

Ethos of Conflict of the Palestinian Society

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This chapter sketches the ethos of conflict of the Palestinian society. It deals with its roots, the process of its formation, its components, and its unique content as reflected and expressed in the psychological repertoire of the Palestinian society. First, I will define and characterize the concepts and notions that relate and connect to the idea of “ethos.” The analysis will be based on the important scientific work of Daniel Bar-Tal which contributed to the development of modern academic research on intractable conflicts. The second part of the chapter will review briefly the evolvement of the Palestinian ethos through the major historical events in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which crystallized, shaped, and influenced the ethos. The third part will discuss the composition and nature of the eight themes of societal beliefs which are the building blocks of the ethos of conflict of the Palestinian society. The discussion will emphasize the four dominant societal beliefs that constitute the Palestinian ethos of conflict: justness of the goals, patriotism, delegitimization, and victimization. I will illustrate the significance of each societal belief, its contents, and its contribution to the ethos of conflict of the Palestinian society. The last part will deal with the Palestinian culture of conflict and its components.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict exists on the physical, national-ideological, and psycho-socio-cultural levels. Essentially, the conflict revolves around one territory which two people claim as their homeland. The continuing and violent nature of the conflict has turned the struggle between the two people to one rich in symbols, myths, beliefs, emotions, as well as religious beliefs. Since all of these are closely interwoven, it is sometimes difficult to separate myth from reality and narrative from historical facts

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The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a prototypical case of a conflict which meets the criteria describing an intractable conflict: it is prolonged, irreconcilable, violent, and perceived as having zero-sum nature and total. It is considered to be unbridgeable with the involved parties having an interest in its continuation (Azar, 1990; Bar-Tal, 1998, 2000; Kriesberg, 1998; Sharvit, Chap. 1).

In order to meet the challenges of the conflict, a society develops a psychological-social repertoire of societal beliefs, attitudes, and functional emotions. The resultant repertoire constitutes the basis of a psychocultural infrastructure, at its center the ethos, which accompanies the conflict and serves as a foundation for the development of a culture of conflict (Bar-Tal, 2000).

In light of the prolonged experiences of the members of a society involved in an intractable conflict, they develop an **ethos of conflict** defined as a configuration of central societal beliefs, which leads to a specific governing orientation of a society experiencing an intractable conflict. The ethos of conflict is the narrative of the present which reflects the experiences of the members of the society, gives meaning to their social life, and connects present issues of significance with future goals and aspirations (Bar-Tal, 2000; 2003, 2013).

The **societal beliefs** of the ethos of conflict are reflected in language, stereotypes, images, myths, and collective memories and are also connected with the emotional orientation of the society. Bar Tal (1997, 1998, 1989, 1990, 2000, 2003, 2007, 2013; Bar-Tal & Hammack, 2012; Bar-Tal & Staub, 1997; Bar-Tal & Teichman, 2005; Bar-Tal, Sharvit, Halperin & Zafran, 2012; Nets-Zehngut & Bar-Tal, 2007) proposed that the challenges that arise in an intractable conflict can lead to the crystallization of eight themes of societal beliefs in the ethos of conflict that are crucial in the functioning, mobilization, and struggle of the group during intractable conflict.

1. **Justness of the goals**; These societal beliefs delineate the ingroup's goals and establish their justice, justify and outline the way to attain them, and reject the adversary's goal as unjust.
2. **Delegitimizing** beliefs deny the adversary's humanity and morality and portray the opponent in delegitimizing terms, through dehumanization, outcasting, extremely negative trait characterization, political labels, and group comparison that define the opponent as an enemy (Bar-Tal, 1998, 1989).
3. **Victimization** beliefs are based on viewing the ingroup's goals as just and the wickedness of the opponent's goals (Bar-Tal, Chernyak-Hai, Schori, & Gundar, 2009).
4. **Patriotism** beliefs reflect the attachment of love and loyalty of society members toward their nation and their homeland. (Tamir, 1997).
5. **Positive collective self-image** beliefs involve intense self-justification and self-glorification.
6. **Security** beliefs provide psychological conditions to maintain security, motivating and mobilizing society members to participate in coping with the stressful situation.
7. **Unity** beliefs refer to the importance of maintaining unity and solidarity and keeping the society's consensus.
8. **Peace** beliefs are the supreme goal of a society that will be implemented after achieving the goals of the struggle. Peace is described in utopian terms and as a dream.

