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**Ethnonational Identities in a Protracted Social
Conflict: An analysis of the Israel-Palestine conflict
and of the proposals for its resolution**

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Abstract

This study analyses and discusses the Israel-Palestine conflict from a social and non-material perspective through political and social-psychology theories. To do so, it poses the following research question: *What are the social-psychological factors evident in the ethnonational identities of Israelis and Palestinians that have hindered a resolution to their conflict, and what kind of political solution may help overcome the impasse?* In order to respond to the question, the study first frames the conflict according to Edward Azar's Protracted Social Conflict theory. Secondly, it analyses the political discourse of political and civil society representatives of both ethnonational groups to find social-psychological factors hindering a resolution to the conflict. Thirdly, it discusses the two-state solution and the binational state solution in accordance with two major themes: the Jewish character of the state of Israel and the Right of Return, two key social-psychological factors that feature strongly in the collective memories of the groups.

Introduction

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is usually defined as a land-based conflict, in which both peoples claim the same territory for their national home (Kelman, 1986). Nevertheless, power struggles over resources, diplomatic failures, and regional and international politics all played a part in hindering a resolution to the international conflicts. Negotiation processes outlining a two-state solution focused on material matters such as governance or land partition, and came under criticism for not tackling key issues such as refugees, settlements or Jerusalem. Similarly, in configuring the one-state solution, a proposal mostly outlined by Palestinian and Israeli scholars, most research has been dedicated to its economic, political and territorial viability.

Nevertheless, acclaimed negotiators such as Roger Fischer, William Ury, or Chris Voss have, for a long time, considered that the key to a successful negotiation is the ability to center on the other parties' needs, fears and underlying concerns. Away from discussing material factors showcased in positions rather than interests, they advocate for understanding negotiations not as a zero-sum game, but as a quest to find a solution to the substance. On a similar note, historian and essayist Tzvetan Todorov argues that the memory of the past shall not be used to build an impasse between the us and them, but that instead of focusing on the harm which our group has been inflicted with, we must address what gave rise to such actions and memories as a necessary step towards reconciliation (Todorov, 2012: 448).

Much of what surrounds our fears, and memories lies at the core of our identities and as conflicts evolve, so do the identities of its communities. Zionism emerged in the late 19th century as a response to anti-Semitism and assimilation in Europe with the goal of establishing a home for the Jewish people in Palestine (Jewish Virtual Library, 2021). On the other hand, Palestinian identity strengthened as a national identity as a result of the creation of the state of Israel and in response to the process of Judaizing and de-Arabising the land by Israel (Yiftachel, 2006). It is in those times, when the survival of group identities is at risk, that communities tend to hold on to their identities even more, by developing discourses based on beliefs that refer to the history of the conflict, such as the historic persecution of the Jews or the Right of Return.

My aim is, therefore, to take a more social and non-material perspective in analysing the Israel-Palestine conflict based on Edward Azar's Protracted Social Conflict (PSC) theory and Daniel Bar-Tal's social-psychological factors. First, through Azar's PSC theory, I will explain why hostilities continue to arise and why a resolution to the conflict is difficult. Secondly, I will analyse discourse by political actors to reveal the recurring themes on each side and demonstrate how these are deeply embedded in the very identity of each group. To illustrate the attachment to it, I will present them in accordance with the social-psychological factors which, according to Bar-Tal challenge the resolution of protracted conflicts.

Finally, I will offer preliminary reflections on how the two peoples' identities and cultural claims may be reconciled in a one-state versus a two-state resolution to the conflict.

Objectives and Methodology

At the core of this study lies the interest to deepen my understanding in group identities and the importance they have in an international conflict, as well as in the resolution of it¹. Although the social-psychological approach to conflict analysis and resolution is by no means uncommon, the existing literature on the Israel-Palestine problem tends to take more standard theoretical starting points as will be touched upon in the literature review. While those theoretical paradigms offer valuable ways with which to understand the conflict and propose solutions to it, this study takes a less widely used approach to triangulate theoretical approaches and therefore explore new avenues to understand the conflict. Taking an inter-disciplinary approach to International Relations, I rely on social-psychological theories that have been applied to conflict analysis.

The central research question of this study is as follows: ***What are the social-psychological factors evident in the ethnonational identities of Israelis and Palestinians that have hindered a resolution to their conflict, and what kind of political solution may help overcome the impasse?*** Further questions emerge in an attempt to focus my research on how the attachment to identity claims conditions the resolution of the conflict:

Has the construction of the Israeli-Palestinian identities as a zero-sum game hindered attempts to resolve the conflict?

Are social-psychological factors based on identity symbols specific to the history of each ethnonational identity?

In what conceivable way could the competing claims related to the identity of each group be reconciled?

The study of identities has its origin in sociology which, when first introduced in the field of international relations in the 1980s, brought a social dimension back into the discipline. Constructivism included social concepts that valued the non-material character of politics by introducing the importance of identity and ideas. This approach differed from the predominant vision of realists and liberals who

¹ The recent events in Sheikh Jarrah have resurged the need to frame Israel-Palestine not as a conflict but as a case of settler colonialism. Given the recent shift in discourse, I consider the decolonisation framework to perhaps be a more appropriate framework to use. Please see Bashir & Busbridge (2019) and Busbridge, (2018) for an interesting analysis using this framework.

focused on states, geopolitics, or diplomacy. The approach used in this study is based on interpretivism as it seeks to understand an international conflict through social meaning (Lamont, 2015). More specifically, it relies on theories relating to intractable conflicts, as first theorized by Edward Azar in his writings on protracted social conflicts, and works by Bar-Tal for the social-psychological factors.

