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Narratives of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict:
Evolvement, Contents, Functions and Consequences

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Human beings have a basic epistemic need to live in an environment that is meaningful, comprehensible, organized and predictable (Berger, 1969; Berkowitz, 1968; Geertz, 1973; Katz, 1960; Reykowski, 1982). That is, they strive to perceive their world in a meaningful way in which events, people, things or symbols, are not understood as isolated stimuli, thus come to be comprehended in an organized way which provides meaning to the new information (Maddi, 1971). The sense of understanding is a precondition for a feeling that the world is organized, predicable and controllable (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Heider, 1958; Kelly, 1955; White; 1959). When the epistemic need is not satisfied, then human beings feel stress and often act abnormally. This rule applies to individuals as well as to collectives. That is, individuals strive to put in order and meaning their individual world and also their collective world, of which they are part. This is needed, since not only very often the meaningful part of life for many people derives from their membership in different groups, but also because one's individual life is interwoven within collective structures, events and processes, in a way that it is impossible to separate them. The experiences that individuals undergo are often determined by their membership in the collectives (Jenkins, 1996; Tajfel, 1981). Thus, being a Palestinian or an Israeli determines many of the personal experiences that individuals go through.

To satisfy their epistemic need, people construct their world that is functional for their needs. In this way they shun ambiguity and uncertainty. This is done on the individual and collective level. We will focus only on the collective level and claim that society members construct societal, shared beliefs. Societal beliefs are defined as enduring beliefs shared by society members on topics and issues that are of special concern for the particular society, and which contribute to the sense of uniqueness of the society's members (Bar-Tal, 2000). The contents of societal beliefs, organized around thematic clusters, refer to characteristics, structure, and processes of a society and cover the different domains of societal life. In general, they may concern societal goals, self-images, conflicts, aspirations, conditions, norms, values, societal structures, images of out-groups, institutions, obstacles, problems, etc. In essence societal beliefs constitute a shared view of the perceived reality of that society. Some of the beliefs provide the collective narrative of the society. Following Bruner (1990),

we conceive of collective narratives as *social constructions that coherently interrelate a sequence of historical and current events; they are accounts of a community's collective experiences, embodied in its belief system and represent the collective's symbolically constructed shared identity*. The collective narrative of a society provides a basis for common understanding, good communication, interdependence and the coordination of social activities, all of which are necessary for the functioning of the social systems. The beliefs comprising the collective narrative often feature on the public agenda, are discussed by society members, serve as relevant references in decisions made by the leaders, and influence the choices regarding courses of action. Societal institutions actively impart them to society members and encourage their acquisition.

The present chapter will analyze narratives that are constructed in times of conflict and focuses particularly on the Israeli-Jewish narrative pertaining to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. First, we will elaborate on the nature of the Israeli-Palestinian intractable conflict, which serves as a context to the evolvement of the particular narrative. Then we will describe the ethos of conflict and collective memory, which constitutes the focal part of the narratives of societies involved in intractable conflict. In the next part we describe the main functions of this narrative and their consequences. Finally, we end the chapter with a discussion of some implications for reconciliation and peace education interventions.

The Context of Intractable Conflict.

Intractable conflicts are defined as protracted, irreconcilable, violent, of zero sum nature, total, and central; parties involved in such conflicts have an interest in their continuation (see Azar, McLaurin & Jureidini, 1978; Bar-Tal, 1998; Goertz & Diehl, 1993; Kriesberg, 1995). The present chapter comes to describe the context of intractable conflict as the major experience responsible for the evolvement of the narrative about the conflict. Specifically it concentrates on the Israeli-Arab conflict, or more accurately on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, analyzing the Jewish side.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is centered on the contested territory known as Palestine; an area claimed by two national movements as their homeland. For more than 80 years, Palestinian nationalism and Zionism, the Jewish national movement, have clashed recurrently over the right for self-determination, statehood and justice. Relatedly, the conflict for many years was perceived as being over national identity. The Palestinians and the Jews believed that acceptance of the other identity would

negate their own case and identity. Each side held the view that if it is to be considered a nation, the other cannot be considered as such. Acknowledging the other nationhood was seen for many years as accepting the right of the other group to establish a national state in that land, which in turn was believed to weaken one's own claim for the same land. Thus, the issue of the territorial claims touches on a very fundamental issue of national survival (Kelman, 1999).

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict started as a communal conflict between the Jews and Palestinians living in British ruled Palestine and evolved into a full- blown interstate conflict between Israel and Arab states during the War of 1948-49. Since the 1967 war, with the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the conflict continues on both interstate and communal levels (Sandler, 1988). According to Sandler (1988), each new phase involved intensive violence, was followed by the introduction of new parties to the conflict and led to the development of new patterns of hostile interaction.

For a long time the conflict seemed irreconcilable and total. The dispute concerned elementary issues, involving basic existential needs of each side, and it was impossible to find an agreeable solution for both parties. In various attempts to resolve the conflict peacefully, Israel's minimum requirements exceeded the Arabs' maximum concession and vice versa. Thus, it is not surprising that the sides involved perceived the conflict as being of zero sum nature and mobilized all possible resources, efforts and supports within the group and the international community in order to win it.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been violent almost from its beginning. At first, economic boycotts, demonstrations, strikes and occasional violence erupted, which reached a climax in the Palestinian rebellion of 1936-1939. Following the decision by the United Nations in 1947 to divide the land between the Jews and the Palestinians a full-scale war broke out which claimed many thousands of lives, including civilians. Also, and of great importance, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians became refugees. Through the years, at least four additional wars were fought -- 1956, 1967, 1973 and 1982 -- and in between them, violent activities erupted continuously. They included military engagements, infiltration of hostile forces, terrorist attacks, bombardments, air raids, etc. Between 1987 and 1990 Palestinians in the areas occupied by Israel in 1967 waged an uprising (*Intifada*); in September 2000 the Palestinians began their second *Intifada*, called the Al-Aqsa Intifiada.

