The Jewish–Israeli Ethos of Conflict

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One of Bar-Tal's main contributions is the concept of ethos of conflict. Ethos in general is defined by Bar-Tal as "the configuration of central societal beliefs that provide central characterization to the society and gives it a particular orientation" (Bar-Tal, 2000, p. xiv). Much of Bar-Tal's work, however, is dedicated to a specific ethos—the ethos of conflict. According to Bar-Tal (2000, 2013; Bar-Tal & Oren, 2000; Oren & Bar-Tal, 2006), such an ethos evolves during an intractable conflict and includes specific themes, such as beliefs about the goals in the conflict, about security, about own victimization, and about the opponent's lack of legitimacy. He notes that ethos of conflict is a major component of the psychological repertoire that allows a society to cope effectively with the stressful conditions produced by a conflict. But at the same time, the ethos functions as a barrier to the peace process by providing an epistemic basis for continuation of the conflict (Bar-Tal & Halperin, 2011; Bar-Tal, Halperin, & Oren, 2010).

In what follows, I will elaborate on the meaning of the concept of ethos of conflict from a collective perspective,[1] the way it changes, and the reciprocal relationship between ethos of conflict and conflict resolution. I will focus specifically on the Israeli–Jewish ethos, including the changes in the adherence of the Jewish–Israeli society to the ethos of conflict during the years 1969–2013.

[1] There are several studies that analyzed the ethos of conflict at the individual level, while trying to assess the degree of adherence of an individual to the ethos of conflict. As noted, this chapter will focus mostly on the collective level.

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The Context of the Israeli–Arab Conflict

I begin by outlining some major events in the conflict in order to help the reader understand the context in which the Israeli ethos of conflict evolved and changed. The roots of the Israeli–Arab conflict can be traced to the Jewish immigration movement to the territory known since the 1920s British Mandate as Palestine. Inspired by the nationalist ideology of Zionism, the new Jewish immigrants aimed to establish their own state in the territory that they considered as their old homeland thousands of years before. This intent, and the ensuing changes in the demographic balance of the area, was bitterly opposed by the local Arab populations and triggered the process by which local Arab populations would develop a distinct Palestinian national identity as well. The end of the British Mandate in 1947, and the war that erupted following this event, shaped the history of the region with the establishment of the state of Israel and as many as 800,000 Palestinians becoming refugees in neighboring Arab states.

Between 1949 and 1967, the Israeli–Arab conflict was largely an interstate conflict, and Israel's focus was on Arab states in the region—especially Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. This stage of the conflict includes several additional wars between Israel and Arab states such as the war between Israel and Egypt in 1956 and the war between Israel, Egypt, Jordan, and Syria in 1967. The 1967 war ended with the Israeli capture of additional territories (the West Bank, Gaza, Sinai, and the Golan Heights), some of them heavily populated, thus bringing additional Palestinians under Israeli control.

However, following a major war in 1973, Israel's neighboring states gradually withdrew from direct military confrontation, and in 1979, a peace treaty was signed between Israel and one of its major Arab enemies—Egypt. At the same time, an independent Palestinian movement emerged, which eventually took over the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) that was created by the Arab League in 1964. As a result, the Arab–Israeli conflict became "Palestinianized" (Kelman, 2007), and Israel's focus shifted to the Palestinians (see also Morris, 2001; Sandler, 1988).

During the 1980s, PLO guerrillas, who had been staging raids on Israel from Lebanese territory, provoked several large-scale Israeli invasions of Lebanon. Eventually, in June 1982, Israeli forces invaded Lebanon, driving 25 miles past the border and moving into East Beirut. They forced the PLO leadership to flee to Tunisia, but Israeli armed forces stayed in South Lebanon until 2000. In December 1987, while IDF was still in South Lebanon, a popular Palestinian uprising in the West Bank and Gaza Strip began and continued, at varying levels of intensity, through the early 1990s (what is known as the First Intifada). In 1993, a "Declaration of Principles" between Israel and the Palestinians was signed that led to a peace treaty between Israel and Jordan in 1994 and an interim agreement between Israel and the Palestinians in 1995. A reescalation of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict began with the failure of the July 2000 US-mediated Camp David Summit between Israel and the Palestinians. With the eruption of what is now known as the Second Intifada, the negotiations with the Palestinians ceased, and the level of violence on both sides

surged. In 2005, Israel unilaterally withdrew from the Gaza Strip and from four settlements in the West Bank. This act was followed by considerable chaos within Gaza. The Hamas movement, which calls the replacement of the State of Israel by a Palestinian Islamic state, won the elections held in the Palestinian Territories in January 2006, leading to the formation of a unity government. In June 2007, amid growing anarchy in Gaza, Hamas militants drove the rival secular Fatah party out of the Gaza Strip. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas dissolved the unity government with Hamas and formed a separate government based in the West Bank.