The Oslo Accords, which outlined the framework for the two-state solution, were unsuccessful at addressing identity issues and claims. These were central issues which, as later discussed, constituted the main political claims of the two groups. Therefore, as peace proposals mainly focus on governance, economic solutions and the distribution of resources and the exact separation of the land, the aim with this project is to see the extent to which the two proposed solutions could best accommodate social-psychological factors that create division among group identities.

The study first maps the Israeli-Palestinian conflict according to a social-psychological approach. It then goes on to examine Israeli and Palestinian political discourse in accordance with Bar-Tal's social-psychological factors. Finally, it discusses the extent of its fulfilment in the two proposed scenarios: the one-state and the two-state solution. The research is divided into the following three phases:

Phase 1

The first part of the study maps the Israeli-Palestinian conflict onto the Protracted Social Conflict (PSC) theory by Edward Azar, which is presented in the section “Theoretical Framework”. This theory takes an interdisciplinary approach to protracted social conflicts as showcased in Miall, Ramsbotham, and Woodhouse (2005) (see Table 1).

Table 1: Relevant Disciplines in Edward Azar’s Theory of Protracted Social Conflict

<i>Relevant discipline</i>	<i>Preconditions for PSCs</i>	<i>Correlates</i>
Anthropology, history, sociology	Communal content	Degree of ethnic heterogeneity
Psychology, biology, development studies	Needs	Levels of human development
Politics, political economy	Governance	Scales of political repression
International relations, strategic studies	International linkages	Volume of arms imports etc.; cross-border fomentation

Source: Miall, Ramsbotham, and Woodhouse (2005)

Phase 2

The second part of the study analyses the political discourse of each group to better understand their narratives and claims. I conducted a discourse analysis of the narratives and claims of political representatives and politically-oriented civil society organisations to find the common tropes used to justify each group's claims. Discourse analysis is a common method in International Relations that acknowledges how language constructs social processes and enables the researcher to understand how certain discourses arise, become dominant and are used by actors. I considered this method would allow me to identify the social-psychological factors that hinder the resolution of the conflict.

In order to extract the main claims of the Israeli discourse, I analysed UN General Assembly addresses by Benjamin Netanyahu since assuming office in 2009. I also looked at the discourse of the World Zionist Organisation (WZO) which is the umbrella organisation for the Zionist movement. The WZO is both historically and currently relevant. Under the initiative of Theodor Herzl, it established the goals of Zionism and at the present moment it aims to strengthen the Zionist identity among Jews (World Zionist Organization, 2021b). Although there are numerous Israeli organisations focused on peacebuilding, such as B'Tselem or Peace Now, I decided to focus on those with a predominantly nationalist message in favour of the state of Israel as it currently stands.

For the purpose of understanding the discourse of Palestinians I deemed relevant to analyse both Fatah and Hamas discourses given the differences in political support for them in the West Bank and Gaza. On the one side, since the website of Hamas was available in English, I focused on its published mission, statements, and opinion articles. Since the website of Fatah was only available in Arabic, I analysed UN General Assembly addresses by Mahmoud Abbas as he is the current President of the Palestinian National Authority and chairman of both the Palestinian Liberation Organisation and the Fatah party. On the civil society side, I analysed the Boycott Disinvestment and Sanctions Movement (BDS) since it has become an influential movement advocating for the Palestinian struggle since 2005, with growing international support. The BDS campaign calls for the moral responsibility to boycott, divest and sanction Israel's policies of apartheid, inspired by the campaign against South Africa in the apartheid era (Palestinian Civil Society, 2005). Table 2 shows the actors whose discourse was analysed.

I am aware of the limitations of providing an honest representation of both groups' discourses based only on a discourse analysis of the political actors and not including the opinions of citizens pertaining to the groups. I did consider conducting interviews with Palestinians and Israelis living in historic Palestine, however, due to feasibility reasons and the limited duration of this study, I considered this would require resources and conditions outside of my reach. My initial plans also included the triangulation of this phase with a focus group with both the Comunitat Palestina de Catalunya and the Comunitat Israelita de Barcelona, but due to the absence of a response from one of the associations, I

considered the situation to be unfair as I would not have been able to equally interview both communities.

Table 2: Actors for Discourse Analysis

	Political Representative	Civil Society Organisation
Israel	Benjamin Netanyahu	World Zionist Organisation
Palestine	Hamas Fatah: Mahmoud Abbas	Boycott Divestment & Sanctions (BDS) Movement

Phase 3

The third phase of the study discusses the extent to which reconciliation would be possible in the two proposed solutions, the two-state and the one-state, to overcome the social-psychological challenges discussed in the "Theoretical Framework" section.

The discussion around the fulfilment of those factors is based on the content of the general parameters of the two-state solution based on The Declaration of Principles (1993), which established the framework of the negotiations of the Oslo Accords; The Interim Agreement (1995), which outlined the basis for governance in the West Bank and Gaza, and the Clinton Parameters (2000). Since one of the main concerns about the Oslo Accords has been the lack of progress over key issues, I considered relevant to include the Clinton Parameters (2000) which outlined solutions regarding Jerusalem and the Right of Return. Although these parameters never solidified into a single document, contrasted accounts made of notes from negotiators agree on the content of it. Moreover, both Israeli and Palestinian negotiators accepted this outline and they were later used as the basis for the Taba negotiations of 2001.

As later exposed, all peace attempts have been based on the two-state solution, while the binational one-state solution is advocated by scholars and activists but has never been considered seriously within high-level politics. Therefore, the discussion around the reconciliation of both groups under a one state solution is based on the content of the general parameters given in scholarly articles and books by prominent Israeli and Palestinian intellectuals. It should be noted that the scope of this study is to show how the two theoretical solutions may address the psycho-social challenges of the two identity groups, but does not stretch to analysing how each solution may affect land division, governance over resources or administrative issues. While all these factors are essential for the establishment of a long-enduring peace, they fall outside the scope of this study.

