevention is useful in suggesting relevant hypotheses on outcomes of dialogue toward conflict prevention. We need more yet-to-be-identified and conceptualized approaches to be practiced to fill the gaps in the field of conflict resolution.

The IID experiment points to the strengths and limitations of the Reflective Digital Dialogue model. There is a need for 1) evolving the model (an evolving model is suggested in the section of areas for further practice in this chapter), 2) further experimentations of dialogue between enemy states' citizens, along with theoretical and research-based practice, to specify where the dialogue model can contribute to process of conflict prevention in the field of conflict resolution.

Here we share some more questions need to be explored in this area of research and practice: How are online dialogue different from face-to-face dialogue in different experiments? Is there any specific formula regarding framing time and the quantity of sessions in a series of dialogue which result in specific outcomes? How can ethics and emotions be defined and analyzed in online dialogue and what can practitioners expect (or not)? In terms of security, online dialogue has considerations of its own. How can security of the participants in online dialogue be maintained? Is there a need to develop some professional specific software for dialogue in the field of conflict resolution? Is it not the time for the field to welcome computer science as a necessary component to the practice? Answering these questions could help next researchers and practitioners in the field of conflict resolution and provide more clear structures and design models for online dialogue interventions.

Additional Findings

In the process of research and practice of the Iran-Israel Dialogue, some other findings can be listed as follows:

Addressing fears: The IID experience demonstrates substantial time and attention to the discussion of fears, prior to moving toward collaborative action planning. In this case, the fears shared by participants seemed to require substantial time investment for consideration before the group seemed ready to discuss collaborative action. The group had a lot of fears that they needed to share without exacerbating those same fears, and without addressing the roots and causes of them, moving to the third stage – taking collaborative actions – might have been difficult and perhaps impossible.

Benefits of common fears: Although the IID sessions were formulated over positive thinking (e. g. AI) and storytelling, some of the sessions unfolded revelations of some negative factors in both sides. When the IID facilitators observed the common fears expressed by the participants, they built the next stages of the facilitation upon those common fears – although they were negative and hard to discuss and dig in – and used them to remind the participants how they can learn from those common fears to bridge more to one another side and follow their dialogue goal with the appeared compassion. The fears that could have been translated as negative parts of the dialogue that could have created distance among the two sides' participants instead empowered the relationship. Talking about fears and negative realities in the two societies without aggressiveness or defensiveness is another benefit that gifted a maturity to the dialogue as well.

Need of facilitator: This dialogue project focused on shifts and promoting change in individuals from enemy states. It showed that these shifts are observable through a series of facilitated dialogues. It found, based on the research project and also interviews with the participants, that dialogue intervention between enemy countries needs a

facilitator (contrary to what Bohm suggests, that dialogue should be free and without facilitator – discussed in Chapter Two.) Furthermore, the dialogue requires facilitators in the field who are knowledgeable about the conflict to create the right environment for such a group coming from decades of animosity and disconnection from one another, and thus are able to adjust the facilitation style at different development stages of dialogue.

Impact of outside events: As the IID experienced and as was contended in Chapter Six, the dialogue can be affected by outsider events (e. g. what we observed about the impact of the Gaza war and Israel-Palestine war on the dialogue dynamic) or domestic political and social incidents (e. g. as the IID experienced domestic elections in the two countries changed the process and topic of the dialogue). Keeping an open and flowing style of facilitation that accepts discussing new (e.g. out of agenda) events, themes and questions raised by the group helps the participants feel that they are the main decision-makers in the dialogue. In addition, they feel that there is nothing dictating how they go through dialogue with each other.

Bypassing the dehumanization doctrine: The IID found that the doctrine of *dehumanization of the enemy* has generated huge hatred between the two nations (see Chapter Six). This doctrine, built by the states and rooted in deep layers of their societies, not only adds difficulty to the implementation of peace projects, but also is continuously paving the final road for war and as Kassimeris & Buckley (2013) indicate it gradually leads to a vicious cycle of violence and atrocities. Bypassing this group of stereotypes and limitations - created by the enemy states - through dialogue intervention, although important and necessary, is very difficult. As Christakis (2006) points out too "the only

way to those difficulties is through an adequate methodology" (p. xi). The hardship of the

IID was predictable. The dialogue participants came to the dialogue project from two

hostile countries that have demonized one another for decades and forbidden their

citizens for any contact with the *other*. The IID participants explained that both Iran and

Israel demonstrated the same approach for deepening this disconnection. The

governments have employed the enemy's dehumanization technique (Dower, 2009;

Rowell, 2011) which develops the belief about the enemy being a threatening evil

aggressor with only destructive objectives. From the four criteria of dehumanizing the

enemy that Boykoff (2007) defines, all are seen in the IID project and how they have

impacted the citizens (see chapters five and six); 1. Both media and state employ frames

to portray the inherent nature of so-called enemy mostly in moral terms, 2. The character

of the opponent is depicted as good (us) against evil (them), 3. The states are the origin of

demonological portraying, and 4. There is no significant counterclaim from the state (p.

192). The way that Iran and Israel have convinced their citizens that there is no

diplomatic solution between the two countries but war (followed by the moralization of

getting equipped by nuclear bombs against a possible attack of the *other*) complicates

peace projects between the two sides significantly (see chapter 7). As Gardner (2005)

explains - by modeling the United States' "War on Terrorism" – the dehumanization of

the enemy is a technique that states employ which makes diplomatic solutions impossible

and inevitably leads into the war or worsening of relations (p. 16). However, in such a

status-quo, peacebuilding and conflict resolution practitioners can still find and start

peace projects through Track II & III Preventive Diplomacy, as the IID intended and

implemented the dialogue project through the citizens outside of the governments. In fact, the practitioners need to strategize and consider bypasses around such problems while planning a peace project with people in enemy states.

Areas for Further Research

The Iran-Israel Dialogue (IID) project confirms that, at least in this one case study, the Reflective Digital Dialogue model provides an instrument for observing shifts among Iranian and Israeli participants in the dialogue. It utilizes techniques and skills of conflict resolution and intervention for preparing the citizens from enemy countries who make choices regardless of their society's stereotypes to participate in a dialogue with the *other*, to reflect on their own insights about the *other*, practice listening to the other side's perceptions about them, ask and answer about each other, and get encouraged to brainstorm with the *enemy* for bridging their societies.

In this case study, the self-reflection that reflective dialogue offers to the participants encourages them to narrate their society and own story, value awareness of reality, put behind the traditional narrative and stereotype about the *other*, doubt the social norms dictated by the government, learn how to express fears of the *other*, share vision and stories, and engage in an inclusive and open process characterized by compassionate listening, storytelling, discussing, resourcing, sharing documents and important texts, videos, audios and anything that helps to overcome the gap between the two sides.

