## Helpdesk Research Report

# Communicating peace agreements

Huma Haider
21.07.2016

## Question

*What lessons can be learnt from how countries have communicated the contents of peace agreements to their populations in advance of popular referenda?*

## Contents

## 1. Overview

Peace agreements and new constitutions may require ratification by the electorate through a referendum. There is limited research, however, on the process of conducting such referendums and how to communicate the contents of peace agreements and constitutions to the electorate. Research that is available focuses on factors that can influence whether a referendum is likely to be won, including discussion of campaign strategies. These factors include:

- *Planning and timing*: Sufficient time is required to plan and implement referendum campaigns and voter education. The peace agreement and/or draft constitution, along with the referendum question, should also be published well before the referendum date to allow for proper dissemination and discussion (Brandt et al., 2011).
- *Consultation and participation*: Key actors and the broader public need to be able to participate in negotiations and constitution-making processes from the early stages in order to understand the issues and make informed choices at the referendum (Loizides, 2016; Brandt et al., 2011). Participation also promotes local ownership and shared responsibility for a subsequent agreement/constitution, making participants more likely to vote in favour of its implementation (Loizides, 2016).
- *Voter education*: There are various methods of voter or civic education, designed to help prepare the public to participate in the relevant processes. In most cases, a combination of methods is required to reach different audiences and communities in the same country (Brandt et al., 2011).

- *Media*: The media provides cues for the public on what to think about referendums (Schuck & de Vreese, 2011). Voter awareness is likely to grow with increasing media coverage (Hobolt, 2005).
- *Communicating 'no alternative' - prospect theory*: Prospect theory, which is based on the view that people are more strongly motivated to avoid costs rather than to achieve gains (see Schuck & De Vreese, 2009), has been relied on to frame preferred choices in referendum campaigns as less risky than the alternative (Hancock, Weiss & Duerr, 2010). Focusing on the damaging outcomes that could result from a 'no' vote, rather than the benefits from a 'yes' vote, can help to persuade voters to support a peace process (Oliver, cited in Ibid; Hancock, 2011).
- *Reaching marginalised groups*: Successful targeting of groups and communities that have been historically marginalised is essential and requires proper resources. It may entail, for example, the translation of printed materials, media programming and workshop presentations into minority languages (Brandt et al., 2011).

## Country examples

The 1998 referendum in Northern Ireland has received the greatest attention in the literature. This referendum, along with the one held in South Africa in 1992, resulted in 'yes' votes and is considered to have successfully facilitated settlement and transition (see Loizides, 2014).

**Northern Ireland**: The 1998 referendum to accept or reject the Good Friday Agreement is one of the most prominent and well cited examples in the literature of a successful 'peace referendum'. The Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) communication strategy was inclusive and designed to appeal to 'all' the people of Northern Ireland, regardless of affiliation (Somerville & Kirby, 2012). Civil society and the media bridged political leaders and people at the local level, enabling regular communication. Despite the absence of a unified Yes organisation, there was still a harmonisation of messages from the disparate pro-agreement parties, organised by the civil society Yes campaign (Hancock, 2011). The referendum campaign focused not on the details of the agreement, but instead on messages of a better future, no alternative, reconciliation, change and equality (Couto, 2001). The Agreement and the process were framed as a better alternative to continued or renewed conflict that could stem from rejection of the Agreement (Hancock, Weiss & Duerr, 2010). This strategy has been noted as a key factor in the referendum's passage (Hancock, 2011), particularly in winning over swing-voters (Couto, 2001).

**South Africa**: The 1992 referendum asked white South Africans whether they supported continuation of the reform process, aimed at a new constitution. The way in which the referendum question was framed and worded made it difficult to garner opposition. There was much cooperation and unity on the Yes side across political parties and civil society, including strong vocal support from big business, the media, universities, the sports sector and artists (see Strauss, 1993; Kersting, 2010). Similar to the case of Northern Ireland, the Yes campaign relied heavily on prospect theory and the language of 'no alternative'. De Klerk made clear that a No vote would be 'suicidal' (Kersting, 2010).

**Cyprus**: In April 2004, Cypriots were asked to give their consent to the proposed reunification of their island, under the proposed UN plan. Simultaneous twin referendums were held with Greek Cypriots voting no to the plan and Turkish Cypriots voting yes. There was no public consultation or polling of people's preferences in the negotiation process, considered to have been a key reason why many Greek Cypriots rejected the proposal (Lee & Mac Ginty, 2012). In addition, the decision to have two separate referendums resulted in campaigning aimed exclusively at each constituency, rather than an inclusive approach (Loizides, 2016). The Yes campaign on the Greek Cypriot side was poorly organised, with no coherent leadership and no effective media and advertising strategy. In contrast, the Yes campaign on

the Turkish Cypriot side was well organised and well supported by the government and civil society, including activists, the business sector and media (Bahcheli & Noel, 2009). The media in particular was much more supportive of a Yes vote than Greek Cypriot media (Ciftci, 2014).

