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Psychological obstacles to peace-making in the Middle East and proposals to overcome them[1]

Kurzfassung: Die Analyse der Beziehungen zwischen israelischen Juden und Palästinensern im Kontext der Al Aksa Intifada offenbart ein trauriges Paradoxon. Einerseits ist in beiden Gesellschaften die Mehrheit der Bevölkerung bereit für weitreichende Kompromisse, um eine friedliche Lösung des palästinensisch-israelischen Konflikts zu erreichen. Andererseits jedoch pflegt die Mehrheit der Bevölkerung in beiden Gesellschaften Stereotype über das Gegenüber, die von extrem negativen Eigenschaften geprägt und mit tiefem Misstrauen verbunden sind, so dass jegliche Verhandlung und Konfliktlösung unmöglich gemacht wird.

Der vorliegende Aufsatz erklärt dieses Paradoxon auf der Basis der Theorie des transitional context, wobei der Fokus auf die israelisch-jüdische Gesellschaft gerichtet ist. Ein transitional context besteht aus beobachtbaren, klar definierten physischen, sozialen, politischen, ökonomischen, militärischen und psychologischen Bedingungen, die vorübergehend sind und in ihrer Komplexität die Umwelt darstellen, in welcher Individuen und Kollektive agieren. Diese Bedingungen entstehen in der Folge von wichtigen Ereignissen und Informationen, die von den Mitgliedern der Gesellschaft wahrgenommen und verinnerlicht werden und die ihrerseits deren Verhalten und Handeln beeinflussen.

Im Fall der israelisch-jüdischen Gesellschaft bestand dieser Kontext aus wichtigen Ereignissen und Informationen im Zusammenhang mit dem Gipfel in Camp David und dem Beginn der Al Aksa Intifada im Jahr 2000. Dies bildete die Grundlage für die Entstehung von Angst, für die Delegitimierung der Palästinenser und die kollektive Sichtweise, selbst Opfer zu sein. Daraus entwickelten sich gravierende Hindernissen für Verhandlungen in Richtung auf eine friedliche Konfliktlösung. Sie führten zur Unterstützung von Gewalthandlungen gegen die Palästinenser; zur Unterstützung eines Führers, der aus seiner Entschlossenheit, mit dem Gegner unnachgiebig umzugehen, keinen Hehl macht; zu einem Gefühl der Unversöhnlichkeit und zur Unterstützung einer einseitigen Trennung von den Palästinensern.

Der letzte Teil des Aufsatzes behandelt auf allgemeiner Ebene den psychologischen Zustand, nach dem beide Gesellschaften – in der augenblicklichen Situation eines gewaltsamen Konflikts ohne Verhandlungen – streben sollten. Nach beinahe vier Jahren gewaltsamer Konfrontation sollten Israelis und Palästinenser versuchen, einen Zustand friedlicher Koexistenz zu erreichen, welcher gekennzeichnet ist durch einen beidseitigen Prozess der Legitimierung, des Ausgleichs, der Differenzierung und der Personalisierung sowie durch neue Hoffnung und gegenseitige Akzeptanz. Im Kern bedeutet Koexistenz eine Geisteshaltung, die von den Mitgliedern der Gesellschaft geteilt wird. Um zu einer Koexistenz zu gelangen, ist es notwendig, das psychologische Repertoire der Gesellschaften zu verändern, die in den Friedensprozess involviert sind. Das Erreichen dieser Veränderung hängt zuallererst ab von den Intentionen, den Aktivitäten, der Entschlossenheit und der Stärke derer, die den Friedensprozess unterstützen: sowohl unter Führungspersönlichkeiten als auch in politischen Parteien, in den NGOs und bei einzelnen Mitgliedern der Gesellschaft. Zum zweiten hängt die erfolgreiche Etablierung eines Klimas der Koexistenz in der Gesellschaft davon ab, inwiefern die gesellschaftlichen Institutionen mobilisiert werden können, die neuen Botschaften des Friedensprozesses zu verbreiten. Die Massenmedien und das Bildungssystem spielen bei dieser Aufgabe eine wichtige Rolle.

Abschließend wird herausgearbeitet, dass eine ausstehende Veränderung des psychologischen Repertoires dem Friedensprozess bislang entgegensteht. Grundlegende Voraussetzungen dafür, um dies ändern/angehen zu können, sind erstens Verhandlungen zwischen den Gegnern, welche die Entwicklung einer beidseitig akzeptablen Übereinkunft ermöglichen, und zweitens die Beendigung oder zumindest ein deutlicher Rückgang aller Arten von Gewalt.

Abstract: Analysis of the relations between the Israeli Jews and the Palestinians, in the context of the Al Aqsa Intifada, suggests a sad paradox. On the one hand, the majority of people in both societies are ready for far-reaching compromises in order to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict peacefully. But, on the other hand, the majority of people in both societies stereotype their opponents with extremely negative characteristics and feel a profound mistrust that prevents any possible negotiation and solution of the conflict.

The paper explains the described paradox on the basis of the theory of transitional context, focusing on the Israeli Jewish society. The transitional context consists of observable and well-defined physical, social, political, economic, military and psychological conditions that

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are of a temporary nature and construct the environment in which individuals and collectives function. These conditions arise as a result of major events and major information that are perceived and apprehended by society members, and then they affect their behavior and functioning.

In the case of the Israeli Jewish society, the context consisted of major events and provided major information that shed light on them, related to the Camp David summit and the beginning of the Al Aqsa Intifada in 2000. This context served as a basis for the emergence of fear, delegitimization of the Palestinians and a self-collective view as a victim, which became major obstacles that prevented any meaningful negotiation towards the achievement of a peaceful solution. They in turn led to support for violent acts against the Palestinians, support of a leader who projects a determination to deal harshly with the rival, feelings of irreconcilability and support for unilateral separation from the Palestinians.

The last part of the paper describes in general terms the psychological state that both societies should strive to reach in the present situation of violent conflict without negotiations. After almost four years of violent confrontations, Israelis and Palestinians should try to achieve a state of peaceful coexistence, which means mutual legitimization, equalization, differentiation, and personalization, as well as the introduction of hope and mutual acceptance. In essence, coexistence refers to a state of mind shared by the members of a society. In order to achieve coexistence, it is necessary to change the psychological repertoire of the societies involved in the peace process. The achievement of this change depends first of all on the intentions, determination, activism and strength of those who support the peace process, including leaders, political parties, NGOs, and individual society members. Second, a successful process of establishing a climate of coexistence in a society depends on the mobilization of societal institutions to propagate the new messages of the peace process. Mass media and the educational system play an important role in this mission.