It should be pointed out, though, that in spite of the fact that some intractable features are still present, the nature of the Israel-Palestinian conflict changed with the visit of the Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in Jerusalem in 1977. The peace treaty with Egypt in 1979, the Madrid conference in 1991, the agreements with the Palestinians in 1993 and 1994 and the peace treaty with Jordan in 1994 are watershed events in the peace process, and they have greatly affected the Arab-Jewish relations. The present eruption of violent confrontations between the Israeli Jews and the Palestinians is the major setback to the peace process and may have an important influence on the quality of the intergroup relations between Jews and Arabs in the Middle East in general.

The conflict has continuously been on the both sides' public agenda since the related events were taking place almost daily. Many of these events had a direct impact on the life of individuals living in the conflict region. The involved parties learned to live with this harsh and violent reality. It was almost impossible to imagine an alternative to the conflict, and coping with it became the way of life for both the Israelis and Palestinians. Both sides invested a great deal of human and material resources in order to successfully cope with the conflict.

In extreme cases, the seven characteristics of intractable conflicts described above are explicit and salient, inflicting threat, stress, pain, exhaustion, and cost, in human and material terms. Members must adapt to the situation in both their individual and social lives. From a psychological perspective, this adaptation requires the meeting of two basic challenges.

First, it is necessary to satisfy basic needs, such as needs for mastery, safety, and positive identity, that are deprived during an intractable conflict. Of special importance among the needs is satisfaction of the epistemic need for a comprehensive understanding of the conflict that can provide a coherent, meaningful and predictable picture of the situation. Individuals try to reduce uncertainty and ambiguity by formulating a comprehensible environment (e. g., Berkowitz, 1968; Reykowski, 1982).

Second, adaptation requires the development of psychological conditions that will be conducive to successfully coping with the challenges posed by the situation of conflict. Successful coping enables groups to psychologically survive over time the intense conflict with all the concomitant challenges and adjustments that it entails, both on the personal and societal levels. That is, intractable conflict poses many

challenges including ensuring the survival of group members. Parties to the conflict thus have to prepare themselves for a long struggle and this requires recruitment of human and material resources. For these purposes, they develop a system of psychological conditions that ensure successful coping such as loyalty to a society and country, high motivation to contribute, persistence, ability to cope with physical and psychological stress, readiness for personal sacrifice, unity, solidarity, maintenance of the societies' objectives, determination, courage, and endurance.

To meet these epistemic and coping needs, society members construct an appropriate psychological repertoire, which includes shared beliefs, attitudes, emotions and capacities. In this psychological repertoire, narratives (shared societal beliefs) that pertain to the collective memory and to the ethos of conflict are of special importance. The narrative of the collective memory focuses on the remebered past of the society. In contrast, ethos, denoting the configuration of central societal beliefs, deals mainly with the present state of the society and outlines its goals, means and experiences. We will first discuss the narrative of the collective memory.

Collective Memory

The collective memory component of the narrative has a number of characteristics: (a). It is shared by group members and is treated by many of them as truthful accounts of the past and valid history of the group; (b). It does not necessarily tell the truthful history of the past, but intends to tell the past that is functional for the group's present existence and functioning. Thus, this narrative is tendentious ???, providing a story that is biased, selective and distorted. It omits certain facts, adds ones that did not take place, changes the accounts of events and makes purposive interpretation of the events that took place. It is constructed to fit the current needs of the group (Ahonen, 1999). As Wright (1985) wrote pertaining to Britain: "Far from being somehow "behind" the present, the past exists as an accomplished presence in public understanding, In this sense it is written into present social reality, not just implicitly as History, National Heritage and Tradition" (p. 142), but restores the "essential and grander identity of the 'Imaginary Briton'…" (p. 165).Moreover, the narrative of the past events not only undergoes major revisions to suit present day needs, it is often invented, years after the events have actually taken place. Thus, for example, Walker (1996 C& R, 174) claims that the memories of the 1690 Battle of the Boyne in N. Ireland, were invented for political purposes in the nineteenth

century; (c) The body of collective historical narrative appears to entail both memories of past events (the conquests of William of Orange, the siege of Massada, the battle of the Alamo), as well as memories of more recent, conflict-related events. The latter memories, some of them being personal memories that mesh into the collective memory pool, become historical memories the longer the conflict lasts and exert a powerful force in shaping present day attitudes, perceptions and behaviors (Bar-Tal, 2003).

It follows that opposing groups in a conflict will often entertain contradictory and selective historical narratives of the same events. Also, whereas one group might emphasize certain events the other group may not even include them in their set of collective memories. By selectively including or excluding certain historical events and processes from the collective memory, a group characterizes itself and its historical experiences that count in unique and exclusive ways (Irwin-Zarecka, 1994 C&R, 189). The history is perceived by group members as self characterization. It is unique, distinctive and exclusive. It tells the particular story of the group's past and outlines the boundaries for a group's description and characterization. In short, the narrative of collective memories relating to an intractable conflict provides a black and white picture, enables parsimonious, fast, unequivocal, and simple understanding of the history of the conflict.

In terms of particular contents, the collective narrative touches on at least four important themes, which influence the perception of the conflict and its management. First, it justifies the outbreak of the conflict and the course of its development. It outlines the reasons for the supreme and existential importance of the conflicting goals, stressing that failure to achieve them may threaten the very existence of the group. In addition, it disregards the goals of the other side, describing them as unjustified and unreasonable.