**Guatemala**: A referendum to ratify the Indigenous Rights Accord, as part of peace negotiations, was held in 1999. There was a very low turnout and the proposal was rejected. Most members of indigenous ethnic groups, who were the subject of the Accord were not part of the process for making the changes (Lee & Mac Ginty, 2012). In addition, little effort was made to prepare indigenous groups for the referendum.  The majority of Mayans lacked understanding of the issues and possible consequences (Ibid). Neither the government nor political parties or social organisations were willing to allocate necessary budget support to voter education services, particularly necessary given that most Mayans are illiterate and many Mayan communities very remote from municipal centres (Ibid).

# 2. Referendum campaigns

Peace agreements and/or new constitutions may, in some cases, need to be ratified by the electorate through a referendum. In the case of peace processes, a vote in favour of the agreement gives decision makers a mandate to continue the process, whereas a vote against the agreement blocks its implementation and usually puts the process on hold (Paffenholz, 2014). There are various factors that influence whether a 'peace referendum' is likely to be won:

## Planning and timing

It is important to ensure sufficient time to plan and implement referendum campaign and voter education strategies.  In preparation for South Africa's constitutional referendum in 1996, for example, planners took four months to plan for public consultation and civic education efforts (Brandt et al., 2011). Strong planning and management skills are required to coordinate the large number of partners required for media campaigns and voter education strategies. The peace agreement and/or draft constitution – in addition to the referendum question - should also be published well before the referendum date such that there is sufficient time for proper dissemination and discussion (Ibid).

## Consultation and participation

Key actors need to be able to participate in negotiations and constitution-making processes from the early stages such that they can become aware of the issues and debates, allowing them to make informed choices at the referendum (Loizides, 2016; Brandt et al., 2011). Public consultation and participation also promotes local ownership and shared responsibility for a subsequent agreement/constitution, making the public more likely to vote in favour of its implementation (Loizides, 2016). Key actors include civil society actors, constitutional experts, and elected political leaders from both government and opposition parties (Ibid). In addition, the broader public should be consulted throughout the peace process. A settlement often requires formal endorsement by voters in more than one community (Ibid).

In various contexts, lack of consultation with groups significantly affected by the potential reforms has prevented constituencies from reflecting their interests in the proposal, rendering the proposals problematic (Lee & Mac Ginty, 2012). For example, the discussion for the draft proposal was undertaken either between the top negotiators (Cyprus), among legislators (Guatemala and Iraq), or in extreme

cases, proposals were advanced by the presidents with no debate (Cameroon and Rwanda) (Ibid). Leaders may argue that consultation is not required as communities will get their say by deciding whether to ratify the agreement and/or reforms in a referendum (Loizides, 2016). This unintentional effect of direct democracy is termed the *moral hazard* effect of peace referendums (Ibid.).

It is also beneficial for key actors to be consulted on the framing of the referendum question. This is related to the importance of preparing constituencies and managing expectations of change (Lee & Mac Ginty, 2012). Questions should be tested in advance to see whether they are understood; and the chosen question should be announced well in advance of the referendum (Brandt et al., 2011).

## Voter education

'Voter education' (or civic education) in this context refers to 'access to information on the referendum issue and the context of the referendum' (Lee and Mac Ginty, 2012, p. 56). Such educational activities are designed to help prepare the public to participate in the relevant processes (Brandt et al., 2011).

There are various methods of voter or civic education, including (see Brandt et al., 2011):

- Radio and television, such as call-in shows and debates on reforms/provisions.
- Billboards, particularly in areas where large segments of the population do not have radio or television.
- Newspapers and magazines, which can publish copies of the peace agreement or constitution.
- Stories, comic books or digital books.
- Leaflets and brochures.
- An official website of the peace making/ constitution making body, which could encourage the public to send questions, comments and suggestions direct to the website, so long as there are the resources to respond.
- Popular Internet sites, mobile and social media tools, such as Facebook and Twitter or texting, which could send out key pieces of information, including the opening of the polls for a referendum and information on important provisions. This could be particularly effective for youth. In South Africa, a phone line was set up to receive questions and suggestions.
- Cultural and sporting events, games and competitions, directed at adults and youth. Some countries (e.g. Fiji) have conducted art and literary competitions on themes of the new constitution in order to encourage public engagement in the process. Street theatre performances and short plays can also be effective in educating people about particular issues.
- Face-to-face workshops and town-hall meetings, which may be the only effective way to reach disadvantaged or hard to reach groups that do not have much access to media and/or are illiterate or do not speak the dominant language. In addition, they can bring peace negotiators or constitution-makers in direct contact with the people, which can allow them to gauge the extent to which the electorate, or particular social groups, understand the issues. Workshops must be designed to be accessible. In Nepal, for example, lawyers prepared dense educational materials and civic educators lectured on the political system, which did not necessarily prepare the public to participate on a practical level. An effective approach is to begin with an issue that is of concern to participants (e.g. land rights) and discuss how the peace/constitutional process and referendum relates to this.