As its final point, the paper suggests that the fundamental prerequisites for changing the psychological repertoire that inhibits the peace process are: a. negotiations between the rivals which will allow the development of mutually acceptable agreement and b. cessation, or at least a significant reduction, of all types of violence.

Introduction

Analysis of the relations between the Israeli Jews and the Palestinians, in the context of the Al Aqsa Intifada, points to a sad paradox. On one hand, the majority of people in both societies are ready for far-reaching compromises in order to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict peacefully. A national survey, made in November 2002, indicates that about 70% of all Palestinians and Israelis are ready to begin a settlement process with the aim of establishing a Palestinian state based on the 1967 border, provided the Palestinian refrain from further violence (see Kull, Ramsay, Warf, & Wolford, 2002). But, on the other hand, the majority in both societies stereotypes the opponent with extremely negative characteristics and experiences intense fear and a profound mistrust that prevent any possible negotiation and solution of the conflict. In addition, a majority in both societies supports the use of force against their opponent, which only intensifies the negative stereotyping and the mistrust (see Kull, Ramsay, Warf, & Wolford, 2002). These data indicate that at this stage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, psychological factors play a very important role. After long experience of negotiations and contacts, both societies are aware of the general contours of a possible solution to their conflict, and a majority in each society supports various aspects of the solution. However, due to the above-noted psychological obstacles, which are often exploited by various political forces, the solution of the conflict seems to members of both societies to be unachievable in the near future.

In the present paper, after briefly describing the general outlines of the background of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, I would like to focus on one of the societies involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, namely the Israeli Jewish society, which I know better, and analyze the psychological obstacles that prevent any meaningful negotiation towards the achievement of a peaceful solution. Then, I would like to propose several psychological approaches that might help to remedy the present stalemate. It is important to note that there is substantial evidence that similar psychological factors operate on the Palestinian side and cause similar effects (see for example Bar-Tal, 1988; Kelman, 1999). From a psychological perspective, there is much mirror imaging in the psychological repertoires of each side, as the perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, emotions and behaviors of the Palestinians are in many respects similar to those of the Israelis, and both repertoires nourish each other and lead to mutually destructive types of behavior. Therefore, the proposed remedial steps apply to the Palestinian side, as well. But before turning to the above-promised analyses, there is a need to first describe the background of the present conflict situation.

Background of the present Israeli-Palestinian conflict

The discussed case concerns the intractable Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which has a history going back for nearly a century. It developed over territory claimed as a homeland by two national movements, Palestinian nationalism and Zionism (the Jewish national movement). Both sides clashed recurrently over the right to self-determination, statehood and justice (see Gerner, 1991; Tessler, 1994 for details). Only in 1993 was there a historic breakthrough, when Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) signed an agreement in which the PLO recognized the right of Israel to exist in peace and security, and Israel recognized the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people in peace negotiations. Moreover, the two sides signed a Declaration of Principles (DOP) that specified the various stages for the peace process and set the framework for the five-year interim period of Palestinian self-rule. This interim period was intended to allow a gradual building of trust and reduction of animosity and hatred between the two nations that would enable them to construct relations of peaceful coexistence. These developments were expected to lead to a subsequent permanent settlement of the conflict in which the issues at the core of the conflict would be resolved (see Hirschfeld, 2000).

Seven years later, the two parties eventually convened to try to complete the final agreement and resolve all the outstanding issues peacefully. Many of the events and processes that occurred during the seven-year period did not facilitate the emergence of a peaceful climate of mutual trust, but it is beyond the scope of the present paper to analyze the nature of these developments. Thus, on July 11-24, 2000 top-level delegations of Israelis and Palestinians met at Camp David, USA, with the participation of a US team led by then President Bill Clinton, to try to reach a final agreement and end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, the two sides did not succeed in reaching an agreement, and the peace summit failed.

In order to understand the threatening background for the evolved psychological repertoire we must describe not only the events that took place, but also the information provided to the Israeli Jewish public by their society's epistemic authorities. This information claim, accepted as valid by the great majority of Israeli Jews, framed the knowledge of many citizens and had a determinative influence on the development of the psychological repertoire to be described (Bar-Tal, in press). Thus, in the case of the summit meeting, first, the Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak provided a major information claim by building the expectation that the time had come for crucial decisions in the negotiation process with the Palestinians (Drucker, 2002; Pressman, 2003; Sher, 2001; Wolfsfeld, 2004). This major information claim implied that Israelis and Palestinians were ready for historical compromises and that this was the moment that would reveal whether the Palestinians really wanted to settle the conflict peacefully. Second, when these negotiations failed, Barak made another major information claim by asserting that he had done all he could, turning every stone in search of peace by making a very generous and far-

reaching offer at Camp David, that Arafat had refused to accept it and had made no acceptable counter-proposals. This placed all the blame for the failure of the talks on the Palestinian side (Drucker, 2002; Pressman, 2003; Wolfsfeld, 2004; Swisher, 2004). This message was supported by statements by U.S. President Bill Clinton and all the Israeli participants at the Camp David conference. Subsequently, almost all the country's political, social and religious leaders, as well as the Israeli mass media, widely and repeatedly circulated this message (Wolfsfeld, 2004). This was a major information claim and had a strong effect on the construction of the Israeli people's views. It implied that although Israel had made an ulti-mate compromise and offered to "give everything," the Palestinians had refused to accept this generous offer. It meant that Arafat, together with the Palestinian leadership, was not interested in resolving the conflict through compromises and in a peaceful way, but was still striving to annihilate Israel, especially by insisting on the right of return of millions of Pal-estinian refugees to Israeli territory.

On September 28, 2000, violent conflict erupted. In response to the controversial visit of Israel's opposition leader at the time, Ariel Sharon (presently Israel's Prime Minister), to the Temple Mount, where a major Palestinian mosque is located, Palestinians began disturbances including stone throwing, demonstrations and shooting. These were met with violent re-sponses by Israeli security forces, and in the first four days of the uprising, 39 Palestinians and 6 Israelis were killed; within a month the death toll rose to over 130 Palestinians and 12 Israelis (Dor, 2001).