I propose that the analysis of societal beliefs of an intractable conflict should take into account the religious dimension. Religious beliefs intensify the conflict by providing it with symbols, myths, and intense emotions. The ethno-religious solidarity acts as a basis for political organizations and loyalties. In periods of violent conflict, religious beliefs act as a stabilizing anchor and a source of support for the other societal beliefs. Religion is one of the factors in the crystallization of a social identity and one of the driving forces of societies (Weber, 1963), and it supplies a communal identity to the believers.

Historical Background

The beginning of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be traced back to the end of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century, when the Zionist settlement enterprise in the ancient land of Israel/Palestine took its first steps (1881–1882) (Kimmerling & Migdal, 2003). In the eyes of the Arab inhabitants of the land, the new Jewish settlers were foreigners who had broken into their territorial, social, cultural, and religious area. The purchase of land by the Jewish settlers led to disputes with the indigenous population and the emergence of suspicion, hostility, fear, and an existential threat, together with feelings of anger and hatred, turning the new settlers into the enemy (Mandel, 1976). The violent local disputes became the concern of the Arab population as a whole, and fear of the Zionist newcomers, who were viewed as colonialist invaders, drove the population to resist and to struggle by means of violence (Khalidi, 1997).

Those first three decades of the conflict saw the emergence and formative period of the ethos of conflict of the Palestinian society, which developed in reaction to the Jewish Zionist settlement of Palestine (Khalidi, 2006). The development of these societal beliefs received an impetus following the Balfour Declaration of November 2, 1917, which promised the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine. The declaration was perceived by the Arab inhabitants as a threat to their future. Henceforth, territorial conflict between Palestinians and Jews broke out, which involved violent confrontations that culminated in the war of 1948.

From the 1920s, a culture of conflict began to develop within the Palestinian society and in its core the Mukauma—resistance by violent struggle.¹ Since then, the conflict has been accompanied by incessant violence, and it exists in a permanent reality of low-intensity conflict and eruption of waves of high-intensity conflict every few years. The intractability of the conflict and the negative experiences of violence have crystallized and shaped the societal beliefs of the Palestinians, especially the beliefs regarding justness of goals, victimhood, and delegitimization.

Three additional seminal events have had a major impact on the Palestinian ethos of conflict. The first is the war of 1948, known among the Palestinians as the Nakba

¹For definition of the concept, see Milstein, M. (2009). *Mukawama: The challenge of resistance to Israel's national security concept*. Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, pp. 9–10, 29–34 (in Hebrew).

(catastrophe), which crushed the Palestinians, sociologically, demographically, as well as psychologically and created the refugee problem (Morris, 1987). The Nakba is the “chosen trauma” (Volkan, 2001) for the Palestinians, the central event in their national consciousness, and their collective memory of the conflict (see Nahas, Chap. 5). The Nakba for the Palestinians is not a onetime event but an ongoing process, which many believe will come to an end only in a new context which enables them to regain their rights as before the Nakba.

The second major event was in 1964 with the establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) resulting in the reconstruction of the Palestinian national identity and its goal to establish a Palestinian State (Cobban, 1984).

The third major event was the Nakasa—the defeat in the 1967 war, resulting in the conquest of the whole of Palestine by Israel, including the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, the third holy shrine of Islam—which was perceived as the defeat of Islam and led to the intensification of the conflict (Gazit, 2003). The Nakasa intensified the hatred and hostility toward Israel, Zionism, and Judaism, especially from a religious dimension, and deepened the ethos beliefs, especially the perceived victimization of the ingroup.

The first Intifada (uprising) against the Israeli occupation (1987–1993) brought the Palestinian ethos of conflict to one of its peaks. It was a kind of patriotic declaration, crossing borders of social standing, sex, age, and geographical division stressing societal beliefs of unity, justness of goals, and positive collective self-image.

Paradoxically, the Oslo process in 1993, which led to mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO and to the establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA), did not lead to any significant change in the Palestinian ethos, not even with regard to peace. On the contrary, postponing the discussion on core issues—Jerusalem, refugees, borders, and settlements—led to disappointment and strengthened the Palestinian ethos of conflict. The Al-Aqsa Intifada, which started in September 2000, was deadly and bloody and caused great suffering to both sides.

The Palestinian civil war (2007) between the Islamic movement Hamas and the national secular Fatah caused division between Gaza and the West Bank, but did not affect the ethos because it did not refer to the conflict with Israel. On the contrary, the wars between Hamas and Israel in Gaza, in 2008, 2012, and 2014, strengthened and stabilized the ethos of conflict in Gaza as well as in the West Bank.

