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Security and Fear in Israeli and Palestinian Conflict Narratives

A Social-Psychological Study

Master Thesis (30HP) in Global Studies (120HP)

Ingrid Baukhol

Supervisor: Nina Gren

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ingrid.baukhol@gmail.com

Abstract

The Israeli and Palestinian societies are involved in a long-lasting and violent conflict, where any considerable de-escalation has been conspicuously absent for the last twenty years. The seemingly never-ending spirals of escalation, de-escalation, negotiations, breakdowns and upheavals wear immensely on both societies, which, at the current stage are at an all-time low regarding their beliefs in finding a peaceful solution that involves co-existence with their adversaries. These dynamics also contribute to the creation of large social, political and cultural gaps between the conflicting parties. These differences are often developed on the basis of fear and resentment deriving from the conflict. The fear and resentment become particularly visible in conflict narratives, which express the collective understandings of the conflict itself, developed by the conflict-torn Israeli and Palestinian societies.

In this thesis, a qualitative literature study is conducted with the aim to explore socio-psychological aspects of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with the help of conflict narratives. Emphasising demands for security and expressions of fear in Israeli and Palestinian societies, this thesis investigates: 1) What themes in the conflict narratives are revealed when exploring demands for security in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? 2) How are security aspects in the conflict narratives related to a collective sense of fear? and; 3) How do collective fear and demands for security affect Palestinian and Israeli mainstream interpretations of recent events?

Through the analysis of security aspects in the conflict narratives, interesting findings related to collective fear emerge, and it becomes clear how security aspects in conflict narratives connect the narratives to fear experienced within the societies. Using the conflict narrative to interpret current events, the collective fear coupled with previous experiences blends with the fear generated by the current event, creating a cycle where the conflict narrative and collective fear work to enhance the fear in the Israeli and Palestinian societies.

Keywords: Israeli-Palestinian conflict, intractable conflict, conflict narrative, collective fear, social psychology.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

It was the end of July 2014 and the afternoon prayers rang out, overpowering the usual noise in the streets below my apartment in Jerusalem's Old City. Sitting at my windowsill, cooling down in the afternoon breeze, I reflected on the discussions with my Israeli and Palestinian friends over the last few weeks. Friends who were usually liberal and open-minded had now withdrawn into their shells, supporting either the Israeli government's decision to bomb Gaza, or Hamas' decision to fire rockets into Israel. Palestinian friends who usually enjoyed the company of friends from 'the other side,' now erupted into frustrated tirades on whether Israel was seeking to bomb Gaza to pieces, if this was what eventually would happen in the West Bank, and how the entire Palestinian people would end up in refugee camps all over the Middle East. To some of my Jewish-Israeli friends the fear of what could happen if anyone found out that they as Jews were in the Muslim Quarter, became too overpowering, and they had turned down my dinner invitation. The fear of being lynched, kidnapped or even killed suddenly appeared very real, to people who usually fought against such stereotypes or prejudice, and their strive against the conflict had faded significantly.

The Israeli and Palestinian societies are involved in a long-lasting and violent conflict, where any considerable de-escalation has been conspicuously absent for the last twenty years. The seemingly never-ending spirals of escalation, de-escalation, negotiations, breakdowns and upheavals wear immensely on both societies. Therefore, at the current stage, the societies are at an all-time low regarding their beliefs in finding a peaceful solution that involves co-existence with their adversaries. How can we explain the forces behind the Israeli and Palestinian societies' current reluctance towards dealing with each other? What is it that affects the fear of the adversary, and how does this fear emerge?

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a conflict where identity is a central concern, and it contains intricate symbolic, ideological, and political dimensions. The 'conflict narrative' is tightly connected to the societies' identities, being a social construction that helps the society to define and give meaning to the conflict and conflict-related

events (Rotberg, 2006).¹ Living in a conflict that is framed in terms of identity often leads conflicting parties to take an absolutist approach, where defence frequently results from what is perceived as the adversary's attack on one's identity. Such attitudes tend to evoke strong feelings and have great impact on the conflicting parties' belief in peace and future reconciliation, and thus also on their will to compromise and cooperate in order to reach a solution (Auerbach, 2010: 108). I argue that the combined power of collective fear, being the emotion focused upon in this thesis, and rigid conflict narratives throughout different conflict phases is underestimated, which emphasises the importance of conducting a study enhancing our understanding of this relationship.

Aim, purpose and research questions

There are many ways to approach the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the great need for political solutions has been and still is the main focus in the conflict. At the same time, the conflict's complexity reveals the need for alternative approaches to increase the understanding of challenges to its resolution. In this thesis, I have chosen to approach the conflict from a socio-psychological angle, arguing that this is an important complementary perspective to more frequent discussions of competing national projects and Israeli colonialism.

The overall aim of this thesis is to explore socio-psychological aspects of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with the help of so-called conflict narratives, which will be further explained below. I am particularly interested in demands for security and expressions of fear in Israeli and Palestinian societies, and the interaction of these elements with the conflict narratives. Based on this aim, my more specific research questions are phrased as follows:

1. What themes in the conflict narratives are revealed when exploring demands for security in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?
2. How are security aspects of the conflict narratives related to a collective sense of fear?

¹ I will refer to the collective conflict narratives interchangeably as 'narratives,' 'conflict narratives' and 'collective conflict narratives.' I will specify whenever I refer to other types of narratives, or narratives belonging to other societies than the Israeli and Palestinian.

3. How do collective fear and demands for security affect Palestinian and Israeli mainstream interpretations of recent events?

First, I will use elements from narrative theory and social psychology to establish a conceptual framework, elaborating on what a collective conflict narrative is and what role it plays in a conflict. It should be pointed out that the collective conflict narratives are generalising and overarching narratives, and thus do not reflect the complexity and nuances in opinions found within the Israeli and Palestinian societies. Second, I use the established framework to identify and analyse security aspects in Israeli and Palestinian conflict narratives, connecting the security aspects to historical conflict-related events. Third, this enables me to discuss how the Israeli and Palestinian societies use the conflict narratives to interpret current conflict-related events, while at the same time highlighting what role collective fear plays in these interpretations, being one of the most powerful emotions in conflict situations.

The findings in this thesis highlight an important, but nonetheless largely un-researched connection between a society's collective fear and its conflict narrative. This link suggests that fear and narratives are involved in a reciprocal process where fear plays a big role in shaping the narratives and that elements in the narratives have the potential to evoke the emotion of fear in a society. By investigating how security aspects of conflict narratives are related to a collective sense of fear I would like to enrich the study of conflict narratives. Paying attention to less investigated factors affecting a conflict is important in order to try to find new, constructive approaches to deal with conflict narratives and peace negotiations. I hope that this thesis can inspire the development of de-escalatory measures in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and that it can create awareness of the importance of emotions and narratives in violent intractable conflicts more generally.

Literature review

Both Israeli and Palestinian scholars have gone far back in history to justify and legitimise their own group's right to the country and thereby the content in respective collective conflict narratives (Fisher and Kelman, 2011: 67; Pappé, 2009; Morris, 2004). Despite a lot of historical research and revisions of the conflict history, many

components within the two narratives are just as contested as they were forty years ago. As argued by Professor Smita Rahman (2010: 62) the formation of a group's identity is tightly connected to the way the group experiences its past, something which makes issues relating to the narratives important political questions. Scholars such as Kelman (2007), Auerbach (2010), Daoudi and Barakat (2013), and Rotberg (2006) point at exactly this phenomenon in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, describing how the use of rhetoric referring to security components in the respective conflict narratives, has made the relationship between the conflicting parties deteriorate.

The importance of cognitive and perceptual processes in conflict was discussed early in social psychology. Kelman (1965) and Jervis (1976) were two of the first scholars to recognise how these processes affected the formation of enemy imagery and foreign-policy decisions. On the basis of this, the social-psychological approach has for the last few decades received increased attention in disciplinary fields such as international relations, political psychology and conflict research (Herman et al., 2005; Fisher and Kelman, 2011: 61). More specifically, research on international relations and ethnic conflict from the middle of the 1980s and onwards has emphasised psychological barriers. Extensive theoretical research and also some empirical research have been conducted, emphasising the motivating force behind negative emotions, and the way it can uphold conflict (Horowitz, 1985; Volkan, 1997; Kelman, 1997).

Within conflict research, this development resulted in scholarly work on the formation of identity and narratives in conflict (Bar-Tal and Salomon, 2006), conflict narratives (Rotberg, 2006; Daoudi and Barakat, 2013), narratives in reconciliation (Auerbach, 2005; 2010), political psychology and large-group identities in international conflict (Volkan, 1985; 2001; 2004), and collective memory in conflict (Gur-Ze'ev and Pappé, 2003). On the basis of this, there is a significant amount of research conducted after 2000, claiming that the last breakdown in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations can, at least partially, be blamed on the fact that the negotiations during the 1990s had not taken socio-psychological aspects into consideration (Halperin et al., 2010). Despite the increase in this research, there are some who continue to argue

that there still is a need for more thorough research on socio-psychological barriers, such as clashing conflict narratives (Rouhana, 2006; Halperin et al., 2010; Bar-Tal, 2001; Volkan, 2009).

The Israeli scholars Daniel Bar-Tal and Eran Halperin have made important contributions to the topic of psychological infrastructures in conflict throughout the last decades. Their research highlights psychological and emotional barriers to peace such as anger, hatred and fear, and how societies develop such collective emotions (Bar-Tal, 2001; 2002; 2011; Bar-Tal and Salomon, 2006; Halperin, 2011; 2014; Halperin et al., 2011).² Another characteristic of fear as an emotion, is that it binds current negative experiences together with previous experiences, blurring past and present, and narrowing the perspective of the society or group experiencing fear (Bar-Tal et al., 2007). The Palestinian-Israeli ethnographic researcher Fatme Kassem has exemplified this by showing how storytelling among Palestinian women in Lod intricately links past and present interpretations and experiences related to the conflict (Kassem, 2010; 2011). This argument will be further developed in the thesis' analyses of security aspects in both of the narratives.

With this thesis emphasising the effects of collective fear, Bar-Tal's and Halperin's research is highly relevant, since they show how fear connects to a general motive of wanting to create a safer environment, but how it can also result in response tendencies that make an individual fight or flee. Together with Joseph de Rivera, Bar-Tal and Halperin also argue that stable negative collective emotions can become integrated into the more permanent psychological context of individuals in conflict, making long-term emotions key influencers in conflicts such as that in Israel-Palestine (Bar-Tal et al., 2007). Their description of the psychological context in conflicts, can, on a group level, be connected to the Israeli scholar Yehudit Auerbach's (2010) research, which connects narratives to identity conflicts. To Auerbach, conflict narratives provide the society in conflict with a framework in which the conflict and conflict-related events are interpreted. Her work emphasises the narrative qualities of the psychological infrastructure or context, showing how events from the past and the

² An emotion is collective, in the notion that it is widely shared by the members of the society, and by a strong presence in public discourse, educational material, and cultural products (Bar-Tal, 2011:12).

remembrance of these events are important to the development of a society's identity and the understanding of its position within the conflict.

This outline of previous research reveals how there is an increasing emphasis on the role of narratives and emotions in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, although this has not become part of more mainstream understandings of the Israeli-Palestinian context. The outline has established one framework that explains the narratives, and another framework, which connects conflict-related events to the emotions it activates and to the behaviour this eventually results in (Halperin et al., 2011: 90). However, this research is in its initial phase, especially regarding research on emotions. As exemplified by the research of Bar-Tal and Halperin, the emphasis in the majority of research on emotions in conflict has focused on the individual level, rather than on the collective. There is nevertheless increasing support to apply the findings from the individual level onto group and intergroup levels (Halperin et al., 2011: 84). If one sees the psychological studies of Bar-Tal et al. (2007) in relation to Auerbach's conflict narrative, one can argue that Bar-Tal et al. lack an emphasis on the narrative qualities of the psychological context. While Auerbach emphasises the psychological context's narrative qualities, it could be argued that her research does not take into consideration how emotions such as collective fear play into the operation of the conflict narrative and the way conflicting parties choose to narrate their experiences. This means that the interaction between the conflict narratives and the emotions that emerge in response to conflict-related events appear as relatively undescribed. Attempting to fill this gap, I wish to further the understanding of conflicts, by using a theoretical framework inspired both by Auerbach's research on conflict narratives and Bar-Tal et al.'s research on emotions. This will help in understanding how conflict narratives work together with collective fear, and the way conflict-torn societies use the narratives when interpreting current events.

Method and research design

The complexity of conflicts poses a methodological challenge when conducting conflict research. Both conflicts and conflict research relate to and are explained differently by each discipline and theoretical framework. Thus, there are challenges connected to choosing one single, adequate theory or method, which is why I have

chosen to combine two slightly different approaches. In retrospect, my choices can be questioned, but nevertheless, after an extensive literature review, I choose them as the most suitable in answering my research questions. In addition, the specific topic in this thesis poses methodological challenges because conflict narratives and a society's experience of fear are highly abstract issues; it is about perceptions and feelings, variables that are constructed, and thus difficult to measure and compare (Foucault and Trombadori, 1991). This problem demands that I am transparent regarding my presumed set of beliefs and assumptions. Consequently, the beliefs and assumptions that are used derive from an understanding that humans who live in conflict situations, attribute meaning to their environment in light of the conflict in which they are situated, and that these interpretations affect their attitudes and behaviour. This belief is based on central elements from the philosophical tradition of phenomenology, which connects to the social-psychological approach taken in this thesis. The social-psychological approach emphasises that subjective experiences, values, and attitudes are central to the way a person perceives his/her reality and chooses to respond to that reality (Fisher and Kelman, 2011: 61).

In accordance with the social-psychological approach, I work along a description that defines international conflict as intersocietal and interactive. As a process, international conflict is:

(...) driven by collective needs and fears – by nonfulfillment or threats to the fulfilment of basic human needs, including such psychological needs as security, identity, recognition, autonomy, self esteem, and a sense of justice (Burton, 1990 in Fisher and Kelman, 2011: 62).

I thus investigate the specific cognitive group and intergroup processes according to the belief that the interaction of groups plays a large role in the course and outcomes of international conflict (Fisher and Kelman, 2011: 61-63). With an open mind, I aim to interpret the understandings of the conflict within the Israeli and Palestinian societies, meaning that this thesis is focused on my personal interpretation of the research issues, not the interpretations of the societies that I investigate.