During the years 2007–2014, several attempts at direct and indirect negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority headed by Mahmoud Abbas took place, all to no avail. At the same time, the relationship between Israel and the Hamas in Gaza remained tense and erupted into several major confrontations (in 2009, 2012 and 2014).

In many ways, the Arab–Israeli conflict is a prototypical case of an intractable conflict, characterized as lasting at least 25 years, violent, and perceived as unsolvable, over goals considered existential, and of zero-sum nature (see Bar-Tal, 2013; Kriesberg, Northrup, & Thorson, 1989; Sharvit, Chap. 1). Yet, some events since the late 1970s, such as the peace treaty with Egypt in 1979, the Oslo agreements in 1993 and 1995, and the peace treaty with Jordan in 1994, pointed towards a more tractable end of the conflict's dimension during the 1990s.

Content of the Ethos of Conflict

As noted, Bar-Tal (2000) defined ethos as a configuration of central societal beliefs. Societal beliefs, then, are the building blocks of an ethos according to this definition. They are defined as cognitions shared by society members that address themes and issues with which society members are particularly occupied and which contribute to their sense of uniqueness. This implies that at least some group members hold in their mental repertoire the same beliefs, and they are aware of this sharing. Furthermore, most society members do not have to agree with these beliefs, but they have to recognize their importance and view them as one of the society's characteristics.

According to Bar-Tal (2013, p. 175), not every societal belief in a given society is included in the ethos of a society, only those that meet particular criteria. In addition to being known to the majority of the members of a society, the beliefs of the ethos (a) are often invoked in public debates as justifications, explanations, and arguments; (b) influence politics and decisions taken by leaders of society; (c) appear in many cultural products, such as literature and films; (d) appear also in numerous social expressions, such as rituals and ceremonies; and (e) are imparted to the younger generation and to new members of society.

Bar-Tal (2000, 2013; Bar-Tal & Oren, 2000) claims that during an intractable conflict, an ethos of conflict often evolves that may include the following themes: beliefs about the goals of the society in the conflict, about security, about own

victimization, about the opponent's lack of legitimacy, about positive self-image, about national unity, about patriotism, and about peace. Several studies applied Bar-Tal's ethos of conflict framework to analyze the Jewish–Israeli ethos. Included in this line of research are numerous studies that look at the prevalence of the above eight themes in Israeli official and cultural texts. Among others, Ben-Shaul (1997) studied siege beliefs in Israeli films. Arviv-Abromovich (2010) analyzed beliefs of ethos of conflict as they were reflected in the official ceremonies of Memorial Day for fallen soldiers and Independence Day during the years 1948–2006. David (2007) traced the beliefs of ethos in school readers used to teach Hebrew literature from the pre-state period until 2003. Bar-Tal, Zoran, Cohen, and Magal (2010) analyzed the existence of the ethos beliefs in Sabbath leaflets distributed in Israeli synagogues on Saturdays during the 2009 Gaza War. Lastly, my own research (Oren, 2005, 2009, 2010, forthcoming) reviewed the appearance of the ethos themes in Israeli public opinion polls, cinema, school textbooks, leaders' speeches, and election platforms during the years 1969–2013.

The above studies reveal that the eight themes of the ethos of conflict mentioned by Bar-Tal were indeed part of the Israeli ethos for many years, although some changes appeared over time that will be described later. This means that these themes were shared by the majority of Israeli society over a period of time, they served the political and economic leadership to justify and explain their policies, they appeared in various cultural products, and they were imparted to the younger generation and to new members of society.

Justification of Israel's Goals—These beliefs emphasize the Zionist goals of creating a Jewish state in Israel and reject any possibility of compromising on this goal (as in creating a binational state). The right of the Jewish people to the land of Israel, as well as the negation of the Arab right to the same land, is justified using historical, theological, legal, moral, and cultural arguments. Among the arguments cited, the land of Israel was promised to the Jewish people by God, the land of Israel was for generations' home to the Jewish people, and this link was not severed—at least in spirit—in centuries of exile. Anti-Semitism in general and the Holocaust in particular demonstrate the need of the Jewish people to have a safe haven.

Special attempts were made through the years to refute the Palestinian claims to self-determination, statehood, and "right of return". Some of the arguments used in this context are as follows: Palestinians are part of the Arab nation and not a separate people; no national, societal, financial, or cultural accomplishment of any substance can be attributed to the Arabs inhabiting the land of Israel; and the land was desolate and neglected prior to the return of Jews. Finally, claims for self-determination by the Palestinians were raised only at the time of and in response to the establishment of the Jewish settlement in Israel.