Second, the narrative of collective memory of intractable conflict presents a positive image of one's group. The contents of the narrative can pertain to a variety of positive acts, traits, values, or skills that characterize the society. It reflects the general tendency toward ethnocentrism documented in different groups (LeVine & Campbell, 1972), but in times of intractable conflict it gains special importance. Groups involved in intractable conflicts engage in intense self-justification, self-glorification and self-praise.

Third, the narrative of collective memory delegitimizes the opponent. Since societies involved in intractable conflicts view their own goals as justified and perceive themselves in a positive light, they attribute all responsibility for the outbreak of the conflict and its continuation to the opponent. The narrative focuses on the violence, atrocities, cruelty, lack of concern for human life and viciousness of the other side. It describes the adversary's inhuman and immoral behavior and presents it as intransigent, irrational, far-reaching and irreconcilable, thus, the adversary is seen to precludes any possible peaceful solution and, therefore, the conflict cannot be resolved. All these beliefs present the opponent as an existential threat to the group's survival

Fourth, the narrative of collective memory presents one's group as being a victim of the opponent. This view is formed over a long period of violence as a result of society's sufferings and losses. Its formation is based on beliefs about the justness of the goals of one's group and on one's positive self-image, while emphasizing the wickedness of the opponent's goals and the deligitimization of the opponent's characteristics (Frank, 1967). In other words, focusing on injustice, harm, evil, and the atrocities of the adversary, while emphasizing one's own society as being just, moral and human, leads society members to present themselves as victims. Beliefs about victimhood imply that the conflict was imposed by an adversary, who not only fights unjust goals, but also uses immoral means to achieve them.

Thus, for example, Jewish-Israeli textbooks describe the waves of Jewish immigration as an expression of national aspiration to build a state for Jewish people in their ancient homeland. The immigrants bought land from Arab landowners to build Jewish settlements with the will to live peacefully beside Arabs. The collective narrative describes the Arab violence aimed at Jews and portrays it as vicious riots and massacres. According to the accepted narrative, the Arabs rejected any compromise to settle the conflict and in 1947 even rejected the UN decision to divide the country into two states -- Jewish and Palestinian; instead, they initiated a war against the Jewish minority which drew in seven additional Arab states that invaded the newly established State of Israel. On the other hand, the schoolbooks have not mentioned until recently the mass, often "encouraged" departure of Palestinians-turned-into-refugees during the 1948 war. Neither are initial attempts by Arabs to sense Israel's willingness to negotiate a peaceful settlement ever mentioned in school

textbooks and all the major wars are described as defensive in which Israel successfully repelled Arab aggression (see Firer, 1985; Podeh, 2002).

Ethos of Conflict

In addition to the narrative of collective memory, societies evolve also a narrative about the present that we call an ethos. Ethos, defined as *the configuration of central societal shared beliefs that provide particular dominant orientation to a society* (Bar-Tal, 2000), gives meaning to the societal life of a particular society. It indicates the major aspirations, goals, means, concerns and images that preoccupy [concern? Are of interest to?] the society. In other words, the narrative of the ethos provides the epistemic basis for the direction the society presently takes. The narrative of the ethos indicates to society members that their behavior is not just random but represents a coherent and systematic pattern of knowledge. This narrative implies that the decisions of society's leaders, the coordinated behavior of the members of society, and the structure and functioning of the society, are all based on coherent and comprehensive beliefs that justify and motivate members of society to act in the society and accept the system.[NOT CLEAR, perhaps: to act in particular, conflict-appropriate ways]

The narrative of the ethos evolves under the influence of the particular conditions in which the society lives and the particular collective experiences that shape the society. We suggest that under prolonged conditions of intractable conflict societies develop a particular ethos of conflict, which provides a clear picture of the conflict, its goals, its conditions, requirements, images of one's group and images of the rival. At the climax of intractable conflict, the beliefs are often shared by the great majority of society members, but the extent of sharing may change with the change of the nature of the conflict. Also, we recognize that the extent of sharing depends on various societal and political factors and therefore societies may differ in the extent to which members share societal beliefs of conflict.

In view of the intractable nature of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Israeli-Jews evolved an ethos of conflict during the late 1940s, 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s that was functional for the demanding, stressful, costly, and prolonged situation. This narrative enabled adaptation and successful coping with the conflict's painful consequences. It has been suggested that the narrative of ethos of conflict consisted of eight themes of societal belief (Bar-Tal, 1998). We will now describe the Israeli-Jewish societal beliefs of the narrative pertaining to the ethos of conflict.

Societal Beliefs about the Justness of the Israeli Goals.

This theme concerns the rationale behind the goals that led to the conflict, and particularly the justification of these goals in terms of their importance. The Jews' return to Eretz Israel (the land of Israel), with the aim of establishing their own state after two thousand years of exile, was inspired by the nationalist ideology of Zionism. This ideology provided the Jews both with goals and the justification for them (Avineri, 1981; Vital, 1982). These goals centered first on the establishment of a Jewish state in the ancient homeland of Eretz Israel. Historical, theological, national, existential, political, societal, and cultural arguments were used to justify these goals. These included arguments such as the following: that the Jewish nation was founded in the ancient Land of Israel; that during many years of ancient Jewish history the Land of Israel was the Jews' homeland; that during their exile Jews maintained close spiritual and physical ties with the Land of Israel, continuously aspiring to return to it; that the continuity of Jewish life never ceased in the land; and that the persistent experience of anti-Semitism in the Diaspora highlighted the Jewish people's need for a secure existence in their old homeland. The conquest of the Sinai, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and Golan Heights in the 1967 War greatly augmented the territorial dimension of the Israeli goals. In the aftermath of the war, many Israeli Jews believed that Israel had the right to retain these territories. Their shared beliefs pertained to the Jewish people's exclusive rights to Judea, Samaria (i.e, West Bank) and the Gaza Strip and to the security importance of the Golan Heights, parts of the West Bank and the Sinai.