In fact, the participants of the IID find themselves in a "training laboratory" (Kelman, 2017, p. 102) that creates not only the research and practice opportunity to a

practitioner, but also for the participants to adapt the process and benefit from the learning experience. In the interviews with the participants, individuals pointed out the changes they felt in themselves through the dialogue. "The people were changing, and the group was changing" a participant shared her observation of the training and skills that individuals gain through the dialogue, "trusting got better in me and trying to be understanding of the others." The individual explained how the skills used in the dialogue trained them in parallel and benefited them throughout the talks.

Beside what this research explored in term of stages of shifts and change among the group of citizens from enemy states, there are some questions worth exploring in dialogue-oriented intervention such as: What are the conditions under which dialogue will produce a high-quality outcome? How can dialogue guarantee a more durable change in its participants? In the IID, we do not know how the participants will maintain changes and notions gained from the dialogue. And, finally, how will political and international events and governments impact the participants once they leave the dialogue?

Such endeavors require a conceptualized analysis of the politics, society, culture and religions of those specific conflicting parties to enhance the quality and possibility of intervention and achieving the expected change. There is a need to dive into culture, identity and definition of peace and power in each conflicting party participating in a dialogue to relate those influence on the individuals' role in dialogue.

In case of gender studies in the field, a future study could help researchers and practitioners by answering how dialogue outcomes and dynamics varies based on the gender of participants? In other words, are there differences between a dialogue only

recruiting female or male participants with a dialogue that has mixed male-female participants? As explained in Chapter Four, although the IID started the dialogue with recruiting only women, we added male participants from the sixth session onward. This question is left for further research and can be fruitful in the field.

In the IID interview series with the participants, one side's participants expressed the meaning of peace is different in their culture and they indeed laugh at peace as being too cliché. This notion raises the following question: How can different beliefs about peace among conflicting parties impact the result and dynamic of a dialogue?

In terms of differentiating practices between conflicting parties with high-level hostility level – such as Iran and Israel, Israel and Palestine – there is a need to further the research. The IID showed that implementing a conflict resolution model between enemy states requires more tailored timing in formulating the facilitation stages. What are other possible models of dialogue between enemy states? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each model? Reflective Digital Dialogue showed some success in reflective practice in both interveners and participants. Yet, questions on the online part of this model remain.

Other areas for further research exist, such as focusing on the role of facilitator in dialogue. This is discussed at length in the next sub-sections while addressing some specific examples that challenged the facilitator/s in the IID.

Facilitation Style. Apart from the inherent complexities of the IID, I made a list of possible intrapersonal conflict (within self), interpersonal conflict (between individuals) and international conflicts involved with such a conflict and intervention.

This section of this final chapter shares reflection on self as an observer and practitioner and the dilemmas that a facilitator to such dialogue intervention might face.

The model of facilitation employed in IID focuses on bringing the hostile countries' citizens, who habitually find themselves the victim, to dialogue and help them break their old thoughts and stereotypes and let them discover the other sides' commonalities and differences in perception of the *other*, fears, and comparison of those feelings with their own.

In the first two years of IID, the interactions between the two sides' participants were repetitive and stereotyped. The participants still referred to the other side as "they", not yet "we". Changes in interactions, trust, bridging to the *other* and developing what a dialogue indicates as its primary goals occur gradually over time. While the group is changing and the individuals are reshaping their inner and outer personalities in practice, the researcher's thinking changes over the course of the project as well. For example, the IID morphed into a research project after it had started; therefore, I found myself in a new researcher role. Research methodologies now must be deployed. She has to be very aware how those research requirements can impact the project. One of those challenges I faced as both a facilitator and researcher through the project related to the addition of interviews with the participants, which were not discussed in the beginning. I am grateful that the IID participants came from academic background and valued what the dialogue could be adding to the field of peace and conflict resolution. But could the initial goal of the project change in the eyes of some participants from a peace project for conflict prevention to academic research? My answer is yes. Indeed, I found that my thought

process changed over the course of the project, and it should be studied how these changes impact the research.

Facilitator's Ethical Dilemma. Another factor needs to be considered in dialogue models similar to the IID, namely when the facilitator is faced with her own ethical dilemmas. The most difficult moments in my IID work were those at which I had to confront with my own ethical dilemmas. Taking the role of convener was much easier than that of a facilitator. I initiated the dialogue project as an Iranian and my identity was an advantage in the initiating such a war prevention-oriented dialogue. But when the dialogue turned into a doctoral research project and dissertation based on the suggestion of my professors and the facilitators from the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University – where I was a Ph.D. student – my Iranian identity as the facilitator of the project became a hurdle. I had to not only keep my neutrality in-check but also, I had to prove my neutrality to any observer with different judgments. I benefited from meditations before and sometimes after the dialogue's sessions. I also kept journaling my thoughts and reflection on the practice to keep in-check and consider where I was standing toward the dialogue and its participants. But results on how I percive myself sometimes left a hole and dilemma.

One of those challenges put me to the test during the Gaza war. I was not neutral. I had a side. At the same time, another session of the IID was ahead in a few days. I did dig in into my feelings and insights and felt the battle between my personal ethics and my role that could be judged by different degrees whether I was neutral in every single event and situations throughout the project. My honest answer to the later question was no, and

it could affect the evaluation of the whole dialogue and facilitation. This was the last thing I needed to be added to the other complexities of the IID.

I called one of the facilitators who was clean of any label for her identity related to the IID to facilitate that specific session. She expressed that she is not neutral to the Gaza crisis either. She was American and on the same side as mine. At that moment, a new notion arose. We brainstormed on possible solutions for such status que occurrences in an intervention. We concluded that the best solution was postponing the session and observing whether the Gaza war would de-escalate.

Although that part of the practice reassured me about my capability on keeping the check-in on my personal feelings toward the project in check, it still left me with a doubt throughout the project as to how neutral I was. This doubt made me raise the question in the interviews after the dialogue and let the participants – particularly the Israelis– evaluate my facilitation and neutrality throughout the project. The answers were very reassuring. An Israeli participant described me, "very warm, asked appropriate questions, and very friendly, putting lots of efforts to keep the group going and touch and feel each other." An Iranian member of the group, while describing why such a dialogue goes nowhere without facilitation, added "I actually really enjoyed the facilitation process in this dialogue. It takes lots of brain for everything…[the facilitator was] sensitive in using some words, she was able to sense the feeling of all people in [the] dialogue, and based on that, she had on-time reaction." Other participants mentioned that I had been careful to avoid sharing my own points of view in the discussion and stayed true to my role as a facilitator. Some other participants indicated that the facilitator "was a bridge

between the two sides" and described how I helped to give each side a perspective about the other side and the dialogue that brought them the dialogue as a whole that helped building trust between the two sides.