Qualitative literature study

In order to deal with the challenges of the conflict's complexity and the abstractness of the issues treated, the social-psychological approach will frame the chosen method of a qualitative literature study. The thesis uses the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as case study, which together with the chosen method provides a context in which I can apply the thesis' theoretical framework, analyses and discussion. It enables me to show how the issues in this thesis have emerged and developed in a complex context, and it allows the reader to take multiple factors from both sides of the conflict into consideration when developing his/her own understanding.

The use of sources

The qualitative literature study is based mainly on text analyses of research from fields such as social psychology, narrative research, conflict research, political science, international relations, security studies, and political psychology. The data was found in literature searches through the library catalogues and online databases of Gothenburg University Library and The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. In addition to my initial search, I continuously searched for data during the writing process; looking up key words and references from the bibliography in literature I already obtained. One of the strengths of a literature study is that it provides broad access to the work of acknowledged and experienced researchers. The chosen method also gave me easy but comprehensive access to values and beliefs of the conflicting groups without interfering, interrupting, or affecting the narratives. Throughout my literature search I continuously aimed to find diverse approaches to investigating security demands in Israeli and Palestinian societies. The qualitative literature study also enabled me to triangulate these findings by using different types of documents such as historical documents, news articles, speeches, and most importantly - research conducted by scholars of each representative society and foreign experts.

What might have limited the research are my subjective reflections behind my choice of topic. As the conflict researchers Louis Kriesberg and Bruce Dayton (2012: 5) note: "it is our moral concern about many aspects of conflicts that motivates much of our interest in trying to understand them." Nearly every aspect in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is contested and a significant proportion of the research conducted

is of a biased character. Additionally, conducting research within the field of social sciences makes it close to impossible to remain neutral. Thus my bias, in relation to this conflict, is to be found in my critical stance towards the politics of the Israeli government, having the power over a majority of the resources and thus also the ability to initiate a serious peace process. This does not mean that I am not critical towards the Palestinian leadership, which unfortunately shows a high level of inefficiency and unwillingness in relation to finding a solution to the internal battle between Hamas and Fatah, which again has negative impact on the peace process with Israel. Another significant problem on the Palestinian side is that there have not been any valid national elections for neither the West Bank nor Gaza during the last decades. This leads the legitimacy of the current Palestinian leadership to be questionable (Abu-Helal, 2013).

One additional reflection regarding biases relates to the use of sources. The literature search and literature review revealed a considerable discrepancy in the number of Israeli and Palestinian scholars working on the topics of this thesis. Israeli scholars have developed large parts of the theoretical contributions applied, and also written a substantial number of relevant empirical articles. In contrast, the Palestinian contribution to the social-psychological approach to conflict research is relatively marginal. For instance, several of the thesis' main sources are edited or written by Israeli scholars such as Bar-Tal, Halperin and Auerbach. Palestinian scholars, on the other hand, are represented only by a limited number of articles and co-authored chapters in books.

This discrepancy cannot be exclusively blamed on better access to translated research originally written in Hebrew and the lack of translation of Arabic research. Another and more important reason is that Palestinians do not have the same extensive discourse on security as Israelis. On the Israeli side, this is at least partially a result of the extensive militarisation of the Israeli society. Regarding the Palestinian society, the lack of a well-developed security discourse can be partially explained by structural limitations of the occupation, but also by the authoritarian rule of the Palestinian Authority (PA). An illustrative example is how the relatively small Palestinian police force works closely with Israeli security forces, and is therefore not

taken into consideration as something protecting Palestinians from the Israeli threat. This leads the Palestinian society to lack central concepts or institutions related to security in the same way Israelis do (Trall, 2010). This does not mean that a Palestinian security discourse does not exist, but rather that it is defined in a slightly different manner, and survives mainly on the elite level rather than on a collective level (Balamir Coskun, 2010: 285). A final possible reason is that the social-psychological approach is not very attractive to Palestinian academia since it depoliticises the conflict. The approach looks at what could be perceived as the individual's ability to cope with the conflict situation on a psychological level, leaving the political power relations on the side. This view of the conflict could be less favourable to Palestinians, as their discourse about the conflict focuses on the political injustice of having less fulfilment of human rights than Israelis, which is much due to Israel's implementation of security measures to decrease their fear of Palestinians (Bar-Siman-Tov, 2014).

The fact that Israelis dominate the theoretical research done within the field, means it is unavoidable that the framework and terminology used in this thesis are coloured by an Israeli perspective and thus also by the Israeli narrative. Despite the challenges on how to relate to the sources used in this thesis, I argue that the use of Israeli sources on the Palestinian case is crucial, and provides important information in several ways. First, it provides information on the content within the two conflict narratives and on the narratives' functions, while also illuminating reaction patterns in Israeli and Palestinian societies. Lastly, it enables a comparison of the Israeli and Palestinian narratives, reactions and fears.

Another aspect to take into consideration is the discrepancy between the scholars' portrayals of the conflict narratives. I attempt to bridge the discrepancies by using both internal (Israeli and Palestinian) and external (international) scholars to crosscheck data on each narrative, with the goal of conducting an analysis that takes into consideration the different, relevant approaches and perspectives. Lastly, there are methodological challenges connected to my choice of including statistics from Israeli and Palestinian public opinion polls to give additional proof to the claims of

this thesis.³ As described by the ethnographer Juliana Ochs (2011), there is a taboo around expressing resentment or prejudice overtly, when for instance being asked questions for polls. Therefore, I have aimed at crosschecking statistics with other data that represents attitudes, in order to get additional proof of long-term trends and in order to try to deal with the possible discrepancy between outspoken and actual attitudes.

³ I used polls from 1995 to 2014 conducted by the Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace and the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (The two institutes work together in Joint Israeli Palestinian Poll (JIPP)), Israel Democracy Institute (The Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research), and Arab World for Research and Development (AWRAD).

Chapter 2 Theoretical and conceptual framework

This chapter will first build on the literature review discussed in the introduction and clarify some points of departure for my understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Second, it will establish a theoretical framework inspired by Auerbach (2010) and Bar-Tal et al. (2007) that I will use for the discussion of my material in the following chapters.

Points of departure

A conflict about identity

A society develops large parts of its identity through comparison to other groups' identities. In a political perspective, identity-building relates to existential means in the society members' lives, such as the aspirations of a nation state or the protection of the state's continued existence, and the preservation of one's culture, values and attitudes (Ochs, 2011: 72).

The development of identity has interesting connections to the society's perception of its security situation, the security discourse, and measures taken to obtain security. This interaction also draws much of its reasoning from security aspects in the conflict narratives. The perception of security shapes who we are and the way we explain our circumstances, and thus our identity. In intractable conflict, the conflicting parties' perceptions of themselves and of the adversary has roots in the collective fears and needs that drive the conflict, and a conflict tends to escalate when identities become part of contested issues (Fisher and Kelman, 2011: 63-64; Kaufman, 2006). Large segments within both Israeli and Palestinian societies view the identity of the other as a threat to themselves, which results in an increased focus on separating the enemy's identity from one's own identity. This becomes visible in the conflict narrative's portrayal of the other (Auerbach, 2010: 100). The denial of the adversary's identity and existence take the form of a zero-sum game, meaning the acknowledgement of the adversary's identity is viewed as equivalent to putting their own identity and existence at risk. Thus the existential security-issues emerging from the conflicting identities can be argued to be both a root cause and a cause of continuation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Kelman, 2007; Fisher and Kelman, 2011: 64).

Asymmetry

Asymmetry in power relations

Another important concept when explaining my approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is conflict asymmetry. The asymmetry in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict starts with the basic difference of Israel being an internationally recognised state for 67 years, while Palestine is not yet an internationally recognised state.⁴ Thus Israel enjoys the stability a state provides to a society, including well-developed institutions and a robust economy. Palestine, on the other hand, suffers from great political instability and a tight economy that relies on foreign aid. These factors give Israel an advantageous position in relation to economic and institutional resources. Second, the asymmetry also derives from the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and military blockade over Gaza, creating a dynamic where both areas are *de facto* controlled by Israel.⁵ Relating to security, the occupation in itself is very much about dominance and control over the occupied. Third, the power asymmetry is visible in the political impetus of Israel compared to that of Palestine. Israel has a close alliance with the United States, where they benefit from extensive aid and military cooperation, making Israel a powerful political actor on an international level and in their relation to Palestinians. Lastly, the power asymmetry also gives Israel the upper hand when it comes to interpreting conflict-related events outside of Israel/Palestine. When one side has the ability to control interpretations of conflict-related events, they tend to communicate a version supporting their agenda and thus affect the perceptions dominating the news (Rouhana, 2006: 127).

The effect of asymmetry in narrative building and the development of identity

The asymmetry in the stages of identity building makes the narratives differ in outlook, strength, and in the way the Israeli and Palestinian societies relate to their narratives (Auerbach, 2010: 108). Moreover, the asymmetric features directly affect the conflict narratives by accentuating their importance. This mechanism becomes an

⁴ November 29th 2012, Palestine received a non-member observer State status in the UN. The resolution granting the status also voiced a hope for the approval of the Palestinian application for full UN-membership (United Nations, 2012).

⁵ Israel disputes that there is an occupation of Gaza, pointing at their unilateral withdrawal in '04-'05. However, after Hamas took over the power in Gaza in 2007, Israel keeps it under a strict military and naval blockade. The blockade imposes severe restraints on the import and export of goods, and as much as 70% of the Gazan population relies on humanitarian aid (Amnesty International, 2012).

attempt to compensate for the experienced weakness in relation to the adversary, further increasing the narratives' potential power (Auerbach, 2010). Rouhana (2004: 42) supports this idea; He emphasises how power asymmetries are decisive to how the societies experience the conflict by defining concepts present in both conflict narratives in very different ways, depending on whether one is the oppressor or the oppressed.

In conclusion, the most powerful party in a conflict in most cases does not have sufficient incentives to engage in a comprehensive peace process (cf. Zartman, 2000). Scholars such as Halperin et al. (2010) and Rouhana (2004) argue that Israel would have to make the first move in whatever initiative related to the peace process, since it currently has the upper hand and thus, does not have enough to lose by continuing existing policies. Rouhana (2006: 112) elaborates that the "culture of force" that governs Israeli relations with Palestinians further decreases the number of incentives for Israel to engage in reconciliation. The history of the Israeli-Palestinian relationship makes it easier for Israelis to continue turning to the use of force to deal with Palestinians, maintaining today's power asymmetry. Hence, there is a vicious cycle, created by the power asymmetry, in favour of Israel.⁶

Intractable conflict

The intractability of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is an issue that both affects and is affected by the conflict narratives. According to Kriesberg and Dayton (2012: 210-214), a conflict is considered intractable because of its longevity, comprehensiveness, high levels of animosity, and constantly returning cycles of violence that bring extensive losses and suffering. Under such circumstances, the society's values and beliefs are considered to be under existential threat, eventually leading to a number of negative feelings including extensive stress in respective groups generated from the narratives. The intractability also relates to the asymmetry in power relations and the discrepancy in development regarding national aspiration and identity.

⁶ The lack of pressure from the international society is caused by an international climate based on power relations and real politics, contributing to maintain the power asymmetry. Combined with Israel's close relationship to the US, powerful countries' traditional support to the use of violence makes international pressure on Israel even more unlikely (Kaufman and Grigorian, 2007).

When a conflict is intractable, collective conflict narratives achieve immense force; they will permeate every conflict-related issue spanning from the refugee issue, questions on future borders, to the discussion on security (Kriesberg and Dayton, 2012). Adding psychological characteristics to the definition, a conflict is intractable when: 1) the conflict is “perceived to be about essential and basic goals;” 2) these goals are indispensable, meaning that elements of a zero-sum game once again appear; and 3) that this absolutism occupies a central position in the lives of the group (Bar-Tal, 2011: 7-8, 11-13). An illustrative example of how the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is intractable is the struggle over Jerusalem. After decades of conflict, failed negotiations and violent eruptions, the city has become a mythical symbol of both Palestinian and Israeli national identity. The intractability makes Israeli and Palestinian aspirations and demands very absolute and the goal is a total ethnic control over the city and its resources, hence another zero-sum perception (Halperin et al., 2010).

Theoretical framework

The collective conflict narrative

With regards to the concept of ‘collective conflict narrative,’ there are many disciplines contributing research related to conflict narratives and thus, the discourse has a set of concepts with marginal differences in their definitions. Examples of this are ‘collective identity’ (Rouhana, 2004) versus ‘large-group identity’ (Volkan, 2009). Other examples are ‘national narratives,’ ‘historical narratives,’ and ‘meta-narratives’ (Auerbach, 2010; Rotberg, 2006) versus ‘collective memory’ and ‘ethos of conflict’ (Bar-Tal and Salomon, 2006), also called ‘chosen glories’ and ‘chosen traumas’ by Volkan (2009).

Making an attempt to orientate among the different terms, I choose to define the *collective conflict narrative* as a social construct that defines and gives meaning to a society’s history and its common existence in relation to the conflict situation (Bar-Tal and Salomon, 2006: 20). The conflict narrative’s unity relies on logic and trustworthiness, and creates cohesion in the society’s identity and values. It does not provide an objective truth, but functions rather as a ‘coping mechanism’ that helps the

society interpret and process conflict-related information (Rotberg, 2006: 3). In an intractable conflict like the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the coping mechanism of the conflict narrative is important in defending the legitimacy of one's own cause, and the actions such a defence requires (Daoudi and Barakat, 2013: 136). In order to answer this thesis' research questions, it is also necessary to narrow the conflict narratives down to clear analytical variables. In relation to the Israeli conflict narrative, I exclude Palestinians-Israelis, and include them in the Palestinian conflict narrative.⁷ I also exclude the vast Palestinian and Jewish Diasporas from the narratives, despite their historical and current influence on the two societies.⁸

Components

Auerbach (2010) distinguishes between the *national narrative* and *meta-narrative*, as two main components in a conflict narrative. The national narrative explains events that define the character of the society and it includes, excludes and frames the reality of the conflict.⁹ Stories passed on to the next generation focus on traumatic events caused by the conflict and as part of the conflict narrative, the traumatic experiences affect the society's worldview and perception of their own situation (Auerbach, 2010: 101; Rotberg, 2006; Bar-Tal and Salomon, 2006: 19-20). The Israeli-Palestinian conflict contains a relatively high number of experienced traumas on both sides, and one of the consequences is that it enables the fear behind the stories and traumas to develop within the conflict narratives (Volkan, 2001).