As the violence began, a major piece of information claimed by the Israeli government was that the outbreak of the Al Aqsa Intifada had been planned in advance by Arafat and the Palestinian Authority (Bar-Siman-Tov, Lavie, Michael, & Bar-Tal, 2004; Dor, 2004; Wolfsfeld, 2004). This was the explanation given, even though at the beginning of the violence most of the security sources had a different interpretation of the events (Dor, 2001). Nevertheless, very soon all security and gov-ernment sources rallied behind this major information claim, which was continuously disseminated by the media. As the violence continued, both government and military sources and much of the media kept providing information to the effect that the goal of the Palestinians was to destroy Israel, so that Israel was caught up in a war for its very survival (Dor, 2004; Feldman, 2002). Also, governmental and military sources continuously repeated major information claims that Arafat was personally responsible for each terror attack and that the Palestinian leadership (especially Arafat and leaders associated with him) was not a partner for negotiation, because of its involvement in terror and refusal to fight terrorism.

In the months that followed, Palestinians launched violent terrorist activities, mostly in the occupied territories, and the Israeli army continued military attacks to contain the uprising and prevent terror. During the fall of 2000 and early 2001, continuous attempts at negotiation to end the violence and complete the agreement were still being made. The climax of these efforts took place in Taba, where the Israeli and Palestinian delegations made a sincere effort to negotiate the frame-work for a final settlement of the conflict (Matz, 2003). But these attempts ended on February 6, 2001 with the election of Ariel Sharon as the Prime Minister of Israel by an overwhelming majority of Jewish voters.

Since the election of Ariel Sharon, the level of violence on both sides has escalated, and relations between Israelis and Palestinians have deteriorated. The Palestinians increased their terror attacks, mostly through suicide bombings in public places all over the country. At the same time Israeli security forces, in an attempt to contain the violence and especially the terror, engaged in violent acts against the Palestinian Authority, assassinated Palestinians suspected of terrorist activity, imposed severe restrictions on the Palestinian population, severely affecting their daily lives, and made frequent incursions into the Palestinian territories. The climax of these activities was the operation "Defensive Shield," carried out by the IDF in April and May of 2002, which culminated with Israeli forces re-occupying the West Bank almost entirely (Reporters with-out borders, 2003).

By April 14, 2004 (Independence Day of the State of Israel) the violence had claimed over 2,720 lives and 25,000 injured on the Palestinian side, many of them civilians, and 943 lives (276 security forces and 667 civilians) and 6,300 injured on the Israeli side. Various attempts by external mediators, especially American and European, failed to stop the violence.

The above-described context is very threatening, and as can be expected, it led to various psychological reactions. I will focus on major reactions of Israeli Jewish society members that have served as major obstacles to the peace process.

Before we begin with the analysis, however, two points must be made. First, it is important to note that the peace process with the Palestinians which began in 1993 was not viewed uniformly. That is, although many members of Israeli Jewish society supported the peace process (there were periods when a significant majority belonged to this group), trusted the Palestinians and hoped for a successful conclusion to the peace process, a large segment of Israeli Jewish society opposed it consistently and was unwilling to make any compromises, did not trust the Palestinians and continued to view the situ-ation as conflictual and threatening (see Arian, 1995; Peace Index for the results of the polls). Nevertheless, a major change in Israeli Jewish public opinion took place in fall 2000: at this time a large share of the peace process supporters began to mistrust the Palestinians (see Arian, 2003; Bar-Tal, 2004a; Peace Index for description of the change). In spite of this change and the formation of a clear majority view, Israeli society is not fully consensual, as the presented data will show.

Also, it is important to note that the below-described specific repertoire that concerns the relations with the Palestinians, which was assessed during the Intifada Al Aqsa, is based on the ethos of conflict and collective memory which has domi-

nated Israeli Jewish society throughout decades of intractable conflict with the Arabs, and with the Palestinians in particular (Bar-Tal, 1998, 2000a). Prominent in narratives of ethos and collective memory are societal beliefs about the justness of a conflict's goals, a delegitimation of Arabs and particularly Palestinians, positive self-collective view and self-view as a victim. *Societal beliefs about the justness of one's own goals* deal with the reasons, explanations and rationales of the goals that are at stake in a conflict and, above all, justify their crucial importance; *societal beliefs that delegitimize the Arabs* deny the adversary's humanity; *societal beliefs supporting positive self-collective images* concern the ethnocentric tendency to attribute positive traits, values and behavior to one's own society; and *societal beliefs about one's own victimization* concern one's self-presentation as a victim (Bar-Tal & Salomon, in press). These societal beliefs are shared by society members, appear in public discourse, including mass media, are expressed in cultural products and featured in school textbooks. They lost some of their dominance during the peace process in the 1990s, but they reemerged in the latest cycle of violent conflict that started in the fall of 2000 (Sharvit & Bar-Tal, in press).

Psychological obstacles

The analysis of the psychological obstacles deals with three major reactions: Fear, delegitimation of the Palestinians and self-collective view as a victim.

Fear

One of the major psychological obstacles to renewing the peace process is the widespread fear in the Israeli Jewish society. Fear, as a primary aversive emotion, arises in situations of threat and danger to the organism (the person) and/or his/her environment (the society), and enables people to respond to them adaptively (Gray, 1989; Öhman, 1993; Plutchik, 1980; Rachman, 1978). It is experienced on the personal and collective levels in situations of violent conflict that are usually characterized by threat and danger to society members as individuals and to society as a whole. (Bar-Tal, 2001).

Fear prepares society members for better coping with the stressful situation on the very primary level (Collins, 1975; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). This preparation is achieved in a number of ways: (a) it mobilizes a constant readiness to face potential dangers in the form of unanticipated threats; (b) it directs attention and sensitizes society to cues that signal danger and to information that implies threat; (c) it increases affiliation, solidarity and cohesiveness among society members in view of the threat to individuals and to society at large; and (d) it mobilizes society members to act on behalf of society, to cope with the threat, to act against the enemy and to defend the country and society.