Security—This theme presents the Israeli society as a society that is under existential threat. Threats such as war, terrorism, and unconventional weapons have always featured prominently in the Israeli public discourse. Therefore, security has become

the most cherished need and value, promoted as a cultural master symbol in the Israeli Jewish ethos. All the channels of communication and agents of socialization paid tribute to the security forces, resulting in absolute confidence and trust in the Israeli Army. Military means were seen as more effective in dealing with threats than diplomacy or negotiations. Israel was seen to have a right and a duty to arm itself adequately to address the threats, including the acquisition of nuclear weapons (Bar-Tal, Jacobson, & Klieman, 1998).

Negative Image of the Arabs—At the core of the beliefs in the Israeli ethos, related to the Arab opponents was the perception that all Arabs were part of a single homogenous group (the "Arab World") with no meaningful way to classify them into subgroups. During the most intense period of the conflict, the image of Arabs was dominated by negative stereotypes describing the Arabs as primitive and backward. They were viewed as murderers, a bloodthirsty mob, and treacherous on the one hand, but cowardly and poor soldiers on the other. Other beliefs effectively delegitimized the Arabs by comparing them to Nazis—the embodiment of evil in the Jewish–Israeli discourse. They were perceived to be pursuing the extermination of the state of Israel and its inhabitants and as having no interest in peace (Bar-Tal & Teichman, 2005; Oren & Bar-Tal, 2007; Podeh, Chap. 7).

Victimhood—Israelis perceived themselves to be the victims in the conflict with the Arabs. In this regard, the ethos describes all Israeli actions during the conflict as self-defense and the Arabs as "forcing" Israel to act aggressively. Furthermore, this view was consistent with a "siege mentality," self-perception of Israel as a victim of unjust deeds, mistrust directed even at friendly states and allies, and the idea that Israel cannot trust anyone but itself (Bar-Tal & Antebi, 1992a, 1992b).

Positive Self-Image—This theme presents Jews as "the chosen people" and "a light unto the nations". In addition, this theme includes the belief in Israel as an advanced society, Israel as a peace-loving society, and Israel as a regional military superpower.

Patriotism and Unity—These beliefs encouraged taking pride in Israel and Israelis, denigrated emigration from Israel, and enforced the importance of willingness to make sacrifices for the homeland, especially in the military context and specifically making the ultimate sacrifice in defense of the country (Bar-Tal & Staub, 1997).

The theme of national unity evokes the concern that internal discord may weaken Israel's ability to withstand the threats it faces. Accordingly, it demands conformism especially relating to the goals in the conflict with the Arabs.

Peace—Peace is considered a core value in Israeli society. However, during the intense period of the conflict, the common belief was that peace would only come about by having the Arabs forgo their goals and embrace Israel's goals instead. There was no recognition that achieving peace would require a prolonged process which would include compromises on the Israeli side as well. Rather than being seen as a realistic short-term prospect, peace was viewed as a distant hope or dream.

The Structure of Ethos

Another important observation of Bar-Tal (2000) is that ethos is more than the sum of the main societal beliefs in a society. In this regard, he notes that "Although it is important to study societal beliefs separately, the study of their wholeness, the ethos, enables a more complete understanding of a society" (p. 141). He also notes that "the investigation of the configuration of dominant societal beliefs allows us to elucidate the structure of the ethos" (ibid). Indeed, as part of the research of ethos of conflict, Bar-Tal and his students examined the structure of the Israeli ethos of conflict as a whole at the individual level. For example, Bar-Tal, Sharvit, Halperin, and Zafran (2012), using a scale designed to assess individuals' adherence to ethos of conflict (EOC), found that

> *The eight themes of beliefs that comprise the Ethos of Conflict load on a single factor, suggesting that the different themes constitute a coherent and Gestalt view of the conflict conditions. Each of the themes is unique in content and, at the same time, adds to the holistic orientation so that the different belief themes complement one another and form a core societal outlook about the conflict. (p. 53)*

In my work, I elaborate on the structure of the ethos of conflict at the collective level. My views about how the components of an ethos relate to each other are based on empirical studies of national ethos such as the study of McClosky and Zaller (1984) (about the American ethos) and the vast psychological literature regarding cognitive structures (Festinger, 1957; Heider, 1958) and value systems (Rokeach & Ball-Rokeach, 1989; Tetlock, 1986). This literature suggests that first, the elements comprising an ethos are organized around a limited set of core themes. Indeed, as we saw above, Bar-Tal (2013) describes an ethos of conflict with eight main themes. Second, some themes may be more prominent in the ethos of a society than others. That means that more members of the society share these themes and there is less public debate about them. In addition, more prominent themes of the ethos are more frequently found in cultural products, such as school textbooks and media discourse. In the Israeli context, I found that some themes such as the goals in the conflict and security were very dominant in the Israeli ethos, while other themes such as national unity and siege beliefs were less dominant. The latter themes appeared in some periods more than in others. In addition, they were not equally distributed among different segments in the Israeli society and among different sources of the Israeli ethos. For example, siege beliefs were common in school textbooks, but the centrality of these beliefs in films and in leaders' speeches changed over the years, and they appeared infrequently in some periods. During the 1990s, they appeared mostly in speeches of hawkish leaders but not in speeches of dovish leaders. Public polls also reveal that the agreement with these beliefs varied over time. For many Israelis, these themes may represent a "temporary state of mind" that arises in some situation (like when Israel faces international criticism or during a war) but weakens with changes in circumstances. Indeed, Sharvit (2014) demonstrated in her research that conditions of high (vs. low) distress, either related or unrelated to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, increased the activation of the ethos of conflict among samples of Israeli Jews.