⁷ I did this despite the fact that Palestinian-Israelis are citizens in Israel and part of Israeli public opinion, because Palestinians in Israel are closer to the Palestinian conflict narrative in relation to their experiences and current position in Israel, being a group partly living outside of the Israeli society. They experience juridical discrimination from the Israeli state at the same time as fellow Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territories question their loyalty to the Palestinian nation. The challenges connected to their position and identity have been thoroughly documented by scholars such as Isabelle Humphries (2009) and Ilan Pappé (2011).

⁸ The Palestinian Diaspora has its origin from the 1948 War and consists of Palestinians who have chosen to leave Israel/Palestine voluntarily, Palestinians deported by Israel, and refugees from the large Arab-Israeli wars. The Jewish Diaspora's majority has lived in exile for generations with the initial exodus being a result of the dissolution of the Kingdom of Israel after King Solomon's death, dated around 920-930 B.C.E. Today's largest Jewish Diaspora communities are found in USA and Europe. The diaspora is not physically present in the area where the conflict plays out, which makes their conflict narrative different from that of people living in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza.

⁹ The national narrative also includes the *historical narrative*, a component that focuses more exclusively on explaining the history of a society. The historical narrative is a part of a national narrative independent of whether the society sharing the narrative lives in a conflict situation or not (Auerbach, 2010). It could be argued that the definition of 'historical narrative' is close to the definition of 'collective memory,' explained below.

The *meta-narrative* is an overarching component in the conflict narrative that provides moral and ideological reasoning to the national narrative. It characterises the core beliefs within the society, explains the society's goals and aspirations, and assesses their capacity to realise these goals. It also plays a great role when societies begin establishing a national identity, which is very much the case for both Israelis and Palestinians, but perhaps especially for Palestinians. Touching upon the deeper strata of the reasoning for a nation's existence, identity, and legitimacy, the meta-narrative is difficult to question or change (Auerbach, 2010: 101-104). Religious justifications are also part of the meta-narrative, and will be elaborated upon when discussing the power of conflict narratives.

The concept of 'conflict narrative' and Auerbach's components of this narrative can be connected to what Bar-Tal et al. (2007) define as a socio-psychological infrastructure in intractable conflict. Bar-Tal et al.'s infrastructure consists of a *collective memory* that contributes historical information, which could be connected to the historical narrative inherent in Auerbach's national narrative. The infrastructure consists of *societal beliefs* also called ethos of conflict, which can be connected to Auerbach's meta-narrative. In addition, Bar-Tal et al. (2007: 441) describe a *collective emotional orientation*, which the society directs towards its adversary. The emotional aspect in their framework adds an important aspect to the concept of conflict narratives by taking the potential effect of negative emotions into consideration.

As shown in the literature review, Auerbach's framework, based on narrative theory, lacks the emotional aspect in its understanding of the psychological dynamics at work in a conflict situation. Bar-Tal et al. include the emotional aspect, and thus offer an additional aspect important for this thesis. Simply describing the larger framework as psychological infrastructure, they do not, however, describe the narrative characteristics of the psychological dynamics. In other words, both frameworks have their shortcomings. Therefore, on the basis of these shortcomings, I wish to use a theoretical framework inspired by both Bar-Tal et al. and Auerbach. I thus call the society's understanding of the conflict as a whole, a *conflict narrative*. Furthermore, I will denote its main components as *meta-narrative* and *national narrative*, while at

the same time including the concept of *collective emotional orientation*. This model will help me discuss how the Israeli and Palestinian societies use their conflict narratives to interpret current events and how collective fear plays out in these interpretations.

Mechanisms and power of conflict narratives

Benedict Anderson (2006) claims in his book *Imagined Communities*, that the increasing size of modern communities makes societies strive for ways to strengthen their shared identities. One of the ways to strengthen identities is through the development of narratives, meaning that conflict narratives play an important role in conflicts that revolve around identity such as the one found in Israel/Palestine. Going deeper into its functions, the conflict narrative legitimises the values of the society and explains its weaknesses and failures. To stress the importance of the society's own goals, the conflict-related issues are often portrayed in very absolute terms, with their own choice of actions being the *only* right thing to do. The fulfilment of these goals is portrayed as having existential importance, meaning that failure would lead to the downfall of the society. Such attitudes discard the goals and issues of the adversary as less important. This mechanism limits the extent to which received notions can be altered by new perceptions and makes the narratives biased (Auerbach, 2010).

Another description of this mechanism of clashing conflict narratives is *mirror imaging* (Rotberg, 2006: 22-23). Mirror imaging becomes a rather extreme version of ethnocentrism that orients the narrative according to a good-bad dimension. It uses stereotypes that portray the enemy as the aggressor, while one's own society is portrayed as morally superior. First, mirror imaging is relevant to security aspects in conflict narratives, by helping to maintain what Volkan (2009: 210) calls the society's *nonsameness*; its uniqueness and elevated position in relation to the adversary. Second, mirror imaging legitimises taking a harsh stand, using violence when experiencing threat, and defending ones' own violent reactions as purely defensive. Third, when the adversary is portrayed as the warmonger not wanting peace, this increases the society's level of fear from this adversary. All this contributes to a downward spiral where mirror images contribute to immediately interpreting the

adversary's hostile actions as a threat which one needs to defend oneself from. While the society experiencing the threat believes that the adversary understands the defensive character of its' actions, the adversary on the other hand, reacts to these (defensive) actions as if they were signs of aggression. So it is that mirror images contribute to essentialist tendencies, which create a framework explaining the adversary's actions as inherently hostile (Fisher and Kelman, 2011: 66-67; Kelman, 1997).

Groups opposing peace or interaction with the adversary often use mirror imaging in their rhetoric. Examples of this are Hamas in the Palestinian society, and Zionist fundamentalist movements in Israel such as the Nachala Settler Movement. The moment something goes wrong in negotiations or there is a clash between Palestinians and the Israeli military, these groups perceive those actions as proof and justification to fuel their images of the other as hostile, the perpetrator, or the one violating their own society's rights. This is eagerly communicated to the wider society, and often results in increased support for such extreme images (Volkan, 2009: 210). This shows how features in conflict narratives can exert significant power upon conflict dynamics.

First, going more into detail on the emotional aspect from the social-psychological framework, societies involved in intractable conflict tend to develop an emotional repertoire dominated by negative emotions such as fear, hatred and anger. Additionally, the power of the psychological emotions can be connected to the conflict narrative by using the research of Bar-Tal and Halperin (2011: 224), who argue that in intractable conflict, negative emotions become part of the "long-term emotional sentiments," coined as part of the conflict narrative in this thesis, thus contributing in upholding the conflict. The conflict narratives connect the values and ideological sentiments from the meta-narrative, with the emotions tied to traumas from the national narrative. This emotional connection motivates reactions, which are seen as necessary for the defence of the society and its nation. The conflict narrative may then contribute to legitimise, or in the most extreme cases, to glorify the use of violence against adversaries (Kelman, 2007).

Second, the mirror imaging explained above assists conflict narratives in developing rigid and prejudiced attitudes towards the adversary. These attitudes derive from in-group – out-group dynamics, which justify out-group scepticism and hate by portraying the out-group's values and identity as a threat to the in-group (Fisher and Kelman, 2011). This adds to the mistrust and often results in a loss of belief in a settlement of the conflict or in the belief of the adversary as a partner for peace. Actions that imply compromises, reconciliation or measures enhancing peace will, in a situation of mistrust, be met by great reluctance and scepticism. These mechanisms can thus block or hinder measures aiming to improve the relations between conflicting parties (Bar-Siman-Tov, 2010; Bar-Tal and Salomon, 2006).

Third, conflict narratives often find justification and gain additional power from religion mixing with political ideology. This can translate itself into a divine right to the disputed area. It can also justify an elevated position of one's own people in relation to the adversary, or portray the adversary as evil and thus also be a factor that legitimises the use of violence. This could portray the use of violence as a religious act, connected to sacrifice such as martyrdom (*shahadah*) in the Palestinian case, or to religious Zionism, advocated by many right-wing settler movements and politicians (Reiter, 2010: 229). In conclusion, the conflict narrative plays on multiple sentiments within a society and its collective identity, and it provides an important reference framework. The power inherent in the narratives make them double-edged swords that can uphold and fuel a conflict, but could also contribute to creating conditions that would increase the chances for solving the conflict.

Defining security and fear

Delimitation is also needed with regards to how I choose to use the concept of 'security.' In order to make the concepts fit the objects studied, namely Israeli and Palestinian societies and collective fear, I choose to apply the holistic definition of security, as defined by the UN (1994). I choose this definition rather than the definition found in Security Studies and International Relations Theory, which defines that a state is considered the ultimate agent of security. The UN's concept of 'human security' emphasises the security of people rather than of a territory or nation state and has its two main components in 'freedom from fear' and 'freedom from want.'

This concept seeks to break with the tradition where the state is the main agent, recipient and provider of security, and to make human beings into valid units of analysis (Stern, 2005: 22-24).

I choose to talk about security focusing on its position in collective narratives, aiming to locate what I have called 'security aspects' in the narratives. Using this term, I depart from an assumption from the social-psychological approach, which claims that a society's stereotypes and traumas relating to the adversary have the potential to lead to violence or the use of force. The stereotypes and traumas are connected to security-related emotions within the society such as fear, hatred, and anger, which again connects to how the society perceives its security situation (Halperin et al., 2011). As noted, I focus on the emotion of fear, meaning that the security aspects that will be located and analysed in the narratives, are aspects that generate fear among the members of the Israeli and Palestinian societies.

Collective fear occurs in situations where the society views their situation as one living under a perceived threat or danger, which in conflict can justify the use of force or violence (Volkan, 2009; Kaufman and Grigorian, 2007). The myths and stories mentioned above have their origin in the national narrative, which provides historical information to the conflict narrative. This establishes the link between fear and conflict narratives with the narratives accumulating events that have caused fear.

As introduced in the literature review, collective fear tends to function as a barrier to peace. Since the Israeli-Palestinian conflict currently is an intractable conflict, which moves interchangeably between the escalation and de-escalation phases, the role of collective fear is of great importance in several ways. In the outbreak and escalation phase, fear must be considered when calculating whether to implement possible offensive actions or not, and when choosing how to frame conflict-related events. In times of de-escalation, the long-term emotional sentiments present in public views, such as fear, play an important role with regards to whether a de-escalatory initiative will be well received. If one is to move towards conflict resolution and peace building, one has to be willing to take risks. The collective fear seems to be one of the biggest barriers to taking such risks. If the experienced level of fear is high, the

society tends not to support policies involving a perceived security risk. It will rather support action that aims at protecting the society, such as not taking any risks in negotiations, or the initiating of military actions (Halperin, 2011: 26, 40; Huddy et al., 2007). In on-going conflict, however, fear loses its restraining role. It contributes to uphold reluctance towards negotiation and interaction with the other side, and eventually stabilises a violent situation (Halperin et al., 2011: 93). When a group in conflict experiences threat and fear, the group is likely to become increasingly bigoted and prejudiced. In intractable conflict, such experiences tend to occur frequently, with the result that “society members become over-sensitised to cues that signal danger and exist in a state of constant readiness to defend themselves” (Jarymowicz and Bartal, 2006). The high levels of violence and intractability are crucial in shaping the meta-narrative, leading the involved societies to perceive the conflict as total, irresolvable, and as a zero-sum perspective where the adversary’s gain is ones’ own loss (Halperin et al., 2011).

Individual versus collective fear

Conflict researcher Mustafa Sherif claimed as early as in 1966 that cognitive processes operate differently in group and intergroup processes, compared to on an individual level. Interaction between groups happens on the basis of the groups’ identities. Since identity and conflict narratives are intimately connected, this means that in conflict, the collective conflict narrative will play an important role in shaping the interaction (Sherif, 1966 in Fisher and Kelman, 2011). Relating this to fear, one can differ between *individual* and *collective* fear. The latter is developed on a societal- or group level, and is the notion of security found in collective conflict narratives. In conflict, the society’s trauma and fear present in the conflict narratives affects how the society perceives their security situation. In the narratives, the perception of collective security possesses the same cohesive energy as the national and meta-narratives explained above.

People who live in conflict situations intertwine their individual perception of security with the collective security and with political notions of security notions. This is supported by the research of Maria Stern: in her ethnography on the relation between Mayan women’s identity and their understanding of security, she points at how people

seek security in constructing a collective identity. This, under the modern structure of sovereign nation states, makes the state the ultimate focus of security (Stern, 2005: 25-26, 46). In other words, members of a conflict-torn society increasingly perceive their individual security situation and perception of threat tied to the state's security situation and perception of threat. As mentioned in the literature review, Bar-Tal et al. (2007) talk about how the fear binds current negative experiences together with previous experiences. Experiencing fear also contributes to the blurring of the borders between the 'self' and the 'state,' according to ethnographer Juliana Ochs' research on security and suspicion in the Israeli society. This blurring means that the fear one experiences in relation to attacks or threats to the state, is also experienced as fears and threats against themselves as persons, increasing public inclination to accept the state's harsh measures against the threat (Ochs, 2011).

Chapter 3 Historical and religious background of the conflict narratives

This chapter will provide an explanation of selected historical events in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that have shaped security aspects in the Palestinian and Israeli conflict narratives, and which I have assessed as relevant to my research questions. I selected these issues for background information to clarify my focus and to facilitate the following analyses and discussion.

The Israeli and Palestinian conflict narratives originated during the British mandate period (1920-1948). Both conflict narratives are heavily influenced by the meeting between Jewish immigrants and the local Palestinian Arab population in historical Palestine,¹⁰ the popular nationalist movements that emerged from this meeting, and both groups' opposition to the British Mandate rule (Auerbach, 2010; Pappé, 2006c). Israelis and Palestinians understand the historical events in very different ways, and therefore I will explain their interpretations of the events interchangeably. Using research by Israeli, Palestinian, and external scholars, I aimed at finding the narratives shared respectively by the Israeli and Palestinian societies, leaving a focus on finding a balanced or neutral version of the narratives, outside the focus of this thesis.¹¹ This inevitably means that I had to generalise and simplify complex historical processes and disregard many disagreements within each society.