In sum, according to the Palestinian perspective, which is reflected in their narrative collective memory,² at the end of the nineteenth century, the Palestinians, who were the earliest inhabitants of Palestine, fell victim to the Zionist movement, which motivated the Jews to migrate to a territory not theirs—Palestine—while spreading the false myth that the land was the homeland of the Jews. The Zionists, who arrived in Palestine as colonialist settlers, began to take over the land. In the Nakba and subsequently, the Jews adopted methods of terror, expelled Palestinians from their lands, destroyed their homes and villages, and turned them into refugees. The State of Israel, which was established on Palestinian land, did not respect international

²This part is based on official documents of the PA, <http://www.wafainfo.ps/atemplate.aspx?id=2087>

laws and did not allow the refugees to return to their homes. In 1967, Israel, which sought to expand and spread, conquered all the territory of Mandatory Palestine. It refused to retreat from it, and by means of its military power—backed by Western imperialism—it intends to continue to expand in the Middle East. The Palestinians are fighting with all the means at their disposal in order to win back for themselves their natural and lawful rights and ownership of their territory.

The Palestinian Societal Beliefs About the Conflict

Bar-Tal (2000) emphasized that any attempt to understand the ethos of a society requires an analysis of the particular societal beliefs that comprise it. In this part I will analyze the contents of the eight themes of the societal beliefs which are the building blocks of the ethos of conflict of the Palestinian society.

Justness of the Goals

Palestinians' beliefs about justness of their goals are based on their perception that they are the indigenous people, descendants of the Canaanites, who had lived in the land centuries ago, before the ancient Hebrews (El-Hasan, 2010, 2013; Litvak, 1994, 2009). Therefore, the territory belongs to them, and they have the full right to return to their homeland, from which they were exiled in the Nakba, and have the right to build an independent state in their homeland. Their beliefs are based on the international legitimization and from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In 1977, the Palestinian National Council coined a new idiomatic expression to describe the Palestinian goals in the conflict: “Thawabit,” namely, the firm, just, and unchangeable principles and goals.³ The Thawabit are protected values, red lines, which the Palestinian society with all its diverse parts, the PLO and its factions, adopted as goals that cannot be compromised or surrendered, and no leader has the right or authority to change them.⁴ The Thawabit have become the cornerstones of the ethos of conflict of the Palestinian society, featuring prominently in all cultural products, in the media, in the speeches of leaders,⁵ in official documents,⁶ in textbooks, and notably in the daily life of the Palestinian society.⁷ The Thawabit are consensual, dominant, and hegemonic in the Palestinian society including Hamas.⁸

³<http://palestineun.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/conclusions-of-the-PLO.pdf>

⁴<http://www.wafainfo.ps/atemplate.aspx?id=4883>

See, for example, the claim of the popular front, Al-Ayam 15.12.2004.

⁵For example, the speech of Abu Mazen: <http://www.wafainfo.ps/atemplate.aspx?id=8748>

⁶<http://www.wafainfo.ps/atemplate.aspx?id=4938>. See the Independence Declaration.

⁷Graphic wall in Dehisha refugee camp; pictures were taken by the author.

⁸Al-Ayam 29.7.2004.

The following are the Palestinian Thawabit:

- The establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state, with East Jerusalem as its capital.⁹
- The right to self-determination.
- The right of return of the Palestinian refugees according to the international and Arab resolutions.
- Release of all the Palestinians prisoners from the Israeli jails.
- Since 2012, in response to Israeli demands, the objection to recognize the State of Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people was added to the Thawabit.¹⁰

Although The Thawabit were formulated in 1977, they were the demands of the Palestinians since the early 1920s. The demand to establish an independent Palestinian state was the first article in the resolution of the third Palestinian Congress in 1920, and since then, it has become a permanent and constant demand. It was demanded in the uprising of 1929 and in the Palestinian revolt of 1936, it was the main demand of the All-Palestinian Government in 1948, and it appeared in the Palestinian charter as well as in all the resolutions of Palestinian National Council (PNC) and the PA. Thus the Thawabit became instruments enabling the Palestinian leadership to adjust their demands according to the level of the conflict and the possibility of its resolution.

Patriotism

As a societal belief, patriotism grew already from the beginning of the early 1920s, when Palestinians began to develop a strong and growing national identification with Palestine. The Nakba and its devastating results, such as living in refugee camps, gave rise to a kind of patriotism—*wataniyya*, which refers to yearning and longing for a homeland. The establishment of the PLO in 1964, with its main goal to liberate the Palestinian people in their homeland, gave rise to the concept of **Mukawama**, meaning resistance and referring to violent struggle of various forms and nuances, which became the dominant and permanent feature of the culture of conflict of the Palestinian society and an upmost expression of patriotic beliefs. It expresses the willingness and readiness to fight and to sacrifice. This is evident in the emergence of the mythical figure of the Fedayee—the new Palestinian fighter, which was depicted as a fearless hero, restoring honor to his people and liberating his homeland, a figure which transformed from the image of the poor refugee to a revolutionary hero (Jamal, 2004).