But fear may also lead to a collective freezing of beliefs. That is, it leads to adherence to certain beliefs about the causes of threats, about the conflict, about the adversary and about ways of coping with the dangers, on the one hand, and to difficulty in entertaining alternative ideas, solutions or courses of actions, on the other hand. As Maslow (1963) noted, "all those psychological and social factors that increase fear cut the impulse to know" (p. 124). Furthermore, the collective fear orientation tends to limit society members' perspectives by binding the present to past experiences related to the conflict, and by building expectations for the future exclusively on the basis of the past. A society over-sensitized by fear tends to be driven by affectively primed heuristics and appraisals of continued threat and thus misinterprets cues and information as signs of threat and danger, searching for the slightest indication in this direction, even in situations that signal good intentions. Fear also causes great mistrust and delegitimization of the adversary and prevents rational and creative evaluation of the situation. In addition, a line of political research has showed that fear leads people to increased ethnocentrism and intolerance towards out-groups (Feldman & Stenner, 1997; Marcus, Sullivan, Theiss-Morse, & Wood, 1995). Finally, the collective fear orientation is a major cause of violence (see Brubaker & Laitin, 1998; Lake & Rothchild, 1998). A fearful society tends to choose to fight in response to threatening conditions. Fighting is a habituated course of action, based on past experience, and thus again a society fixates on coping with threat in a conflictive way, without trying new avenues of behavior that can break the cycle of violence.

The previously-described Palestinian violence directed towards Israeli Jews, together with its framing as an attempt to destroy the Jewish state, led to a feeling of fear as a result of implied threat. In June 2001, 67% of Israeli Jews reported that they were anxious about the future of Israel, and 63% reported higher anxiety than in the past regarding their personal security and that of their family (*Maariv*, June 8, 2001). With the increase in violence, Israelis' fear increased and influenced all aspects of life, in particular their behavior in public places and their use of public transportation (Klar, Zakay, & Sharvit, 2002; Lori, 2002). In addition, in the spring of 2002 almost all Israeli Jews (92%) reported a feeling of fear that they or a member of their family might fall victim to a terrorist attack, while in February 2000 this percentage was only 79%, and in 1999 only 58% (Arian, 2002). Finally, in 2002, 78% of the respondents reported that their personal security had deteriorated, whereas in 1999, 80% of Israeli Jews reported that their personal security was greater since the peace process began in 1993 (Arian, 2002, 1999).

Delegitimization of the Palestinians and their leaders

Violence and threat perceptions arouse a need for explanation and justification of own acts and differentiation between one's own group and the rival. Delegitimization, which refers to stereotypes with extremely negative connotations, fulfils these functions. Specifically, *delegitimization is defined as the categorization of a group or groups into extremely negative social categories that exclude it or them from the sphere of human groups that act within the limits of acceptable norms and/or values, since these groups are viewed as violating basic human norms or values* (Bar-Tal, 1989, 1990 Bar-Tal & Teichman, 2005). Delegitimization is the categorization of an out-group into such categories as primitive persons, murderers, terrorists, aggressors and so on. In this view, delegitmization is a type of denial of humanity and moral exclusion (see also Bandura, 1999; Bar-On, 2000; Kelman, 1973; Opotow, 1990; Staub, 1989). In fact, it implies maximal differentiation between one's own group, which is viewed positively, and the delegitimized opponent. It provides rigid, persistent and durable categories that are unlikely to change while the conflict lasts, and most probably long after. This implication is based on the tendency of in-group members to explain the violence as due to the other group, and to attribute the continuation of the conflict to stable internal dispositions of the out-group (Pettigrew, 1979).

Delegitmization homogenizes the delegitimized group as one entity, not allowing the individualization of its members or differentiation among its subgroups. It automatically arouses strong negative emotions and implies behavioral intentions. That is, the use of labels such as murderers, terrorists, colonialists or fascists indicates that the delegitimized group, which is in conflict with the delegitimizing group, has the capacity and the intention to harm the opponent. Thus, delegitimizing characteristics imply threat to the delegitimizing group, since the labels used imply behavioral intentions. In turn, the violence and use of delegitimizing labels, which indicate threat and possible harm, arouse fear and deep mistrust. Finally, delegitimization implies a readiness to use violent means in order to punish the delegitimized group for the violence it has committed, and also to prevent future aggression by the group.

Indeed, during the Al Aqsa Intifada, systematic and institutionalized mutual delegitimization of Palestinians and Israeli Jews has been occurring (see Oren & Bar-Tal, 2004; Wolfsfeld & Dajani, 2003). The delegitimization of the Palestinians began with their leader. Within a very short time after the eruption of violence, Yasser Arafat was portrayed as not a partner for peace. Later, Arafat was portrayed as a terrorist, and he was blamed personally for every terror attack carried out by any Palestinian group. This line of delegitimization intensified after September 11, 2001, when the USA and other western states declared a "world war against terrorism". In this context, Arafat was compared to Bin Laden and to Saddam Hussein. Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon claimed, "There is a need to delegitimize Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian Authority. There is a need to connect Arafat to terror and to destroy his image as a peacemaker" (Ben, October 19, 2001, p.3a). Finally, he was portrayed as "irrelevant," and formal contact between him and the Israeli authorities ceased. The Israeli public concurred with this presentation. As the polls showed, already in October 2000, 71% of Israeli Jews thought that Arafat behaved like a terrorist, in comparison to two years earlier, when only 41% thought so (Peace Index, October 2000). Similarly, the Palestinian Authority was represented by the Israeli government as a "terrorist entity" which initiated and supported terror attacks (Herald Tribune, March 1, 2001) and 67% of the Israeli Jews supported this view (*Maariv*, December 7, 2001).

As for negative stereotyping of the Palestinians, while in 1997 only 39% of the Israeli Jewish respondents described the Palestinians as violent and 42% portrayed them as dishonest, by the end of 2000 68% of Israeli Jewish respondents perceived the Palestinians as violent and 51% as dishonest. Also, in November 2000 78% of the Jewish public agreed with the statement that Palestinians have little regard for human life and therefore persist in using violence despite the high number of their own casualties (Peace Index, November 2000). In April 2001, 23% of Israeli Jews thought that all Palestinians support violence against Israel, 32.7% thought that the majority of them support it, and 17.3% thought that half of them support it (Peace Index, May 2001). In addition, while in 1999 64% of the Israeli Jews believed that the majority of the Palestinians want peace, in 2002 only 37% believed so (Arian, 2002), and in 2004 43% believed so. Finally, the lack of trust that goes with delegitimization is clearly reflected in the following beliefs: 70% of the Israeli Jewish public estimated that Arafat personally lacked the desire, or the capability, to sign an agreement to end the conflict with Israel, even if Israel agreed to all of his demands – and that he would make additional demands aimed at defeating the agreement; and 80% believed that the Palestinians would not honor an agreement signed by them (Peace Index, May 2001). Moreover, the great majority of Israeli Jews started to believe that the Palestinians were striving to destroy Israel and therefore peace with them could not be achieved (Arian, 2002).