Zionism and the time before 1948

The Palestinian experience

Before the middle of the 1930's, Palestinian Arabs were accepting towards the Jewish immigration and there was little to no resistance. However, a coloniser-colonised relationship soon developed. Palestinians perceived what was happening as an invasion of foreigners, with the newcomers having an increasingly successful strategy of dispossessing and displacing those already living on the land (Rouhana, 2006). It

¹⁰ The term 'Mandate Palestine' refers to the land that was under British rule from 1920 to 1948, i.e. today's Israel/Palestine. However, the name 'Palestine' was used for the region long before the British mandate period, and so I choose to use the term 'historical Palestine,' thus referring to the time before the British mandate as well. In relation to this, it should also be noted that Jewish immigration started already in the late nineteenth century while the area was under Ottoman rule (Forman and Kedar, 2003).

¹¹ For research on the bridging of narratives see: Pappé (2006b) and Bar-On (2006).

has been argued, that for Palestinians, resistance was a natural reaction towards what was an increasingly unjust and harsh treatment (Rouhana and Bar-Tal, 1998: 763). When the Palestinians started protesting against the Jewish immigrants' methods to gain land, their relationship quickly deteriorated, and the Arab Revolt of 1936-1939 contributed further to this deterioration. Even though the revolt was mainly directed towards the British Mandate, it contributed to making nationalism the dominant sentiment in both Israeli and Palestinian societies.

The Jewish experience

Theodore Herzl is usually considered the founder of the Zionist political ideology, a movement born in the late nineteenth century in Central and Eastern Europe. It emerged as a reaction to the difficulties met when trying to build a Jewish lifestyle within European countries, and increased levels of anti-Semitism soon ignited the search for a place to establish a Jewish state. The Israeli historian Anita Shapira (1996: 38), argues that already from the emergence of Zionism, the movement used historiography, media, politicians, and literature to shape the past in a way that would persuade European Jews to move to Palestine.¹² This underlines Zionism's role in shaping the national narrative shared by the Jewish society (Gavriely-Nuri, 2014: 47). The land of historical Palestine was the birthplace of Jewish religion and civilization, and Zionism explained how it was time to redeem and liberate what once was theirs. The ideology became the foundation for the immigration and rebuilding of the Jewish homeland, and for what was to become the Israeli state's policies (Friedman, 2007). Zionism's three key principles stated that; 1) the Jews are a nation which ought to establish their own nation state ending the Jews' exile; 2) the Jewish State should be located in Palestine and; 3) Palestine is to be the *exclusive* homeland of the Jews (Pappé, 2006a).

Already in the beginning of the twentieth century, Sephardic and Ashkenazi communities who developed in historical Palestine discussed intently how to handle

¹² This becomes apparent in the historiographic tradition called *The Jerusalem School*, showing how the Zionist paradigm related to history as something that built national identity and nationhood, framing events within Zionism's religious-ethical basis of Judaism, Jewish uniqueness and future prosperity (Shmueli, 1986).

the ‘Arab Question.’¹³ Thinkers like Yitzhak Epstein and Hayyim Ben-Kiki warned already at that time against the increasingly dominant Zionist attitudes and actions against Arabs, fearing it eventually would backfire in the form of Arab hostility. When, and to what degree, the immigrants realised the negative consequences their actions would have, both for the local population and themselves, is highly discussed. The details of that discussion are, however, outside the scope of this thesis (Bar-On, 2006: 147-149; Behar and Ben-Dor Benite, 2013: 102-103). From the Arab Revolt and onwards, the encounters have been dominated by an increasingly asymmetric power relationship and the coloniser-colonised dynamic mentioned above. This escalation has continued up until today and thus, Palestinian hostility has become one of the most important causes of fear in the Israeli society (Rouhana, 2006).

Then, starting in the late 1930s, the Holocaust’s consequences for Jews in Europe were immense. The Holocaust has undoubtedly had a profound impact on Israeli-Jewish identity-formation and behaviour, and on Zionism’s strong position. Being a massive trauma within the Jewish people’s national narrative means it holds an important position and exerts great influence on the conflict narrative. Despite the Holocaust being a historical event happening in a geographically different place, and with other actors involved than in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the emotions that are evoked are very similar. Thus Holocaust’s impact on the Israeli conflict narrative and collective fear cannot be ignored (Gur-Ze’ev and Pappé, 2003). As an example, the connection between Holocaust and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is frequently made by the current Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who for instance argues that the Mufti of Jerusalem during the first half of the twentieth century, Haj Amin al-Husseini, sympathised with the Nazis (Netanyahu, 2013).

The 1948 War

Al-Nakba

The core event in the Palestinian national narrative is *Al-Nakba* (The Catastrophe), following the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. The previous year,

¹³ The majority of immigrants, the Ashkenazim, supported strategies conforming to the Zionist principles. The Jews, as the chosen people, were to be placed in a privileged position while cooperation and integration into the local population was not prioritised. The Sephardim, coming from Middle Eastern and North African countries, were of a different attitude, advocating cooperation and dialogue (Ben-Kiki, 2013).

Palestinians had rejected the UN Partition Plan that was to leave them with 43% of what they considered to be their land (Pappé, 2006c). The war in 1948, between the newly established Israel and the Arab states, is seen as ignited by the Israeli forces and was fought on the land of historical Palestine. It came upon an unprepared Palestinian people, and over 700.000 people were displaced because of the war. In Palestinians' eyes, Israelis systematically and violently expelled Palestinians and later denied the majority of the displaced the right to return. The traumatic experiences from the war added to the Palestinians' feeling of humiliation and suppression resulting from the Jewish immigration. The eradication of Arab cities and the continued expulsion after 1948 only increased the scope of the tragedy for the Palestinians (Pappé, 2006c; Rouhana, 2006; Daoudi and Barakat, 2013: 62-63). The Jewish immigrants had now become Israelis, and to Palestinians it was the Zionist project that had brought this humiliation upon them. In addition to losing their homes and land, the Nakba deprived Palestinians of the foundation for a Palestinian national coherence and thus their national aspirations, while at the same time igniting nationalist sentiments in the population (Rotberg, 2006: 7-8; Al-Jawad, 2006; Lindholm Schulz, 1999).

The War of Independence

The Israeli narrative's interpretation of what happened in 1948 considers the emergence of war a result of Palestinian hostility and reluctance towards any Jewish presence. The aggression from the Arab states and the Palestinians had left Israel with no other choice but to use military power in order to establish their state (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013). To Israelis, the victory was implausible, and the surprise brought by Israel as "little David vanquishing the giant Goliath," with the latter being the hostile Arab states, has historically held an important position in the Israeli national narrative (Bar-On, 2006: 145). Regarding the Palestinian refugees, some Israeli scholars such as Samuel Katz (1985, in Daoudi and Barakat, 2013: 63) claim that local Arabs were not passive victims.¹⁴ They either voluntarily moved out or were encouraged by their own leaders to leave. Thus the War of Independence provides an important foundation to the Israeli perception that "Palestinians have

¹⁴ For more on this discussion, see: Morris (2004) and Pappé (2006a).

never had a history, they have never had a just cause, and were responsible for all the tragedy that has been inflicted on [Israelis]” (Daoudi and Barakat, 2013: 63).

The 1967 War

Al-Naksa

The 1967 War, called *Al-Naksa* (The Setback) by Palestinians, resulted in complete Israeli occupation of Historical Palestine. In total, Israel seized the West Bank including East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, the Sinai, and the Golan Heights, and it was in the years after Al-Naksa that the Israeli settlement growth accelerated in the West Bank (See Appendix 1). The Naksa played a great role in getting the Palestinian national movement on its feet. Before the Naksa, Palestinians were connected to the other Arab states both with regards to identity and support. In 1969, Yasser Arafat became chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO). Arafat chose to lead the Palestinian national struggle independent of the other Arab countries and managed to merge the emerging national identity together with the idea of resistance (Pappé, 2006c; Ghanem, 2010).

The Six-Day War

To Israelis, the increase in terror attacks, Arab hostility and military build-up eventually required a pre-emptive strike, invoking the inherent right of self-defence against the Arabs preparing to destroy the Jewish state (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013). The Israeli victory unified Jerusalem and freed Judea, Samaria and Israeli towns in the northern areas.¹⁵ The victory strengthened Israel’s position in the region, and affected the way the Israeli public perceived themselves and their situation. The collective narrative was adapted in order to explain and justify the decisive victory and the newly obtained areas in religious, historical, national and security-related terminology. This led to an increased support for portraying Palestinians as threatening aliens who did not have a national identity and thus had no right to stay in the areas Israel had now taken control over. What was viewed as unprovoked Palestinian hostility against Israelis legitimised Israel’s increasingly

¹⁵ ‘Judea and Samaria’ are the biblical terms of the territories in the West Bank, used by Zionists to claim Israel’s historical right to this land. The northern villages refer to Jewish communities in the Golan Heights.

harsh stand to contain and/or remove Palestinians (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013; Bar-Tal and Salomon, 2006; Safran, 1971).

Sabra and Shatila

A massacre

In September 1982, Sabra and Shatila, two Palestinian refugee camps in Beirut, were surrounded by the Israeli military and Phalangists, trained and uniformed by the Israeli forces.¹⁶ The Phalangists, a Lebanese Christian militia, eventually entered the camps on September 16th under Israeli command, launching a massacre directed towards Palestinian civilians in the camps (Shahid, 2002: 40). When it became dark, the Israeli military launched illuminating flares that lit up the camps so that the Phalangists could continue the massacre, which lasted for two days. The camps were closed, so that no one except soldiers came in or out without the Israeli military's permission. Trucks transporting dead and alive Palestinians were, however, reported driving out of the camps (Journal of Palestine Studies, 1983: 101). On the second day, the Phalangists moved out of the camps and journalists and diplomats were eventually able to enter, broadcasting the news about what had happened. Despite proof of the Israeli military providing training, logistics, supplies and ammunition, Israel denied any responsibility until its Kahan Commission found that Israel bore only indirect or moral responsibility for the massacre. According to Kapeliouk (1984 in Shahid, 2002: 44) 3,000 to 3,500 were killed, with a majority being Palestinian refugees.¹⁷ In the Palestinian conflict narrative, the massacre works as proof of Israel's capability and wish to systematically remove Palestinians, underlining their existential fear of eventually being wiped out.

An operation to root out terrorists

As expressed in the Israeli Cabinet's communiqué from September 19th (1982), the Israeli military had:

¹⁶ Going into detail on the reason for planning the operation towards the refugee camps is outside the scope of this thesis. For more information, see: Shahid (2002) and Temkin (1987).

¹⁷ These numbers also, however, include foreign workers and Lebanese civilians who lived in the camps (Shahid, 2002: 44). For more information on casualties during the Lebanon War, see: *Race & Class* (1983).

(...) surrounded the Palestinian refugee camps in west Beirut to flush out terrorists, confiscate weapons and strengthen the Maronite regime in the wake of Bashir Gemayel's assassination.

According to the communiqué, the Israeli military ended the actions by what they called the “Phalangist elements” as soon as they learned about the massacres. The military’s public statements expressed great compassion concerning the civilian casualties. But despite the remorse, the government and military emphasised the terrorists’ violations of the agreements, enabling them to continue their “bloody terror against Israel.” The Israeli Cabinet called upon the people of Israel to “(...) unite around its democratically elected government in its struggle for security and peace for Israel and all its citizens” (1982).

When the news about the massacres, and the possibility of Israeli forces passively aiding the Phalangists reached Israel, the public debate reached a new peak with one of the largest demonstrations in Israel’s history. The Lebanon War, also seen as Israel’s first ‘war of choice,’ ended up challenging some of the core values in the Israeli meta-narrative related to military pride and morality. The war had challenged the infallibility of the Israeli government and army, and the perception that Israel was always “dragged” into its wars (Benziman, 2013: 115; Temkin, 1987).

The First Intifada and the Oslo Accords

The Palestinian experience

For Palestinians, the First Intifada was a reaction against years of occupation, military checkpoints and Israeli assaults.¹⁸ Lasting from 1987 till the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, it was mainly a popular uprising, with the Israeli military using disproportionate force to crack down on the movement. The high number of children among the casualties contributed to the Palestinian feeling of the Israeli counter-reaction being unjust, a perception that is firmly placed within the Palestinian conflict narrative. The First Intifada proved that the Palestinian people had their own national agenda and aspirations, and at this moment they gained international recognition and support (Pappé, 2006c). During negotiations the power asymmetry between the

¹⁸ *Intifada* is the Arabic expression for ‘shaking off’ or ‘uprising.’

Palestinian PLO and Israel had become obvious, and after the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, the transfer of West Bank areas to the Palestinian Authority went slowly. This led many Palestinians to gradually lose faith in their negotiators and political leaders. As an answer to this, Islamist groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad grew in popularity, receiving increasing support in the Palestinian society (Milton-Edwards and Farrell, 2010; Hroub, 2006).

The Israeli experience

The First Intifada became a clear demonstration of Palestinian hostility and threat towards the existence of Israel. Demonstrations and Palestinians throwing Molotov cocktails and stones increased the implementation of security measures, for instance by creating 'buffer zones' around Israeli settlements and the eventual building of a 'security barrier' around the Gaza Strip. The continued settlement expansion was justified by emphasising the religious importance of this land to the Jewish people, but also by underlining Israeli security concerns, with the latter being supported by the Israeli Supreme Court's practice (Dinstein, 2009: 240). The events and practice resulted in a growing culture of security during the 1990s in Israel. Despite the signing of the Oslo Accords, the violence prevailed, and terror attacks from Islamist movements became a main source of Israeli fear, ruining the sense of progress achieved by the agreement (Ochs, 2011).

The Second Intifada

The Palestinian experience

Although the causes of the Second Intifada were connected to Palestinian frustrations with the lack of political progress on the ground, Israel's Likud leader Ariel Sharon's walk on the Temple Mount ignited the Intifada in 2000. His actions were seen as an insult and provocation to Palestinians both religiously and politically. Israeli police's harsh crackdown of Palestinian demonstrations caused the situation to escalate quickly. Unlike in the First Intifada, the Palestinian mobilisation was strong, with a more developed political system and access to weapons and groups with military training. Therefore, the confrontations led to higher numbers of casualties than during the First Intifada, and had a devastating effect on an already fragile Palestinian society (Pappé, 2006c).