Since the establishment of the PLO, the Palestinian society has developed a sense of national pride. The new patriotism includes love of the people and the land and revenge against Zionism; steadfastness includes living in refugee camps as a

⁹<http://www.nad-plo.org/etemplate.php?id=59&more=1#4>

¹⁰<http://palestineun.org/category/mission-documents/statements/page/2>

way of showing commitment to the land of Palestine. A poster published by Fatah in 1969 illustrates a new Palestinian patriotic message. It shows a Palestinian fighter with a *koffiyeh* on his head and a Kalashnikov in his hand with the words “my way, my blood, my name, my house and address is Palestine”.¹¹ Patriotism has encouraged the armed struggle and legitimized it.

On March 30, 1976, which came to be known as Land Day, Palestinian citizens of Israel held violent protests against land expropriation in which six Palestinians were killed by the Israeli Army. This was another milestone in the national revival of solidarity and love of the homeland, with land as a focus of patriotism. A poem by ‘Abed Ebeid Al-Zara’i became the anthem of the Land Day: “For the olive trees... and for the sake of the citrus trees, we want to fight till we die, till we get back our Palestine”.¹²

The first Intifada brought Palestinian patriotism to one of its peaks in terms of preparedness for sacrifice for the homeland and unity around the national leadership—the PLO. The Palestinian flag became an inseparable part of the landscape in the territories. The Palestinian society is portrayed in the Intifada literature as fiercely patriotic, solidly united, with values of national honor, and glorifying its martyrs (Marouf, 1997; Nachmani, 2001).

The Oslo agreement created new symbols of patriotism, such as security forces, flag, and anthem. The return of PLO chairman Yasser Arafat to the territories was accompanied by rallies and gatherings in every town of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The rousing speeches by Arafat used mantras and patriotic slogans and created the popular expression of patriotism “with spirit and blood we shall redeem and liberate Palestine.”

The emergence of Hamas in 1987 led to the construction of more patriotic societal beliefs that are based on religious patriotism (Shaked & Shabi, 1994). Hamas has stated that “nationalism is part of a religious belief” (Sela & Mishal, 2006).¹³ Palestine as a homeland became a *waqf*,¹⁴ and the struggle for its liberation is a religious duty; the armed struggle became a *jihad*, and the patriotic sacrifice became death for the sake of Allah. Hamas succeeded in Islamizing the Palestinian patriotism (Abu Amr, 1992).

The motif of a struggle bound up with blood and sacrifice occupied a central position in the Palestinian societal beliefs about patriotism. Without sacrifice, patriotism has no significance (Bar-Tal, 2000; Somerville, 1981). These motifs grew stronger and were reinforced in the course of the Al-Aqsa Intifada; they were expressed in acts of sacrifice by suicide bombers. The presence of the myth of the martyr—*shahid*—in the Garden of Eden in the Palestinian society as a whole provided the spur and incentive for these acts of sacrifice, which are the psychosocial

¹¹ Ronni Shaked, private collection of posters and pictures.

¹² Retrieved 3-9-2013 from <http://pulpit.alwatanvoice.com/content/print/19456.html>

¹³ The Hamas Charter, Article 12.

¹⁴ *Waqf* means the permanent dedication by a Muslim of any property for any purpose recognized by the Muslim law as religious, pious, or charitable. According to Hamas, all Palestine was proclaimed as a *Waqf* for the Muslims.

products of the societal beliefs of patriotism. This phenomenon encompasses both religious and national patriotism and involves a dominant presence of myths and societal beliefs. The martyr is perceived as a hero who is esteemed and honored. School textbooks present martyrs in a positive way and respect them (Firer & Adwan, 2004).

The Mokauma is hegemonic and consensual in the Palestinian society. For example, in 2000, 52 % of the Palestinians supported the Mokauma; in 2001, 75 %; in 2002, 90 %; and in 2003, 75 %. In 2004, 82 % supported armed struggle and 59 % supported suicide terrorism. In 2008, 48 % supported armed attacks; in 2010, 32 % supported armed struggle; and in 2012 41 %. In 2104 42 % believed that armed struggle is the most effective means for establishing a Palestinian state.¹⁵ The Mokauma, especially the armed struggle, mainly contributed to social solidarity and strengthening of the societal beliefs; above all the Mokauma escalates the conflict and its intractable nature.