Information and choice questionnaires (ICQs), which summarise a full range of viable policy options and the probable consequences of each (as provided by experts), and asks respondents to evaluate the attractiveness of each consequence before making a choice, is another method of educating the electorate (Neijens & De Vreese, 2009). ICQs can be effective in helping people to process information better and to make more consistent decisions (Ibid). A study on the Dutch 2005 referendum on the European Constitutional Treaty finds that many voters had little knowledge about the European Constitution and had inconsistent preferences. The ICQ made their vote preferences more consistent, particularly among those with lower levels of 'political sophistication'. Findings also show that a large percentage of respondents indicated a different voting preference on the EU Constitution after going through the ICQ (Ibid).

In most cases, a combination of methods is required to reach different audiences and communities in the same country (e.g. women, illiterate citizens, and minorities). Research may be needed to determine which medium or methods would be most effective in reaching particular groups to convey information in a trusted and credible manner, taking into consideration culture and context (Brandt et al., 2011). In addition, given the unlimited time and resources often afforded to peace and constitutional making processes, it is important to assess what is feasible and cost-effective. Setting up a sophisticated website, for example, may not be the best use of resources if only a small percentage of the public uses the Internet (Ibid).

In Afghanistan and other countries, biweekly or monthly magazines have been distributed to more than a hundred thousand readers, assisted by use of websites such as Facebook and Twitter (Brandt et al., 2011). Some countries have relied on field offices of their constitution-making bodies to help disseminate materials to remote areas (Ibid). In Rwanda, copies of the draft constitution were distributed during the two years prior to the 2003 referendum, and efforts were made to reach marginalised groups, including the illiterate. Such efforts are considered to have contributed to high voter turnout and a vote in favour of the constitution (Ibid).

South Africa engaged in an extensive and creative civic education programme prior to the constitutional referendum in 1996, which has inspired subsequent constitution-makers. The aim of the programme was to consult with the public and prepare them to participate, creating a sense of ownership and legitimacy for the process and the constitution (Brandt et al., 2011). Efforts were made to reach a broad cross-section of citizens, including the illiterate and disadvantaged, through public meetings, workshops, and a media campaign, designed to raise awareness and encourage public participation. The campaign included mass distribution of the draft constitution (in a simplified format) through mail and in taxis, newspapers and schools (including in braille); advertisements with messages such as 'It's your right to decide your constitutional rights'; posters, leaflets, brochures, newsletters, booklets; comic book versions of the bill of rights; weekly television and radio programmes; an official website; teaching aids; and a talk line in five languages. An external evaluation found that approximately 75 percent of South Africans knew about the process and about half of the population were aware that they could make a submission about constitutional issues (Ibid).

In other contexts, voters have not had sufficient opportunities to become aware of and understand the issues central to the referendums. This may be due to a short run-in time between the announcement and holding of a referendum; and or inadequate resources for advertising and campaigning (Lee & Mac Ginty, 2012). In some cases, structural factors may play a role. In Guatemala, for example, political leaders did not consider ethnic minorities to be important political assets and limited the resources devoted to explaining the referendum to them (Ibid).

## Media

The media plays a critical role in providing cues for the public on what to think about referendums (Schuck & de Vreese, 2011). In many cases, they are the key source of information for voters. Voter awareness is likely to grow with increasing media coverage (Hobolt, 2005). Studies show that there is a strong relationship between the quantity of media coverage given to an issue and the perceived salience of the issue among the public (see Hobolt, 2005). Research also indicates that how a referendum issue is framed in the news can affect voter participation (de Vreese & Semetko, 2002; cited in Schuck & de Vreese, 2009). Tabloid newspapers, characterised as focusing on the 'saleability' of information – incorporating more pictures, bigger headlines, less text, shorter expressions, more informal expressions and more emotional language – has the potential to increase readers' attention and interest in a topic (Schuck & De Vreese, 2011). A study on the role of the media in referendums finds that greater levels of exposure to tabloid style campaign news led to higher approval of referendums (Ibid).

While the media and news framing can generally have persuasive effects on voters, it may be less influential in referendums considered to be of particularly high salience and/or where people hold strong attitudes (such as in the case of the Dutch 2005 referendum on the EU Constitution) (Schuck & De Vreese, 2009).