Even after listening again to those interviews and checking on self, still I am left with some questions: what does neutrality really mean? Where does neutrality clash with ethical dilemmas? What is the responsibility of the practitioner in such situations? Did the practitioner accurately measure the risks of initiating dialogue? Where is she demanding too much from herself or from participants?

On the other side of the practice of the IID, I cannot emphasize enough the high level of emotional stress associated with writing this dissertation which is going to be the first publication of the IID, although as an academic publication. It was hard to maintain the security of the project during its four years of implementation and in the period following the discourse. While writing about it, I and both chairs of this dissertation, former chair Sandra Cheldelin, and the current chair Susan Allen, checked and rechecked multiple time any reference to or identification about of any specific participants. Many of the participants expressed they have no security concerns related to participating in the dialogue; nevertheless, responsibility for the safety of the entire dialogue rests with me.

Nature of Participants. Dialogue does not only depend on the quality and style of facilitation, its setting and formulation. It also gets impacted by the nature and personality of individuals in the group. Every individual brings their own background and personal, family and society psychology to the practice. The degree of openness to peace and working toward peace also varies among the participants. In the IID, there were some

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members who were more positive, active and eager to take collaborative actions toward

peace between the two counties, and there were some others who preferred to be more

observant in the process of joint thinking and collaborative actions.

IID behind-the-scene talks and interviews reveal that the feeling of insecurity and

lack of a sense of safety among the same side participants was higher than this feeling

toward the other side. In other words, participants mistrusted their own compatriots more

than they mistrusted the participants from the other side. Also, the arguments among the

same side participants were more intense than with the other side on some topics. In the

participants' thoughts, the dialogue provided "more connection to the other side."

The IID experience showed that participants in the dialogue can feel influenced

by other participants' behavior. Specifically, an IID participant reflected on the comfort

or discomfort she felt in participating in the dialogue when she reacted to behavior by

another participant. I was told that she didn't feel safe toward one of her own side's

participant. I received an email followed by a talk from a participant to hear her concern.

She also revealed in the interview that she felt "bullied by her." The participant who

opened up to me about that participant mentioned that she feels that way because they

(she and the other participant) are from the same country, and in that view, she allows

herself to question other same-side participants on their less pro-state opinions and forces

them to rethink about what they are sharing with the other side.

Kelman (2017) finds that in such gathering of conflicting parties in an

intervention process such as dialogue or problem-solving workshop, "personal identity is

characteristically linked to national identity, and this link becomes even stronger when

the national group is involved in an intense, protracted conflict relationship" (p. 188). This kind of clash between those individuals who insist on keeping their national identity at the fore and those who decide to prioritize sharing uncensored feelings and modified biases cannot be predicted. Even predicting whether it will appear in a dialogue project or not and what are its circumstances will be, is difficult. But if it does appear, it is the duty of the facilitator to accept the nature of that particular group and let it play out in the project.

The IID organizers main selection of participants attempt focused on inviting the "right" kinds of individuals to the dialogue. As explained in chapter three, we looked for – first of all –individuals who are actively pro-peace in their own practices and lives, and second, were willing to sit with their enemies for an ongoing open-ended dialogue series. But the issue of personal pro-state biases and degree of nationalism in the individuals was not calculable from the beginning and appeared later on in the discussions, making some other same-side participants feel insecure. This was another reason to have interviewed participants before the dialogue began. The pre-dialogue interviews could have helped indicate with what characteristics individuals are entering the dialogue with and define what needs to be considered in planning – for predicted and unpredicted events.

Managing a Highly Emotional Event. As different individuals with different nature and psychology enter a dialogue, different emotions poured into the project. The impact of these emotions on the intervention needs further research. I will explain this with an example observed in the IID.

The specific nature of the Iran-Israel conflict brought some surprises into the practice. There are some outsider events mixed with the personal history of the participants that impacted the project dramatically and caused shifts in the planning and the implementation of the project. For example, what surprised us the most was the impact of Israel-Palestine War on the participants' talks. The Gaza war, which happened twice during the IID, changed the tone, anger and tension of the participants. The most challenging facilitation also happened in a session held simultaneous to one of the Gaza wars, when about ninety percent of the participants – both Iranian and Israeli sides – condemned participating into any war and emphasized the importance of raising children with anti-war and pro-diplomatic-solution beliefs. However, one of the Israeli participants was mourning the separation of her son who had joined the Israeli military to fight in Gaza and the group was not aware of her personal emotional upheaval.

The participant had entered the conference room late and missed the checking-in section to share with the group what situation she is in and how she feels – the section that allows the participants to share their feelings and if they have good or bad news impacting their personal or social life – and she started listening to the session when the group was against the very circumstance of her life in her choice send her son to war.

That scene not only impacted the moods of the participants but also complicated the facilitation when the Israeli mother burst into tears and threatened to leave the group because of the lack of understanding she felt from the group for the actual situation in her country and her life. Such an emotional situation mixed with national and international conflicts shifted the entire dynamic of a dialogue. One member was angry over the

statements by the group and used inappropriate words in describing the group. Two other members – both Iranian and Israeli sides – were insisting on their opinion.

As this discussion continued, the IID participants practiced reflections on their own feelings and those of the other members, and a reflection on compassion arose. In this event, as facilitator of the session, I set some ground rules - that came up to the dialogue for the first time – to remind the participants about the words they use about the others and the tone and voice they need to keep throughout the dialogue. I also let the participants decide either to stay some extra minutes in the session to resolve that conflict among the group or leave the conflict unresolved. The group then demonstrated an inherent self-facilitation ability as they made that decision.

I knew we needed to clarify the emotions and feelings before leaving the conference room because an unresolved conflict could add up the hardship of next sessions and negatively impact the relationships amongst the group. But it required extending the time of the session. I did not feel I could request that the entire group stay a half hour more in the session. But one of the participants who was from the other country came to the same thought – without me mentioning anything - and suggested that the group stay for the extra time. I observed at this point that the participants had not only learned through the dialogue not only the skills of connection to the other side but also problem solving within the context of the dialogue.

That event taught me that the facilitator does not need to be always a facilitator throughout the intervention. Sometimes exchanging her position with the participants enhances the quality of facilitation, particularly, when the participants have been trained

how to be and act in a dialogue and how they consequently use their talent in connection to the other. In such a situation, the facilitator can embrace the unpredicted victories, including witnessing how the participants have come to the level of problem-solving and the confidence building that appears among them to take on the role, suggest their resolution to the problem, make a decision and implement it. This takes a significant amount of pressure off the facilitator. It also gives the participants more of a sense of ownership of the process, where they built more confidence in themselves as the main influencers of their own dialogue.