The Palestinian patriotism contains a number of central features: it combines national and religious patriotism, in which religion serves as a platform for nationalism and as a motivating vehicle; it is a blind patriotism, devoid of self-criticism (Schatz, Staub, & Lavine, 1999); it is a patriotism geared to the struggle against the adversary, and it is motivated by “love of the homeland,” the struggle to achieve the national Palestinian aims, and by the societal beliefs relating to the justness of the goals. The Palestinian anthem states: “Palestine is my home, is the soil of my victory. Palestine is my revenge and the land of steadfastness.”¹⁶

Delegitimization

Palestinian delegitimizing beliefs portray the natural character of the Jew, the Zionist, and the Israeli as involving negative traits, including racism and fascism. Zionism and Israel are considered inciters of violence, aggression, and wars (Rubin, 1993). The term “Zionism” has become a label for political deviation and a synonym for colonialism. Zionism and Israel are portrayed as cruel, oppressive, bloody minded, demonic, and Nazis.¹⁷

The Palestinian delegitimization of Judaism, Zionism, and Israel draws on the conflict, on the religion of Islam, on the Arab world, and on the Western world. Collective experiences connected with the conflict and its violent nature created negative impressions of deaths and injuries, damage to property, stress, fear, suffering, and anxiety, which led to the development of delegitimizing beliefs. The perception of the Jew as an enemy in the Koran and the Hadith led to the creation of a

¹⁵ Polls conducted by Khalil Shakaki, retrieved from <http://heb.inss.org.il/index.aspx?id=4354&articleid=6496>

¹⁶ Retrieved from <http://www.wafainfo.ps/atemplate.aspx?id=2353>

¹⁷ See leaflets of the First Intifada: No. 1, 10-1-1988; No. 5, no date indicated; No. 4, 21-1-1988; No. 7, 13-2-1988; No. 9, 2-3-1988.

delegitimizing infrastructure with diverse expressions, mainly dehumanization, stereotyping, and assigning negative traits to Jews. The Jews are described in the Koran as killers of the prophets, as deviants from the truth, and as descendants of monkeys and pigs. These images, which leaders and religious preachers use, have helped to shape the Palestinian delegitimizing beliefs.

A survey conducted in the West Bank in 1972 shows that the motif of attributing negative stereotypical traits to Jews is predominant. Jews were portrayed as cowards, deceitful, thieves, and greedy (Peress, 1972). In cultural products, the Jew is presented as weak and humiliated on the one hand, and as a sneaky conspirator on the other (Moreh, 1975). In the second Intifada, Jews were perceived in the same way, as a prototype of evil murderers, violent, satanic, and racist.¹⁸

During the first Intifada and also in the Al-Aqsa Intifada, the Israeli soldier was described as one who humiliates Palestinians without distinguishing between old and young or men and women. The description of Israel, Judaism, and Zionism as inferior and noxious creatures appears in articles in newspapers, on posters, in caricatures and drawings, as well as in sermons in the mosques (Elad-Buskila, 2006). The Jews are identified as viruses, as insects, as worms, as grasshoppers, as scorpions, as donkeys, as monkeys and pigs, and as only half-real creatures.¹⁹ A widespread image of the Jew is that of the snake, a motif borrowed from Western anti-Semitism (Shragai, 2010).

Delegitimation also appears in school textbooks, especially through ignoring the existence of Israel and describing Jews as colonialists²⁰ (Adwan, Bar-Tal, & Wexler, *in press*). The attribution of negative characteristics includes expressions such as bloodsuckers, dishonest, moneylenders,²¹ war traders, sadists,²² and murderers of elderly, women, and children.²³

Since the founding of the Hamas in 1987 and the process of Islamization, the image of the Jew became more negative and connected to “monkeys and pigs” which was taken from the Koran. Hamas’s first leaflet begins with the words “Here are the Jews—brothers of the monkeys, and the killers of the prophets.”²⁴ The same image reappeared in 2012 in the Fatah community: “our war is with the descendats of monkeys and pigs, it is a war of religion and belief.”²⁵ In 2012 the term “descendents of the monkeys and pigs” appeared 86 times in various contexts in the online version of the Al-Quds newspaper referring to Jews and Zionists. Other dehuman-

¹⁸ For example, Al Hayat al Jadeeda 31.10.2004.

¹⁹ Al-Resala 1.6.2007; 13.7.2006; 28.2.2008. Al Hayat Al Jadida 7.3.2004; 27.2.2009; 23.5.2010.