Literature Review

This section reviews the main recurring approaches used to analyse the Israel-Palestine conflict. Firstly, it considers the different approaches used, and the need to give more attention to the social-psychological aspect. Secondly, it reviews social-psychological theories as they relate to the conflict. Thirdly, it provides a review of existing literature that has compared the two-state and the one-state solution. Finally, it states the expected contribution to the literature by this study.

Most research attention in studying the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been directed to issues of international law (Bosco, 2016; Boyle, 2003), human rights (Kagee, 2020; Montell, 2016) or security (Chazan, 2020; Hunter, 2004). Nevertheless, a less explored field is that of the non-material vision of politics, focused on the ethnonational character of the conflict. One of the greatest scholars that researched on it was H.C. Kelman (1986; 1997; 1982) who greatly contributed to the literature by studying the role of national identities as a hindrance to the resolution of the conflict. Nevertheless, given his background in psychology, much of his research used a focus group method through workshops with Israeli and Palestinian youth.

There is a vast literature considering the Israel-Palestine conflict as a protracted conflict, although other authors, such as Sharvit (2016), refer to it as 'intractable'. Sharvit (2016) analyses it through a social-psychological approach in accordance with Bar-Tal's theorisation of intractable conflicts, which the author defines as violent, protracted and perceived as irresolvable. Although Bar-Tal has been considered the reference author for intractable conflicts, other authors have also theorised about them. The Protracted Social Conflict theory by Edward Azar has been a less studied theory, with authors such as Miall, Woodhouse and Rambotham (2005) considering it to be underestimated. The authors review Azar's theory and consider he argued for a broader understanding of "security" linking it to "development" and "political access". Nevertheless, as opposed to Bar-Tal, Azar's writings applied the theory to conflicts in Sri Lanka and Cyprus. The authors also compare Azar's theory to other scholars such as Kalevi Holsti, Michael Brown, or John Burton who have contributed to the literature on group identities in conflict (Ibid).

In reviewing the political solutions to the conflict, much of the literature is centred around the unviability and failure of the two-state solution in favour of the one-state solution (Habib, 2016; Klein & Liel, 2019; Nelson, 2019). Other articles also offer proposals for the binational state solution where they argue for its economic and political viability (Ghanem, 2016a; Scheindlin, 2016)

With this research, I aim to contribute to the literature by analysing the conflict from a social non-material view, discussing the two-state and one-state solutions from the perspectives of a social-psychological approach enshrined in the exposed theories. In other words, I aim to explain how psycho-social fears and hopes may be addressed by each of the two theoretical solutions.

Theoretical Framework

This section presents Edward Azar's theory of a *Protracted Social Conflict* (PSC) (Azar, 1978, 1985, 1990; Azar & Farah, 1981), and Bar-Tal's (2007, 2013) three social-psychological factors of an intractable conflict.

Edward Azar defined a PSC as long-term hostile interactions with intermittent outbreaks of open warfare that vary in frequency and intensity. These involve either groups in a single nation state or in different nation states in the same region, where deep-seated racial, ethnic, and religious hatreds can generate or escalate domestic and international hostilities. Thus, Azar focuses on the role of group and national identities and considers that since those are rooted in ethnic hostilities and the subsequent ingroup/outgroup effect, this affects the distribution of power and resources generating hostilities over long periods of time.

Firstly, Azar identifies four preconditions for Protracted Social Conflicts:

Communal Content: Azar suggests group identity as the most important unit of analysis, be it racial, religious, ethnic, cultural, or otherwise. PSC societies, he considers have a multi-communal composition which was formed after the divide-and-rule actions of colonial powers. This caused the state and society to become divided and led to the domination of the state by a single communal group, which as a consequence, is unable to respond to the needs of other groups in society. Azar conveys that in such situations the nation-building process would eventually lead to fragmentation and a protracted social conflict.

Deprivation of human needs: Azar considers the extent that groups can access basic human needs such as security needs, development needs, political access needs, and identity needs (including cultural and religious expression). He conveys how one group of individuals enjoy it in abundance while others do not. The grievance that the deprivation of human needs creates is usually expressed collectively and continues to solidify as authorities fail to address this. Moreover, one should not understand human needs as merely physical but in a broader understanding such as the recognition of communal existence.

Governance and the state's role: Azar claims that the role of the state is critical for the satisfaction or frustration of identity group needs. It is the responsibility of the state to ensure that identity groups under its jurisdiction can fulfil their human needs. Political power is dominated by one identity group, which in a will to ensure its power, resists the participation of minority groups.

International Linkages: Azar points to what extent internal policy and governance are dictated by international linkages which can be either in the form of economic dependency or client relationships. Economic dependency refers to states that are reliant on the international economic system and whose autonomy is weaker due to their policies being dictated by outside influences. Client relationships refer

to the promise of state security in exchange for loyalty and obedience which sacrifice the autonomy and independence of the governance. This may lead to enacting domestic and foreign policies contrary to the needs of groups.

Continuing with this, Bar-Tal (2007, 2013) also devoted his academic writing to understanding the Israel-Palestine conflict as an intractable conflict. He identified three social-psychological elements present in protracted conflicts:

Collective memory: Bar-Tal considers collective memory as societal beliefs about the history of the conflict and topics and issues of special concern that form the narrative of the conflict. This narrative is based on a vision of how the conflict began, its progression and the major events that occurred throughout its history. They are usually employed to justify one side's goals, blame the rival group for the continuation of the conflict, delegitimise them, or emphasise their own position as victims of the conflict.