Palestinian extremist organisations' propaganda stated that Israel was determined to physically eliminate the 'Palestinian problem,' and Israel's widespread use of force was seen in Palestinian eyes, as proof of Israeli intentions. Thus, Israeli use of force directly affected the number of Palestinian suicide attacks. This also made revenge a central factor shaping Palestinian response and conflict narrative from the Second Intifada and onwards. The commemoration and tribute to suicide bombers became an important symbol for revenge as Palestinians started portraying the suicide bombers as heroes resisting the invincible Israel. This also resulted in Palestinians' inclination to using violence strengthening (Tzoreff, 2010: 88).

The outcome of the Intifada, a superior military domination by Israel, forced Palestinians to once again speak with the political language and negotiations were resumed after American pressure (Pressman, 2003). However, members within the Palestinian opposition did their best to sabotage the process, conducting a number of suicide bombings. The political party Hamas was gaining power and connected their struggle for independence to their ethnicity and religion, making the conflict take on more religious undertones. More about this will be discussed in this chapter's section on Hamas' takeover.

The Israeli experience

To the Israelis, the Second Intifada became the proof of Palestinian's desire for continued violence and conflict, instead of wanting professional negotiations and an agreed settlement. The Intifada was about waging a military campaign against Palestinian suicide bombers, and to remove Palestinian leaders and Palestinian institutions, which were posing a security threat to Israel. The Second Intifada made the collective fear that Israel would cease to exist into a real threat personified by Palestinians, who were increasingly referred to as terrorists (Tzoreff, 2010: 89; Halperin et al., 2010: 32). Israel's rhetoric and discourse on security reflected and drew force from a global rhetoric focusing on security and counterterrorism, growing in strength since 9/11. Israel began labelling every action of resistance as terror, delegitimising every Palestinian action while legitimising Israel's response. Together with the increased need of security created from the collective fear caused by the Second Intifada, the reinforcement of the conflict-supporting elements in the Israeli

meta-narrative once again made security the topic that proved decisive in elections. The Second Intifada reinforced Israelis' belief in their own morality and military superiority over the Arabs, decreasing their motivation to end the conflict through negotiations with Palestinians. Israel had also proven that it could handle an enduring, intractable conflict without compromising or cooperating, strengthening the unilateral element in the Israeli conflict narrative (Halperin et al., 2010: 35-37; Peace Index September, 2000; Peace Index October, 2001).

Hamas' takeover of the Gaza Strip

The electoral victory in 2006, followed by the takeover of the Gaza Strip, proved the religious, fundamentalist movement Hamas' strengthened position within the Palestinian society. Hamas enjoyed growing support from the Palestinian public, with the majority interpreting the Israeli disengagement from Gaza in 2004-05 as a result of Hamas' armed resistance. Hamas' emphasis on the religious aspects of the struggle against Israel, made religion gain strength within the Palestinian conflict narrative, which *inter alia*, legitimised the use of violence in the name of religion. Taking into consideration the religious meaning of the land to Muslims, Christians and Jews, religion has historically been used to magnify the schisms in the Israeli-Palestinian relationship, and it has been utilised even more after the strengthening of Hamas' position within the Palestinian society and the general Islamisation of the Arab world. The concrete issues of the conflict, perhaps especially the question of Jerusalem, are amplified and become more protracted when tied to emotions inherent in religious beliefs, making de-escalation and negotiating a settlement even harder (Amari et al., 2009; Auerbach, 2005; Halperin et al., 2010: 35-37).¹⁹

After 2000, what had been a trend of improving attitudes towards Palestinians shifted because of Hamas' victory in the elections. Israelis previously worried that Palestinians did not really want peace and that there did not exist a real partner for negotiations. Hamas' victory in their eyes, proved their fear of a radicalised Palestinian society because Hamas control led to increased rocket attacks from Gaza into the southern parts of Israel (Auerbach, 2010). In speeches like that of Ehud

¹⁹ Significant Israeli and Palestinian factions express that they view an undivided Jerusalem as their capital. In addition, the city is one of the holiest to Muslims, Jews and Christians (Beckerman, 1996). Moderations to this demand have been aired in negotiations, but it has always been met with great resistance in the Israeli and Palestinian public (Pressman, 2003).

Olmert (2009, in Halperin et al., 2010: 28-29), held after the military operation in Gaza in 2008-2009 (Operation Cast Lead), the military rule in Gaza was portrayed as primitive and barbaric, using civilians as shields, only strengthening the fears mentioned above. The changed situation also resulted in increased Israeli beliefs that Palestinians, and Arabs in general, strongly wanted to eradicate the state of Israel (Joint Israeli-Palestinian Public Opinion Poll June, 2013; Peace Index September, 2013).

In his speech to Israel on its 60th anniversary, former Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad said: “(...) while you celebrate your 60th anniversary, we commemorate the 60th anniversary of our catastrophe the Nakba” (Fayyad, 2008). This quote shows that despite the different explanations and meanings attributed to the historical events, there are several similar sentiments within the narratives. The feeling of being under attack, living under existential threat, and thus possessing justification for the use of violence, are some of the shared sentiments. However, the disagreement on these root causes of conflict and the significance of historical events contributes in moving Israeli and Palestinian perceptions of the conflict further away from each other (Daoudi and Barakat, 2013). In the following two chapters these experiences will be analysed in relation to the Israeli and Palestinian conflict narratives. Then in Chapter 6, the developed theoretical and conceptual framework will be used to analyse the relation between collective fear and security aspects in the conflict narratives, in order to understand how this relation affects Israeli and Palestinian interpretations of recent events.

Chapter 4 Security aspects in the Israeli Conflict Narrative

The narrative of victimhood

The traumas from European pogroms and the Holocaust, the encounter with the Arab countries in the Middle East, and more specifically, with the Palestinian population in historical Palestine, laid the foundation for the strong position of victimhood within the Israeli conflict narrative. The belief that Israel and its citizens have been under a continuous security threat has forced the society to be constantly prepared to fight (Rotberg, 2006: 4). This has made Israel see itself as the one constantly attacked, but also made its citizens place a high value on security, and the state to develop a comprehensive defence mechanism. More specifically the security focus has its foundation in the Israeli citizens viewing themselves as beleaguered, a condition that is well established in their society and that has been termed ‘siege mentality’ (Bar-Tal et al., 2010: 85). In compliance with the concept of mirror imaging, there is a dominant perception within the Israeli society that they themselves are a peace-loving people. However, they live in a hostile environment where they are continuously threatened by attacks and wars. Another mirror image refers to Israeli politics and works according to the perception that Palestinians refuse to recognise Israel as a Jewish state, while Israelis do not refuse to accept an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel. According to Israelis, this makes Israel fall victim to an absolutist attitude among Palestinians.

Israeli society’s feelings of victimisation and anxiety legitimise their extreme suspicion towards the intentions of Arabs in general and Palestinians in particular. The high level of such emotions justifies policies and actions motivated by ideological (read: Zionist) and security-related considerations. As argued by Fisher and Kelman (2011: 70), the “cognitive biases,” which contain the mirror images, attitudes and values connected to the conflict that are found within each society, play a big role in fortifying the victimisation. This eventually becomes increasingly established in intractable conflict, and allows for increasingly violent and aggressive responses towards the adversary, measures that unavoidably contribute to escalation of the conflict.

Zionism and security

Zionism's important role in Israeli historiography and its tendency to view the land in Israel/Palestine as exclusively Jewish provides important support to keep security aspects in the Israeli-Jewish conflict narrative alive. In addition, Rouhana argues that Zionism contains three components that are central to understanding how ideology affects security aspects of Israeli conflict narratives, namely: force, fear and extremism. The use of force towards Palestinians is explained as necessary to achieve the goals of the Jewish state to exist and protect its citizens, and is also a main factor in Israel's deterrence policy. The policy is shaped according to the resistance it encounters, and serves to deter Palestinians from resisting again (Rouhana, 2006: 118-123). It is today a formal political position not to allow Palestinian refugees to return to what is now seen as Israeli land, an attitude that also derives from Zionism. The fear is rooted in the possibility of the state ceasing to exist if there would be a Palestinian majority. Rouhana (2006: 121) argues that in order to deal with the challenges posed by the Palestinian presence;

[t]he political Zionist elites succeeded in instilling this fear in the Jewish public through the production of a hegemonic political culture imbued with the values of maintaining the Jewish majority and the Jewish character of the state, as well as Jewish domination over non-Jews. Fear of non-Jews, particularly Arabs, makes it difficult for Jewish citizens and groups to resist this hegemony.

What should be taken into consideration when reading Rouhana's approach to the impact of Zionism on the Israeli conflict narrative, is how Bar-On (2006) challenges this explanation. Drawing upon the discussion on the emergence of Zionist thought in the previous chapter in this thesis, Bar-On argues that Zionism did not legitimise the use of force until the late 1920s, when violence against Jewish immigrants escalated. Without rejecting the validity of Rouhanas' narrative, he argues that one must take into consideration that to Israelis themselves, it would be hard to admit to an inherent aspect of dominance within Zionism. This underlines the difficulty in holding on to uncompromising narratives when attempting to introduce processes of rapprochement between Israelis and Palestinians (Bar-On, 2006: 146-148, 168). Still, however, with Bar-On's nuances, one can conclude that Zionism has played a significant role in shaping security aspects in the Israeli conflict narrative, since violence, if used in

defence, as of today, is legitimised by the Zionist doctrine. In addition Bar-On's arguments connect Zionism to security by it providing a solution to the insecurity and fear experienced by the Jewish diaspora. Thus, it receives meaning also in the manner of saving the Jews, a rescue operation Bar-On admits initially came at the expense of those already living in historical Palestine. Such ideas have been developed more recently by for instance PM Netanyahu. After the terror attacks in Paris and Copenhagen in early 2015, Netanyahu expressed that the "(...) wave of terrorist attacks – including murderous anti-Semitic attacks – is expected to continue," telling the Jews of Europe how Israel is "preparing and calling for the absorption of mass immigration from Europe" (in Weiss, 2015).

How is peace viewed from within the narrative?

Victimisation's strong position in the Israeli conflict narrative also affects the way peace is viewed from within the narrative. As long as Israelis perceive their situation as continuously living under the threat of attacks from hostile Arabs, the society's belief in peace stays low. Taking into consideration the mirror image described in the paragraphs on victimhood, Israelis feel it is not about them, since the Arabs are the ones not wanting peace and who want to get rid of Israel (Halperin et al., 2010: 34, 43).

Throughout the years, there has been a steady decline in the Israeli belief in peace. The belief in peace and success of negotiations was at its highest in the mid-1990s, when 59.5% of the Israelis asked, supported the peace process (Peace Index May, 1995).²⁰ This poll is from a period of optimism, after the signing of the Oslo Accords. In 2001, during the Second Intifada, 42% believed "that there is no chance to reach a peace agreement in the foreseeable future," meaning that an increasing share of Israelis had stopped believing in a return to negotiations (Joint Israeli-Palestinian Public Opinion Poll July, 2001).²¹ In 2013, the same poll was conducted and only 10% of the Israelis asked believed in a return to negotiations and halt in violence

²⁰ An interesting aspect is how the polls, by the questions they ask, define peace in a very pragmatic manner; as a peace agreement reached through negotiations. It should be kept in mind how peace can be defined in very many other ways. In addition, peace also emerges and draws force from other levels of society and from other causes than a top-level political agreement.

²¹ The JIPP is a joint Israeli-Palestinian poll conducted every other year since 2000 by the Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace and the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research. For details, see: http://truman.huji.ac.il/?cmd=join_polls.259 [Accessed 11.06.13.].

(Joint Israeli-Palestinian Public Opinion Poll June, 2013). An interesting aspect is how the belief in peace continued declining after the end of the Second Intifada despite low levels of violence affecting Israelis. The poll from 2013 was conducted after many years of relative calm for most Israelis, excluding the wars in Gaza, which somehow seem to become relatively isolated events from the general conflict dynamics, not creating any larger upheavals or waves of violence in their aftermath.²² A lot of this fear can thus be ascribed to rigid and hostile conflict narratives and continued high levels of collective fear, as will be elaborated upon when discussing Israeli fear from Palestinian resistance in Chapter 6.

In compliance with the claim in the previous paragraph, the conflict narratives affect the low levels of belief in peace. Another element in the Israeli narrative that contributes is the strong confidence in Israel's superiority and the society's resilience to the conflict. Such attitudes increase the support of a more unilateral security policy leading Israeli security policies to be mainly developed without cooperating with Palestinians or by taking reconciliatory actions into consideration. Through the Israeli perspective, the superiority and resilience become proof of the Israeli society's ability to stand up against the threat they face without complying to or taking into consideration Palestinian demands. This belief can also reduce the willingness among Israelis to end the conflict since it shows how Israel is able to withstand the current intractability in the conflict. Prioritising security before peace is not only indirectly visible as explained in this paragraph, it is also a clear Israeli position in the negotiations with Palestinians (The Reut Institute, 2008). This means that the collective conflict narrative and the Israeli political discourse both treat security, and not peace, as its main concern in the relationship to the Palestinians (Halperin et al., 2010: 40-41).

Words and rhetoric related to security

Strategies to regain the historical land of the Jews have been openly developed in Zionist and religious literature and include measures such as 'Judaisation of the land,'

²² The wars in Gaza did not affect everyday life in Israel to any larger extent. The wars have, however, been legitimised as necessary, much because of Hamas and other militia in the Gaza Strip sending rockets towards Israel. It should be mentioned that these rockets have had limited ability to kill and hurt Israelis, both because of poor quality and because of Israel's air defence system "Iron Dome."

‘expulsion of Arabs,’ and ‘population exchange’ (Kanaaneh, 2002; Reiter, 2010: 232).²³ With the successful development of the Jewish state, the discourse urging Jews ‘to return to the lands of their fathers,’ ‘liberate the land from the Arabs,’ and ‘to redeem the land from the enemy’ (*geulat ha’aretz*), has had an important position in the state-building process and, thus, also in the Israeli conflict narrative (Rouhana, 2006: 119).²⁴ Furthermore, rhetoric that denies the existence of Palestinian identity and nationalism is frequently used to strengthen Israeli rights to the land. An example is leader of the party ‘The Jewish Home,’ Naftali Bennett, stating: “There was never a Palestinian state here, and we were never occupiers, this is our home” (AFP/Ma'an News Agency, 2013).