In the context of justifying the Israeli goals, attempts were made over the years to refute Palestinian claims. The contested territory was often described as being sparsely populated by Arabs who, moreover, had only moved there in recent centuries. The Palestinian national identity was also denied; it was claimed that they are Arabs, part of the Arab nation, and that their national Palestinian identity is a relatively new development. Finally, Palestinians' claims of attachment to the land was questioned by describing the land as desolate, neglected, swampy, desert-like, and primitive, until the Jews' came back to cultivate it when they returned.

These societal beliefs motivated the members of Israeli Jewish society to fight for their goals and to endure the stresses, sacrifices, and costs of intractable conflict.

Societal Beliefs about Security

During the intractable conflict, the Israeli Jews have always believed that the security of the country and of its Jewish citizens were under serious threat (Arian, 1995; Stein & Brecher, 1976; Stone, 1982). Therefore, achieving a sense of security, which was one of the basic Zionist reasons to return to Israel and establish a Jewish state there, became the most central need and value. Security acquired the status of a cultural master-symbol in the Israeli Jewish ethos (Horowitz, 1984; Liebman & Don Yehiya, 1983). Israeli society became a "nation in arms" or "nation in uniform," living in a situation that has been termed a "dormant war" (Horowitz, 1993).

Assigning the highest priority to the value of security, the society did all it could to motivate its members to serve in the armed forces, and to encourage the best qualified to volunteer for the most important institutions and units (e.g., the air force, the commando units, the Mossad, or the General Security Services). All channels of communication and agents of socialization paid tribute to the security forces (Lissak, 1984). Service in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) was viewed as an entrance ticket to Israeli society, and refusal or evasion of service was socially sanctioned. Those who volunteered to serve in special institutions or units were accorded high prestige. The top-ranking officers were ascribed a special status that allowed them not only to act as epistemic authorities on a wide range of issues, but also to be accepted into any field upon retirement, including politics, industry, business, the civil service, and even cultural institutions and education (Peri, 1983). At the same time, a legacy of wars and battles was developed and heroism was glorified. Military heroes received special honors, and society commemorated those who had fallen in military service, gave financial support to their families, and aided those who had been injured in the line of duty.

The fundamental societal beliefs of the ethos delineated the conditions that were assumed to ensure security. First, it was assumed that Israel has to build mighty military strength of highest quality to deter Arab aggression. Second, it was stressed that Israel had the right and duty to defend itself against threats by means of its own armed forces and even initiate military acts, including wars to prevent possible Arab attacks on Israel. Third, Israel should not rely on help from foreign military forces or be dependant on international public opinion or the views of foreign leaders and international organizations (e.g., the UN). Fourth, land was regarded as the country's important national strategic asset in maintaining security.

In sum, the societal beliefs were functional for the violent confrontations of the conflict, since they assigned high priority to security, provided a rationale for societal decisions and actions, and motivated members of society to participate in the conflict and accept and cope with stressful conditions.

Societal Beliefs about Positive Collective Ingroup-Images

The societal beliefs of positive collective ingroup images involve the attribution of positive traits, values, intentions, and behaviors to one's own society. These beliefs stood (and to an important extent still do) in absolute contrast to the delegitimizing beliefs about the Arabs. The Israeli Jews viewed themselves as "new people," reborn in the land of Israel (Hofman, 1970). The positive stereotypes presented them firstly as tenacious, hard-working, courageous, modern, and intelligent, and secondly as moral and humane. With respect to the first set of traits, various stories and myths were amassed about the Jews' behavior in peace and war times, while the second group traits referred to Israeli Jews' behaviors towards Arabs. Positive ingroup presentation also invoked the Jewish heritage. Jewish culture, religion, and traditions were regarded as lying at the heart of Western civilization and morality. There were also segments in the society that thought that Jews are "Chosen People" and a "light unto the nations." These beliefs provided moral strength and feelings of self-worth during the conflict.

Societal Beliefs about One's Own Victimization

These beliefs are about self-presentation as the victim of the conflict and of unjust Arab Aggression. They are associated with the beliefs concerning a positive ingroup image and the delegitimization of Arabs. Beginning with the early encounters with the Arabs, attempts to harm Jews physically, halt their immigration, or prevent them from settling in the homeland were considered by the Israeli Jews as evidence of their victimization (Hareven, 1983). These beliefs were greatly reinforced when, following the establishment of the State of Israel, the Palestinians and the Arab states tried to annihilate the new state, and continued to attack it. The wars that were fought, the Arab embargo on trade with Israel, the terrorist attacks on Israeli and non-Israeli Jews, all confirmed to the Israeli Jews their status as victims. These beliefs fitted in with the Jewish tradition of viewing Jews as victims in a hostile world (Bar-Tal & Antebi, 1992; Liebman, 1978).

During the conflict the belief about victimization supplied the moral incentive to fight against the Arabs, to seek justice, and to turn to the international community for moral, political, and material support.