## Communicating 'no alternative': Prospect theory

How a peace process is framed can have an impact on the durability and success of the process (Hancock, Weiss & Duerr, 2010). Psychological research demonstrates that people tend to pay more attention to negative information rather than positive information; and negative attitudes are more likely to motivate behaviour than positive attitudes (see Schuck & De Vreese, 2009). Prospect theory, which is based on the view that people are more strongly motivated to avoid costs rather than to achieve gains (see Schuck & De Vreese, 2009), has been relied on to frame preferred choices in referendum campaigns as less risky than the alternative (Hancock, Weiss & Duerr, 2010). In order to get the electorate to support the peace process, they need to be made aware of all of the possibilities associated with their choices (Ibid). The focus on the risks of failure, and the damaging outcomes that could result from a No vote, rather than the benefits of success from a Yes vote, is considered to be helpful in bolstering the Yes side (Oliver, cited in Ibid; Hancock, 2011). Hancock, Weiss & Duerr (2010) stress the importance of keeping populations focused on the main benefit of the peace agreement – that it will deliver peace, an outcome much preferred to the alternative framed as a return to violence and war.

In Northern Ireland and South Africa, for example, the successful Yes vote was attributed, in part, to fears of significant negative consequences in the event of a No vote. There was a widespread perception that there would be renewed violence and in the case of South Africa, international sanctions and economic turmoil. Such fears were not present in the case in Cyprus (Loizides, 2016) (see country studies below for further discussion). In the case of the Israeli-Palestinian Oslo Accords of 1993, it is argued that proponents were unable to sell the peace agreement because they did not focus on the costs of failure but rather emphasised the rewards of success (Hancock, Weiss & Duerr, 2010).

## Reaching marginalised groups

It is important to ensure that accurate information and effective civic or educational messages reach a wide and inclusive audience, particularly groups and communities that have been historically marginalised. This may require the translation of printed materials, media programming and workshop

presentations into minority languages and in ways that can reach those with reading/hearing impairments (Brandt et al., 2011). Where it is unlikely that groups have access to television and radio, other tools such as the use of billboards and workshops could be utilised. In Nepal, representatives of marginalised groups were purposely brought together to discuss constitutional issues. Where face-to-face workshops are held, it may be necessary to provide childcare or to hold workshops at night or early in the morning so that women and farmers in a particular area are available to attend (Ibid).

Resources necessary to specifically target marginalised groups and communities are, however, often not made available. In such cases, seemingly 'neutral' campaigns may have the effect of exacerbating inequalities by empowering those who already have access to some level of social networks or resources (Brandt et al., 2011). In addition, some campaign tactics may have the unintended consequence of alienating specific groups of voters.  While celebrity campaigns, for example, have been effective in some contexts (e.g. a peace concert by Bono and U2 in the Northern Ireland referendum, see below), in other cases, the support of prominent business people and celebrities have contributed to an elitist outlook that turned away 'ordinary' voters (Qvortrup, 2012).

# 3. Country examples

Successful referendums are considered to add legitimacy and durability to negotiated peace settlements (see Loizides, 2014). In the cases of South Africa (1992) and Northern Ireland (1998), for example, referendums have been viewed as facilitating settlements and transition by engaging broader segments of the society in the peace process and limiting the role of violent opposition groups (see Ibid).

There are various kinds of 'peace referendums': in South Africa, the referendum presented a general idea (whether to continue with the reform process) – referred to as a 'mandate' referendum (Loizides, 2016). Mandate referendums can also concern the framework of a peace agreement with the public being asked to provide a mandate to finalise the agreement. In other cases, such as in Cyprus, the public was asked to approve (or reject) the actual provisions of the peace plan/constitution.

## Northern Ireland

The 1998 referendum in Northern Ireland to accept or reject the Good Friday Agreement is one of the most prominent and well cited examples of 'peace referendum' in the literature. The referendum passed with 71.2 percent Yes votes out of an 81 percent turnout, which was considered to be sufficient to demonstrate the necessary support for the agreement (Somerville & Kirby, 2012). It signalled popular approval for a peace process that had largely been conducted at the elite political level, amounting to a 'peace affirmation referendum' (Lee & Mac Ginty, 2012).  The literature discusses various factors that are considered to have contributed to the affirmation of the peace process. These include:

### Approaches

*Dissemination:* A one-way communication model of dissemination, persuasion and argumentation approach was adopted, instead of dialogue (Somerville & Kirby, 2012). Political parties and civil society working on the Yes campaign drew on the expertise of public relations consultants and marketing firms. The Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), for example, explicitly used the concept of dissemination to explain the party's communication strategy for a Yes vote (Ibid). As part of the SDLP's public relations campaign, the SDLP relied on third-party endorsement, including high-profile figures from business, the arts, and British and Irish politics to endorse the Yes vote (Ibid).