All these processes, from the impact of change in facilitation style during emotional events to its results, needs further research in dialogue intervention methods in the field of conflict resolution. A collection of comparison models of facilitation in dialogue intervention can help expand the knowledge for future researchers and practitioners.

Formulating Timing for Dialogue Sessions. In digital dialogue and intervention, there is no formula and research-based direction that how long a session should be held. We read some literatures on online dialogue – discussed in chapter two - that online sessions can make participants tired as they are not in a face-to-face interaction (Linda Ellinor and Glenna Gerard, 1998). But there is no research that how to formulate timing for an online dialogue – in the short or long-term.

Based on what the IID experienced, facilitators planned the timing it based on their own unique case study. In the IID, the three facilitators brainstormed on the timing based on the quantity of the participants. In the end, we suggested an hour-long meeting,

an hour and half, and two-hour meeting, monthly. The group was in favor of a one-hour meeting, monthly. We did observe as the dialogue progressed that in some sessions, the participants were willing to keep to the discussion and stay half an hour more to continue the conversation. I believe that in the field of CAR there is a need to establish, based on quantitative and qualitative research, a guideline of advantages and disadvantages of different formulas considering both the quantity of the participants and internet difficulties (e.g. should we recalculate the missed parts because of reconnecting the disconnected members to discussion of the topic?).

Having gleaned some possibilities for further research from the IID experience, as described above, the next section will discuss how further practice could proceed with the IID in the future.

Areas for Further Practice

The IID's ultimate goal is to promote change among the group produced through dialogue and to utilize the group as a vehicle for promoting those positive changes to their network level and ultimately society as a whole. Such a model can be developed with the goal of examining whether those positive insights that emerge in the dialogue can enter to the two societies and gradually shift the hostility into human connection. And if the answer is yes, how can those changes be promoted into the enemy societies and what are the barriers?

For such consideration, the question is what could be next to develop such a model of dialogue? The advice of Harold Saunders in an in-person meeting has stayed in my notebook as the next stage and evolution of the IID: "adding citizens connected to the

governments to the dialogue group and let them to play the role of messenger to their

government and send the need of peace and war prevention from the citizens to the

government."[47] This is the approach that Saunders utilized in his forty years of US-Russia

dialogue. His position as an official diplomat, however, changes the goal setting in a

dialogue project to one very different from the IID which was initiated far from

diplomatic facilities and governmental support. But still, the benefit of involving the

semi-government agents or those who are connected to the government body but have no

official position (such as academics who are advisors to the governments and/or

journalists who are the connector ring of society and the state and thus have the

opportunity of frequent meeting with the officials and policy-makers) could be examined

in the unique case of conflict between Iran and Israel or other enemy states.

Including citizens connected to the government to such a dialogue creates a "dual

purpose" (Kelman, 2017, p. 130) which enables the dialogue to promote messages of the

group and change created in the group to the decision-makers and policy makers. In fact,

after collecting new ideas for conflict resolution from the dialogue, the individuals will

transfer those ideas and changes into political debates and the decision-making process in

their own societies. Considering this phase can be one of the main formulations

informing the evolving model of the IID with the purpose discussed above.

Continuing the IID with an evolving planning phase is also able to answer a key

question that has been on my mind after closing the IID in September 2016: "are those

participants returning to their society maintaining the changes experimented through the

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[47] In-person meeting in Saunders office, Washington, D. C., October 2013.

dialogue or do the society and state overcome those changes and reverse them to their initial fears?" This needs to be examined. Answering only by prediction or academic argument does not promote the authenticity of the answer without examination in practice. Particularly, how different the results could be conflict-by-conflict case? Is there any difference in the case of enemy states?

Kelman (2017) argues that based on his own thoughts and argumentation, that although the conflict resolution workshops – if successful – create a coalition with the *other*, but they also create a concern among the group about their self-image as they are engaging in collaborative work with members of the enemy state. He imagines the individual concern that the individuals - as the members of their own community - need to see themselves at all times as loyal members to their country and to avoid any participation that might be interpreted as actions of a traitor. He concludes that, "the relationship to their own national community creates a concern among participants about their credibility at home and hence their future political effectiveness." (p. 189)

This argument was not even close to the case of the IID and what we observed and heard during the interviews with the participants. From the moment the participants decided to enter to the dialogue with the enemy, they accepted the risk of their participation and what could be interpreted about them in their society. But the other side of this concern remained in the case of the IID, namely whether the perception about the *other* changed in the dialogue and will stay with those individuals (former participants in the dialogue) or whether those positive changes will reverse gradually under the continuous States' attempts to dehumanize the *other*. Here we can think about what

Kelman (2017) argues that "changes are more likely to take place in a cultural island [workshop or dialogue], but more difficult to maintain once the individual returns to the mainland" (p. 111). The evolving model of the IID then necessarily includes examining Kelman's analysis and whether the participants will maintain the change of perception toward the *other* in a longer period of time. Answering this question remains until further research and another round of qualitative research, including interviews with the participants after the absence of the dialogue, can be done and the results be examined.

While talking about the idea of the continuation of the dialogue and collecting new results in an evolving phase, logistical and financial constraints should be considered for the continuation of dialogue, in which the same group of participants come back to meet regularly over an extended period of time, and they come to a consensus to add a few citizens connected to governments to carry the messages of the dialogue to people inside the governments. But all these ideas still depend on political situations that have not been conducive to systematic long-term efforts. Does the security of the participants from Iran and Israel allow us to add those citizens close to the governments to dialogue? Do the participants agree with this idea? Or do the next series of the IID need to invite a combination of the past participants (who agree with the idea) and a new series of participants?

Limitations of the Research

The digital dialogue has its own advantages – explained above - and disadvantages. In this section limitations of the research are shared in three discussions. First, the section explains how the setting and design of the research could be different.

Second, it points out about possibility of different dynamic in the dialogue if anti-peace participants (pro-war Iranians and Israelis) were recruited for the IID. Third, it shares details on limitations of internet-based dialogue.

Limitations of the IID Setting. If I started this research again, I would do the three settings differently: 1) interviewing the participants before the first session about their opinion and fears, concerns and/or hopes for attending the dialogue, 2) setting the frequency of the IID as monthly from the beginning. It took a year to learn that bi-weekly meetings pressure the participants regarding their own other responsibilities and time limits, 3) inviting both men and women to participate from the beginning.

Interviewing the participants before the start of the dialogue sessions provides a useful tool to the researcher for evaluating change in the group. It helps her being confident about the data through surveys or interviews collected before the dialogue begins. It also allows her to compare it with another series of interviews done toward the end of the dialogue. For example, in interviews at the end of the IID, two participants claimed that they had relations with the other side and the dialogue helped them deepen their understanding of the other side. But if a pre-dialogue-interview had been done, the research would have been able to measure and indicate what the perception of this individual of the other was and how it changed after four years of dialogue.