Societal Beliefs about Delegitimizing the Opponent

Intractable conflict fosters the evolvement of negative stereotypes and especially societal beliefs, which deny the adversary group - the Arabs - its humanity. This process is called delegitmization. Indeed, mutual delegitimization has been one of the bitter manifestations of the long years of conflict between the Israeli Jews and the Arabs (Bar-On, 2000; Bar-Tal, 1988; Bilu, 1994; Kelman, 1999a). From the very beginning the encounters between Jews, mostly from Europe, and Arabs, living in Palestine, fostered negative stereotyping (Lustick, 1982). Arabs were attributed such labels as primitive, uncivilized, savage, and backward. In time, as the conflict deepened and became more violent, Arabs were perceived as murders, a bloodthirsty mob, treacherous, cowardly, cruel, and wicked. After the establishment of the state, these delegitimizing beliefs about Arabs still prevailed and were transmitted through institutional channels (e.g., Cohen, 1985; Domb, 1982; Segev, 1984). In addition, Arabs were blamed for the continuation of the conflict, for the eruption of all of the wars and military clashes, and for intransigently rejecting a peaceful resolution (Ben-Gurion, 1975; Harkabi, 1977, Landau, 1971). They were also characterized as striving to annihilate the state of Israel and to drive the Jewish population into the sea. During the height of the intractable conflict in the 1940-1970s, all Arabs were perceived as one undifferentiated entity as all Arab nations were perceived to display a uniform attitude towards the state of Israel. Only after the peace treaty with Egypt did the Jews differentiate between Arab nations. This differentiation has continued to develop as Israel has built separate relationships with different Arab nations. But, the (over-generalized) label "Arabs" continues to be widely used until today, often with derogatory undertones. [DANI; ARE YOU AWARE OF THE FACT THAT IN THIS CHAPTER THE CONCEPTS ARABS AND PALESTINIANS ARE USED INTERCHANGEBLY!] Palestinians were perceived as an enemy of the Jewish people and many of the delegitimizing terms were applied to them. In fact through the years all of them were referred to as "Arabs". With the Oslo agreement the views somewhat changed and became somewhat more differentiated, but the eruption of the second *Intifada* brought back the delegitimizing labels (Bar-Tal, 2002).

Societal Beliefs about Patriotism

During the intractable conflict, Israeli Jews made a special effort to convey beliefs that would instill patriotism (Ben-Amos & Bar-Tal, in press). In the context of the conflict, extreme sacrifices were asked of Israeli Jews, including economic hardship and prolonged military service or reserve duty. Patriotic beliefs called for various forms of dedication, including the settlement of outlying or desolate areas, volunteering for the security forces, and working for society's welfare. These beliefs even called for the ultimate sacrifice as part of the violent confrontation with the Arabs [or Palestinians??], Israelis had to be willing to die. Those who acted as models of patriotism were glorified, while those who left the country (called "deserters") or did not fulfill their duties to the state (e.g., by not serving in the army) were stigmatized. Such patriotic beliefs increased cohesiveness and played an important role in mobilizing the members of Israeli society to actively participate in the conflict and to endure hardship and even loss of life (Elon, 1971).

Societal Beliefs about Unity

These beliefs have helped Israelis to ignore internal disagreements and conflicts so as to unite society in the face of external threats. Israeli Jewish society strove to foster unity and build a sense of belonging and solidarity. Legacy and religion were emphasized, and an attempt was made to minimize the ethnic differences within a society whose members came from various parts of the world. Unity was also reinforced by setting lines of agreement in the form of a "consensus" and sanctions were applied to those who expressed opinions or exhibited behavior that did not fit in with the accepted consensus (Smooha, 1978). Consensus pertained particularly to societal beliefs about the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the justness of Israel's goals and the means of ensuring security (Lahav, 1993; Negbi, 1985).

These beliefs strengthen society from within, augment the sense of commonality and solidarity, and allow energy to be directed toward coping with the external enemy.

Societal Beliefs about Peace

These beliefs center on the society's ultimate desideratum, namely, peace. During the intractable conflict with the Arabs, Israeli Jewish society cherished peace as a value. Peace was conceived of as a dream, a prayer, and a belief in utopian and idyllic images. Hence Israeli Jews were stereotyped as peace-loving people forced by circumstances to engage in violent conflict. They presented themselves as ready to

negotiate and achieve peace, whereas the Arabs, rejecting any peaceful resolution of the conflict and even refusing to have direct contact with Jews, were seen as the sole obstacle to progress. Such beliefs inspired hope and optimism, strengthened positive self-image, and contributed to empathic self-presentation to the outside world.

Functions of the Conflict Narratives

Narratives are not only responses to political events, serving the epistemic function of providing a comprehensible explanatory cognitive schema (Burton, 1990); they also actively affect the events by assigning to them meaning, thus shaping to an important extent the political process. The reciprocal relationship between political events and a collective narrative take center stage during times of conflict for it is then that both the epistemic and the politically-shaping functions of narratives are most needed (Foster, 1999). Indeed, when one side makes some conciliatory moves and the other side – in light of its narrative-guided perceptions - rejects these as mere public opinion stunts and politically motivated traps, political escalation follows. We thus identify six major functions that narratives of ethos and collective memory accomplish in times of intractable conflict.

First, as already noted, collective narratives fulfill the epistemic function of illuminating the conflict situation. The situation of intractable conflict is extremely threatening and accompanied by stress, vulnerability, uncertainty, and fear (Lieberman, 1964; Milburn, 1977). In view of ambiguity and unpredictability, individuals must satisfy the epistemic need for a comprehensive understanding of the conflict, which will provide a meaningful and predictable picture of the situation (Burton, 1990; Maddi, 1971). The narratives fulfill these demands, providing information and explanations about the conflict. They explain the nature of the conflict to group members: Why did the conflict erupt? What was the course of the conflict? Why does it still continue and cannot be resolved peacefully? What is the enemy's responsibility and contribution to the conflict? How did the ingroup act in the conflict? What are "our" goals in the conflict? Why are they existential? What are the challenges facing society? And so on.