Third, an understanding of the structure of ethos requires analysis of how the core themes relate to each other and to other systems of beliefs and values in the society. The beliefs and themes of the ethos can coexist in harmony, clash, or be partly harmonious and partly clashing with each other or with other beliefs in the society. In addition, some issues, events, or contexts may trigger conflict among the values while others do not. In some contexts, tension may appear in societal beliefs within a specific theme of an ethos (e.g., between majority rule and minority rights within the democratic values system). Other contexts may create a conflict among the different themes of the ethos or between the ethos beliefs and other societal beliefs in the society. For example, in the Israeli case, tension exists between the belief in the value of democracy, that is a societal belief in Israel, and the belief that it is necessary to ensure a Jewish nature for the state. This tension becomes apparent in the context of Israeli control of the territories captured in 1967, which are densely populated by Palestinians. Keeping masses of Palestinians under Israeli occupation may strain democratic practices. On the other hand, adding masses of Palestinians as new citizens to the Jewish state threatens the goal of having a Jewish majority and a Jewish state.

Furthermore, it is important to identify the strategies employed by the society to address inconsistencies among the different themes of the ethos or between the ethos beliefs and other beliefs in the society. Indeed, the psychological literature points to several strategies for dealing with cognitive imbalance. People may deny the inconsistency by questioning the evidence of its existence, they may add new cognitions to bolster one of the clashing beliefs, they may engage in cognitive differentiation, they may change one of the beliefs, or they may decide that one of the beliefs is more important than the other(s) (Abelson, 1968; Festinger, 1957; Heider, 1958). The last two strategies can play an important role in the process of change of ethos of conflict (and also in the process of conflict resolution), as will be described in the next sections.

Changes in the Ethos of Conflict

Changes of ethos over time might take several forms. One type of change takes place when the ethos as a whole becomes more widely or less widely shared among society members. Another type of change involves shifts in the composition of the ethos. Some beliefs or themes of the ethos may be dropped while others are added. In addition, the internal balance among the different beliefs and themes in an ethos may change over time, as some themes may become more dominant while others become more peripheral. Finally, an ethos may also be contradicted by the evolvement of new central societal beliefs that begin to constitute an alternative ethos.

With regard to the Israeli ethos, I identified the following trends of change in the Jewish–Israeli ethos of conflict during the 1967–2000 period:

The main change regarding *the goals theme* was a significant erosion in the belief denying the Palestinian goals of self-determination and statehood, a change that

started following the 1978 Camp David accord between Israel and Egypt. The rejection of the Palestinian "right-of-return" to the 1948 boundaries, on the other hand, has not weakened materially and still constitutes a societal belief in the Israeli society. As for *security*, the perception of the nature of the existential threat shifted during the 1990s away from the danger created by the establishment of a Palestinian state, terrorism, or a conventional war—to focus on the threat of unconventional weapons in the possession of Arab states. The prestige of the armed forces remained mostly intact during this period, but open criticism of the military and its leaders became more acceptable and common. Since the late 1970s, a change was also observed in the beliefs related to the means of achieving security: from an almost total preference of military means (increasing pace of arms development and acquisition, decisive military victories) to a recognition of the importance and value of the diplomatic component, going as far as preferring it over military means in achieving national security goals.

Changes were apparent also in beliefs related to *the opponent's image*. Specifically, following the peace process between Israel and Egypt, Israelis started differentiating between different groups within the Arab world—even identifying different subgroups within national entities, such as the separate factions within the Palestinian population. Another pronounced change, evident both in opinion polls and in cultural products, was the decline in the delegitimization of Arabs: they were increasingly portrayed in more human terms, and some of the negative stereotypes previously ascribed to them (cowardly, primitive, and traitorous) became less prevalent. In addition, the belief that most or all of Arabs had no interest in peace with Israel but rather aspired to exterminate it, declined as well.