Ethos of conflict: this is defined as a system of shared societal beliefs that give meaning to the current members' identity and their future. There are eight themes comprising the common beliefs including: (1) the justness of their own goals: provide explanations and a rationale, (2) Security: reinforce the need for personal safety and national survival, (3) Positive collective self-image: positive characteristics, values and behaviour of the ingroup, (4) Ingroup victimisation: presenting the ingroup as the victim of unjust harm by the adversary, (5) Delegitimise the opponents: denying their humanity and excluding them from those worthy of moral treatment, (6) Patriotism: encourage loyalty, love and sacrifice for the ingroup, (7) Unity: refers to the importance of remaining united in the face of the external threat, (8) Peace: refers to peace as the ultimate goal of the society and to society members as peace loving.

Collective emotional orientation: the tendency of a society to express particular emotions, which usually in protracted conflicts are dominated by fear, anger, and hatred. These are emotions related to the topics of collective memory and interact with the ethos of the conflict.

The theorisation by Azar will be used to assess whether the Israel-Palestine conflict can be categorised as a PSC, and if so which characteristics apply. After that, political discourse will be analysed in accordance with the social-psychological factors by Bar-Tal. The results of that analysis will then be used to discuss the two-state and one-state solutions, based on the characteristics of the PSC and the major themes that emerge from the political discourse.

The Israel-Palestine Conflict as a Protracted Social Conflict

This section of the study maps the Israeli-Palestinian conflict within Edward Azar's theory of a Protracted Social Conflict (PSC), following the four established preconditions as described in the theoretical framework previously.

Communal Content

Historic Palestine is claimed by Israelis and Palestinians. According to Azar's definition, a PSC's multi-communal composition derives from the divide-and-rule policies of colonial powers. This can be seen in the recognition of the right of Jews to establish a homeland in Palestine by the British Mandate and later by the United Nations (UN). Important inflection points were the Balfour Declaration in 1917 that promised to set up a national home for Jews in Palestine, and the 1947 Partition Plan proposed by the then Western-dominated UN that also proposed to divide Palestine. Western support for this project may be said to have resulted in the violent events that led to Israel's birth in 1948. After this division, a single state was formed where one communal group dominated over the other. This was initially done through martial laws that Israel applied to those Palestinians that had remained inside the newly founded state (Ghanem, 2016b).

Today, the communal content dimension of a PSC can be seen in the whole territory of historic Palestine, both within the 1948 borders of Israel and within the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT).

Firstly, inside the borders of the state of Israel, according to the 2020 estimation by the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics one finds three main groups: 73.9% Jews, 21.1% Arabs (including Muslims, Druze, and Arab Christians) and 5.0% Others (including non-Arab Christians, members of other religions and unclassified by religion) (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2020). It should be clarified that although Mizrahim Jews consider themselves as Arab Jews, the Israeli census categorises them under the "Jews" group (Tal, 2017). "Arab-Israeli" refers to Palestinians who, after the 1948 war and the establishment of Israel, remained inside its borders and were granted Israeli citizenship. Various articles such as that by Berger (2019) have shown how Palestinians prefer the term "Palestinian in Israel" and consider that "Arab-Israeli" feels disconnected from the Palestinian identity.

Not only are there differences between Israelis and Palestinians but within each ethnonational group, there are also sub-group divisions. Among Israeli citizens, there are Jews of different origins as a result of the so-called "One Million Plan", a project by the state of Israel that used immigration as the key for the solidification of state formation. The Ashkenazim are Jews with an East- West- European, and American origin, who arrived mostly as Holocaust survivors in 1948, and from the former Soviet Union in the early 1990s following the collapse of the USSR. The Mizrahim are Jews with an Arab origin, coming from Middle Eastern countries (mostly Iraq and Yemen), and North African countries in the

1950s-60s. The Sephardi are Jews from a Hispanic or North African origin, although very often they are considered Mizrahim. Moreover, there are Jewish Ethiopians who have migrated to Israel since the 1980s.

Although the Zionist project aimed to unify a common Israeli identity through its Jewishness, to develop a strong nationalist ideology, calling on all Jews to migrate to Israel, different backgrounds have created established differential identities within the Israeli society. Fischer (Fischer, 2016) describes how the exclusion of Mizrahi Jews from the Zionist project by Ashkenazi Jews led them to form a counter collective. This divide remains today and can be seen in the different voting preferences among them.

Diversity also exists among Palestinians. The geographical division in the OPT between the West Bank and Gaza has propelled a political division, between Hamas in Gaza and Fatah in the West Bank, one being politically Islamist and the other secular, respectively (Johannsen et al., 2011). Other identity groups can be found among indigenous Palestinians, as those refugees in neighbouring countries such as Lebanon or Syria, who due to having grown up in different countries after their expulsion in 1948, have developed different socio-political conceptions. Moreover, although Palestinians are mostly Muslim, Christian Palestinians constitute 1% of the population in the West Bank and Gaza (Survey Research Unit, 2020: 3). Nevertheless, religious differences do not suppose a great divide among Palestinians, since at the political level, the struggle against Israeli policies of occupation is shared. For instance, both religions are prohibited from freely travelling to holy sites in Jerusalem; Palestinian Christians to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the Old City of Jerusalem and Palestinian Muslims in both the West Bank or Gaza are denied free access to the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

Deprivation of human needs

Although there are certain inequalities found internally within the Israeli and the Palestinian groups, the biggest gap can be found between the two ethnonational groups. This is evident in the fact that Palestinians who remained in the newly-formed Israel in 1948 and who now have Israeli citizenship feel like second-class citizens, lower on the scale of privileges than Jews (Ghanem, 2016b). Azar argues that the dominant group arising from the divide and rule policy prioritizes the human needs of the majority and restricts the needs of minority groups.