Second, in their epistemic function, the narratives serve to justify the acts of the ingroup towards the enemy, including violence and destruction. It allows justification for group members to carry out misdeeds, perform intentional harm and institutionalize aggression towards the enemy. This is an important function that

resolves feelings of dissonance, guilt and shame for group members. Human beings who behave normally do not usually harm other human beings willingly. The sanctity of life is perhaps one of the most sacred values in modern societies. Killing or even hurting other human beings is considered the most serious violation of the moral code (Donagan, 1979; Kleinig, 1991). However, in intractable conflict, groups hurt each other in most severe ways, even resorting to atrocities, ethnic cleansing and genocide. The narratives allow this violence. They justify carrying out the most immoral acts and allow the attribution of one's own immoral behavior to external-situational factors.

Moreover, harming the other side is justified in light of a number of beliefs such as "We are the victims" and "They are the perpetrators" (Salomon, 2004), and in light of the self-percept of being righteous and superior. Such beliefs and self images put one on moral higher grounds (e.g., Staub, 1999), thus clearing that side of any responsibility for acts of violence towards the other side (Waller, 2002). In that way, one side can legitimize its actions.

Third, beliefs of the narratives create a sense of differentiation and superiority. They sharpen intergroup differences because they describe the opponent in delegitimizing terms and at the same time glorify and praise one's own group. Since societies involved in intractable conflicts view their own goals as justified and perceive themselves in a positive light, they attribute all responsibility for the outbreak of the conflict and its continuation to the opponent. The narrative focuses on the violence, atrocities, cruelty, lack of concern for human life and viciousness of the other side. It describes the other side as inhuman and engaged in immoral behavior: it describes the conflict as intransigent, irrational far-reaching and irreconcilable, which precludes any possible peaceful solution. Delegitimizing stereotypes lower the standing of the rival by attributing to this group labels that imply immorality, evilness and inhumanity. This differentiation allows feelings of superiority, which is of special importance in the situation of intractable conflict, when both sides engage in violence, often performing immoral acts.

Fourth, the narratives have a motivating function for mobilization and action. By justifying the goals of the conflict and focusing on the delegitimization, intransigence and violent acts of the opponent, the beliefs imply the necessity to exert all the efforts and resources of the group in the struggle against the enemy. The beliefs play a central role in arousing patriotism, which leads to readiness for sacrifice in

order to defend the group and the country and avenge the enemy's past violent acts. In addition, the narratives remind group members about violent acts performed in the past by the rival and indicate that these acts could recur. Thus, they imply that group members should carry out violent acts to prevent possible harm by the enemy and avert the perceived potential danger and threat.

Fifth, as pointed out above, narratives tend to affect political events by assigning to them particular meanings. Whereas one's own political concessions and compromises, such as seen by Barak's conciliatory moves at the Camp David summit in the summer of 2000, are taken by that side as great sacrifices, the other side, looking through the lenses of its own narrative, dismisses these steps as no more than a smoke screen (Ross & Ward, 1995). Seeing such moves as false and insincere, frustration and a sense of betrayal soon follow, easily leading to outbursts of violence. The outbreak of the second *Intifada* soon after the failure of the Camp David Summit appears to be a case in point.

Last, but not the least, the narratives fulfill the unique function of contributing to the formation, maintenance and strengthening of social identity, a crucial requirement in the formation of any society or group. Individuals have to identify themselves as group members in order for the group to exist. This condition is widely accepted by social scientists. The self concept consists of a collection of self-images which includes both individuating characteristics and social categorical characteristics (Tajfel, 1981, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). The former represent personal identity, while the latter express social identity. Social identity combines identifications -- of varying degrees of importance -- with different groups. The formation of social identity is based on self-categorization process in which individuals group themselves cognitively as the same, in contrast to some other classes of collectives (Turner et al., 1987). On this basis, the uniformity and coordination of group behavior emerge.

Clearly, self-categorization is fundamental for self-definition as members of a society, but it is only an initial phase which has to be followed by acceptance of additional beliefs which provide meaning to social identity (Bar-Tal, & Oren, 2000; Turner, 1991, 1999). Society members, as thinking creatures, cannot be satisfied with mere self-categorization for forming society membership. They need an elaborated system of beliefs which justifies and explains their belonging, describes their characteristics and concerns as society members, and explains the meaning of their social identity. The narratives of collective memory and of ethos of conflict fulfill

exactly this important function. They provide the contentual basis for the social identity.

In view of these important functions that fulfill the narratives during intractable conflict, special attempts are made to institutionalize them. Institutionalization of the narratives is characterized by four features: (a).Extensive sharing. The beliefs of the narratives are widely held by society members. Society members acquire and store this repertoire, as part of their socialization from an early age on. (b).Wide application. Institutionalization means that the narratives are not only held by society members, but also put into active use by society members. They surface in society members' daily conversations, via their leaders, and the societal channels of mass communication. (c). Expression in cultural products. The institutionalization of the narratives is also expressed in cultural products such as films, TV programs, books, theatrical plays, etc. They are part of a society's cultural repertoire, relaying societal views and shaping society members' attitudes. Through these channels these beliefs can be widely disseminated and can reach every sector of the public. (d).Appearance in educational materials. Beliefs of the narratives appear in the textbooks used in school socialization. This element of institutionalization is of special importance because the beliefs presented in the school textbooks reach the all of the younger generation of a society. Moreover, because of the perceived epistemic authority of school textbooks, they are often considered to express truth and fact. Given compulsory attendance in schools in almost all societies, whole new generations are exposed to and learn from these books because. They become part of the cultural context in which society members live and thus are stable and easily available in the society.

These processes consolidate the narratives and facilitate their perseverance and durability even in the face of contradictory information. The contradictory information is rejected and the society uses control mechanisms to ensure that society members do not change them, or even entertain alternative beliefs. This becomes a frozen and rigid repertoire which is resistant to change during the intractable conflict.