In parallel, opinion polls, cultural products (e.g., movies), and political platforms all indicated a marked decline in *victimhood* themes during the early 1990s, specifically a recognition that Israel was not the sole victim in the conflict, combined with a more positive view of the world's attitudes toward Israel. During the early 1990s, there was also an erosion in the *positive self-image* of Israelis, especially as it related to Israel's moral superiority, but also to some degree its military dominance. *Patriotism* also experienced decline, with the willingness to sacrifice as well as the denigration of emigrants becoming less pronounced. However, it still constituted a societal belief in the Israeli society.

Finally, a dramatic change was observed for beliefs concerning *peace*: starting in the late 1970s (following the peace process with Egypt), the content of these beliefs shifted in the sense that peace was now perceived as a realistic prospect and was discussed in concrete rather than abstract terms, with reference to specific political solutions that acknowledged the existence of the Arab population in the territories. As well, peace beliefs were less concerned with a comprehensive resolution of the conflict with all Arab nations, but rather addressed the prospects of peace with specific Arab nations.

In sum, between 1977 (the Israeli–Egyptian peace process) and the early 1990s (before and during the Oslo process), the hegemony of the Israeli–Arab conflict ethos in the Israeli society started to decline, making the Israeli society less cohesive. Many of the beliefs that comprised the ethos lost their status as widely held

societal beliefs: beliefs rejecting the Palestinian claims to self-determination, statehood and their ties to the land, the image of all Arabs as objecting to peace with Israel and aspiring to exterminate it, siege beliefs, and the view of Israeli Jews as a chosen people and morally superior. Other beliefs retained their place in the Israeli ethos, but their support in the Israeli public diminished: the willingness to sacrifice and the prestige of the Israeli military. Still other beliefs, specifically about peace and about the nature of the existential threat to Israel, significantly changed their content. Comparatively, peace beliefs became more dominant in the ethos, while the dominance of security-related beliefs declined. These changes, in turn, intensified the internal contradictions between the beliefs in the ethos. For example, the new content of the peace beliefs (portraying peace as a realistic short-term prospect achievable by means of negotiations) contrasted with the beliefs rejecting all Arab claims and goals. Since the late 1980s, Israeli society started acknowledging the inconsistencies among its values in the context of Israeli control of the territories (for instance, maintaining a Jewish majority, democracy, and peace) and tried to resolve them by changing the context that was triggering the inconsistencies (give up some of Israeli control of the territories). This trend intensified following the First Intifada.

The end result of all of the changes described above was an ethos significantly shrunken and weakened and a reduced tendency to consider the conflict as a zero-sum game. Israeli society migrated from having a single, hegemonic conflict ethos to being exposed to several competing belief systems, of which the original ethos was one (that still enjoyed support within a significant proportion of the population). It is important to note that the Oslo agreement was preceded by 5 years of conciliatory changes in the Israeli ethos. In other words, the ethos was not only a product of the context and the situation of the conflict, but may have also had an effect on what happened in the conflict. I will return to this observation later.

However, the eruption of the Second Intifada in 2000 and its violence reversed the trends described above and restrengthened some of the societal beliefs of the ethos of conflict (Bar-Tal, Halperin, et al., 2010; Bar-Tal & Sharvit, 2008). First, there are indications that negative stereotyping of the Palestinians has become more common since 2000. For example, while in 1997 39 % of Israeli Jewish respondents described the Palestinians as violent and 42 % as dishonest, by the end of 2000 the figures were 68 % and 51 %, respectively (Bar-Tal & Sharvit, 2008). Since 2000, Arabs are again unanimously blamed for the continuation of the conflict and for intransigently rejecting a peaceful resolution. In 2007 and 2009, only about 44 % of Israeli Jews believed that the majority of Palestinians want peace, compared to 64 % who thought so in 1999. Accordingly, polls indicate an increase in the percentage of respondents who think that the ultimate goal of the Arabs is to eradicate the state of Israel from 50 % who thought so in 1997 to 71 % who thought so in 2009.

Second, since 2000, there was also restrengthening of positive beliefs about Israel as militarily superior to the Arabs. For example, in 1993, 58 % of Israeli Jews believed that Israel had the ability to wage war successfully against all the Arab states. This percentage dropped to 48 % in 2000 and then rose to 67 % in 2004 and 72 % in 2005 (Oren, 2009). In 2009, 74 % believed that Israel would be able to cope

successfully with total war with the Arab states, and 80 % were confident that the Israeli army could defend the State of Israel (Ben Meir & Bagno-Moldavsky, 2010).