The establishment of a state enables group identities to consolidate their claims and symbols into recognised national symbols and policies. One of the main aims of the Zionist movement consisted in the establishment of a state to fulfil the human needs that Jews had historically been denied. Therefore, the creation of Israel enabled the Jewish community to have a place where they could freely express their identity and religion. This way, those identification symbols gained importance and continue to be recognised, from commemorating the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day to officialising Independence Day as an important day in the calendar.

Various reports denounce the deprivation of basic needs Palestinians living in the OPT suffer. Restrictions on freedom of movement is considered one of the main tools Israel employs to control the Palestinian population in the OPT. Palestinians are restricted from moving between the West Bank and Gaza Strip, into Israel or going abroad. Palestinians are only able to travel within those areas with a special permit. To enter Israel, East Jerusalem, or travel between the West Bank and Gaza, Palestinian residents of the OPT require a special permit, which is issued rarely, and almost never for residents of Gaza following the strict blockade by Israel since 2007. Each of the territories is under exhaustive control: Gaza's sea, air and land entry points are controlled, the West Bank is surrounded by military control and growing check points (B'Tselem, 2019), and East Jerusalem has been de facto annexed into Israeli territory (B'Tselem, 2017).

The blockade of Gaza implies, as stated by UN Special Rapporteur to the OPT, how the most basic socioeconomic rights, such as employment, health care, housing, food, water and sanitation were considered a luxury in scarce supply (Link, 2019). This has resulted in 80% of the population becoming dependent on international assistance, as 95% of Gaza residents have no access to clean water (UNRWA, 2021).

The demolition of Palestinian homes as well as the continuous building and expansion of settlements is another form of threat to Palestinians' human needs. According to Israeli authorities the demolition of Palestinian homes is due to the lack of planning permission, though Palestinians are denied building permits. Moreover, groves of West Bank olive trees, which are both an economic resource for Palestinian farmers as well as a symbol of Palestinian identity are often destroyed by settlers (Dyke, 2018)

By analysing the recent Nation-State Law which passed in Israel on July 19, 2018, one can clearly see the attention of the state of Israel to the human needs of the Jewish population. Israel does not have a constitution but instead a set of Basic Law. While previous Basic Laws established foundational institutions or the powers, the 2018 Nation-State law reaffirms the Jewish identity of the state in a formal constitutional structure (Harel, 2021). In a move to enhance the Jewish character of the state, tThe 2018 Nation-State Law determined among its basic principles, the cultural, religious, and historical right to self-determination of the Jewish People. It also declared Arabic to have a "special status" in the state, downgrading it from being an official language, and thus establishing Hebrew as the sole official language. Moreover, it acknowledged Jerusalem, complete and united, as the capital of Israel and thus denied Palestinian claims to East Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state. It also acknowledged Jewish settlements as a national value and stated the state's intention to encourage and promote their strengthening. In a special part of the law, named "The Connection with the Jewish

People”, it encouraged the preservation of the cultural, historical, and religious heritage of the Jewish People in the state as well as in the diaspora (Knesset, 2018).

Governance and the State’s Role

Palestinians in Israel do qualify as citizens and have the same legal rights as Israelis, and thus can vote in Israeli general elections, but the differentiation between nationality and citizenship results in Palestinians facing institutional discrimination including restricted access to the land, home demolitions or obstacles to family reunification (Human Rights Watch, 2021). In the current 24th Knesset configuration 10 out of 120 seats represent Palestinians in Israel split into two parties, the Joint List (6 seats) and the United Arab List (4 seats) (Knesset, 2021). The rest of the parties comprising the Knesset have a Zionist ideology (Ibid).

In the OPT, the governance over the West Bank and Gaza remains under debate. According to international law and as first acknowledged by the UNSC, in Resolution 242 of 22 November 1967 the West Bank and Gaza Strip qualify as “Occupied Territories” in part III of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 (United Nations Security Council, 1967). This Resolution acknowledges the responsibility of the Occupying Power, the state of Israel, for the management and governance of the OPT which include East Jerusalem and other Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967, namely the West Bank and Gaza.

Different articles point out the legal obligation of the Occupying Power (OP) to respect the rights of Occupied Territories (OT). Article 49, for instance, prohibits the OP from transferring part of their population into the territory it is occupying. Israel has however built settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem since 1967 in a process that continues to the present day. For example, between 2009 and 2020 more than 23,696 housing units were built in the Israeli settlements of Area C (Human Rights Watch, 2021). Article 53 also prohibits the destruction of real or personal property owned by individuals or collectively owned, but Israel has been demolishing Palestinian homes. Article 55 is about the duty of the OP to ensure food and medical supplies to the population and make arrangements to ensure its supplies of basic utilities such as electricity, something that Israel has neglected in Gaza since the blockade.

Nevertheless, according to Israeli authorities the territories are considered to be disputed, although the Israeli Supreme Court did consider them to be under belligerent occupation (Kretzmer, 2012). The conception of the Israeli authorities in regard to the OPT does not enable the basic human needs of Palestinians to be fulfilled, since by not recognising the *de jure* state of the OPT Israeli authorities avoid considering them under their jurisdiction and thus their responsibility. A contradiction exists between the entitlement Israel feels to building and demolishing on the land in the West Bank and East Jerusalem while rejecting the responsibility to properly administer and service the people living in it.

The recent Covid-19 pandemic has shown the positioning of the Israeli government with regard to the governance of the OPT. Israeli authorities insisted that the 1995 Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement of the Oslo Accords transferred the oversight of public health to the Palestinian Authority until a permanent peace agreement could be reached – although it never was reached. UN Human Rights experts called for the obligation of Israel to provide vaccines to Palestinians in accordance with international law and said the Fourth Geneva Convention applies until the occupation has fully ended (Lynk & Mofokeng, 2021).