‘Never again’ is another expression central to the Israeli conflict narrative. The expression refers to the events of Holocaust and also to other persecutions of Jews throughout history, and stands for the assurance that Israelis will never let similar injustices happen to their people again. This means Israel will take all measures possible for such injustices not to take place, which becomes another aspect legitimising taking a harsh stand against those who pose a threat to them (AFP/Ma'an News Agency, 2013). ‘We live in a hostile environment’ and the interpretation of critique against Israeli policies as anti-Semitic, are also important aspects within the Israeli conflict narrative, which connect to the mentioned siege mentality (Derfner, 2013). The former gives the feeling of the Jewish ‘space’ being threatened and it creates an ‘us and them’ perception, which contributes to a feeling of living in constant and encompassing threat. Denoting Israel as “the Middle East’s only democracy, the most beleaguered democracy on earth,” is frequently used rhetoric that serves the purpose of these perceptions (Netanyahu, 2015). First, this strengthens the feelings of being victims. Second, it gives Israelis an explanation for why their security has to be kept at the level that it is, and third, it provides justification for why their security measures target Arabs.

²³ ‘Population exchange’ has been defined as an expulsion of the Arabs in Israel/Palestine, bringing in Jews from Arab countries in return (UN Human Rights Council, 2009).

²⁴ During the last years, an internal Israeli discussion around the state’s expansion in the Palestinian territories, has pointed out how the need of ‘lebensraum’ might have been, and still is, a bigger motivational factor in Israeli security politics than originally thought. ‘Lebensraum’ was originally portrayed by Nazi ideology to be a nature law of superior races to displace inferior races to gain living space (Sarid, 2011; Amayreh, 2011).

The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel

The declaration, signed in 1948, provides an explanation both of Israeli's historical past and more specifically of the characteristics of their relation to the Palestinians. It is a source that provides useful insight into the Israeli meta-narrative. The beginning of the declaration describes Jewish-Israeli identity and their territorial ties by stating the following:

The land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained to statehood, [and] created cultural values of national and universal significance (The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel, 1948).

The declaration also touches upon the sense of victimisation within the Israeli society in the following sentence:

After being forcibly exiled from their land, the people kept faith with it throughout their dispersion and never ceased to pray and hope for their return to it and for the restoration in it of their political freedom (Ibid.).

The victimisation also plays a role by validating the need and right of Jews to claim a territory for a Jewish nation by mentioning the Holocaust and by underlining the ancient right of Jews to establish their land in Israel. In relation to Arabs and Palestinians, the declaration does not put any direct blame, but does however say this:

We appeal in the very midst of the onslaught launched against us now for months – to the Arab inhabitants of the State of Israel to preserve peace and participate in the construction of the State on the basis of full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its provisional and permanent institutions (Ibid.).

Taking the preceding description of elements in the Israeli conflict narrative into consideration, the language in the declaration relates to victimisation, the need to defend oneself, and the 'never again'-concept. According to Auerbach's (2010: 117-118) analysis of Israeli and Palestinian founding documents, and, as we will see in the Palestinian National Covenant, the documents function as large-scale mirror images, contesting the same set of events on which their national narratives are based.

Internal contradictions and Israeli nationalism

The Israeli society is a multifaceted, highly diverse society, with multiple sets of cultures and values. The different groups of Israelis are placed in an intricate hierarchy mainly based on their origin before coming to Israel. The Ashkenazi Jews originally from Western Europe, but also with significant communities in Central- and Eastern Europe, have had a dominant socio-political position, while for instance Jews from Ethiopia and Eritrea are far down in the hierarchy (Ringel et al., 2005).²⁵ This is a source of grievance and it has on several occasions caused unrest and tension between the social groups within Israeli society in the shape of vigorous public debates and even outbreaks of violence (Ram, 2008).

The schisms within Judaism as a religion also result in contradictions between the views on nationalism between religious nationalists,²⁶ ultra-Orthodox, and secular Israelis. As an example, religious-nationalist Israelis strongly believe in “immigration, conquest, settlement, and state formation (...) as the first process of transcendental redemption” (Ram, 2008: 69). This relates back to Israeli security being guaranteed by control of the land. The ultra-Orthodox community in Israel strongly oppose the ideological features of Zionism and the religious-nationalist ideas of human effect on messianic redemption. Despite the plethora of opinions, Uri Ram (2008: 67-69) notes how religious nationalism has become the dominant form of nationalism within the Israeli society and how this has had severe consequences for levels of Israeli secularism. A consequence of this is that religious nationalism has grown to play an important role in maintaining a rigid conflict narrative and fierce attitudes towards Palestinians. The mix of nationalist and religious currents has been shown to be highly explosive, legitimising the use of force against those opposing it (who in most cases are Palestinians).

If we see these schisms in relation to the conflict narrative, there has been a continuous discussion within the Israeli society on what the Israeli meta-narrative

²⁵ This explanation focuses on the Jewish society within Israel and thus does not explain the position of groups such as the Palestinian-Israelis/Arab-Israelis, Bedouins, and Druze, who are some of the largest non-Jewish minorities living within Israel.

²⁶ Religious nationalists are also called ‘messianic Zionists,’ and have their origin in the wave of colonial settlers, which started in the 1970s (Ram, 2008).

actually is, and how Israeli nationalism ought to be expressed. This is related to the historiographic debate with Israel's 'new historians',²⁷ and the multitude of Israeli backgrounds, as discussed in this chapter. The discussion on Israeli nationalism revolves around how big a role Zionism and religion should play in Israeli historiography, and whether national aspirations should be fought for the way it is done today.

Highlighting the multifaceted insecurity experienced by Israelis, and this insecurity's position in the conflict narrative, this analysis has focused on the insecurity and fear that connects to Israelis' conflict with the Palestinians, while also mentioning how fear deriving from the Holocaust gets coupled with this conflict. One can also argue that Israeli insecurity draws considerable power from fear present in the Israeli meta-narrative, exemplified by elements from Zionism and the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel. Additionally, Israelis experience fear, threat and insecurity in relation to a general hostility and anti-Semitism towards Jews both in an international context, but even more so in the regional context being surrounded by what they see as hostile Arab states. Their fear from what they view as Palestinian terrorism becomes a personification of the over-arching fear, which feeds the conflict narrative with empirical examples of harassment, hostility, suicide bombings and missiles.

²⁷ For more on this debate, see: Ilan Pappé (2003; 2009) and Benny Morris (2004, 2011).

Chapter 5 Security aspects in the Palestinian conflict narrative

The narrative of victimhood

The victimisation builds on the national and meta-narrative, with the former providing important events in which Palestinians have been victims, while the latter provides ideological and moral aspects from the larger conflict narrative. Palestinians perceive themselves as victims because of the continuous loss of land, the expulsion, especially with regards to the numbers of Palestinians becoming refugees in 1948 and 1967, and also because of events where large numbers of Palestinians have been killed, like the massacres in Sabra and Shatila, clashes during the Second Intifada and the more recent wars on Gaza. Palestinians perceive themselves as members of an oppressed national group, who because of the occupation are deprived of their basic human rights and experience socioeconomic barriers hindering them from fulfilling their basic needs. In other words, they see themselves as victims of the agenda of the State of Israel and a paralysed international society that does not come to the rescue (Tzoreff, 2010).

The Palestinian sense of victimisation thus connects to feelings such as inferiority and weakness, but also to the collective fear (Tzoreff, 2010). The inferiority is related both to the discourse on the 'Palestinian issue' in Israel,²⁸ and the perception of complete, Israeli control of Palestinians' lives (Rouhana, 2006). Palestinians see themselves as considered less valuable than their Israeli neighbours: Israeli policies have been defined as dehumanisation, and by some even as a modern version of apartheid (John and John, 2013). The feeling of weakness is connected to the asymmetry and the events deriving from the national narrative: the constant defeats in clashes and in the Second Intifada, and loss of Palestinian land and basic rights through Arab-Israeli wars. These feelings also connect to Israel's total control of the land through the occupation and continuous Israeli land-grabbing, which leads to the existential fear of Palestine and Palestinians eventually being wiped of the map.

²⁸ The Israeli discourse on the Palestinian issue openly discusses the 'transferring of Palestinians,' which means to move Palestinians out of Israel/Palestine and into other Arab countries. For more details on this discussion and the fear it generates within the Palestinian society, see: Kanaaneh (2002) and UN Human Rights Council (2009).

Tiredness from conflict and the feeling of helplessness sometimes expresses itself through what Tzoreff (2010: 75) calls a “defeatism complex,” when weakness and helplessness lead Palestinians to leave their faith in the hands of destiny. This happens after, for instance, experiencing harsh and violent retaliation or losses, after trying to resist what they experience as unjust treatment. A culture of defeatism is a rather extreme expression of victimisation in a conflict situation, and it can in this case be seen as another consequence of the asymmetry and intractability in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As with the Israeli sense of victimisation, the Palestinian attitudes and perceptions described above also blur the borders between threats belonging to the present, and those belonging to the past. As an example, Fatme Kassem’s (2010; 2011) findings on Palestinian women’s storytelling have given empirical proof that the national narrative’s explanation of past experiences is connected to how the groups experience victimisation today, further underlining the conflict narratives’ potential strength and ability to affect contemporary conflict dynamics.

How is peace viewed from within the narrative?

In 1995, 65% of the Palestinians asked supported a continuation of negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians (Public Opinion Poll May, 1995). The Joint Israeli-Palestinian Poll from 2001 showed that 46% of the Palestinians asked, believed that peace will eventually come (Joint Israeli-Palestinian Public Opinion Poll July, 2001). In 2013, only 27% thought that violence will stop and that there will be a return to negotiations (Joint Israeli-Palestinian Public Opinion Poll June, 2013). As in the statistics mentioned in the chapter on the Israeli conflict narrative, the Palestinian numbers also show a declining belief in peace since the Oslo Accords, a decline which has a set of explanations (Rosen, 2009: 135-136).

We can connect these statistics to the feeling of victimisation and the “defeatism complex.” If we go back to the asymmetry and the fact that many Palestinians believe they cannot alter the outcome of the conflict, this could also contribute to the decline in the belief in peace. Also, the lack of belief in peace can be connected to the increasingly unilateral focus within Palestinian policies, similar to Israeli unilateral initiatives, with a prominent example being former Palestinian PM Salam Fayyad’s wish to develop the infrastructure and economy of a Palestinian state and move

towards sovereignty independent of negotiations with Israel (Danin, 2011). This trend also makes the conflict narrative less adherent to the idea that peace must be obtained through cooperation, as a dominant assumption becomes: ‘since attempts to cooperate with Israel have failed, we must now manage on our own.’

Words and rhetoric related to security

Oral and written expressions have an important role in maintaining the Palestinian conflict narrative. First, its importance has roots in the asymmetry of the conflict. Since Palestinians cannot fight against the experienced injustice with a conventional army or police force like Israel, the struggle in many cases gets translated into words. Second, it is a result of the heavy restraints on political and organisational activity, which limit Palestinians’ ability to organise themselves in order to improve their situation. Both the Palestinian and Israeli authorities exercise strict control over the Palestinian civil society, resulting in Palestinians fearing to be imprisoned by Israeli soldiers or border police, to be turned in by collaborators, or to be accused of illegal political activity (Abu Zayyad, 2012).²⁹ The limited ability to act has also made words an important bargaining chip in Palestinians’ relationship with Israel. This can be exemplified by the Palestinian chief negotiator Saeb Erekat’s (2010) emphasis on rhetoric central to the conflict narrative, stating for instance that:

[t]he fact that Israel bears responsibility for the creation of the refugees is beyond argument, and; al-Nakba or “the catastrophe,” is the seminal Palestinian experience and source of our collective identity.

This brings us to ‘The right of return,’ another security aspect in the Palestinian conflict narrative.³⁰ This frequently used term represents Palestinians who left historical Palestine during the 1948 war and want to return to their original homes. Even though it relates the strongest to Palestinian refugees not living within Israel/Palestine, it also applies to the significant numbers of internally displaced

²⁹ Collaborators are those working undercover either for the PA or Israel, to locate people within the Palestinian society who are involved in activity perceived as a threat either to the PA or Israel. For details, see: Al-Jawad (2001).

³⁰ The ‘Right of Return’ refers to what has been interpreted as the right of Palestinian refugees to return to the places within Israel/Palestine from which they fled or were expelled in the 1948 War. The claim for ‘Right of Return’ is based on the text in UN Resolution 194 (1948: 24).

Palestinians found in Israel, Gaza and the West Bank.³¹ ‘The right of return’ relates to Palestinians’ victimhood and is frequently invoked by politicians such as current President Mahmoud Abbas, as a necessary requirement for any peace agreement with Israel. An example is from Abbas’ speech to the UN, after Palestine submitted the application for recognition to the UN. In his speech he referred to the “grave historical injustice committed against [the Palestinian] people” and how Palestinians are a “defenceless people, armed only with their dreams, courage, hope and slogans in the face of bullets, tanks, tear gas and bulldozers” (Abbas, 2011). The latter half is also a reference to the asymmetry in the conflict, and to Palestinian victimisation.

The Palestinian National Covenant

The two main written expressions of the Palestinian meta-narrative are the “Palestinian National Covenant” (1968) and “The Palestinian Declaration of Independence” (1988). The Palestinian meta-narrative was formally expressed for the first time in the National Covenant, and has formulations such as: “The liberation of Palestine (...) is a national (*qawmi*) duty and it attempts to repel the Zionist and imperialist aggression against the Arab homeland” (1968: Art. 15. Italics not in original) and “Judaism, being a religion, is not an independent nationality. Nor do Jews constitute a single nation with an identity of its own” (1968: Art. 20). These statements show that the Palestinian relation to Israel is very much based on the original injustice, denying Israel’s right to take their land, and the threat that Israeli aggression poses. By clearly stating their rights and the way they define themselves, this expression of the conflict narrative became a way for the Palestinians to verbally fight back against Israel.