Consequences of the Narratives

The narratives serve as lenses for society members through which they view their world. In this role they play a determinative role on the way society members process information. They lead to selective collection of information, which means that society members tend to search and absorb information that is in line with the

narratives and omit contradictory information. But, even when ambiguous or contradictory information is absorbed, it is encoded and cognitively processed to be in accordance with the held beliefs of the narratives through bias, addition and distortion. The new information is assimilated into existing collective schemata. Bias leads to focus on the schema-consistent parts of the absorbed information, disregarding the inconsistent parts, or to interpretation of ambiguous information in line with the held repertoire.

Specifically, such processes of assimilation and distortion are carried out in a a number of ways. First, the narratives serve as "anticipatory schemata" (Neisser, ...) providing the basis for certain expectations; they direct the attention to particular types of information and increase sensitivity for information that is congruent with the valence and content of the repertoire. Society members are especially attentive to information that provides validation of their views about the conflict and the rival group. They are selective in their information processing by actively searching for confirmatory information, preferring it, identifying it easily and being less open to alternative information.

Second, narratives serve as a basis for encoding the incoming information in particular ways and evaluating it. Narratives influence the translation of incoming information coming from the environment. Society members tend to use a theory driven strategy to absorb new information about the conflict, own society and the rival group in line with the narratives.

In sum, it should be stressed that while the described narratives that evolve in conflict enable better adaptation to conditions of intractable conflict, They also serve to maintain and prolong the conflict. The narratives become a prism through which society members construe their reality, collect new information, interpret their experiences and then make decisions about their course of action (e.g., Ross, 1993). That is to say, participation in an intractable conflict tends to "close minds" and facilitate a tunnel vision that precludes the consideration of incongruent information and alternative approaches to the conflict (Rapoport, 1960).

Implications for Issues of Reconciliation

It becomes clear that any movement by society members towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict and eventual reconciliation requires changes of the collective narrative and the beliefs that accompany it (Bar-Tal, 2000). This requires the adoption of a psychological point of view which serves not only to understand conflict but to

also examine possible avenues for reconciliation and dilemmas associated with these. We will discuss these here only briefly as they are discussed in greater length elsewhere (e.g., Salomon, 2002, 2004; Bar-Tal, 2002, ...;).

It follows from our preceding discussion that one of the major outcomes of the collective narratives is the deligitimization of the other side's collective narrative (e.g., Bar-Tal, 1998). Thus, theoretically speaking, one of the major goals of peace education would be to legitimize the other side's narrative (Salomon, 2002). However, while this would make logical and moral sense when applied to the strong side of the conflict, expecting the weaker side to legitimize the narrative of the strong side would make far less sense. Would we expect the Palestinians to perceive as legitimate the Zionist narrative in light of which they feel they have been dispossessed?

Still, it is possible that legitimization does not need to pertain to all of the narrative's components. Collective narratives, much like all ideologies (e.g., Abric, 2001), may have more central and more peripheral components. The existence (or its abolishment) of a Jewish independent state in Israel is a very central belief in both the Israeli and the Palestinian narratives; it is exactly where the two narratives contradict each other most sharply. On the other hand, the beliefs in the relative inferiority of members of the other side are apparently less central. Legitimizing the humanity of Israelis would be far easier for Palestinians than legitimizing the basic tenets of the Zionist narrative. Indeed, Bar-Natan (2004) has recently found that developing interpersonal friendships between Jewish and Israeli-Palestinian youth through encounter groups generalize among the Jewish participants to a greater willingness for contact with Palestinians in general, and to a greater acceptance of the Palestinian perspective on the conflict. However, among the Palestinian participants friendships generalized only to willingness for more contact with Jews, but did not generalize to a greater acceptance of the Israeli-Jewish narrative. Thus, legitimization was only partial but possibly sufficient to pave the way for some reconciliation to take place.

It also follows from our description of collective narratives and their major components that these are in fact outstanding barriers to any reconciliation. History has proved itself to often hold people's collective identities, beliefs and attitudes towards the "other" in a firm grip that won't let go. Think of how the 600 year old history of the Turkish conquest of the Balkan played itself out in the recent Yugoslav wars; or think of the hold that memories of the holocaust have over the psychology of

the Jewish people. Similarly, beliefs are not easily shaken, particularly as they facilitate the senses of collective identity and collective purpose. Thus, would contacts between conflictual groups provide the desired avenue? Research is equivocal on this point (e.g., Cairns & Hewstone, 2002). Pettigrew (1998) provided a list of difficult-to-meet conditions necessary for the success of contacts between adversaries. However, there is nevertheless research evidence to show that when at least some of the conditions are met, such as intensive interaction (Maoz, 2002) or developing friendships (Bar-Natan, 2004), perceptions change and adversary's narratives become somewhat less delegitimized. Perhaps even more importantly, participation in peace education programs has been found to serve, particularly among Palestinian youth, as a **barrier** against the deterioration of perceptions and feelings toward Jews, deterioration effects caused by the ongoing *Intifadah* (Biton, 2002).

A related issue pertains to the role of facing historical memories in a process of reconciliation. Does allowing historical memories to surface facilitate or hinder reconciliation attempts? Devine-Wright (1999) argued that highlighting historical memories is unhelpful as it can easily lead to entrenchment. First, however, history may be unavoidable; it surfaces nevertheless, as Maoz (2000) has shown. As in other cases, while the strong side in the conflict wants to look into the bright future, evading if possible, the past, the weak side usually returns to deal with the past to achieve recognition of the harm done to it. The absence of acknowledgment by the strong group of past harm done by it to the weak group can be a hindrance to any reconciliation process (Roe & Cairns, 2003). Second, as the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* in South African (e.g., Enslin, 2002) and the *To Reflect and Trust* (TRT) workshops (Bar-On, 1999) suggest, facing personal history embedded in collective history may well be a necessary step in the attainment of reconciliation. As Bar-On (2002) describes it: "Probably the acknowledgement and working through process of the Holocaust that took place in the original TRT group enabled the Jewish-Israeli members to acknowledge and start to work through their role in relation to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict" (p. 115).