Collective self-perception as a victim

One clear effect of group life in the context of violence, perceived threat and fear is the emergence of a sense of victimhood. The perception of being a victim emerges because an ingroup always focuses on the violence of the other group and assigns responsibility for the erupted violence and the continuation of the conflict to the out-group. At the same time, however, it views its own violence as a reaction to the harm caused by the out-group. This perception is especially pronounced when

the violence of the out-group harms civilians, including children and women. A self-perception as a victim is also based on a collective self-image as a peace-loving group striving to end the bloody conflict and a perception of the out-group as vicious, evil, bloodthirsty and unwilling to end the violence and solve the conflict peacefully.

A collective self-perception as a victim gives rise to feelings of anger and wishes for vengeance. Thus, it often leads to acts of violence represented as reactions to out-group aggression. Also, this perception causes a focus on the self. Ingroup members are wholly preoccupied with their own fate, since the threatening events are central and prominent in their awareness. They are preoccupied with their own danger, human losses, injury, damage, the future of the violent confrontation, and so on, without realizing that their behavior may be threatening to the rival group and may also be a cause of the violent cycles. Moreover, locked within the vicissitudes of their own losses, ingroup members have difficulty in being empathetic to out-group members, in being attuned to their suffering, hardships, grievances, needs or goals (Mack, 1990).

The sense of being a victim began to evolve especially with the increasing perception that the Palestinians had instigated violence in spite of the fact that, in the view of most Israelis, Ehud Barak had made the most generous possible proposals to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In November 2000, about 80% of Israeli Jews blamed the Palestinians for the eruption of the violence (Peace Index, November 2000), and in 2002, 84% of Israeli Jewish respondents thought that the Palestinians were solely or mostly responsible for the deterioration in the relations between them and the Israelis, while only 5% thought Israel solely responsible for the conflict (Arian, 2002). Similarly, in August 2002, 92% of Israeli Jews believed that the Palestinians had not fulfilled their commitments as specified in the Oslo agreement, while 66% believed that Israel had fulfilled its own part (Peace Index, August 2002). It was not just the attribution of responsibility for the eruption of violence that set the stage for the Israelis' deep sense of victimhood, it was powerfully underlined by the continuous terror attacks that claimed many Jewish lives, most of them civilians. All members of the Israeli Jewish society thought and felt that the terror hurts innocent people enormously, is unjust and is far beyond the legitimate means of Palestinian struggle against the occupation. A sense of victimhood came to dominate the thoughts of Israeli Jews, and every attack on Israeli Jews, including on Israeli soldiers, was called terror and received immense exposure as such in the media. The Israeli media not only provided detailed accounts of terror attacks, their rescue actions following them, reports from hospitals and funerals; it also personalized the victims by describing their lives and publishing descriptions by those who knew them (Wolfsfeld & Dajani, 2003). In contrast, the great majority of the Israeli Jews was not interested in the great suffering of the Palestinian people and even supported the military actions which necessarily led to civilian casualties among the Palestinians. For example, 62% of the Israeli Jews supported army efforts to kill persons suspected of being involved in terror, even if there is a reasonable likelihood that the Palestinian civilian population would be harmed (Peace Index, July 2002).

The above-described psychological repertoire that characterizes society members involved in violent intractable conflict has serious consequences that will now be described.

Consequences

When group members believe that the other group initiated the violent confrontations unjustly, experience fear, delegitimize the out-group and perceive their own group as a victim. Then they tend to support aggressive ways to cope with the violence, especially when they believe that they have the ability to resist the enemy. But first of all, situations of violent intergroup conflict cause people to look for a leader who projects determination to cope forcefully with the rival and can assure security. Israelis went to the polls on February 6, 2001 and elected Ariel Sharon (with a 60% majority), the Likud party candidate, over Ehud Barak, of the Labor party (Dowty, 2002). This outcome was not surprising, in view of the fact that the majority of Israeli Jewish voters believed that Barak had not only made the Palestinians an overly generous offer (44% thought so already in July 2000, Peace Index, July 2000, and 70.4% thought so by January 2001, Peace Index, January 2001), but also had been too lenient (70% thought so) in handling the crisis that led to the increased Palestinian violence (even 51% of Barak's own supporters accepted this view, Peace Index, January 2001).

The newly elected Prime Minister, an ex-general, had been involved in all of Israel's major wars, took an extremely hawkish position, vehemently opposing the Oslo agreement. He was, moreover, behind the building of many of the Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In Israel and outside it, Sharon had come to stand for force and a powerful determination to subjugate the Arabs, and especially the Palestinian. In his election campaign, he promised peace and security, and on taking office, he stopped negotiations with the Palestinians and insisted on the cessation of Palestinian violence as a precondition for any political negotiation. At the same time, he outlined the contours of an eventual conflict resolution proposal that promised Palestinians very small political gains (see interview with Sharon in *Maariv*, April, 13, 2001). During his incumbency, terror and violence increased, and Israel stuck to a policy of forceful and violent "containment" of Palestinian violence. Sharon gained great approval (about 60-70%) among Israeli Jews and consistent support for his security position, policy and actions.

Specifically supporting Israeli military policies, in March 2001 72% of Israeli Jews thought that additional military force should be used against the Palestinians (Peace Index, March 2001). A survey poll of February 2002 revealed that 75% of

Israeli Jews thought that the Intifada could be controlled by military action; 57% thought that the measures employed to put down the Intifada were too lenient, while only 9% thought that they were too harsh, and 34% thought that they were appropriate (Arian, 2002). Also, 58% supported the policy of investing more in the country's military apparatus in order to avoid another war and as an alternative to peace talks, while two years earlier only 40% supported this option (Arian, 2002).