Figure 1: Illustration of Palestinian Loss of Land

Source: The New York Times (2021)

International Linkages

International alliances have dictated much of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the peace process. Especially relevant is the role of the US, but neighbouring states, or the recent actions of civil society organisations through the BDS movement have affected the development of the conflict as a protracted social conflict as well as its prospects for resolution.

The relations between the US and Israel have been long enduring, and considered to be, by many authors, as complicating a resolution to the conflict. The strong economic dependency and loyalty from Israel

to the US has turned Israel into the largest recipient of US foreign assistance since World War II (Sharp, 2020: 1). The US ensures a vital partner in the Middle East in exchange for loyalty, aid, a security apparatus, as well as legitimacy (Ibid). The US has also been a third party in the various attempts at negotiating peace. However, research shows strong biases and support towards the Israeli side (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2006). The unconditional support by the US, one of the most powerful countries in the world, has given more legitimacy to Israel's demands as opposed to those of Palestinians. Therefore, the unwillingness of Israel, the US Administration or the American Jewish Community to abandon the Israeli mythology and narrative does not contribute to solving the conflict and seeing the two parts as equal on the negotiation table (Slater, 2001). As it will later be exposed, much of the Israeli political discourse is focused on the threat posed by Iran to their state security. Although hostile relations between the two countries date back to the Iranian Revolution, the confrontational relations between the US and Iran and therefore the alliance between the US and Israel also dictate Israel's foreign policy to diminish Iran's influence in the region.

It is therefore apparent, that the current communal composition of historic Palestine, and the subsequent implications in terms of deprivation of basic needs, state governance and international linkages allows us to qualify the Israel-Palestine conflict as a PSC. The situation presented creates, in accordance with Azar, grievances and frustration that are expressed collectively. The longer the situation goes on, the more these feelings of frustration among identity groups solidify and hinder the reconciliation between both groups.

Political Discourse

Palestinians

The Palestinian discourse is greatly based on international law and human rights, as well as official institutions and organisations as a supporting argument for Palestinian rights. President Mahmoud Abbas usually begins his addresses by expressing appreciation for UN organs and agencies, such as UNRWA for assisting Palestinian refugees (Abbas, 2009, 2010). Furthermore, he often acknowledges the implication of the Human Rights Council in assisting people in the Gaza Strip (Abbas, 2010: 30), and emphasises different proponents of peace initiatives such as the Arab Peace Initiative or the Obama Discourse in Cairo in an attempt to contribute to the end of the conflict. By stressing his willingness to find a resolution he remarks, as theorised by Bar-Tal, peace as the end goal of society.

The use of internationally acknowledged UNSC resolutions such as Resolution 194 (III) of 1948 becomes a way to defend key issues and frame them as undisputed. In his most recent intervention Abbas asked for a peace process “to settle final status issues notably the refugee question in line with Resolution 194” (Abbas, 2020: 17). Hamas too, in a recent opinion article which reviewed the position of Hamas in the Cairo dialogue with the Fatah movement and the rest of the Palestinian factions and national figures, claimed that “the Palestinian diaspora is an integral part who paid the price of their displacement from their land for decades” (Haniyeh, 2021).

On the civil society side, the BDS movement has three key demands, framed in international law and human rights. These include the end of the occupation of all Arab lands, the recognition of Arab-Palestinians' demands, who are “subjected to a system of racial discrimination” and the promotion of the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes referring to the UN Resolution 194 (BDS Movement, 2021). This also becomes apparent in the BDS logo which has Handala, a character from Naji al-Ali's cartoons. According to the cartoonist, Handala represents his age when forced to leave Palestine. Al-Ali argued that Handala would only grow up and reveal his face when Palestinians could return to their homeland and claimed that Handala was turning his back as a rejection of outside solutions, referring to the US's role in the conflict (see Figure 1). The Right of Return is therefore a common element among all actors studied for this analysis, it constitutes a factor of their collective memory that keeps Palestinians in the OPT and in the diaspora unified.

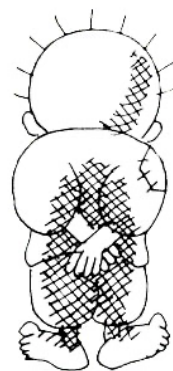


Figure 2

Source: Handala.org

Furthermore, much Palestinian discourse highlights the occupation of Palestinian territory especially since 1967 and the continuous settlement activities, as well as the restriction of movement and deprivation of human needs. To illustrate this, Jerusalem becomes apparent in all discourses, for its occupied state as a capital city, but also by denouncing the annexation of East Jerusalem by Israel.

Many times, Jerusalem, is indirectly included in the discourse as already part of Palestine. Abbas refers to how Israel “continues to besiege the Holy City with a ring of settlements and separation wall imposed to separate the Holy City from the rest of the cities of Palestine” (Abbas, 2010: 27), while other times East Jerusalem is referred to as the capital of a future state of Palestine, by stating “... independent sovereign State based on the borders of 4 June 1967, with east Jerusalem as its capital” (Abbas, 2010: 31). Many times, when the discourse refers to annexation, it is followed by a number of consequences which constitute an attack on Palestinian identity, as Abbas would say how the settlement campaign in Jerusalem “...chokes the City and prevents millions of Palestinians from freely accessing its mosques, churches, schools, hospitals and markets” (Abbas, 2012: 31). When referring to the settlements, Palestinians see it as an attack on their identity and territory, and consider it as a campaign of ethnic cleansing “aimed at altering the city’s historic character and the glorious image of the Holy City as etched in the minds of humankind” (Abbas, 2012: 31).

The BDS movement has repeatedly called for boycotts of attempts by the Israeli government to hold events in Jerusalem. Some examples can be found with campaigns such as #BoycottEurovision2019 which was initially proposed to take place in Jerusalem, or the campaign against the relocation of the US Embassy coinciding with the 70th Anniversary of the Nakba and the establishment of the state of Israel (PACBI, 2018). The BDS movement actually goes a step further and claims that “Israel maintains a regime of settler colonialism, apartheid and occupation over the Palestinians” (BDS Movement, 2021).