Finally, since 2000, there are many indications that peace beliefs have become less central in Israeli society. For example, in a time series survey of the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) at Tel Aviv University, respondents were asked to rank four values (democracy, peace, greater Israel, and a Jewish majority in Israel). A drop from 72 % in 2000 to 57 % in 2009 has been found among those who ranked peace as "the most important value" or "second most important value." In addition, as violence erupted in 2000, Israelis began to express pessimism about the chances of resolving the conflict. For example, INSS surveys show a decrease in the degree of optimism and an increase in pessimism regarding the chances for peace from 56 % who thought that it was not possible to reach a peace agreement with the Palestinians in 2001 to 69 % in 2007 and in 2009.

In the next section, I will further elaborate about the link between changes in the ethos of conflict and changes in the conflict context, including causes for change in the ethos following changes in the context of the conflict.

The Ethos of Conflict and the Conflict Context

According to Bar-Tal (2013), the ethos of conflict is a major component of the psychological repertoire that allows a society to cope effectively with the stressful conditions produced by a conflict. It fulfills the epistemic function of illuminating the conflict situation, which is characterized by uncertainty and stress (Burton, 1990). By doing so, it prepares the society for violent acts by the enemy as well as for the difficult life conditions that may ensue. It attunes the society to information that signals potential harm, allowing psychological preparations for lasting conflict and immunization against negative experiences (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Additionally, it functions as a motivating force for mobilization and readiness for sacrifice on behalf of the group that is essential in time of intractable conflict. It also enables the maintenance of positive personal and social identities with the sense of worthiness and integrity that every group strives to preserve on both individual and collective levels. This is especially important in times of intractable conflict because, among other things, the ethos justifies the negative acts of the in-group towards its enemy, including violence against humans and destruction of property (Apter, 1997).

At the same time, these beliefs usually fuel and maintain the conflict and serve as explicit barriers to a peace process. More specifically, they encourage the rivals to keep hurting each other; they constitute obstacles to commencing negotiations between the parties, to continuing the negotiations, to achieving an agreement, and later to engaging in a process of reconciliation. For example, beliefs about own victimization are strongly associated with willingness to continue military operations at all costs and a desire to punish the other side even if such punishment means retaliation and suffering inflicted upon one's own group (Schori-Eyal, Klar, & Roccas, 2013). Beliefs about delegitimization of the opponent exclude negotiations

with the other side because of the perception that it cannot be trusted and that its only aim is to harm and destroy one's own group. Beliefs about the justness of the in-group's goals that define these goals as protected values prevent any compromises regarding these goals, even if such compromises might lead to a better result in terms of the protected values themselves (Landman, 2010).

Recently, Bar-Tal and Halperin (2011; Bar-Tal, Halperin, et al., 2010) included the ethos of conflict, along with other factors, such as general world views, circumstantial beliefs, and intergroup emotions (e.g., fear, hate), in a framework for understanding the sociopsychological barriers to peace. They focus mostly on information processing during the conflict. According to this framework, societal beliefs about the conflict "provide a prism through which individuals perceive and interpret the reality of the conflict. That prism, integrated with general cognitive and motivational biases, frequently leads to selective, biased and distorted information processing of new, potentially positive information" (Bar-Tal, Halperin, et al., 2010, p. 72). The reason for this unwillingness to hear alternative information is a "freezing" of the societal beliefs about the conflict. More specifically, the freezing process involves continued reliance on these beliefs that support the conflict, a reluctance to search for alternative information and a resistance to persuasive arguments which contradict held positions. The result is that the societal beliefs of the ethos of conflict preserve the continuation of the conflict because they prevent acceptance of information that provides an alternative view about the conflict or the rival. Indeed, several studies show that ethos of conflict influences processing of information regarding the conflict and hence functions as a conservative ideology (see, e.g., Bar-Tal, Raviv, Raviv, & Dgani-Hirsh, 2009; Porat, Halperin, & Bar-Tal, 2015).

The ethos of conflict, then, may help a society to pursue a conflict more or less successfully—to win it or at least not lose it—but may also prevent the society from resolving it. For the latter to happen, the rivals would have to change their ethos of conflict. This change may allow readiness to be exposed and receive alternative information that could shed a new light on the conflict and the rival and willingness to adopt this new information that opens ways for peace building.

Change in the ethos of conflict may contribute to efforts to resolve an intractable conflict also when seen from the perspective of the well-known ripeness theory. According to this perspective, resolution of a conflict usually results from a long process of searching for a formula that will satisfy both parties' aspirations (Pruitt & Kim, 2004). Several conditions may encourage such a process. According to ripeness theory, "If the (two) parties to a conflict (a) perceive themselves to be in a hurting stalemate and (b) perceive the possibility of a negotiated solution (a way out), the conflict is ripe for resolution" (Zartman, 2000, pp. 228–229). Put differently, the first condition produces motivation to escape the conflict, and the second condition refers to optimism about finding a solution (Pruitt, 2005). A change in the ethos of conflict can produce circumstantial beliefs that relate to these conditions for ripeness. For example, the decline of confidence in Israel's military superiority during the 1990s may have made winning the conflict decisively seem less likely. As a result, the status quo of continuing the conflict became less desirable. Indeed, surveys from the late 1980s and early 1990s (before the Oslo accord) show that simultaneously