Setting a monthly frequency for the IID from the start could have saved time and energy throughout the process. As explained in chapter four, the frequency of the dialogue changed from bi-weekly in the first year (2012) to monthly (2013-2015) and again changed to quarterly (2016.) The two bi-weekly and quarterly meetings did not

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benefit the dialogue content. During the bi-weekly meetings, we had absentees who were not able to participate owing to complications in their personal life. Therefore, their absence not only decreased the quality of talks and discussions, but also required an update and more communication between them and the convener to make up for that absence. In quarterly meetings that included the last two meetings of the IID in 2016, a three-month gap created a disconnection between discussions (e.g. what was discussed three months ago could be and was forgotten.) This also forced the facilitator to spend more time summarizing the previous session and connecting it with the current session.

Regarding the third setting, inviting both men and women to participate from the start, we quickly decided that starting or staying with only female participants only was unnecessary. The IID is a bridging project between two peoples and whose goal was to promote change toward the *other*. It was not necessary to focus only on one gender. We then started to invite male participants – with the agreement of initial women participants – in October 2012, in the seventh dialogue session.

Selection of participants. The results of this pilot project reflect what we found through IID with this group of participants who were educated (in this case, higher than a bachelor's degree), had access to computer and internet and were not pro-war. In fact, when the IID started to recruit the group's members as a project and not yet as a research project, we focused on listing pro-peace candidates - from different spectrums - who believe in dialogue between Iran and Israel. The results of the IID come from such a recruitment. If, for example, pro-war people or people unfamiliar with computer and internet had been included in the dialogue, results, dynamic of discussions, facilitation

and duration of the project could have varied – predicting – to a harder and sometimes unresolved level of discussions.

Limitations of the Digital Model. Although the internet helps the practitioner as a bridging tool between the separated societies and allows the participants to connect to the discussion from wherever they are located by just clicking to the internet, it also carries some difficulties and impacts the practice and research. For example, although the digital model is able to keep track of participants, recording sessions, and delivery of product of each session to participants and connect disconnected individuals, in practice it can also be a damaging tool, as described below.

Internet-based project: Although internet is able to connect the disconnected peoples, it carries its own difficulties. Speed and quality of internet for any individual's household in the group, the country s/he lives and the person/s who hosts the group and looping every member into the conference room can all impact the quality of a session and the research process as a whole. For example, we faced disconnections of some participants (sometimes frequently) which impacted their ability to follow the talks. Also, some of the disconnections happened in the middle of a speaker's talk. Internet disconnections not only could be frustrating sometimes, but also creates a dual task to the facilitator (if she is the digital host and convener of the session) to continue facilitating the session while bringing back a disconnected member of the group to the conference room. If the disconnection happens on a speaker, the group misses the speaker's points. It also impacts the research and coding process. For example, we had some parts of transcripts where words or sentences were blank. On the facilitation side, it impacts the

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flowing discussions and creates a constantly shifting process. Reconnection to the conference room takes its own time and based on our experience, it results in losing parts of the speaker's talk and even patience of some participants if they are not used to internet-based projects thus familiar with technical difficulties. The facilitator needs to summarize what has been missed by the disconnected member and this requires a different, specific set of skills to consider the time limit of the session as well as the patience of the other members.

Internet functionality and national security of the countries, which is considered as cyber security by modern states, must also be considered, and creates ups-and-downs in an internet-based international project. Iran and Israel both showed controlling behaviors in relation to the internet in political and crisis situations regarding the country's national security. We observed that Israel limited internet services during the Gaza wars and Iran has a long story of controlling internet in elections time.

Transcripts: Although all of the transcripts of the IID have been done by native English speakers (i.e. no use of a machine transcriber), there are many words that can be heard badly or even opposite and change the meaning of what the speaker discussed (e. g. the word "can't" or "can" easily could be transcribed incorrectly.) In the IID, the transcriptions would be sent to the group before following session. The participants were then able to edit and comment on their talk parts. Still, this process is time-consuming and not all members read the transcripts and gave feedback on them.

Planning: We cannot ignore the positive impacts of face-to-face human connection, where humans connect with the least barriers, take control of choosing with

whom they want to connect more or less, and the trustbuilding process is expedited compared to digital connections. McDaniel et al. (1996), by comparing face-to-face conversation to computer-mediated conversation in small groups of scientists carrying out data collection campaigns, discovered that "the technology did not significantly interfere with the object of the scientists work. The technology certainly got in the way when there are problems, but it also enabled a level of collaboration …that is surprisingly similar to in-person interactions" (p. 43). They conclude that digital based conversation may lessen concern among the participants about what the facilitator thinks of them and discourage them from withholding embarrassing information.

What the IID experienced, however, is that in a digital project, planning is not an absolute factor. It changes based on the limitations, advantages and disadvantages. For example, building trust among the group which was one of the optimal needs and foundations of the project could be achieved in less time and efforts of facilitation in a face-to-face meeting. We always needed to map out a 'plan B' next to planning each stage or phase. We needed to consider extra time for participants to come to the level of feeling trust with the other members and the group regarding the limits of meetings that were not face-to-face.

Dialogue possesses its own characteristics and needs to be situated amongst and supported by other intervention approaches (e.g. negotiation, problem-solving workshop, mediation, etc.) in the field of CAR. The entire process is filled with unknowns and unfolding events for both sides, practitioners and individuals alike. Maybe this explains

why scholars and practitioners of dialogue note frequently that dialogue needs courage. This courage must be present throughout the journey to tackle these unknowns.

Conclusion

The occasions on which a dialogue among enemy states contributes to successful conflict resolution vary widely. The dialogue model proposed in this dissertation is perhaps most applicable to situations similar to the Iranian and Israeli conflict where the states have disconnected the citizens and are willing to escalate the conflict. Such a dialogue initiative promotes multi-dimensional experiments. It is primarily preventive and deescalates the animosity between the two sides. It is also educational as well as a training platform to both practitioners and participants.

This doctoral research intended to pilot a model of digital dialogue and document its implementation as well as participants' feedback on the process. By focusing on the track II diplomacy, it documented a case study of digital dialogue over four years. It focused on and documented shifts that occurred in the dialogue group during that four years. Ultimately, it intended to determine the viability of the Reflective Digital Dialogue model as a method of contributing to conflict prevention between citizens of enemy states.

The case study described in this dissertation offers a new model of dialogue for the field of conflict resolution. The model is able to guide the use of digital dialogue within a conflict prevention approach. In our current world where the interests of many states still lie in a willingness toward war and where threatening and dehumanization of

the *other* is seen as fair game, there are ways for practitioners to mobilize citizens for

contributing in a process that seeks the prevention of war.