With regard to specific actions, in April 2002 about 90% of Israeli Jews supported Operation Defensive Shield, in which the Israeli army re-conquered the West Bank cities that were under the control of the Palestinian Authority (Peace Index, April 2002); in 2002, 90% supported the so-called "targeted assassination" of Palestinians suspected of terrorist activity (Arian, 2002), 80% supported the use of tanks and fighter planes against the Palestinians, 73% supported the use of so-called "closures" and economic sanctions, and 72% supported military invasion of the cities under the control of the Palestinian Authority (Arian, 2002).

Finally, fear, the perception of one's own group as a victim and especially delegitmization led to a sense of irreconcilability, which implied that the conflict would continue to be violent and could not be resolved peacefully. Public opinion surveys taken before and during the relevant period reveal a dramatic change in the percentage of the Israeli Jews who thought that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could come to an end through peace agreements: In 1999 the evaluations about peace agreements were optimistic, as 69% of the Israeli Jews preferred peace talks over strengthening Israeli military capacity, 68% believed that peace would come in the next three years, 59% thought that only through negotiations would terror attacks be curtailed, and a majority was ready to negotiate with the Palestinians over various core issues of their conflict (Arian, 1999). But in 2002 this mood changed: 58% of the Israeli Jews preferred strengthening Israeli military capacity over peace talks, 77% believed that war would erupt in the next three years and 68% thought that it was impossible to reach a peace agreement with the Palestinians (Arian, 2002). Moreover, the polls showed an increase in the degree to which the conflict was perceived as insolvable in the near future: in 2001 and 2002 at least 50% of Israeli Jews believed that the conflict would deteriorate and at least 50% predicted that the conflict would continue for many years (Globes, November 15, 2001, April 25, 2002). In 2002, 77% assessed the likelihood of war between Israel and Arab states within the next three years as being of medium or high probability compared with 44% in 1999 (Arian, 2002). Similarly, a decline in support for the Oslo agreement was evidenced in the polls: from support of 70% in 1999 to support of 31% in 2003 (Arian, 2003).

One result of the violence is the tendency to draw clear distinctions between one's own group and the rival. Thus, the Israeli public first differentiated psychologically between themselves and the Palestinians by perceiving the latter negatively as obstructionists, as having bad intentions, as perpetrators of violence and as having generally negative characteristics. In contrast, Israeli Jews perceived themselves as victims with predominantly positive characteristics.

Moreover, the violence, threat perception, fear, delegitmization of the Palestinians, self-image as a victim and sense of irreconcilability led many Israeli Jews to support physical separation between Jews and Palestinians. The notion that "they should be there, and we should be here" was propagated by politicians across the entire political spectrum. In the relevant period, they proposed at least nine different plans for unilateral separation (Galili, April 5, 2002). This reflected not only a desire for self-defense, but also a wish for psychological differentiation from the Palestinians (Baskin, 2002; Nadler, 2002). The Israeli public supports (at least about 60%) separation from the Palestinians by physical means (Peace Index, May 2001), and 56% prefer it to agreement with the Palestinians (*Maariv*, May 10, 2002). The direct reflection of this desire is the construction of a fence that is supposed to separate Israelis and Palestinians and to prevent, at the same time, terror attacks (Rabinowitz, 2002). The government eventually yielded to these demands, and in the summer of 2002 decided formally for physical separation between the Palestinians and the Israelis, which includes building a wall and other physical means of separation. A survey poll made in February 2004, after many controversial views about the wall were published, showed that 84% of the Israeli Jews support the dividing wall. About 66% believed that the wall should be built, in accordance to the government's security policies, and 64% believe that the suffering of the Palestinians should be a secondary or only negligible consideration.

Psychological steps for de-escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

The above analysis suggests that psychological factors play a major role in the stalemate that characterizes the present conflictual relations between Israelis and Palestinians. While the contours of a possible solution of the conflict are more or less clear to members of both societies, and a substantial majority in each society supports large parts of it, the described psychological obstacles prevent the realization of the solution, allowing the extreme leadership and obstructionist fractions to dictate the course of the conflict.

Political psychology can suggest various specific steps that each society can take in order to reduce the effects of the psychological obstacles (Bar-Tal, 2000b; Kelman & Fisher, 2003; Carnevale & Pruitt, 1992; Ross & Ward, 1995). Among them I note reduction of the incitement carried in each society by the leaders, positive statements about peace support by lead-

ers, extensive descriptions of the civilian victims of the rival society, elimination of the double standard in reporting about violence by the mass media, and so on. In this paper, I would like to describe in general terms the psychological state that both societies should strive to reach in the present situation of violent conflict without negotiation. After almost four years of violent confrontations, Israelis and Palestinians should try to achieve a state of peaceful coexistence.

Coexistence in my opinion refers to conditions that serve as fundamental prerequisites for the peace process, on a societal level. It refers to the very recognition of the right of the other group to exist peacefully with its differences and to the acceptance of the other group as a legitimate and an equal partner with whom disagreements have to be resolved in non-violent ways. This state has been reached when the majority of society members share this view (Bar-Tal, 2004b). I would argue that the following are the main components of the shared psychological state of coexistence:

Legitimization allows viewing the opponent as belonging to an acceptable category of groups behaving within the boundaries of international norms, with whom it is possible, and even desirable, to terminate conflict and construct positive relations. This allows recognition of the legitimate existence of the other group with its differences, which may be in the realm of goals, values, aspirations, religion, nationality, ethnicity, culture, and other domains. Legitimization implies that the other group has the same right to exist and live in peace as one's own group and has the right to raise claims and grievances that are then to be resolved in nonviolent ways. Legitimization implies acceptance of the elected leaders of the rival group as legitimate partners in the peace process. As such, it provides the basis for trust that is an essential condition for starting the process of conflict resolution leading eventually to the construction of peaceful relations. Trust raises expectations for future positive relations and catalyzes the continuation of the peace process. Legitimization thus plays a crucial role in changing the nature of intergroup relations. It enables the initiation of negotiations with the opponent to achieve a peaceful resolution of the conflict and to eventually build peaceful and cooperative relations. Therefore, encouraging legitimization is one of the first conditions and primary building blocks for the construction of new relations between former rivals.