with the change of the ethos beliefs, a reduction occurred in the rate of respondents who chose the alternative of "status quo" as the preferred solution of the conflict (Levinson & Katz, 1993; Shamir & Shamir, 2000). Likewise, awareness of the inconsistencies among components of the ethos in the context of the conflict may have increased the motivation to end the conflict, since the conflict was perceived as more costly in psychological terms. This idea appeared in the election platform of the Labor Party that won the 1992 elections, stressing the inconsistency of the beliefs in Israel as a democratic state and in peace on the one hand and beliefs that refute Palestinian claims to self-definition on the other (Oren, forthcoming). In addition, a decline in the belief that the Arabs wish to exterminate Israel and in Israel's isolation in the world in the pre-Oslo period may have encouraged more optimism and hope for peace. Indeed, Israeli assessment of the chances of achieving peace increased from 57 % in 1986 to 66 % in 1990 and to 77 % in 1991 (Levinson & Katz, 1993; Shamir & Shamir, 2000).

But what may bring about a change in the ethos? Many factors may cause such a change. For example, changes in the society's configuration may lead to changes of its ethos. In this case, the new members of the society may not believe in the old societal beliefs. The younger generations may adopt new values or give different meaning to the old ones (Inglehart, 1997). Mass waves of immigration may also affect the ethos of the society. However, the reality or experience of the society's members may influence the ethos of the society even in the absence of major changes in the society's demography. In this case, the information from new reality or experience may cause society members to reevaluate their current societal beliefs. Two concepts are highly relevant in this regard: major events and major information. Major event is defined as an event that causes wide resonance, has relevance to the well-being of individual society members and to society as a whole, occupies a central position in public discussion and on public agenda, and implies information that forces society members to reconsider their accepted psychological repertoire (Oren, 2005). The term major information refers to information supplied by an epistemic authority, such as the president, government officials, and intellectual agencies, about a matter of great relevance to the society's members and to society as a whole. Like a major event, it occupies a central position in public discussion and on the public agenda and implies information that forces society members to reconsider their accepted psychological repertoire (Bar-Tal & Sharvit, 2007).

In my work (Oren, 2005, forthcoming), I studied the effect of several major events in the Israeli–Arab conflict and related major information on the Israeli ethos of conflict. Analyzing public polls, election platforms, and leaders' speeches, I demonstrated how major events in the Arab–Israeli conflict and related major information, such as the visit of the Egyptian President Anwar Sadat to Jerusalem and the Israeli–Egyptian peace process, had an immediate and dramatic effect on the ethos beliefs of the Jewish–Israeli public. Sadat's visit and the peace process were extremely surprising and nonambiguous events that were accompanied by major information that highlighted the aspects of the events that contradicted the ethos beliefs, for example, beliefs about the Arabs as not having any interest in peace. I identified these specific characteristics of the event as enhancing its potential to bring about changes in

prevailing beliefs (for an extended discussion about characteristics of major event that may enhance its potential for change in ethos of conflict, see Oren, 2005). Indeed, as noted above, immediately following this event, the beliefs depicting the Arabs as objecting to peace with Israel as well as those rejecting Palestinian self-determination were significantly weakened. Peace beliefs also materially changed their content from an abstract view to a concrete and practical one.

I also demonstrated how significant changes in the Israeli ethos of conflict during the early 1990s occurred as a result of the First Intifada and the Gulf War. More specifically, during this time, there was a decline in the perceived intention of the Arabs to exterminate Israel and in beliefs about Israel as a victim. Erosion was observed also in self-image both in the moral sense and in the military might sense. Patriotism beliefs also declined. More importantly, in this period, Israelis became more conscious of the contradictions between their ethos and other societal beliefs, e.g., the clash among the values of democracy, peace, and maintaining a Jewish majority. The main strategy that was used to solve the contradiction among these three values was changing the context that was perceived as putting these values into conflict with each other, in other words, to advocate giving up the territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Indeed, since the First Intifada, we witness a trend toward greater willingness to give up these territories.

All these changes occurred despite the fact that the leadership referred to the Intifada during most of its duration in a way that was consistent with prevailing beliefs. According to Israeli officials at that time, the Intifada was a massive outbreak of violence carried out by small local radical groups, as another plot against the existence of the state of Israel. Most Palestinians, according to this view, were actually quite content with the status quo and, hence, sought no more than local autonomy under continuing Israeli rule or as part of a Jordanian–Palestinian confederation. Israel's role and duty was defined as restoring law and order and protecting the lives and property of both Israelis and peaceful Palestinians. As such, this perception of the Intifada was consistent with the existing societal beliefs of conflict such as positive self-image of the Israelis and societal beliefs about security. The changes in the ethos beliefs among the Israeli public in this case were, then, mostly on the basis of a major event (the First Intifada) and less in response to major information.