Appendices

Appendix A

MANIFEST: IRAN-ISRAEL-US WOMEN'S DIALOGUE

The Iran-Israel-US Women's Dialogue aims to bridge women scholars and activists of the three countries for the purpose of raising up a powerful voice to prevent war. The dialogue attempts to change nightmares of war into mutual understanding, despite the messages of war that political leaders have conveyed. Under pressure from fear of a war—initiated by governments—the dialogue begins efforts to find ways to prevent war. It is hoped that the group will ultimately go beyond dialogue to take concrete actions.

The dialogue goals are to:
- Show the desire for connecting across national divides,
- Overcome the fears of not only the Iranian and Israeli peoples, but also of people of the world,
- Counteract war mongering by Israel, Iran and the US,
- Share ideas for solidarity,
- Open windows to re-think "who are you", "who am I", "who we want to be", "what is my fear", "what is your fear", "what should WE do to wipe out fears of OUR peoples",
- Find practical steps and ways to war prevention and act together to implement them,

This dialogue is unique in bringing together women with experience in women's social and political activism to use their experience and skills to reframe government narratives and to PREVENT WAR.

Appendix B

Questionnaire

The questioner distributed among the participants in October 2014 to form and design the

phase two (explained in chapter III):

For Our Iran-Israel Dialogue;

1. Do you agree with:
a) One hour per month live session
b) An hour and a half per month live session
c) It varies and depends on the events and discussions' need

2. Which do you agree with:
a) Adding new members in 2014
b) Adding new members gradually through the next year/s
c) Stop adding new members
d) Any other idea?
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3. If you agree with adding new members, how many new participants from each
country do you suggest?
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4. What type of topics are you interested in being discussed for the next sessions from
the two countries:
a) Culture
b) Society
c) Traditions and national events
d) Political events
e) Food, sports, or other types of activities in the two societies

f)   If you have more than one interest, please list them up here.

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5.   Please suggest two-three particular topics that you think should discussed in our talk.

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Thank you!

Appendix C

Chronological Events and the IID Sessions

Session	Stages	Topic/Discussion	Simultaneous Event	Important Points by the Participants	Most Valuable Results/lesson
1	1	Why dialogue?	- Israel urges Obama to strike on Iran	Showing interest in doing something to prevent war and peacebuilding.	-Published the first piece on March 27, 2012 on Iran-Israel Peace on Search for Common Ground, translated to seven language including Hebrew and Farsi.
2	1	Testing and line conference call	Rise of negative rhetoric between Israeli and Iranian leaders.		Difficulties in reaching out the Israeli participants through land line phone.
3	1	Testing PalTalk as platform for dialogue	Report on Iran's nuclear capacity by UN nuclear inspectors		PalTalk didn'r work for all participants. There were technical difficulties with this software, so we never really got a conversation going.
4	1	Further testing of PalTalk		Agreement: PalTalk too cumbersome	PalTalk conversation went well but needed assistance of a staff for guiding the participants, and bringing each Israeli participant into the conference room
5	1	What will be discussed in IID?		Participants start sharing their individual fears, concerns, and	- Clarifying that each participant talks on behalf of her own - and not people of her country. Building self-safety for each participant. - Chose Skype for the next sessions.

				experiments. This way, we will not go through big foreign policy issues and will not think that we are here to "resolve" the problem of the world. We are just individuals to dialogue with each other as one Iranian or one Israeli.	
6	1	What are your insecurities and concerns regarding the possibility of war between Israel and Iran? How do your people look at this confrontation? What hopes do you have on possible ways forward toward peace?	Opened the main question on major fears among Iranian and Israeli society about the other side.	Decided to remove "women" from the title of the dialogue and inviting male scholar, journalist and peace practitioners to the dialogue.	Opening this topic needed some work in advance that done in the previous sessions, from clarification of "why we are here" to continuation of trustbuilding process.
7	1	Continuation of the topics from the previous session.			The focus question for discussion was: What are the major fears that you have as an individual and as a citizen of Israel/Iran/US about the other country and/or the situation? The overall goal of the question

					was to surface and discuss the fears that underlie the rhetoric of war.
8	1	Continuation of the topics from the previous session turned to insecurity and fears of Israeli and Palestinians related to Gaza war.	Gaza attack.		The first Guest-Facilitator. Facilitated by an American facilitator.
9	1	What are the dominant narratives from the Israelis about the Iranians and vice-versa? What would it take to change that dominant narrative?	Gaza attacks.		One of Iranian feminist young participants left the dialogue after a hard argument in the previous session.
10	1	Story of N. from Iran's trip to Egypt.		Sexual abuse in the two countries.	E. suggest a discussion on 'What are the expectations of women under this government, how has this changed? What is their role?'
11	1	Story of M. from Iran about her trip to Morocco.	Israel election on Jan 22nd, 2013.	N. from Iran opens discussion of sexual abuse and masculinity of violence.	Both side participants decide to open an open discussion on women rights in the two cultures.
12	1	Women's rights in the two countries.	Next Day of Israel's Presidential	Discussed the election, the	exampling the phenomenon of women's human rights in Iran and Israel, including "rape" and definition of security and safety for

			Election.	phenomenon of "rape" and definition of security and safety for women in Iranian and Israeli cultures + masculine thoughts on this regarding what M. from Iran opened a discussion in the previous sessions.	women in Iranian and Israeli cultures, rules and laws, plus masculine thoughts in the two cultures.
13		Laws & Violence against women in Israel & Iran		Both sides exchange experience about different activities done at the grassroots level in each country and how they are Supported.	N. from Iran suggests more sessions on Women & violence in Iran and Israel.
14	1, 2	Violence against Women in Iran, Israel, and the U.S.	Increase of sanctions on Iran.	-Potential for shared symbology between Passover and Norooz -Potential for shared	Celebrating Cyrus the Great and Jewish-Iranian Bonds at George Mason University in March 2013.