Recently, Bar-Tal (2000) elaborated on the type of psychological changes that he considers necessary for reconciliation. He proposed that achievement of reconciliation requires changes in five themes of narratives that were formed during the conflict: Themes about group's goals, about the rival group, about one's own group, about relations with the past opponent and about peace.

Theme about Group's Goals. An important change concerns the narrative regarding the justness of the goals that underlay the outbreak and maintenance of the conflict. ~~Groups involved in conflict construct beliefs about own goals that provide epistemic basis for the conflict. They present these goals as being of supreme importance and provide for them justifications and rationale.~~ Reconciliation requires change of this narrative, in fact - its abolition, or at least indefinite postponement of societal aspirations expressed in (narrative-central) goals, which caused the intergroup conflict. Instead new societal beliefs about goals have to be formed. The new beliefs must present new goals for the society that have been shaped by the conflict resolution agreement and that center on maintaining peaceful relations with the former enemy. In addition, these beliefs have to provide rationalization and justification for the new goals, including new symbols and myths.

Theme about the Rival Group. Another determining condition for reconciliation is a change of the images of the adversary group. In times of conflict, the opposing group is delegitimized in order to explain its aberrant behavior, the outbreak and continuation of the conflict, and to justify negative actions taken against the adversary (Bar-Tal & Teichman, in preparation). To promote a process of reconciliation, perceptions of the rival group need to be changed. It is important to legitimize and personalize its members: legitimization grants humanity to members of the adversary group after years of its denial. It allows viewing the opponent as belonging to category of acceptable groups, with which it is desired to maintain peaceful relations. Personalization enables to see members of the rival group as humane individuals, who can be trusted and have legitimate needs and goals. The new beliefs should also contain a balanced stereotype consisting of positive and negative characteristics and a differentiating perception of the group that acknowledges its heterogeneous composition. Finally, the new beliefs should permit seeing the other group as a victim of the conflict as well, not only as perpetrator, given that also its members suffered in its course (Bar-Tal, 2000; Kelman, 1999).

Theme about one's Own Group. Reconciliation requires changing the narrative about one's own group. During the conflict, groups tend to view themselves in one-sided way with self-glorification and self-praise, ignoring and censoring any information, which may shed negative light on the group. But in the reconciliation process, the group must take responsibility for its involvement in the outbreak of the conflict, if that was the case as well as its contribution to the violence, including

immoral acts, and refusal to engage in peaceful resolution of the conflict. Thus, the new societal beliefs present one's own group in a more "objective" and complex light, more critically, especially regarding its past behavior. As pointed out elsewhere (Salomon, 2002), acknowledging the contribution of one's own side to the conflict seems to be a necessary condition for any reconciliation to take place.).

Theme about the Relationship with the Past Opponent. Reconciliation requires formation of new societal beliefs about the relations between the two groups that were engaged in conflict. During conflict, the societal beliefs support confrontation and animosity (Bar-Tal, 1998). To promote reconciliation, these beliefs need to change into beliefs that stress the importance of cooperation and friendly relationships. Of special importance is the stress on equality of relations and mutual sensitivity to each other needs, goals and general well being. These new beliefs about the relationship should also concern the past. As discussed before, the new beliefs should present the past relations within new framework that revises the collective memory and forms an outlook on the past that is synchronized with that of the former rival.

Theme about Peace. During the intractable conflict the parties yearn for peace but view it in general, amorphic and utopist terms, without specifying its concrete nature and realistic ways to achieve it. Reconciliation requires forming new societal beliefs that describe the multidimensional nature of peace, realistically outline the costs and benefits of achieving it, connote the meaning of living in peace, and specify the conditions and mechanisms for its achievement (for example, negotiation with the rival and compromises), and especially for its maintenance. Of special importance is the recognition that for lasting peace the well being of the two sides is in the interest of both parties and hence peace also requires ongoing sensitivity, attention and care for the needs and goals of the other group.

There is wide agreement that reconciliation requires the formation of a new common outlook of the past - a change of collective memories. It is suggested that once there is a shared and acknowledged perception of the past, both parties take a significant step towards achieving reconciliation. As Hayner (1999) noted: "Where fundamentally different versions or continued denials about such important and painful events still exist, reconciliation may be only superficial."(p.373).

Reconciliation implies that both parties do not only get to know, but truly acknowledge what happened in the past (Asmal et al., 1997; Chirwa, 1997; Gardner Feldman, 1999; Hayes, 1998; Hayner, 1999; Lederach, 1998; Norval, 1998, 1999).

Indeed, being recognized and acknowledged is "given urgency by the supposed link between recognition and identity" (C. Taylor, 1994, p. 25). Acknowledgement of the past implies at least recognizing that there are two (legitimate) narratives of the conflict (Hayner, 1999; Kopstein, 1997; Norval, 1999).). This is an important factor in reconciliation, since the collective memories of each party about its own past underpin the continuation of the conflict and obstruct peacemaking. Reconciliation necessitates changing the narratives of collective memories by learning about the rival group's collective memory and admitting one's own past misdeeds and responsibility for one's contribution to the conflict. Through the process of negotiation, in which the one's own past is critically revised and synchronized with that of the other group, a new narrative can emerge (Asmal et al., 1997; Hayes, 1998; Norval, 1998). With time, this new historical account of events should substitute each side's dominant narrative of collective memory.

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