*Inclusivity:* The SDLP's communication strategy was designed to appeal to 'all' the people of Northern Ireland, regardless of affiliation (Somerville & Kirby, 2012). Their campaign was openly disseminated to the entire population, without seeking to segment the public into nationalist and unionist, Protestant and Catholic, or British and Irish (Ibid). The message was non-partisan, connecting with everyday issues rather than constitutional preferences (Hancock, 2011). The SDLP's campaign leaflet emphasised that there were societal benefits of the Good Friday Agreement for everyone, in particular a better and more 'normal' future (Somerville & Kirby, 2012). This demonstrated a more genuine democratic character. In contrast, other pro-Agreement parties, such as the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) and Sinn Féin, focused on 'selling' the Agreement within their own constituencies (Ibid).

*Civil society involvement:* Regular consultations with local communities and the grassroots are considered to have been an effective element in obtaining public acceptance of the Good Friday Agreement (Fouéré, 2012). Further, civil society and the media are considered to have played a key role as a bridge between political leaders and people at the local level, enabling regular communication. Members of Northern Ireland's NGO community, including activists, lobbyists and business people, assembled a small non-party Yes campaign. Their six-week campaign included press releases, well designed advertisements and logos (see 'traffic signs' under 'No alternative' message), celebrity endorsements (including actor Kenneth Branagh and boxing champion Barry McGuigan), public talks by a cross-section of society (including an environmentalist, a women's activist, a dental student, a Presbyterian minister, an immigrant and an underage schoolboy), moving testimonials from victims and their relatives – calling for peace, and a video sent to first time voters (Hancock, 2011; Couto, 2001).

The media, while initially insisting on maintaining balance in reporting, eventually came to support the peace agreement (Paffenholz, 2014). The Yes campaign closely courted the media, creating photo opportunities showing local political leaders working in association with national government leaders that would draw attention (Couto, 2001). The civil society campaign found it difficult, however, to mobilise the business sector, broadly, or the trade unions and churches (Couto, 2001).

The role of the NGO community in Northern Ireland is considered to have been essential in producing a Yes vote, due in part to their campaign strategy that followed the tenants of prospect theory (see 'no alternative' section below) (Hancock, Weiss & Duerr, 2010). The Yes campaign also had more latitude in pressing their campaign as they did not have to be concerned about (or invest resources in) running for political office (Hancock, 2011).

*Harmonisation:* Efforts were made, based on advice from experts involved in other referendum campaigns, to run one campaign, with everybody on board, instead of various different Yes campaigns (see Couto, 2001). Ultimately, however, plans to develop a non-partisan secretariat for pro-Agreement parties failed, as some politicians were not comfortable with running a cross-party referendum campaign (Couto, 2001). This resulted in lack of cohesion on the part of the political parties supporting the agreement (Hancock, 2011). Nonetheless, since many of the political parties had neither the ability nor the will to create their own referendum campaigns from scratch, they took advantage of the expertise, resources and research offered to them by the civil society Yes campaign. Thus, despite the absence of a unified Yes organisation, there was still, to a large extent, a harmonisation of messages coming from the disparate pro-agreement parties (Hancock, 2011).

*Messages*

*The bigger picture:* Details of the Agreement were not a focus of the campaign, as it was believed that going through each clause would mean endless debate and a confused message (Couto, 2001). Instead the messages of a better future, no alternative, reconciliation, change and equality were the focus.

*No alternative:* Political leaders and civil society campaigning on the Yes side relied on a 'sales' message based on tenets of prospect theory, which frames the preferred choice as less risky than the alternative (Hancock, Weiss & Duerr, 2010) – and focuses more on the risks of failure rather than the benefits of success (Hancock, 2011). The Agreement and peace process was framed as a better alternative ('a fresh start') to continued or renewed conflict that could stem from rejection of the Agreement (Hancock, Weiss & Duerr, 2010). This strategy has been noted as a key factor in the referendum's passage (Hancock, 2011), particularly in shaping the opinion of the swing-voters (Couto, 2001). Political parties on the Yes side all articulated the theme of no alternative. In addition, the civil society Yes campaign adopted a series of eye-catching posters designed by advertising firm Saatchi and Saatchi of British road signs: a one-way street/way ahead for the agreement, compared to a 'no through road' for a no vote (Hancock, 2011; Hancock, Weiss & Duerr, 2010). It became the most visible symbol of the referendum, with widespread usage on signs, posters, postcards and advertising trucks (Hancock, 2011). The focus on the Agreement being superior to the alternative of renewed violence protected it from its flaws and potential implementation issues (Hancock, Weiss & Duerr, 2010).