				understanding among these dialogue participants for commitments to your children and your parents - Generational and immigrant gaps. Language and feeling isolated. We face them in every Culture.	
15	1	Celebrations and Holidays in Iran & Israel.		-Starting storytelling phase, a part of trustbuilding process. -Story of E. from Israel.	Communality on: -Celebrations and holidays. "There were common symbols between Norooz and Passover that we brought together." -Interest in meeting with one another -Engagement over brainstorming for cross cultural journalism ideas -Interest and fascination over E.'s story -Shared understanding of N.'s current situation with her mother who is ill -A commitment to parents as well as children
16	1	-Story of F. from Iran. -Women's movements in Iran & Israel Women's empowerment -Dynamics between the US		-Interesting how the same space feels different as a home to some people. -Want to try and discuss topics such as the marriage and	Communality on: -Interest in women's empowerment -A lack of addressing the important issues such as welfare in all three countries -Many current political issues in all three countries

		and Iran -Upcoming elections -Optimism in depressing times		divorce in Iran and Israel, women's movements, the role of religion and the future of nuclear.	
17	1, 2	Story of Ch. From Israel. -Experience and felling of the third generation of Holocaust survivors.	-Recent political changes for both nations	-Ch. From Israel discusses his story as an Israeli-- how Israelis today do not have a big story to tell such as surviving the Holocaust of being prepared to fight and die. Instead, people are being challenged with how to live a happy life, bring food to the table and how to live. But this is a challenge because there are many different ideas surrounding how people should live in Israel and therefore	Communality on: -Ceremonies such as mourning. Same 7-day process of grieving with friends and family. Similar 30-40-day ceremony and similar yearly Memorial Day for grieving. These ceremonies and traditions are very similar. -Some commonalities concerning retirement beliefs.

				tensions can arise. -Rafsanjani could make a large impact on the changing tides of Iran- his recent rhetoric is a major step forward.	
18	2	-The possible impact of Iranian election on Iran-Israel conflict.	Iranian presidential election on June 14th. The upcoming Iranian elections could create change in Iran's internal dynamics and how the world views Iran.	E.'s collaboration idea; writing pieces pairing Israeli and Iranian members for some article, then, translating them into Hebrew as well as Farsi and publishing them on Media, websites, and prominent blogs.	-Iranian dialogue participants were able to fully explain the situation concerning the Iranian election and their hopes for the future. -Israeli dialogue participants were able to understand an Iranian perspective from both inside Iran and throughout the diaspora and can dispel that to friends within Israel.
19	2	- Personal perspectives and how you view the other - National narratives and the		- Many in Israel have felt a fear of Iran's nuclear program for over 30 years. Iranians	-National narratives and the ability of state manipulation -Outlets for learning about one another—they may be there (such as the internet or books) - but people are not curious to discover more about the other. - Israel still will not feel safe no matter how many nuclear weapons they have—no good answer for safety and security besides peace and

		ability of state manipulation - Outlets for learning about one another—they may be there (such as the internet or books) but people are not curious to discover more about the other. - a participant from Israel asks: "Why is it important for Iranians to have nuclear power?"		see Israel equipped with actual nuclear warheads ready to use too. -We need to teach and share basic history, geography and basic understanding of the other culture in order to get people curious. Need to humanize people and share knowledge. Have rational debates concerning security, nuclear weapons, fear and genocide. States should not manipulate this discussion to create fear of genocide or turn it into a discussion of victimhood and the underdog.	trust. - Informal surveys in Israel have shown mixed education concerning Iran and Iranian people. Israeli man jailed in Egypt said he saw Iranians "I see them as I see everyone. As I see you, and as I see myself—as people." Fascinating how he can distinguish between the state and the people, unlike many others. - Anti-Israel sentiment in Iran was shaped by viewing the situation between Israel and Palestine—not because of history with Shah - Need to work with Israel board of education and schools (beginning with kindergarten) to change teaching and textbook system -Thinking about what we can do to neutralize fear of the other and fear within ourselves. How can we help Iranians see that Israelis are not just soldiers?

20	2	National narratives and security interests in both country school systems. However, these narratives changed and their emphasis on 'the enemy' changed generationally.	Iranian presidential election	- Education in some ways in both Iran and Israel to be fearful of the *other* - School systems across Iran and Israel vary in terms of political, religious and secular schools -Some participants in this dialogue have had very different experiences and encounters with Israel/Iran based on their schooling.	- Sharing personal narratives concerning the national and educationally driven narrative of the other. - National narratives and security interests in both country school systems. However, these narratives changed and their emphasis on 'the enemy' changed generationally. - Continually changing portrayals/depictions/national narratives of the other throughout recent decades. National 'enemies' change with the times and current events.
21	3	How My People Consider Your People.	Brainstorming on collaboration; co-authoring, co-researching, etc. Rosh Hashana learning	-Elected Iranian President Rouhani's international message to Jews -Netanyahu's response and the right-wing response looking for a	-Positive messaging coming from Rouhani and Foreign Minister. How can we further this? Further gestures need to develop on both sides! -Interesting point that Israel has always congratulated Iran on their New Year. Important points and notes: -Creation of a new project for the dialogue members—parties of two, an Israeli and an Iranian will work together if they choose to do so, on writing together and publishing. It will be a scientific and rational process of looking at the relationship of messaging and facts about Israel and Iran to share from both sides to both sides.

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				denial of Rouhani's twitter and message. -Celebration of Jewish Holiday- Rosh Hashanah	-How can we work on journalism, conflict resolution, and two-person partnerships to tell and share stories that shift and change these stereotypes?
22	2, 3	-feedback about the article, -Ways to move forward with normalizing publishing articles and other publications about one another side.	A collaborative work of L. Israeli and A. Iranian. Published an article on necessity of opening the discussion of Iran-Israel diplomacy, on Daily Beast. The piece was translated into both Hebrew and Farsi.	-Article has sparked cognitive dissonance. -How do we anticipate criticisms and feedback and prevent this? But, how do we continue to positively dispel truth and create cognitive dissonance?	Feedback on the article (whether good or bad) is good, because people are discussing this. -How do we frame these articles differently? How do we frame what other people perceive such as "Iranians believe…" without it seeming that your voice is becoming theirs? -Need to figure out ingredients that are necessary to create enough cognitive dissonance to get people curious about the other. But not too much, so that people write the article off as 'crazy' or 'reinforcing stereotypes.' What is the exact recipe?
23	2, 3	The new messaging from the new cabinet of Iran and Israeli feedback • Forced retirement in Israel—E. is working on these issues.	-Geneva negotiations and current relations between Iran, Israel and the U.S. - Iranians reacting to the French Foreign Minister at the negotiations, believing that he	-D's question: What would be something to say to Israeli's to show that indeed, Iran has no intention of creating a nuclear bomb and that there is	-Discussion on nuclear campaigns. This dialogue could work toward supporting nuclear campaign efforts to end nuclear weapons. - Netanyahu is gaining support in Israel from the public because he is hitting a sensitive nerve that he will protect Israel even if it is unpopular. Going back to 1938 thinking that Israel cannot rely on Americans or the international community. Israeli mentality— cannot rely on anyone else for protection and own survival and safety. Currently there is a lot of fear and negative stories in Israel. Need an incredible amount of positive interaction to shift that thinking.