²⁰ See, for example, Arabs History and problems of the present, for 10th grade, part 2; 2005, Ramallah.

²¹ Releases of the United National Headquarter: No. 8 March 1988; No. 1 January 1988; Hamas release 11-9-1990.

²² President of Al-Quds Open University, Dr. Younis Amr, Al Hayat Al Jadida 25-3-2009.

²³ Sheikh Taysir Tamimi, the head of Shari’a Courts, Palestinian TV 9-6-2009.

²⁴ Ronni Shaked, Private collection, 1987.

²⁵ Palestinian TV 21-9-2012.

ized images were donkeys, dogs, and mice.²⁶ These images appear in sermons, speeches, and media.²⁷ Burning Israeli flags is common in demonstrations and rallies. The Swastika appears in graffiti and posters in demonstrations.²⁸

An analogy between the State of Israel and fascism and Nazi Germany is a widespread motif. The Palestinians maintain that a similarity exists between the State of Israel and the National Socialist fascism, both ideologically and in actual behavior, since they are all racist. Since the occupation of the territories in 1967 and the need to delegitimize and dehumanize Israel, the use of Nazi imagery has intensified. In the first Intifada, nearly every leaflet labeled Zionist Jews and Israel neo-fascist. Prisons were called “Nazis concentrations Camps” and Israel—a fascist, racist entity—and especially the settlers were called Nazis.²⁹

In the Hamas covenant, Zionism is portrayed as a Nazi enemy behaving brutally toward women and infants. Paragraph 20 of the covenant asserts: “The society facing us is a cruel enemy which acts like a Nazi.”³⁰ Jews are labeled as fascist Nazis, even in official announcements of the PA.³¹

The analogy of Israel with racism is a central motif in the Palestinian delegitimization, which reached a peak on 10 November 1975 in a vote in the UN General Assembly inspired by the Palestinians stating that “Zionism is a form of racism and racist discrimination.” Although this resolution was abolished in 1991, the slogan “Zionism is racism” filtered down to Arab and general public opinion and served as a foundation for the delegitimization of Israel.

During 2012, the terms “Zionist racism” and “racist” appeared in the Palestinian communication channels many times: in the official Palestinian news agency Wafa, 874 times; in the news agency “Maan,” 726 times; and more than 3000 times in Al-Quds newspaper.

Comparing the Jews with crusaders is another way to delegitimize and exclude Israel, since it is compared to an imperialist-colonialist movement (Sivan, 1998). The concept appears especially in fundamental documents of the Palestinian movements.³² The crusaders are described as a small group imbued with religious ideology representing a foreign culture, which came to conquer the Arab region as a whole and Palestine in particular in a cultural-religious struggle. The analogy between Israel and crusaders serves as a motivating instrument for waging a holy war, a jihad, against the “new” crusaders—the Jews.

²⁶ Al Hayat al Jadeeda 20-3-2004, 5-6-2012; Al Risala 28-02-2008; The Palestinian TV 30-08-2012.

²⁷ See Ronni Shaked, Yediot Ahronot, 14-1-2001.

²⁸ Pictures, private collection of Ronni Shaked, 25-2-2013.

²⁹ The Intifada leaflets No. 19 8-6-1988; No. 12 2-4-1988; No. 3 2-1-1988; No. 2 January 1988; No. 7; No. 2; No. 12; No. 13; No. 17.

³⁰ The Hamas Covenant, Article 20.

³¹ Palestinian Information Ministry, cited in Al Quds 17-11-1997.

³² The Hamas Charter, Article 34, 35.

Victimization

The sense of victimization rests on feelings of historical injustice suffered by the Palestinians, especially in the Nakba and since the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967. It is dominant and enshrined in day-to-day events rife with physical suffering and mental anguish, injustice, and abuse of person and property. The societal beliefs relating to the experience of victimization present the Palestinians as the sole victims of the conflict. They portray themselves as victims of the victims. They believe that they suffer unjustly from the consequences of Holocaust, for which they are not to blame (Bar-On & Sarsar, 2004). The Palestinians adopted the analogy between the Holocaust and the Nakba, maintaining that the establishment of the State of Israel, while stealing Palestine, turned the Palestinians into the victims of the Jews victimized by Nazism.

The beliefs stress not only that the Palestinians are victims of Zionism, but also victims of the Arab world, which neglected them and did not help them to achieve their rights. They view the Arab leaders as betrayers, using the conflict for their own political purposes (Khalili, 2007).