*Reconciliation:* The SDLP argued that the essence of the Good Friday Agreement was that it provided a framework for possible reconciliation between two traditions and the ability of the two communities to move forward together (Somerville & Kirby, 2012). Leaflets and other promotional activity emphasised reconciliation and inclusivity (Ibid). A key symbolic moment occurred at a peace concert with Bono and U2, where the leaders of the two conflict parties, David Trimble and John Hume, shook hands (Somerville & Kirby, 2012). This was seen as particularly effective in portraying the Agreement as a fair political accommodation between unionists and nationalists, targeting those most likely to tip the balance toward a successful Yes vote (Paffenholz, 2014).

*Equality & Change:* The repeated use of the term 'equal rights' in the campaign materials of both nationalist parties (SDLP and Sinn Feín) was designed to reassure Catholic nationalist voters that they would not be treated as second-class citizens in the new Northern Ireland (Somerville & Kirby, 2012). The term 'change' was also a tagline on posters, emphasising that the Agreement was the best opportunity to break away from the past (Ibid).

## South Africa

Soon after coming into office, President De Klerk initiated a peace process that also ended Nelson Mandela's imprisonment. Within two years, however, his National Party began to lose support, threatening the legitimacy and mandate of the ongoing peace negotiations (Loizides, 2016). He decided to conduct a referendum asking white South Africans whether they supported continuation of the reform process, aimed at a new constitution through negotiation, with the hope that it would result in an unambiguous mandate to proceed (Ibid). The referendum took place in March 1992. Voter turnout was 85 percent and the Yes side won with 68.7 percent of the votes (see Ibid). This outcome is considered to have given de Klerk a mandate for further negotiations and paved the way for the end of apartheid (Lee & Mac Ginty, 2012). A No vote, however, could have meant the collapse of negotiations and resurgence of right-wing elements (Ibid). While the 1992 South African referendum is considered an important

milestone in South African history, little research has been conducted on it (Kersting, 2010). The following are some factors discussed in the literature that appear to have been effective in promoting a Yes vote:

### Approaches

*Non-threatening question:* The way in which the referendum question was framed and worded made it difficult to garner opposition. The question was: 'Do you support the continuation of the reform process that the State President started on 2 February 1990 and which is aimed at a new constitution through negotiations?' Such imprecise wording demonstrated that the referendum was more a moral debate about whether to end the apartheid system rather than a firm commitment to any particular new political system (Kersting, 2010).

*Cooperation:* The 'Vote Yes' campaign was better organised. During the referendum, the governing National Party (NP) and the Democratic Party (DP) cooperated for the first time (Kersting, 2010).

*Civil society involvement:* There was strong vocal support for a Yes vote from a wide cross-section of civil society, including big business, the media, universities, the sports sector and artists (see Strauss, 1993; Kersting, 2010). Big companies campaigned openly, articulating the negative repercussions of a No vote – including the closure of factories and massive job losses. The media, universities, the sports and arts sector all emphasised that a No vote would result in a return to the isolation of South Africa – exclusion from academic collaboration and participation in international sporting events, and the inability of South Africans to promote their cultural industry internationally. Ultimately, sport and economic issues were key pillars on which the Yes vote rested (Kersting, 2010).

### Messages

*No alternative:* Similar to the case of Northern Ireland, the 'Vote Yes' campaign relied heavily on prospect theory and the language of 'no alternative'. De Klerk made clear that a No vote would be 'suicidal' and that no one would be able to escape the consequences. In contrast a Yes vote was considered to be a vote for survival and long-term stability that would allow for a strong economy and movement toward reconciliation (Kersting, 2010).

The 'Vote no' campaign also created the picture of massive chaos and economic collapse if the negotiation process was successful, with whites no longer having any control over private property or key government institutions (Kersting, 2010; Strauss, 1993). Their campaign lacked financial resources and leadership however, and they were unable to propose a viable alternative solution (Kersting, 2010).

## Cyprus

In April 2004, Cypriots were asked directly to give their consent to the proposed reunification of their island (with a federal government and two equal constituent states), under the proposed UN plan for reunification ('the Annan Plan'). In this case, simultaneous twin referendums were held with Greek Cypriots voting in the South and Turkish Cypriots voting in the North. Although the Annan Plan had the support of the two main Greek Cypriot political parties (DISY and initially AKEL) representing two-thirds of the electorate, it was rejected by 76 percent of Greek Cypriots (despite widespread support for reunification at leadership and societal levels) while 65 percent of Turkish Cypriots approved it (see Loizides, 2014). There are various lessons that can be drawn from this case:

*Approach*

*Absence of consultation:* There was no public consultation or polling of people's preferences in the negotiation process that led to the draft of the proposal for the referendum. Cypriot leaders refrained from broadening the negotiations and refused to include opposition parties or civil society actors (Loizides, 2016; Lee & Mac Ginty, 2012). This is considered to have been a key reason why many Greek Cypriots rejected the peace proposals (Lee & Mac Ginty, 2012).