Two main political camps, nationalism and resistance

There is a Palestinian proverb that goes: ‘If you have four Palestinians you will have five political parties’ (Sami Adwan, personal communication, May 14, 2013). It points at the diversity in the Palestinian political system, and the fact that the society is highly politicised. Hamas and Fatah, the two main actors on the Palestinian political

³¹ A mirror image of ‘The right of return’ would be Israel’s ‘Law of return,’ which gives all Jews the right to live in Israel and to gain Israeli citizenship. Palestinians frequently refer to this law as unjust, since Palestinian refugees from 1948 are prohibited by Israeli law to return to Israel. For more information, see: Perez (2011).

arena work from the same conflict narrative but derive from it very different policies. Hamas, as a religious and fundamentalist actor, has historically rejected Israel's right to exist and called for the expulsion of all Jews from the land of Palestine (Hamas, 1988).³² Fatah has a secular nationalist approach and has proven throughout history to be more open to reaching an agreement with Israel. The core of Hamas' and Fatah's disagreement relating to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is whether one supports an attitude advocating concession in negotiations or takes the harsher stand, saying that intransigence should be the attitude (Auerbach, 2005).³³

A conflict about identity creates a highly conscious and nationalist population. In contrast to Israelis, Palestinians have yet to achieve sovereign nationhood. Resistance (*moqawama*) has been, and still is, a highly important part of Palestinian nationalism and the Palestinian conflict narrative.³⁴ The resistance is related to how Palestinians experience their security situation because it is about *how* they choose to react to the unjust done to them by the Israeli state, and has been seen as a human and political duty.³⁵ This connects to security aspects in three ways. First, it is about how Palestinians react to a situation in which they feel threatened, and second because Palestinian resistance poses a significant and constant threat to Israel. Third, resistance, as interpreted in the Palestinian conflict narrative, becomes a necessity in order for the Palestinian society to obtain security. Nationalism and resistance have ended up as two of the few tools left for protesting and changing their own situation.

The Fatah-governed Palestinian Authority in Ramallah argues that Palestinian security should be obtained through nation building and popular peaceful resistance.

³² The emphasis on religion, and increased Islamisation of the Palestinian society is an interesting example of how religious values and leaders become part of a coping mechanism. Religion offers comfort and strength during times when the feeling of hopelessness is strong (Auerbach, 2005).

³³ This division also reflects and feeds on a larger schism in the Arab world on how to relate to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However this is a discussion on contradictions on a regional level, and is thus not covered by the topic in this thesis. For more information, see: Auerbach (2010).

³⁴ I choose to use the term resistance despite the negative connotations attached to this word, perhaps especially in Israeli terms. Resistance is the term used by Palestinians themselves, and the word is thus very central to their conflict narrative.

³⁵ There are numerous types of resistance used by Palestinians and it ranges from popular, to non-violent, to armed resistance. Armed or violent resistance spans from suicide attacks in public places, to the physical attacks on settlers in the West Bank. The popular resistance has a richer repertoire and was established already in the early beginning of Jewish immigration, also playing an important part in the First Intifada (Grinberg, 2013).

What is most important in relation to the topic of this thesis is how the Palestinian popular resistance focused on maintaining a strong national narrative with the right to their homeland and the right of return of refugees at the centre of this narrative. This is obviously also connected to the conflict narrative since they are core issues in the conflict (Rouhana, 2006: 124). This collides with the views of other Palestinian actors such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad, who claim that the security of the Palestinian people is achieved by armed resistance and a strategy of striking against the enemy however possible.³⁶ Such strategies support the idea that just by being Israeli, one is part of the infrastructures of the military and occupying force (Auerbach, 2010: 107; Rouhana, 2006: 129).

In conclusion, the Palestinian narrative's reliance on oral and written forms of expression is mostly a result of the structural restraints that the occupation brings upon Palestinians' ability to act, but it is also a consequence of the political deadlock between Hamas and Fatah. As is often the case in asymmetric conflict, the weaker party's inability to act makes the society and its leaders look for other channels in which they can express their agenda and policies. On the basis of this inability, it could be argued that the Palestinian conflict narrative differs from the Israeli narrative by relying less upon action and more on rhetoric and discourse.

³⁶ This idea had precedency during the 1970s when Palestinian resistance developed an international scope with the hijacking of planes, and terror attacks in other countries and has been brought on by the Islamist factions (Grinberg, 2013).

Chapter 6 The relationship between collective fear and conflict narratives

The first step in this thesis was to analyse what themes are revealed in the conflict narratives when exploring Israeli and Palestinian security demands, as presented in the two previous chapters. The second step is to look at how security aspects of conflict narratives are related to a collective fear in order to investigate how a collective sense of fear and demand for security affects Israel and Palestinian interpretations of recent, conflict-related events,

Israeli fear

Results from surveys conducted in Israeli society show how “fear is a stable and central psychological characteristic of the (...) [Israeli] society” (Halperin et al., 2010: 45). The analysis in this thesis showed that the main causes of this fear are; 1) Israel’s wars with Arab states and the regional hostility towards Israel; 2) the fear of the Jewish people and/or state ceasing to exist; and 3) Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation.

Persecution of Jews and hostility towards Israel

One of the main causes of Israeli collective fear is the feeling of living in a hostile environment. The hostility towards Israelis has expressed itself through war, violence and fierce rhetoric from the neighbouring countries. Together with international criticism of Israel’s treatment of the Palestinians, this adds on to Israelis’ perception of being an unwanted people, no matter where they live. In relation to Palestinians, this fear is fuelled by Palestinians explicitly stating in Palestinian documents such as The Palestinian Covenant (Art. 15 and 16) their desire to eliminate Zionism in Palestine through armed resistance.³⁷ Comments of this sort can be found in many places, such as speeches by Hamas’ leader Khaled Mash’al, who frequently expresses Hamas’ commitment to destroy Israel and “liberate all of Palestine, from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea” (Yiftachel, 2013). Combined with actions such as firing rockets, suicide bombings and other violent attacks, which will be elaborated

³⁷ These types of expressions were moderated by the PLO in 1988, but are nevertheless still central in the Israeli conflict narrative. This can partially be blamed on Hamas continuing to use rhetoric aiming at the elimination of Israel (Rouhana, 2006).

upon below, such rhetoric has given Israelis the feeling that Palestinians wish to terminate the Israeli state. The fear of the Israeli state disappearing then gets intertwined with a fear for one's life. The possible disintegration of Israel is equalled with each Israeli consequently being liquidated, and so this fear takes on an existential character which blurs the individual and collective level.³⁸

Demographic fear

One of the central Palestinian demands in negotiations is the 'Right of Return' for the displaced Palestinians.³⁹ The majority of Israelis reject this demand, seeing the return as a threat to the continued existence of Israel as a Jewish state. This rejection is also a formal position of the State of Israel, and in 2013 it was supported by 80% of the Israeli population (Peace Index September, 2013). The demographic threat results in reduced willingness in the Israeli society to make territorial compromises and cooperate with Palestinians. In addition, the demographic threat could result in the State of Israel losing its Jewish character, which in the Israeli conflict narrative is equated with the Jewish state ceasing to exist. Eventually, since demographic fear is mixed with the fear of total extinction of the Jewish people, it also takes existential dimensions in that manner (Kuzar, 2008; Halperin et al., 2010).

Fear from Palestinian resistance

During the Second Intifada, the levels of collective fear increased dramatically. The main empirical source of this was Palestinian suicide attacks, which reactivated elements in the Israeli narrative revolving around Arab hostility such as fear of extinction, contributing to a boost in the conflict narrative's security focus. This fear is still strong, despite the decline in deadly attacks during the second half of the 2000s (Peace Index September, 2013; Yiftachel, 2006: 284). Moreover, the fact that the levels of collective fear remained high resulted in the election of security-oriented governments, systematising the fear by translating it into Israeli policies (Ochs, 2011).

³⁸ A joint Israeli-Palestinian poll from June 2013 shows how: "37% of the Israelis think that the Palestinian aspirations in the long run are to conquer the State of Israel and destroy much of the Jewish population in Israel; 17% think the goals of the Palestinians are to conquer the State of Israel" (Joint Israeli-Palestinian Public Opinion Poll June, 2013).

³⁹ In contrast to Israel, the Palestinians interpret Article 11 of UN Resolution 194 (1948) as a demand to Israel to allow refugees from the 1948 War to return to the place from which they left and to compensate those refugees who do not want to return. This would also include the return to properties, which are now within the land of Israel (Benvenisti, 2008/2009: 44).

Second, Hamas' rule in Gaza, combined with the rocket attacks on the south of Israel is also an important factor in this regard. Like many other Israeli political leaders, the late Ariel Sharon chose to focus on Palestinian terror and hostility as the root cause of the conflict. As he described it, "the Palestinian terrorist organizations have put us to a difficult test (...) [but] their plan to break the spirit of Israeli society has not succeeded" (Sharon, 2007). In addition, Israelis fear direct consequences from Palestinian resistance, such as attacks or clashes between Palestinians and the Israeli military in the occupied Palestinian territories. This is a fear most relevant to Israelis who live in settlements within the West Bank, but also to Israelis living within the borders of Israel. Because of mandatory conscription, close to all Israelis serve, or have at some point family members serving, military duty in or near the West Bank, which exposes a large numbers of Israelis to the chance of becoming victims of Palestinian violence.⁴⁰

This violence becomes proof of Palestinian capabilities to physically harm Israelis and this mixes together with the fears connected to the meta-narrative and national narrative, which, as we have seen, have an existential character. Combining all these factors, the level of experienced fear is decided by the interpretation of the event. This interpretation runs through the filter of the conflict narrative and expressions such as the described Declaration of Independence, and through news articles, or political speeches. Encountering expressions such as 'terrorism,' 'Arab hostility,' and 'historical rights of the Jews' triggers remembrance of elements within the narrative. The remembrance also evokes the emotion connected to the historical event or concept from the narrative, reminding the Israeli people to fear on a national scale that genocide could happen again, or on an individual scale that they could be the victim of violence or harassment. In other words, a current event activates long-term fear inherent in the narrative, and in a reciprocal process, the memories from the conflict narrative and the collective fear enhances the current level of fear.

⁴⁰ The ultra-Orthodox Jews have until recently been exempted from the obligatory military service. In March 2014 this changed with Israel's parliament approving a law that reduced the number of ultra-Orthodox men who are exempted to 1,800 (Lubell, 2014).

Palestinian fear

Attempting to categorise the main causes for Palestinian collective fear similarly, the three most important aspects are; 1) the displacement following wars and confrontations with Israel; 2) the expanding Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories; and 3) the violations brought on by the occupation. As when discussing Israeli fears, I will now analyse how security aspects of the Palestinian conflict narrative relate to collective fear, in order to look at how this relation affects the Palestinian society's interpretation of recent, conflict-related events.

Fear of displacement and an expanding Israeli occupation

Important reasons for Palestinians to fear displacement is not only the number of Palestinian refugees created by Arab-Israeli wars, but also Israeli public discourse on 'transfer' of Palestinians to other Arab countries. This concept was historically supported by Israel's founder, David Ben-Gurion (Kanaaneh, 2002; Pappé, 2006a: 9). A more recent example is Likud's Moshe Feiglin (in Novick, 2013), who in January 2013 stated the following:

The State of Israel is paying 10% of its GNP every year for the two-state solution and the Oslo Accords. (...) With this budget we can give every Arab family in Judea and Samaria \$500,000 to encourage it to emigrate to a place with a better future. (...) Polls conducted in Gaza and Judea and Samaria show that 80% [of Palestinians] in Gaza and 65% in Judea and Samaria want to emigrate. We have here the perfect solution.

Fear of displacement is also connected to the Israeli occupation. Land confiscations, house demolitions, political imprisonments, deportations, night-raids, and closure of Palestinian towns, land, and roads, are measures used on a daily basis by Israel to increase their security. Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails usually fall under the category of 'security prisoners' by Israel Prison Service (2013).⁴¹ High numbers of these Palestinians are held indefinitely without charges and many also receive life sentences, making imprisonment another source of fear from displacement (Amnesty

⁴¹ The Security Prisoner is "a prisoner convicted and penalized by time in prison, or is detained for committing an offense with clear aspects of acting against security, motivated by nationalistic reasons, while being aware or indifferent to possible dangerous circumstances of the action" (Israel Prison Service, 2013).

International, 2015: 42, 197-200). The Israeli actions are unpredictable both with regards to when and where they happen, but also in relation to the reasons why they happen. This ends up as another zero-sum game within the conflict, with the attempts to increase Israeli security resulting in a decrease in Palestinian collective security (Gren, 2009; Mandal, 2011).⁴² The Israeli discourse and practice leads Palestinians to interpret Israeli politics and attitudes as a wish to wipe out the Palestinian presence in Israel/Palestine, and there have also been discussions on this topic taking the shape of a demographic threat (Kanaaneh, 2002). This means that the Palestinian fear of displacement too has an existential dimension to it, and that Palestinians blur between the threat against their nation and direct threats to their lives. Underlining this, 57% of the Palestinians asked in a public opinion poll conducted in June 2013, thought “Israel’s goals in the long run are to extend its borders to cover all the area between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea and expel its Arab citizens” (Joint Israeli-Palestinian Public Opinion Poll June, 2013).

Fear from violations connected to the occupation

Palestinian fear connected to the Israeli occupation is highly complex, something that can be at least partially explained by its duration and wide-ranging effects. The occupation is physical, mental, direct and indirect, and also connects to the fear from displacement as mentioned above, blurring between the experience of individual and collective threat. Israeli closures and confiscation of Palestinian areas have often led to the loss of buildings or land to Israeli authorities. Night-raids or flying check points often lead to the detention and imprisonment of Palestinians, and so every event connected to the occupation becomes proof that the occupation is continuing and expanding, connecting it to the existential fear of the occupation eventually becoming total.