I explained this outcome with some characteristics of the event such as its long duration and the fact that the Intifada was perceived as a negative event that came as a surprise and generated some (but not extensive) fear among Israelis. More specifically, as time passed, the intensity and the magnitude of the Palestinian protest, and the long duration of the Intifada, could hardly be interpreted as a set of local riots, but rather as a popular uprising. The event presented the Palestinians in the territories as a group with national awareness and motivation to fight for its rights. This information refuted prior beliefs that identified the Palestinians as part of the "Arab nation" and not as a separate people. The Intifada further exposed the Israelis to information that contradicted existing beliefs of the ethos of conflict, for example, positive self-image beliefs that assumed the moral and humane behavior of Israelis soldiers. Cases of violent behavior, killing, and abuse of unarmed

Palestinian civilians challenged these Israeli beliefs about the humane behavior of Israeli soldiers in their encounters with Arabs.

In sum, in this case, the duration of the event may have eroded the influence of the related major information. In addition, information concerning other events in the international system during the Intifada years could have also transformed Israelis' attitudes regarding the conflict and its ethos: the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Block, the resolution of other conflicts around the world such as in South Africa and Northern Ireland, the Gulf War (that increased fear of weapons of mass destruction and hence may influence security beliefs and self-image in the military might sense), and the changes in the policy of the Unites States regarding the PLO. In other words, the fact that the event of the Intifada was not exclusive on the world (and media) stage for its duration may have also diluted the effect of the Intifada-related major information.

It must be noted that while some major events and/or major information inputs may weaken the ethos beliefs, others may have the opposite effect of reinforcing them. Indeed, Bar-Tal and Sharvit (2007) show how the major event of the Camp David Summit with its unsuccessful ending and outbreak of the Second Intifada, along with the major information regarding these events that was provided to the Israeli public by Prime Minister Ehud Barak, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, their associates, and army commanders, bolstered beliefs of the ethos among the Jewish–Israeli public. For example, they point to strengthening of beliefs regarding delegitimization of the Palestinians, self-victimization, and internal pressure for conformity. Bar-Tal and Sharvit identify characteristics such as the fact that the event was intensive and included negative psychological conditions for the society as explaining these changes.

The changes in the ethos of conflict that were described above, then, present a circular relationship between ethos of conflict and major developments in the context of the conflict. For example, significant changes in the ethos started after the Israeli–Egyptian peace process in 1979 (in themes about the goals in the conflict, about the image of the Arabs, and about peace). It seems, then, that this event shaped Israeli ethos of conflict rather than being a product of such a change. On the other hand, changes in the ethos of conflict that preceded the 1993 Oslo accord between Israel and the Palestinians may have provided a significant contribution to the mechanisms and conditions that made the 1993 Oslo accord possible. The collapse of the Oslo process, in its turn, restrengthened the ethos of conflict that currently serves as one of the barriers to a peace.

Conclusion

Ethos of conflict is a major component of the psychological repertoire that evolves during an intractable conflict. Studies showed that societal beliefs of ethos of conflict that were identified by Bar-Tal (2000, 2013), i.e., beliefs about the goals in the conflict, about security, own victimization, delegitimizing the opponent, positive

self- images, patriotism, and peace, were central beliefs in the Israeli society, that is, they were shared by the majority of the Israeli society over a period of time, they served the political and economic leadership to justify and explain their policies, they appeared in various cultural products, and they were imparted to the younger generation. The research about changes in the Israeli ethos of conflict reveals that the relationship between ethos and conflict is mutual: the Arab–Israeli conflict shapes the Israeli ethos but also is affected by changes in Israeli ethos that contribute to the escalation or de-escalation of the conflict.

It is important to note that the ethos of conflict is only one component (although a central and important one) of the psychological repertoire that creates major obstacles to beginning negotiations, achieving agreement, and later engaging in a process of reconciliation. Other components include collective memory of conflict (Nahhas, Chap. 4; Netz-Zenghut, Chap. 5), as well as collective emotions (hate, fear, the desire for revenge; see Pliskin & Halperin, Chap. 11). In addition, other beliefs that are not directly related to the conflict but reflect general world views (such as religious beliefs) also fuel disagreements that may serve as barriers to negotiation (Bar-Tal & Halperin, 2011). Lastly, conflict resolution and reconciliation require that all sides undergo a similar psychological change. Thus, a change in the ethos of conflict in both societies (the Israeli and the Palestinian) is needed for the reconciliation of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

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