*Exclusive, parallel process:* The decision to have two separate, simultaneous referendums resulted in campaigning aimed exclusively at convincing their own communities, rather than a more inclusive approach (Loizides, 2016). It also produced negative reactions: for example, once Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan appeared in front of the media 'celebrating the agreement', Greeks and Greek Cypriots shifted their attention to the negative aspects of the Annan Plan (Anastasiou 2008; cited in Loizides, 2016). It was also challenging for international mediators to justify positions that undermined campaign efforts in one of the two communities participating in a peace process (Loizides, 2016).

*Varying coordination and organisation:* The Yes campaign on the Greek Cypriot side was poorly organised, with no coherent leadership and no effective media and advertising strategy. The two political parties that supported the Annan Plan were divided and ultimately did not act. In contrast, the Yes campaign on the Turkish Cypriot side was well organised and well supported by the government and civil society, including activists, the business sector and media, which gave the Yes side generous coverage and treatment (Bahcheli & Noel, 2009).

*Media:* The media played an important role in the process of opinion formation in the referendum campaigns. Polling evidence indicates that it was citizens' primary source of information consulted during this period (Taki, 2009). In the case of the Greek Cypriot referendum campaign, the two political parties in favour of the Yes side were given much less media representation. In addition, TV stations failed to correct misrepresentations of the Plan and conflated news and editorialising – all of which tended to promote a No vote (Taki, 2009). The print media instead afforded a wider range of opinions and positions across the political/ideological spectrum, despite the partisan position adopted by newspaper editorials. Newspapers also circulated copies of the Plan and provided explanatory information (Ibid). Media on the Turkish Cypriot side was much more supportive of a Yes vote. A study of the pre-Annan Plan referendum period finds that the Turkish Cypriot media adopted a peace journalism role during this time (Ciftci, 2014). Emphasis was placed on informing readers and audiences about the negotiation process and the Annan Plan, emphasising the benefits the Plan would bring to the whole island and rejecting and emphasis on past violence and divisive (us vs them) narratives (Ibid). Most Turkish Cypriots appear to trust the media, which rendered the media a particularly influential actor. They were persuaded to believe that through the referendum, they had the chance to actively participate in the peace making and settlement process (Ibid). Alongside the media, the Turkish Cypriot community also engaged in impressive peace rallies in the months preceding the referendum, which may have influenced the Yes vote (Loizides, 2014).

## Guatemala

During peace negotiations, the Guatemalan government and the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG) agreed on a number of peace accords that covered a wide range of issues, including an Accord on the Identity and Rights of the Indigenous Peoples (Indigenous Rights Accord) signed on 31 March 1995. A national referendum to ratify this Accord was held on 16 May 1999. All but one of the registered political parties supported the proposal, all the pan-Maya organisations officially endorsed the

reform and the majority of social organisations expected its approval (Lee & Mac Ginty, 2012). At the referendum, however, the proposal was rejected by a margin of 55-45, with very low voter turnout (18.5 percent). The high abstention rate among Mayans is considered the key reason why the Accord failed to be ratified in a society in which approximately 70 percent of the population comprised indigenous peoples. The failure to achieve this ratification in turn slowed down the peace process (Ibid).

This case demonstrates the importance of preparing a favourable context in order for a referendum to succeed in cases of protracted conflict (Lee & Mac Ginty, 2012). Key issues in this case include:

### Approaches

*Absence of consultation:* Most members of indigenous ethnic groups, who were the subject of the Indigenous Rights Accord and related constitutional reforms, were not part of the process for making the changes (Lee & Mac Ginty, 2012). The indigenous peoples' organisations were not consulted during the peace accord implementation phase, once the special commissions' recommendations were reported to the government. In addition, the Mayan organisations that were involved in consultations with the key political parties and governmental commissions did not necessarily represent the Mayan community nor communicate with Mayan constituencies. Ultimately, many of the proposed changes reflected the interests of established political parties, rather than feedback from indigenous peoples. Further, little effort was made to prepare indigenous groups for the referendum (Ibid).

*Lack of voter education:* The majority of Mayans did not have a sufficient understanding of the issues at stake in the referendum and possible consequences (Lee & Mac Ginty, 2012). Most Mayans are illiterate and many Mayan communities are very remote from municipal centres. There was insufficient dissemination of the terms of the popular referendum or efforts to explain the issues. Neither the government nor political parties or social organisations were willing to allocate necessary budget support to voter education services (Ibid). In particular, a budget for announcing the contents and the significance of the referendum through the radio failed to be approved in congress as many political parties wanted to use the money in the general elections in the same year. Instead, some right-wing movements opposed to the Accord dominated the information and propaganda campaign using television and radio. Congress also refused to spend money on providing transport and food for indigenous people coming to vote, again to preserve the budget for general elections. Many low-income Mayans living in remote areas would have been thus been unable to make the journey to vote (Ibid).