The experience of victimhood drove the Palestinian society to search for justice in the international arena by harnessing the societal beliefs relating to the justice of the goals, which furnish the rationale and explanation of the goals of the conflict.³³ The victimization narrative creates a dichotomy between the good Palestinians and the others who are the bad, between the abusers and the abused, and between the moral and the immoral.

Since the reality of their lives is in the shadow of the Nakba, the event which, in their view, turned them more than anything into victims of the conflict, the Palestinians consider the Nakba the ultimate trauma of their victimhood. Since the Nakba, the Palestinians enumerate a long series of massacres and other injustices that reinforce the societal beliefs and the sense of victimization. Israel's actions are perceived as a long succession of assaults and physical abuse, with the aim of completing the expulsion of the Palestinians which began with the Nakba in order to Judaize Palestine. Since the Nakba, the feelings of suffering and distress intentionally caused against them have intensified, feelings of having been robbed and beliefs about the constant threat of expulsion, transfer, uprooting from their land, or as they put it "a new Nakba." This feeling leads the Palestinians to a psychological state of victimization.

Because the Palestinians are the defeated party in the conflict, because of the negative experiences, and because of the feeling of injustice and wrongdoing accompanying their defeat, Palestinians' beliefs about societal victimization have become dominant and central in the ethos of conflict of the Palestinians society. I maintain that the Palestinian experience of victimization has turned the Palestinian people into a "victimization community" which preserves the memory of the victimization as a

³³For example, see President Abbas speech at UN General Assembly, September 2011.

Retrieved from <http://www.wafainfo.ps/atemplate.aspx?id=7390>

central part of the collective memory of the conflict, perpetuates the societal victimization beliefs, and weaves into its sociopolitical reality a mythical plot, by means of which it comes to acknowledge itself as a community of suffering and victimization.

Other Themes of the Palestinian Ethos of Conflict

The societal beliefs about justness of the goals, patriotism, delegitimization, and victimization are the most dominant and hegemonic in the Palestinian ethos of conflict. They are the key themes that feed and maintain the conflict, without which it will be almost impossible for any society to survive intractable conflict and withstand it. Without changing these societal beliefs, it is impossible to reach resolution of the conflict (Bar-Tal, 2013). Henceforth I will describe briefly the other four themes:

National Unity. Despite the ideological sociological and geographical divisions between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, resulting from the Palestinian civil war in 2007, Palestinians have aspired to unity and emphasize its importance in their national struggle. They have not excelled in unity, but they managed to join their forces in times of escalation in the conflict against Israel, as, for example, in the first and second Intifada. The beliefs stress that victory will be achieved by unity³⁴ (Mishal & Aharoni, 1994) and independence will be reached with the strength of unity.³⁵

Furthermore, beliefs about unity became stronger as a result of the division between Fatah and Hamas in 2007, which enhanced the calls for unity. Polls conducted between 2006 and 2009 reflect the high importance and concern attributed to Palestinian's national unity. They indicate that achieving national unity is the predominant desire of the majority of the Palestinians.³⁶

Positive Self-Image. The asymmetric characteristic of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in which the Palestinians are perceived as the weaker side in number and power, necessitates them to find their strengths out of their weakness for the sake of keeping a positive collective self-image. This positive image is important for sustaining collective morale and coping with the stronger rival. The words of a Palestinian young man illustrate this point: "We are mentally and psychologically much stronger, they are materially stronger, with airplanes and missiles."³⁷

One way to present their strengths and enhance their positive self-image is by emphasizing historical events in which they confronted the strong Israeli army successfully. For example, the success in the battle of Al-Karameh in 1968, in which

³⁴ Leaflet no. 10, p. 69. Leaflet no. 1, p. 54, Leaflet no. 28, p. 143.

³⁵ For example, Abu Mazen's speech in January 2011. Retrieved from <http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&article=601976&issueno=11723#.UoZnAsR-xK0>

³⁶ Retrieved from <http://www.heskem.org.il/sources-view.asp?id=1632&meid=43>; <http://www.heskem.org.il/sources-view.asp?id=1651&meid=43>; <http://www.heskem.org.il/sources-view.asp?id=296&meid=43>

³⁷ Interview with a 24-year-old Palestinian man in the West Bank in 17-12-2012.

the Palestinians inflicted heavy losses on the Israeli side, became a symbol for victory and pride (Jamal, 2004). Similarly, the battle of Jenin in 2002 was described as a “heroic battle,” “a legend”.³⁸ Also, the image of a boy throwing a stone on a tank contributes to this “positive image.”³⁹ An additional way to enhance the positive image is by using attributes of heroism, courage, endurance, and resistance—whether passive or active. This image was a source of identification for the society and played a strong psychological role in transforming the state of despair of many Palestinians into feelings of hope.