The prohibition of access to mosques or churches in Jerusalem, and especially the Al-Aqsa mosque is mentioned throughout the Palestinian discourse to exemplify, as theorised by Bar-Tal, the unjust harm suffered. The Dome of the Rock is the most present in Hamas's claims as they frame their discourse through religious symbolism. For instance, on their website, they highlight their struggle as “liberating the Palestinian land, Jerusalem, and Islamic and Christian holy places...”, and call for international action against “Israeli violations against Muslim sacred sites in Palestine” (Hamas, 2021). The Dome of The Rock from the Al-Aqsa mosque also becomes central in their logo, custodied by two crossing swords, and gives name to the Hamas-run official television channel, Al-Aqsa TV (Al-Aqsa TV, 2021).

Although this is mostly seen as a religious symbol, not only due to its significance for Islam but also for Jews on the Western Wall, the compound has become present in the political discourse. In his most recent United Nations General Assembly address, President Mahmoud Abbas talked about the injustice of President Trump's so-called "Deal of the Century", which included the occupation of East Jerusalem, the Al-Aqsa mosque, and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Moreover, the attempts of the state of Israel to undertake excavations under the Al-Aqsa mosque appear in his yearly addresses and are considered as “an attempt to isolate [the mosque] from its natural Palestinian Arab surroundings” (Abbas, 2010: 30), and as a continuation of the occupation.

Furthermore, to the BDS movement, which identifies as a secular movement, the Al-Aqsa mosque becomes a symbol to exemplify the policies of ethnic cleansing through settlements as they expose how churches and mosques have been destroyed by Israel in “a policy of gradually colonizing the land and replacing its indigenous Christian and Muslim Palestinian population with illegal Jewish settlers” (Palestinian BDS National Committee, 2015). Moreover, since the movement usually frames its discourse in the language of international law and human rights, on significant holy dates for Muslims and Christians it becomes a central topic to showcase how Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza are denied entrance to Jerusalem, and thus to the holy sites.

Israelis

The first thing one notices when analysing both PM Benjamin Netanyahu as well as the World Zionist Organization’s (WZO) discourses are the frequent references to the Jewish character of the state of Israel. Many times, through his addresses, Netanyahu refers to Israel as the “Jewish State of Israel”, or simply “the Jewish State” by saying “Last year... I laid out my vision for peace, in which a demilitarised Palestinian State recognises the Jewish State.” (Netanyahu, 2011: 39). In a similar way, he presents himself as “...the Prime Minister of the Jewish State” (Ibid). In both cases “the State of Israel” and “the Jewish State” are used interchangeably.

The proponents of Zionism advocated for the establishment of a national state for the Jewish People in Palestine, and this becomes apparent in discourses by Netanyahu. Although as previously exposed there is great diversity among Jews, his discourse, as well as that of the WZO, focus on what unites them as Jews, reinforcing the unity as a basic societal belief for the present and future of the state. Comparing it to President Mahmoud Abbas's addresses as well as Hamas's and the BDS Movement's, one can see different strategies and targets of their message. For instance Hamas's discourse is addressed to a more religious-driven audience, while the BDS Movement speaks to a global audience. This differs from the approaches used by Netanyahu and the WZO. While they both have some nuances in their discourses, they mainly cover the same topics and are directed to the Jewish community as a whole. In fact, the WZO is made of many bodies that group together the diversity amongst Israelis.

A common trait present in the political discourse of Israel both through Netanyahu’s addresses, as well as that of the WZO is the antisemitism Jews suffered especially in Europe, which is mentioned on various occasions across their discourses to strengthen the *raison d’être* of the state of Israel. The references to the historic persecution reinforce many of Bar-Tal’s societal beliefs, namely the justness of their goals, the ingroup victimisation, as well as the patriotism. This can be seen in continuous references made by Netanyahu in UNGA addresses with recount stories of antisemitic attacks on relatives and the continued struggles lived by Jews (Netanyahu, 2013: 35). The WZO also works towards denouncing and monitoring antisemitic activities (World Zionist Organization, 2021a).

Furthermore, various events, conferences and programs, are carried out by the organisation remembering the persecution of the Jewish community.

Interestingly, the historic persecution of the Jewish people is also alluded to to highlight the threat from Iran and other security concerns such as terrorism and the condition of a future demilitarised state of Palestine. In doing so, they use past antisemitism to justify the need for security, which in accordance with Bar-Tal's theory, reinforces their demands for national survival. For example, in 2015 Netanyahu said:

Last month, Khamenei once again made his genocidal intentions clear. ... He pledged that "there will be no Israel in 25 years". Seventy years after the murder of 6 million Jews, Iran's rulers promise to destroy my country, murder my people... (Netanyahu, 2015: 28)

In an attempt to equate the state of Israel to other advanced democracies, Netanyahu compares Israel to other countries to showcase how "the world is embracing Israel, and Israel is embracing the world" (Netanyahu, 2017: 27). He would, for instance, mention the many visits abroad that he has completed in the role of Prime Minister, or would thank those Presidents who also had official visits to Israel. This is also done when referring to Jerusalem. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's addresses equate the status of Jerusalem to that of Washington DC by saying: "I often hear them accusing Israel of Judaising Jerusalem, that is like accusing America of Americanising Washington DC..." (Netanyahu, 2011: 40). Elsewhere, he alludes to how the capital of Israel is Jerusalem while that of the OPT is Ramallah when he says: "President Abbas and I have met in Jerusalem only once, even though my door has always been open to him", and that "If he wishes, I will come to Ramallah" (Netanyahu, 2011: 40). This strategy can be seen through a visual stunt during his most recent speech to the UNGA, where a picture of Jerusalem was shown as the background while he made his address. The WZO also organises various events such as the "Jerusalem Day Tour" to "commemorate the reunification of Jerusalem and development of Israel's capital since the Six Day War" (World Zionist Organization, 2020)

In analysing the political discourses of Israelis and Palestinians one can notice the extent to which their arguments are built in opposition to each other, reinforcing the us-versus-them conception that nationalist ideologies use to define what they are not and painting the struggle between them as a zero sum game.