		• Recent local elections in Israel and women did not do that well. • 'Peace' has become a negative word in Israel due to the correlation with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict	was acting as a spoiler in the negotiations. People in Iran are upset about the talks also. It appears that the Iranian sentiments and anger is mainly directed toward Netanyahu and Israel.	a real shift occurring? (Iranian government could internationally announce this and somehow provide evidence.) - N's statement: Realize we have a long way to go for reconciliation. Must remain optimistic, but it is good to have a reality check. Still have a long way to go in terms of government and people interactions. - D. and conflict resolution group in Israel is trying to create a new Jewish holiday— Nine Adar (February 9th). Concept of a day for healthy conflict in Hebrew.	

				Machloket l'shem shamayim—a conflict/dispute for the sake of heaven.	
24	2, 3	Do Iranians know why they are afraid of Israelis? Is it just the government? Or is there something really threatening them?	IranTalks.	-Positive responses from Israeli grad students concerning Rouhani's Holocaust statement. Holocaust statement carries more weight than the New Year's statement because it addresses the fear factor for Israeli's and therefore, is more powerful than a New Year's 'nicety.'	-Hard for people outside of Iran to accept the shifts going on inside Iran. Surprised by gestures. -Must figure out people's sensitivities in order to help create gestures that affect them and create cognitive dissonance. -Much consensus over D.'s statement about first fearing Iranian nuclear weapons in the early to mid-1990's. S. agrees this was exactly when Iran decided to become a front-line opponent of Israel and the U.S.
25	2	- Current reflections on Iran and Israel re IranTalks.	IranTalks.	- F. reflection from Iran in 'Disdain in Iran for Ahmadinejad	

				and Netanyahu.' Is there something Iranians could do to help placate Israeli's?	
26	3, 2	Do Iranians and Israelis know why they are afraid of one another? Is it just the government? Or is there something really threatening them?		The facilitator asks the participants to reflect on the changes they feel or experience in themselves.	Continue to make meaning and lead the dialogue with intentionality—both through discovering dialogue topics to discuss and through current event check-ins to make meaning of current situations.
27	3, 2, 1	Jewish national holidays—Remembrance/Memorial Day and Independence Day.	Holocaust Day.	A. from Israel raises a topic with the question "if the tension and the conflict between Iran and Israel can be solved with a resolution to the Palestinian problem, or if there is an independent conflict which has nothing to do with the Palestinian	Recently had Holocaust Memorial Day. Possible similarities between Israeli Independence Day and Iranian revolution day. Similar rituals, but perhaps more emotionally charged for Israeli holidays.

Interesting question: Israeli Independence Day—Independence from whom? Possible answer: Marked a sense of independence as Jewish self-determination of their fate. |

				problem, which is a direct conflict between Iran and Israel?"	
28	3, 1	- Think about common concerns in the two lands: How Iran defines itself and has navigated issues of religious identity and peoplehood. -How does Iran come to terms with what constitutes being among the people of Iran? -Ongoing debates and process in Iran about what is 'Iranian.'		Discussion of Iranian politics. Both countries have 'requirements/limits' on who may become leaders, but it is said that Iran makes this clearer in the constitution and Israel is vaguer on this.	-Similar debates in Israel and Iran for what it means to be part of that peoplehood. - Missing the minority voice from both Iranian and Jewish sides of this dialogue
29	2	Current Israel-Gaza crisis	Gaza war	-The latest [in early July] is that after Israeli and Palestinian teenagers were murdered, a number of riots broke out on both sides. Crisis has	

				escalated, and tensions are high. Immediate trigger for current crisis in Israel: teenage murders. Potential larger trigger for crisis could be the issue of Palestinian rights and citizenship? -Confusing categories in terms of Palestinian citizenship.	
30	2	- Iran nuclear deal - Haj - Saudi Arabia & Iran conflict	Gaza war	S. shares her story of Hadj and her feeling about the enmity of Saudis towards Iranians in Hadj.	
31	1, 2	Minorities and language issue in Iran and Israel.		Similarities in both Iran and Israel with the topic of national language issues in	E. shared a personal narrative concerning the crisis in Israel, and the disproportionate attention in media for another crisis occurring in Israel. "Iranian friends are here for you Israeli friends—please do not feel alone," Iranian participants say.

				court/prosecutions, especially for minorities. Similar process of passport and ID card information—formerly used ID 'codes' in Israel to describe ethnicity. Lauren shared a personal narrative concerning her fears.	
32	2	Discussing Intifada, Gaza, and other conflicts in Israel and how fears are being generated.	Gaza war.	Iranians see Palestine as a victim in Israel-Palestine conflict. Nervousness of Israeli citizens from all conflicts inside the country.	Compassion and active listening from Iranians toward Israelis.
33	2	Briefing 2014's topics and discussions.	IranTalks.	L. from Israel asks Iranian share more about minority rights in Iran.	Participants share and exchange more details about their feelings and their people on current concerns (Iran Talks, Gaza war)
34	2, 3	The narrative of			Participants reach a new theme to ponder: - Do our people have the

		"peace"(Part I) in Iran and Israel.			same definition of 'peace' towards different nations? - What are those different narratives?
35	2, 3	Part II, different narrative of 'peace, friends, and enemy' in Iranian and Israeli society. Part II: "The Narrative of 'Peace' in Iranian and Israeli Society." - Do our people have the same definition of 'peace' towards different nations? - What are those different narratives?		Discussing "How have the identities of Iranians and Israelis been shaped in diaspora and affected the two peoples' narratives living in their second land." - Staying alert to find topics for co-working and collaboration.	
36	2, 3	My feelings towards "you"		Iranian and Israeli feelings on IranTalk and the framework. The impact of nuclear framework on and/or in Israeli and Iranian societies, the Iranian and Israeli societies' feelings on IranTalk and the framework. We	

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				also will be hearing three of our members' brief on what's going on in Iran and Israel re the IranTalk?	
37	2, 3	Nuke concept to Israeli and Iranian societies		- What differences are seen amongst Iranian and Israeli narratives inside and outside of the countries in terms of defining enmity and friendship? Do diaspora narratives feature the same enemies as narratives within the home countries?	Participants discuss feeling of Iranians and Israelis in diaspora re the two countries' conflict.
38	2, 3	Iranian and Israeli feelings on IranTalk and the framework	IranDeal Negotiations	Sensitivity of Iran Deal to the eyes of Iranians and Israelis	
39	2, 3	- Nuke concept to Israelis and Iranians	IranDeal Negotiations	- Israeli and Iranian societies in post-Iran Deal.	

40	2, 3	What domestic concerns and insecurity my country is suffering of.	Iran Deal		Reaching to this question: Do you feel the similar in your side?
41	2, 3	- The US Presidential election and my country concerns.	US election (Hillary & Trump) and impact on Iranians and Israelis	- Iranian concerns about Hillary Clinton who is anti-Iran and pro-military action toward Iran. - recent military contract btw US & Israel.	

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Biography

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