Security. Palestinians’ societal beliefs about security are related to the perception that Israel aspires to completely transfer them out of the country. Feelings of fear, uncertainty, and beliefs about victimization play a major role in their perceptions of security.⁴⁰ In a poll conducted in June 2013, 74 % of the Palestinians were worried that they or a member of their family could be hurt by Israel in their daily life or that their land would be confiscated or home demolished.⁴¹ Collective emotions of insecurity, fear, and frustration led to the development of societal beliefs maintaining that Israel intends to deport and transfer the Palestinian and to cause another Nakba. These beliefs have increased in the last decade, largely due to increases in Jewish settlements in the West Bank and violent interactions between Palestinians and settlers.

Peace. Beliefs about peace are the least common in the Palestinian ethos. A study that examined adolescents’ articles in newspapers between 1996 and 2007 (Nasie & Bar-Tal, 2012) found that only 3 % reflected peace beliefs. Such beliefs were presented through general and vague terms or terms that reflected doubts and disappointments regarding peace. In addition, only 2 % of the contents of Palestinian school textbooks⁴² refer to peace⁴³ and reflect a general aspiration for it without referring directly to Israel. The Palestinians emphasize the link between peace and justice and often use the phrase “just peace” (salam ‘adel).⁴⁴ Among Palestinian adolescents, peace means justice, independence, and freedom (Biton & Salomon, 2006).

³⁸ Retrieved from <http://www.alestqlal.com/ar/index.php?act=Show&id=11008>

³⁹ Retrieved from https://fr-fr.facebook.com/note.php?note_id=351496761635

⁴⁰ <http://mondoweiss.net/2013/09/general-assembly-transcript.html>

⁴¹ <http://www.pcpsr.org/survey/polls/2013/p48ejoint.html>

⁴² Retrieved from <http://www.israeli-palestinians-school-books.blogspot.co.il/>; See http://d7hj1xx5r7f3h.cloudfront.net/Israeli-Palestinian_School_Book_Study_Report-English.pdf

⁴³ See Israeli-Palestinian School Book Project Research Materials, Posted 1 February 2013 by [IsraeliPalestinianSchoolbooks](http://www.israelipalestinianschoolbooks.blogspot.co.il/), retrieved from <http://www.israelipalestinianschoolbooks.blogspot.co.il/>

⁴⁴ See, for example, Arafat’s speech, The Nobel Peace Prize 1994: “Only in an atmosphere of just peace shall the Palestinian people achieve their legitimate ambition for independence and sovereignty, and be able to develop their national and cultural identity, as well as enjoy sound neighborly relations, mutual respect and cooperation with the Israeli people”. Retrieved from http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1994/arafat-lecture.html and in the first speech of President Mahmoud Abbas in 2005: “We will also continue on the path of Yasser Arafat to achieve just peace – the peace of the braves”. Retrieved from <http://www.multaqa.org/access/inside.php?id=565>

Conclusion

As an intractable conflict, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict touches the emotional and psychological needs of the Palestinian society, and this is in addition to economic, social, or political interests. The psychocultural infrastructure has become an inseparable part of the conflict, created the culture of conflict, and has become a central force driving the behavior of the Palestinian society in the conflict in all its aspects. Thus, a vicious circle has been created that feeds itself: the psychological infrastructure feeds the conflict and drives its intractable character and nature, and the continuation of the conflict and the accompanying violence feed and reinforce the psychological infrastructure (Bar-Tal, 2013). A similar infrastructure also developed on the Israeli side, as Oren (Chap. 8) describes.

The Palestinian ethos of conflict is a foundation pillar of the Palestinian society. Since the beginning of the conflict and until present day, it tends toward aggravation and escalation; the ethos of conflict is hegemonic, dominant, rigid, and stable and prevents the growth and development of an alternative ethos. There are no disagreements over the ethos. It is the unifying factor in the Palestinian society.

The ethos of the conflict is comprised of societal beliefs, which make it dominant, solid, and impenetrable to changes. There is a reciprocal relationship between the ethos and the realities of the conflict. Each one strengthens the other and it is sometimes difficult to know which is the cause and which is the effect. In order for the Palestinian and the Israeli people to advance toward reconciliation and a better future, a culture of peace needs to develop. As long as the reality remains unchanged, and with it the culture of conflict, Palestinians as well as Israelis will not implement and adopt culture of peace, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will continue with its current intractable character.

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