## 4. References

Bahcheli, T. and Noel, S. (2009). The rise of the AK Party and Ankara's changing role: Paving the way for the 'Yes'. In: *Reunifying Cyprus: The Annan Plan and Beyond* (eds. A. Varnava and H. Faustmann): 233-245. London and New York: I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd. http://symfiliosi.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Reunifying-Cyprus-2009-book-_CY_FINAL.pdf

Brandt, M. (2011). *Constitution-making and reform: Options for the process.* Geneva: Interpeace. http://www.constitutionmakingforpeace.org/sites/default/files/Constitution-Making-Handbook.pdf

Ciftci, D. (2014). Peace journalism and news coverage on the Annan plan referendum: The role of framing the conflict issues and negotiation process. *GSTF International Journal on Media & Communications,* 1(2), 46-59. http://dx.doi.org/10.5176/2335-6618_1.2.19

Couto, R. A. (2001). The third sector and civil society: The case of the "YES" campaign in Northern Ireland. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 12(3): 221-238. http://www.jstor.org/stable/27927727

Fouéré, E. (2012). Dialogue and wider engagement in post-conflict peace processes. *Preparing for peace: Communications in conflict resolution.* Vienna: Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). http://www.osce.org/networks/98116?download=true

Hancock, L. E. (2011). There is no alternative: Prospect theory, the Yes campaign and selling the Good Friday Agreement. *Irish Political Studies* 26(1): 95-116. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07907184.2011.531107

Hancock, L. E., Weiss, J. N. & Duerr, G. M. E. (2010). Prospect theory and the framing of the Good Friday Agreement. *Conflict Resolution Quarterly* 28(2): 183-203. http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/crq.20019

Hobolt, S. B. (2005) When Europe matters: The impact of political information on voting behaviour in EU referendums. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinions and Parties* 15(1): 85-109. http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.460.9150&rep=rep1&type=pdf

Kersting, N. (2010). Direct democracy in constitutional processes: The South African plebiscite of 1992. *Politikon* 37(2-3): 207-222. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02589346.2010.522330

Lee, S. Y. & Mac Ginty, R. (2012). Context and post-conflict referendums, *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 18(1): 43-64. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13537113.2012.654085

Loizides, N. (2016). *Designing peace: Cyprus and institutional innovations in divided societies.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Loizides, N. (2014). Negotiated settlements and peace referendums. *European Journal of Policy Research* 53(2): 234-249. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12043

Neijens, P. & De Vreese, C. (2009). Helping citizens decide in referendums: The moderating effect of political sophistication on the use of the information and choice questionnaire as a decision aid. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 73(3): 521-536. http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfp040

Paffenholz, T. (2014). Civil society and peace negotiations: Beyond the inclusion-exclusion dichotomy. *Negotiation Journal* 30(1): 69-91. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/nejo.12046

Qvortrup, M. (2012). Voting on electoral reform: A comparative perspective on the alternative vote referendum in the United Kingdom. *The Political Quarterly* 83(1): 108-116. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-923X.2012.02270.x

Schuck, A. R. T. & de Vreese, C. H. (2011). Public support for referendums: The role of the media. *West European Politics* 34(2): 181 — 207. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2011.546566

Schuck, A. R. T. & de Vreese, C. H. (2009). Reverse mobilisation in referendum campaigns: How positive news framing can mobilise the skeptics. *The International Journal of Press/Politics,* 14(1): 40-66. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1940161208326926

Somerville, I. and Kirby, S. (2012). Public relations and the Northern Ireland peace process: Dissemination, reconciliation and the 'Good Friday Agreement' referendum campaign. *Public Relations Inquiry* 1(3): 231-255. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/2046147X12448370

Strauss, A. (1993). The 1992 referendum in South Africa. *Journal of Modern African Studies* 31(2): 339–360. http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X00011964

Taki, Y. (2009) The plan, public discourse and the role of the mass media in getting to 'No'. In: *Reunifying Cyprus: The Annan Plan and Beyond* (eds. A. Varnava and H. Faustmann): 177-190. London and New York: I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd. http://symfiliosi.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Reunifying-Cyprus-2009-book-_CY_FINAL.pdf

## Expert contributors

Yvonne Galligan, Queen's University Belfast
Larry LeDuc, University of Toronto
Neophytos Loizides, University of Kent
Joanne McEvoy, University of Aberdeen
Quintin Oliver, Stratagem International
Thania Paffenholz, Inclusive Peace & Transition Initiative

## Suggested citation

## About this report