With regards to physical violations, one example is continued torture and ill-treatment in Israeli prisons by Israeli Security Officials (Amnesty International, 2015: 200). Palestinian fear from the Israeli military is justified in every encounter with soldiers where violence is used. Another important aspect is the increasing level of settler

⁴² Israel has been accused of disproportionate use of force on several occasions. For details, see: UN Human Rights Council (2009) and United Nations (2013).

violence, which is seldom punished by Israeli authorities. Palestinians get arrested and detained for stone throwing, while Israelis, both in the Israeli military and civilians such as settlers committing hate crimes, are usually freed from charges because of lack of evidence (Hassan, 2011). This reveals a grey area in the Israeli legal system to punish violence, which also affects the victimisation-aspect in the Palestinian conflict narrative (Mandal, 2011: 22-23).⁴³ Those killed or imprisoned in confrontation with Israelis, suffer from these events while fighting for a sovereign Palestine, meaning these victims receive a central position in Palestinian nationalistic discourse and meta-narrative. At the same time, the experiences connected to the losses of fellow Palestinians have contributed to a politicisation of large parts of the society by directly and emotionally involving those who lose someone.⁴⁴ This is also a part of the conflict narrative since the narrative explains and provides meaning to the suffering, violence and injustice by framing it in political terms.

After the Israeli violence during the Second Intifada and a declining belief in Palestinian leadership, the understanding of violence as something necessary or politically valuable did not receive the same support among Palestinians. This can be exemplified with polls from 2013, showing that 44% support Fatah and only 28% support Hamas, and that as many as 65% oppose a new intifada (Opinion Poll February, 2013). However, after the Gaza Operation during the summer of 2014, the polls show how 55% would vote for Ismail Haniyeh if elections were held, showing a current situation where Hamas is more popular than Fatah. Another interesting finding that can be related to Palestinian support for the use of violence, is how 80% of those asked, support launching rockets from the Gaza Strip if the siege and blockade does not end (Public Opinion Poll September, 2014).

This discussion on Israeli and Palestinian fears show how the collective fear is intimately connected to events and values found in the conflict narrative. The security aspects identified in the conflict narratives reveal one of the most important tasks of these narratives, namely to meet the human needs of the society. The need for security, which helps the society deal with its fears, is a human need of particular

⁴³ For more on the discussion on the legal aspects of violence in the West Bank, see: Mandal (2011).

⁴⁴ This is related both to temporary (imprisonment/detention) losses and those of a more permanent character, including those killed, deported, or those fleeing.

importance in a conflict situation (Tzoreff, 2010: 79-80; Halperin, 2014: 4). If the levels of fear are high, the focus on security increases. Consequently, the belief in peace, defining peace as a state reached through Israeli-Palestinian cooperation, declines. As several examples have shown in this chapter, increasing fear and declining belief in peace can to a large degree be explained by the use of the conflict narrative as a framework through which every conflict-related event is interpreted. This use leads the reciprocal process between collective fear and collective conflict narratives to build up the level of experienced fear. The fact that fear stored in the narrative mixes with the generation of fear from current events makes it crucial to understand this process as an important part of what affects conflict dynamics.

Furthermore, the fear takes residence and expresses itself in different ways in the two conflict narratives. Despite the similarity between the Palestinian and Israeli experiences and the type of emotions they generate, the two societies experience fear, and speak about their fear in slightly different ways because of the differences in their conflict narratives. The Israeli narrative emphasises the security discourse, making Israelis quick to connect isolated events to the larger security threat experienced by the Jewish people. The consequence is that long-term collective fear connected to Jews being a persecuted people gain increasing foothold within the Israeli conflict narrative by each incident (Joint Israeli-Palestinian Public Opinion Poll June, 2014). Another consequence, proven by public opinion polls, is that this mechanism makes the narrative increasingly unilateral, further decreasing the will among Israelis to cooperate with their adversary. This increases the backing for unilateral action such as the Gaza Operation during the summer of 2014, which was supported by as much as 92% of the Jewish Public (Hermann, 2014; Peace Index August, 2014).⁴⁵ One further effect that the collective fear and security-oriented Israeli narrative has is that the asymmetry in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is ‘forgotten’ by the Israeli society. Drawing upon the second chapter’s explanation of the effects of rigid narratives, the effect in this case is that Israelis’ own security concerns overshadow Palestinian

⁴⁵ This should be nuanced, by mentioning how a majority of those asked support dialogue, but that the belief in peace is down to approximately 25% (Hermann, 2014). At the same time, 58% of the Jewish public thought “Israel should not respond to any of Hamas’s demands and instead should continue the campaign until it surrenders,” being an additional indicator of increased unilateral orientation (Peace Index August, 2014).

concerns. This means that the inferiority of the Palestinians, both in terms of power and resources, does not play a role to them and that the process with collective fear and the narratives contribute to make it less important.

In the Palestinian case, it appears that no matter how horrifying the event, the discourse has a tendency to revolve more around the injustice that causes the event, rather than a security discourse (Bar-Siman-Tov, 2014; El-'Ajou, 2013). This is also related to the asymmetry since Palestinians cannot cope with their fears through security-related measures, and thus have to look for alternatives. It also goes along with the sentiment of injustice found in the security aspects in the Palestinian conflict narrative. Palestinian explanations connect nearly everything to the Israeli occupation, the historical injustice created by the establishment of the State of Israel and the birth of the Palestinian refugee problem. This has made historical and on-going injustice flagship arguments when arguing against the occupation (Bar-Siman-Tov, 2010: 21, 23).⁴⁶

Despite the differences between the Israeli and Palestinian narratives, one can argue that Israeli and Palestinian fears are to some extent similar, but that they are experienced and expressed differently. First, there is existential fear in both societies, and both societies conflate the threats to the existence of their society with the threat towards them as individuals. Israelis, however, talk about this threat as a security problem, which could be argued to be a more state-oriented approach. Palestinians, on the other hand, denote it as an injustice, an approach coming more from a non-state perspective. Second, the experienced threat and high levels of fear seem to make both societies more inclined to unilateralism, with prominent examples being the Israeli unilateral withdrawal from Gaza in '04-'05, and the current Palestinian search for statehood within the UN-system.

⁴⁶ As an example of a reference to this historical injustice, see: Abbas (2011).

Chapter 7 Conclusion

In this thesis, a framework inspired by social-psychological theory and narrative theory has proven to be a useful tool in understanding and decoding parts of the abstractness and complexity of the Israeli and Palestinian conflict narratives. By identifying and analysing the narratives' security aspects and connecting them to the collective fear experienced by the societies the applied framework showed how Israeli and Palestinian narratives provide insights about fundamental security needs in conflict-torn societies.

The thesis' literature review revealed a discrepancy in the amount of Israeli and Palestinian research relevant for its focus, a discrepancy that has a number of explanations. Despite a domination of Israeli research, the thesis' framework proved useful in understanding the Palestinian conflict narrative. This is because many of the elements identified in the Palestinian and Israeli narratives prove not only to derive from the same type of fear or historical event, but also since the elements appear to be interacting with each other. Finally, the important position of security elements in the narratives such as victimisation and fear from persecution and displacement tell us that security is central in both societies' reluctance to deal with each other, and that the reluctance is intimately connected to consistently high levels of mutual fear.

Regarding the Israeli conflict narrative, the literature used in the analysis showed how the main causes of fear and the societal-wide security focus in the narrative result from a strong focus on victimisation and an existential fear of the Jewish state and people ceasing to exist. The fear has deep historical and ideological roots, which precede the origin of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but which nevertheless spill over into the Israeli conflict narrative and the society's experienced fear. In the Palestinian conflict narrative the sense of victimisation is well maintained, having its origin in the 1948 War. The idea about a Palestinian David, who is defenceless in the confrontations with the Israeli Goliath, is connected to the experienced inferiority and has throughout the decades of conflict become an inherent part of the Palestinian conflict narrative. The internal political deadlock and structural restraints from the occupation add to the victimisation and feeling of helplessness.

Through a focus on how security aspects of conflict narratives are related to a collective sense of fear, this thesis' discussion has explained how these two components mutually activate and strengthen each other. In a reciprocal process, the conflict narratives support interpretations of conflict-related events that fortify the fear of the adversary, while the fear contributes to the development of a conflict narrative that emphasises security aspects. Caught up in this mutual insecurity, the fact that the fear is experienced as existential means it is threatening one's identity, which contributes to harden the adversaries' positions, and makes it easier to resort to aggression and violence (Rotberg, 2006; Rouhana, 2006: 125). This shows how Israeli and Palestinian fear and security aspects in the narratives are interconnected since important issues for one part are an important source of fear for the other.

Additionally, when these emotions and attitudes are generated within the Israeli and Palestinian societies, individual threats are blurred with the threats posed to the state, motivating the members of the respective societies to defend themselves. The high levels of collective fear trigger remembrance of security elements in the conflict narratives, pushing the levels of fear even higher and one of the consequences is that this creates a public demand for increased security. In this case, Ochs' (2011) research on security and fear within the Israeli society can be related to the Palestinian context as well, since Israelis and Palestinians share similar fears directed towards each other and since the fear inherent in their narratives is strongly connected to the continued existence of their nations. This also goes along with Maria Stern's work on security in narratives, which points at how the modern structure of sovereign nation states eventually makes the state the ultimate focus of security (Stern, 2005: 25-26). The aggression increases the insecurity and fear within the other society, creating a downward spiral. In such a situation, the collective fear becomes too strong for more rational arguments and policies to compete with this demand, and a zero-sum game emerges, where increased security for one side decreases the security of the other. Additionally, it results in increased inclination to unilateral measures on both sides, revealing one of the consequences of the conflation between collectively and individually experienced threats.

On the basis of this, the main findings of this thesis are: First, that collective fear is reproduced because of the resonance it creates in the security aspects in the conflict narratives. Second, that the blurring between threats against the state and the individual, and the fear evoked by previous and current events make the societies accumulate fear. And third, that because these high levels of collective fear increase the unilateral actions on both sides, this fear is a huge underlying obstacle to peace negotiations.

Implications of this research and future recommendations

The findings in this thesis, highlighting and discussing the potential effect and power of emotions and narratives in intergroup conflict, can be utilised for the purposes of peace building, de-escalation tactics and reconciliation. The findings are relevant not only for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but also to other conflicts. The framework could help in identifying ways the conflict narratives function and are used/misused in other identity-based conflicts, and could perhaps be of particular help when it comes to intractable conflicts. The identification and analysis of security aspects in conflict narratives helps us understand an important aspect of how large parts of societies end up having little faith in peace and thus do not support peace initiatives. Intractable conflicts, with their recurring violence, make the collective fear permeate the conflict narrative and thus also the societies' interpretation and response to conflict-related events.

On the basis of this thesis' findings, further research questions should investigate what can be done to ease the rigidity of conflict narratives, or what needs to be done to assist people to mobilise other types of emotions than fear, hatred, and violence in the creation of identity and in their interpretation of events. Elcheroth and Spini (2011: 190) point out an important matter when claiming that understanding rigid narratives is not about understanding "(...) why the majority is driven by destructive motives, but how a minority managed to convince the majority that there was no viable alternative (...)." This leads us to some of the essential empirical research questions that ought to be asked in order to find ways to ease the rigidity: How is the established link between collective fear and security aspects in conflict narratives used and misused? Could it be connected to the agenda of political leaders and their

abilities to use elements from the conflict narratives in order to move public opinion and thus potential support in a certain direction?

As both theory and empirical examples in this thesis have proven, the long-term collective fear present in narratives play an important role with regards to how conflict-related events and political measures are received by the public. Referring once again to Maria Stern's (2005) empirical research, the high security focus in conflict narratives blurs distinctions, not only between experienced fear from current and historical events, but also between security needs of the individual and the security needs of the state. Thus, when experiencing high levels of fear, protecting one's state is made a top priority and the emphasis on the nationalist elements in the meta-narrative means it cannot be questioned. Another consequence of the blurring between the individual and the state is how it creates a need for the society's leaders to develop strategies to maintain and defend the society's identity. Stern argues that by emphasising threats and dangers in their discourse, politicians can develop strategies to deal with what they portray as dangers while receiving public support (Stern, 2005: 38, 40-42). If such ideas were to be further developed in the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it could function as an important platform from which one could ask whether politicians, by having the right to define who is the enemy, also have the power to define what to fear and what not to fear, and thus also affect the levels of fear within the society.

The lack of research on the functions of collective fear and its connection to the conflict-torn society's psychological infrastructure was highlighted already in this thesis' literature review, and this thesis has worked to underline the need for further research in this area. Looking in slightly different directions than in previous paragraphs, Halperin et al. (2011: 85-86) argue that there is an interesting potential to utilise in the neuropsychological research on *emotion regulation*. Emotion regulation is a rapidly expanding research field investigating ways to make individuals reconsider their reactions and interpretations of events (Gross, 2007). Still, however, the research needs to move in the direction of investigating emotions in the context of conflict, and also to start focusing on the intergroup level in order to become relevant for the research on collective conflict narratives. This would make it possible to use

its results to investigate how the framing or presentation of conflict-related events to the public could be altered. Another alternative could be to give the research an increasing empirical character, providing concrete examples where such techniques or mechanisms have been in motion. There is, however, a danger of such research being misused since it can contribute knowledge enabling a manipulation of emotions through a dishonest agenda, relating to the potential research question on how fear can be used and misused. This is underlined by the findings in this thesis, showing how the Israeli and Palestinian societies' interpretations of recent events are heavily affected by the activation of elements in the conflict narrative that are connected to collective fear, leading to the generation of additional fear.

In conclusion, moving the focus back to Israeli-Palestinian relations and the currently stalled peace process, one could argue that the pragmatic stance historically present in the negotiations has wrongly underestimated the power of security aspects in the conflict narratives. The potential power of collective fear, and rigid, security-focused conflict narratives has contributed to a negative view on negotiations and the peace process within both societies. The characteristics of the Israeli and Palestinian narratives contribute to maintaining a high level of fear and moving the focus away from the graveness of the current situation and the need to generate alternative and more rational approaches. The recognition of the other's narrative and its validity has to come before a termination of conflict is possible, meaning it is crucial as a facilitator to the reduction of conflict. Undeniably, today there are two societies firmly situated within the land of Israel/Palestine, and it is unlikely that one of them will disappear. One could hope that the power of social-psychological features will be taken more into consideration in the future, resulting in a decrease in mutual fear. Such a change would have to take place within the Israeli and Palestinian societies themselves, but is, however, intimately connected to the way fear and narratives are treated in negotiations, and to the way Israeli and Palestinian politicians choose to portray the conflict to their constituency and the rest of the world. Thus any change is dependent on political will to make a drastic change in today's practices.

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Appendix



Map of Israel/Palestine showing the areas conquered by Israel in the 1967 War.
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