Equalization makes the rival into an equal partner with whom it is possible to establish new relations. This requires recognition of the principle of status equality between the groups, a principle that is brought to bear first in negotiations and later in all types and at all levels of intergroup interactions. Equalization implies that leaders as well as ordinary persons perceive members of the rival group, first and foremost, as equals, without superiority, and then treat them accordingly. Also, it is important not to set any large-scale societal-structural conditions for negotiation that imply paternalization and unequal treatment. This constitutes a major change after years of extreme differentiation between one's own group and the opponent, which was a result of viewing the rival as inferior with delegitimizing labels. Without equalization, it is impossible not only to construct new peaceful relations, but also to carry on successful negotiations to resolve the conflict. Equalization thus allows meaningful interaction between past adversaries.

Differentiation leads to the pluralization of the rival group. It enables a new perception of the rival, previously regarded as a uniformly hostile entity. The new perception implies that the rival group includes various sub-groups that differ in their views and ideologies. Differentiation thus also makes it possible to see that members of the rival group differ in their opinions regarding the conflict and its resolution. This is an important change, because there are always social forces that oppose the peaceful resolution of the conflict and who do not hesitate to resort even to violence to stop it. Differentiation thus enables people to at least distinguish between those who support peace and those who do not support it and as result to establish different relations with these two groups. But differentiation does more than just that – it provides a more human view of the opponent group and does more justice to its complex structure. It enables people to acknowledge sub-groups that hold similar values and beliefs to one's own, especially those relevant for establishing peaceful relations.

Personalization allows people to view the rival group not as a depersonalized entity, but as made up of individuals with ordinary human characteristics, concerns, needs and goals. This is a process of individuation after a period of de-individuation and constitutes a further step after differentiation. Personalization may be reflected in differentiation on three levels: within an individual, among individual members, and among roles. Within an individual, differentiation refers to the level of complexity of individual perceptions. Differentiation among individuals allows the acknowledgement of individual differences, namely to view groups as composed of individuals who differ in appearance, characteristics, opinions, concerns, needs and goals. Finally, it allows viewing members of groups in different personal or social roles such as mothers, sons, students, teachers, physicians, peasants, etc. Any type of individuation of group members defuses generalizations and enables people to perceive similarity and even commonality with them. These may include shared attributes, ideology, beliefs and feelings, at least with some members of the rival group. It facilitates the development of new individual and group representations that go beyond the stereotyped ones. These in turn, facilitate personal references to members of the rival group, empathy for their hardships and identification with some of their needs or aspirations. Those are important psychological elements for developing co-existence. They allow seeing the members of the rival group as human beings who are also victims of the conflict and likewise have just claims and moral justifications for their demands.

Reduction of negative affect and introduction of hope and acceptance On the affective level, two concomitant process need to occur: On the one hand, there is a need for a reduction of collective fear and hatred, and on the other hand, there is a need to initiate collective hope, trust, and mutual acceptance (Bar-Tal, 2000b; Kelman, 2004; Kriesberg, 2004). The col-

lective emotion of hope arises when a concrete positive goal is expected (Lazarus, 1991; Stotland, 1969). It includes the cognitive elements of visualizing and expecting, as well as of the affective element of feeling good about expected events or outcomes (Staats & Stassen, 1985). The development and maintenance of hope involves the higher mental processes of vision, imagination, goal setting, planning and considering alternatives, all of which require openness, creativity and flexibility (Snyder, 1994, 2000). Developing a collective orientation of hope for peace implies the formation of new goals such as living in peaceful coexistence and cooperation with yesterday's enemy. This implies stopping bloodshed, destruction, misery, hardship, and suffering and at the same time allowing for the emergence of peace, tranquility, prosperity and growth. It also requires adopting new ways of achieving these goals, such as negotiation, mediation, compromise, concession and reciprocity (Jarymowicz & Bar-Tal, 2004). In addition, there is a need to create a collective affective orientation permitting the former rival's acceptance, which should replace hatred. It denotes a positive evaluative reaction toward the other group and implies at least trust and the intention to form positive relations. These emotional changes are necessary for the establishment of new relations.

The above-described conditions of coexistence create a positive climate in the society that facilitates the achievement of peaceful conflict resolution. But it is absolutely clear that while the psychological state of coexistence is a necessary facilitator of the peace process, it does not solve the long-standing disagreements between the Israelis and Palestinians. The primary condition for progress towards peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is negotiation between the rivals that allows the development of mutually acceptable agreement. Without negotiation, it is impossible to make any progress towards conflict resolution. It is, however, obvious that even when negotiations begin, there will be a need to reduce the psychological obstacles that inhibit the peace process. I firmly believe that the reduction of psychological obstacles should begin as early as possible, independently of the beginning of formal negotiations.

Finally, but not least of all, it is also absolutely clear that the peace process requires the cessation, or at least a significant reduction, of all types of violence by the Israelis and Palestinians (Violence and its alternative, 2003). This is a fundamental prerequisite for changing the psychological repertoire that inhibits the peace process. Inter-group violence is the physical or psychological harm that results from one group acting against another. When perpetrators act as members of groups, individual acts that harm others can be regarded as inter-group violence. This definition encompasses various forms of violence, including those carried out by states, ethnic groups or organizations, which may not only kill, injure, torture, destroy, expel or commit ethnic cleansing and genocide, but also exploit, discriminate against, deprive, harass, exert pressure on or subjugate other groups. The continuing violence between the Israeli Jews and the Palestinians is tragic and unnecessary. Both sides inflict losses, pain and suffering on the other. At present, the Palestinians mostly engage in terror attacks using suicide bombers, targeting public places, indiscriminately killing civilians and causing fear among the whole Israeli population. They also terrorize civilian Jews in the occupied territories by attacking them on the roads and in their settlements. In addition, they carry out guerrilla activities against military targets. On the other hand, Israeli Jews continually confiscate and settle on Palestinian land and prevent economic development, arrest and torture Palestinian suspects, deny them civil rights, pressure Palestinians to collaborate, destroy their olive groves and orchards, inflict collective punishments, impose curfews and closures and set up checkpoints and roadblocks, assassinate Palestinians suspected of terrorist activity and destroy their homes, bomb the buildings used by the Palestinian security forces, kill civilians during fighting and make incursions into the Palestinian territories.

Each side is convinced that its violence is justified and that the other side is brutal, untrustworthy and violent. It generally does not occur to either side to think about the other – to realize that losses of human life are terrible, irreplaceable and therefore unforgettable. They feed fear, hatred, delegitimization and self-perceptions as victims, which in turn perpetuate violence. In essence, the process describes the vicious cycles of violence in which violence contributes to the construction of a negative psychological repertoire which in turn leads to the continuation of violence, and so on.

Coexistence implies that although conflict and disagreement may still be intact, the involved groups have decided to abandon violent ways of confrontation and choose peaceful means to achieve their goals. It means that the groups are ready to establish mechanisms of negotiation to deal with their lists of grievances in order to resolve them.

It is obvious though that it is easier to stop state sponsored violence than violence committed by organizations and individuals, as happens mostly on the Palestinian side. This type of violence should not have veto power on the continuation of the peace process. Hostile and aggressive acts do not stop immediately, but usually continue for years, with a downward slope. Their decrease depends on the satisfaction of the basic needs of the people. It is thus a challenging task to carry on the peace process even while signs of conflict are still present. In such a situation, the reactions of leaders and the media to the threatening cues are crucial. When they frame the events in ways that support fear, hatred and generalized delegitimization, then the peace process has very little chance to evolve. But when, in contrast, the leaders and media on both sides explicitly condemn the acts and their perpetrators, when they minimize their importance, reassure the public and repeat their commitment to peace goals, then the chances are high that the peace process will survive and gain momentum.

I would like to suggest that the described conditions are essential for starting new kinds of intergroup relations on the way to peaceful conflict resolution. Coexistence does not just involve the acts implied by the described requirements. Acts such

as agreements on ceasefires, the beginning of negotiation, and eventually conflict resolution are important parts of coexistence. But, as noted, the core of coexistence refers to *a state of mind shared by the members of the society*. In this sense, coexistence is primarily a formative process of the psychological repertoire of society members. The accompanying acts of cooperation, integration, or exchanges are direct behavioral products of coexistence. Individual acts that occur in response to formal agreements, orders or decisions, without psychological changes in society members, do not indicate a state of coexistence.

The present conceptual and practical proposal thus focuses on societal change. Such change rarely takes place only due to the mere existence of the peace process, which includes the cessation of violence and negotiation. These conditions are necessary, but not sufficient. Of great importance are well-planned and executed steps aimed to change the psychological repertoire of the societies involved in the peace process. These steps should be of wide scope and an extensive nature and thus affect many society members. I will note few such possible steps.

First of all, a change in the psychological repertoires of society members depends on the intentions, determination, activism and strength of those who support the peace process, including leaders, political parties, NGOs, and individual society members. After years of mistrust, hatred and hostility, both parties must exhibit much good will in order to change these feelings. There is need for well-publicized conciliatory acts, including verbal statements and symbolic acts, both formal and informal, by both parties that will set the tone for reciprocity, positive spirals of behavior, and eventually create a new climate of peace. The change requires the involvement of individuals, groups and organizations in persuading hesitant and opposing group members of the importance of peaceful resolution of conflict through negotiation (Maoz, 2004).

The moves of peace supporters are often met with opposition within their own society in the form of pressure, public mobilization and sometimes even smear campaigns and/or violence- all aimed at obstructing the peace process. Thus there is need to overcome these obstacles and show great resolve and devotion to the peace process. Peace supporters must signal to society members that they are determined to advance the peace process successfully despite the opposition.

Second, the successful process of establishing a climate of coexistence in a society depends on the mobilization of societal institutions to propagate the new messages of the peace process. The mass media and educational system play an important role in this mission.

The mass media can be a very powerful tool for promoting a peace process (Barnes, 1997; Bruck & Roach, 1993; Calleja, 1994; Chadha, 1995; Elhance & Ahmar, 1995; Kopstein, 1997; Kriesberg, 1998; Norval, 1998). Potentially they can act without much planning and preparation and reach all segments of a society. They can transmit information about the new peaceful goals, the rival group, one's own group, about the developing relations, and so on. However, first and foremost, the media serve as channels to communicate leaders' messages about the peace process. The media in itself constructs public reality by framing the news and commentaries. Its support for the peace process is crucial. In democratic states, however, the media cannot be mobilized simply by decrees and orders; instead, they too must be persuaded of the importance of peace.

Another important institution that serves as a societal channel of information is the educational system. Education constitutes one of the most important methods for promoting change in the societal psychological repertoire (Asmal, Asmal, & Roberts, 1997; Calleja, 1994; Chadha, 1995; Chetkow-Yanoov, 1986; Gordon, 1994; Kriesberg, 1998; Maoz, 2002). This mostly involves using the school system for peace education, since this system is often the only institution the society can make formal, intentional, and extensive use of to change the psychological repertoire of society members. Peace education aims at constructing students' worldviews (i.e., their values, beliefs, attitudes, motivations, skills and patterns of behavior) in a way that reflects the reality of the peace process and prepares them to live in an era characterized by a peace process (Salomon & Nevo, 2002). In order to achieve this objective, the school system must provide pupils with knowledge that is in line with the principles of the peace process (for example, about the other group, about the course of the conflict, about future peaceful relations, about the nature of peace, about conflict resolution, etc.). In addition, peace education ought to develop new attitudes and skills in pupils (for example, tolerance, self control, sensitivity to others' needs, empathy, critical thinking, openness, etc.). This is a large-scale endeavor that requires setting educational objectives, preparing curricula, specifying school textbook contents, developing instructional material, training teachers, constructing a climate in the schools that is conducive to peace education, and so on (Bjerstedt, 1988, 1993; Burns & Aspeslagh, 1996; Harris, 1988; Hicks, 1988; Reardon, 1988).

In sum, the above-described conditions of coexistence are limited. They serve as good societal foundations for support of the conflict resolution. Coexistence does not include the development of sensitivity to the other group's needs, the establishment of full economic or cultural cooperation, compensation for past sufferings and harm, forgiveness or healing, change of past narratives, and other important elements of harmonious relations (see Ackermann, 1994; Hayner, 1999; Lederach, 1998; Lipschutz, 1998; Staub, 2000; Wilmer, 1998). These elements may begin to evolve within the framework of coexistence, as necessary steps towards reconciliation. Still, coexistence is an important phase after years of violent con-

flict during which Israeli Jews and Palestinians came under the spell of hostility, mistrust, delegitimization, fear, anger and hatred. This is an important phase in the long journey towards reconciliation. It is necessary that Israeli Jews and Palestinians select this road in order to stop the bloodshed and suffering of both nations and move towards the peace and prosperity so needed by both societies.

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