Major themes across their political discourses are related to social-psychological factors outlined by Bar-Tal, but special emphasis is made in relation to their collective memories. The Right of Return and the Jewish character of the state are the bases on which shared Bar-Tal's societal beliefs are built and developed to justify their goals, blame the rival group for the continuation of the conflict, or perceive themselves as the victims of the conflict. The Nakba, for instance is recurrent throughout the Palestinian discourse to blame the Israeli authorities for the diaspora and the refugees. The BDS movement also

refers to policies of apartheid or the responsibility of Israelis for the Palestinian diaspora to justify the boycott, divestment and sanctions actions against the state of Israel (BDS Movement, 2021). The Israeli discourse also draws on history to form a narrative of the conflict. The historical persecution suffered by the Jewish community is widely used as a key argument for the demilitarisation of a future Palestinian state as well as other security concerns such as terrorism or its foreign policy in relation to Iran.

Both discourses seem very protective of their symbols and identities, especially those that relate to the land such as settlements, or border delimitations. Israelis and Palestinians present themselves as the victims of an unjust harm, but while the Israelis mention external threats in their defence, such as terrorism and Iran, Palestinians denounce their lack of security and human needs with reference to settlements, or limits on cultural and religious expression. The Palestinian discourse does refer to Christians and Muslims, when for instance talking about the holy sites in Jerusalem, but appeal to the values of unity in fighting against the Israeli occupation.

Furthermore, any claim mentioned by both groups seems to have a counter-version by the other. It becomes apparent how much of their discourse aims at protecting their collective identity and self-image, and what the other does is framed as an attack on the whole community and on the specific basic needs of their group, thus enhancing the vision of any solution as one in which one side's gains are the other side's loss. Is it the Al-Aqsa mosque or Temple Mount? Jerusalem as a united capital of Israel or East Jerusalem as the capital of future Palestine? The Nakba or Israel's War of Independence?

One-State or Two-State?

Peace among Israelis and Palestinians has been attempted on various occasions and based on different proposals. In this section, I discuss how important themes outlined in the previous phase of this study would be framed in two broadly proposed solutions, the two-state solution, and the binational state solution.

The two-state solution, enshrined in the Oslo peace process over two decades ago, has been, and continues to be the preferred solution by the international community. In 2000 the “Quartet”, comprised of the United States, the European Union, Russia, and the United Nations, was created to shepherd the peace process forward and became the *de facto* voice of the international community, though dominated by the US (Elgindy, 2012). Despite repeated failures at concluding the Oslo process and thereby setting up a sovereign Palestinian state alongside the existing Israeli state, the general contours of the two state solution lived on in the Camp David II negotiations under Bill Clinton, in the Roadmap under George W. Bush, and in the more recent Trump Peace Plan. Nevertheless, it has been deemed dead and outdated by many. Although it was the first time that Israel recognised the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) as an equal party, the agreement became widely criticized among scholars. The inability to deal with major issues, the continuation of settlements after the signing of agreement, or the lack of leadership by Palestinian negotiators are the usual arguments one can find in the literature about the peace process.

In light of this, the one-state solution, which was put aside in the shadow of Oslo, has re-emerged among Palestinian and Israeli scholars such as Leila Farsakh (2016) and Ilan Pappé (2014). Although it lacks major international support a recent hint by former Prime Minister of Jordan, Omar Razzaz, indicated that this solution could be back on the table (Staff, 2020). Interestingly, the one-state solution has been applauded by activists defending the Palestinian struggle, although its genesis, according to Farsakh (2016) is to be found in the first Zionist proposals by participants of Brit Shalom in Ihud, as well as Martin Buber, Judah Magnes and Hannah Arendt. A one-state solution could come in the form of a binational state, following the Belgian or Swiss models, federated or confederated, so as to fulfill the cultural and political needs of both groups (Farsakh, 2011: 64).

The Jewish character of the state is the basis with which to understand any claim made by the Israeli Zionist movement. Its discourse includes continuous references to historical events entrenched in the collective memory, such as the Holocaust, or Jews' expulsion from Spain, Ukraine and other countries. It is therefore apparent that such an important element of the Israeli collective identity must be satisfied in a future solution. In a two-state scenario, there would be a Jewish majority in Israel and a Palestinian majority in Palestine, living in two separate territories, presumably with each of the states having clear majority-minority communities. This proposal addresses the communal content of Azar's theory, as it

would fulfil the claim of Zionism to establish a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine in which all formal and collective memory aspects related to the establishment of a state such as national days, culture, or educational curriculum would be in accordance with the identity of the majority group.

Although this stance could avoid, at first glance, constant violence and confrontation, each of the groups may continue to construct their identities in opposition to each other, in which societal beliefs of the group ethos outlined by Bar-Tal would continue to perpetuate. The realisation of homogenising the two states would feed their ingroup positive image versus the delegitimisation of the opponents and fostering patriotism and a sense of unity against the other state. This opposition would also become apparent in their international linkages. As previously shown, international linkages, especially with Arab neighbouring countries as well as the US are dictated by pertinence to group identities. The previous conception of the conflict as Israeli-Arab, could further client relationships and economic dependency having marked allies that would further intensify the opposition. While it becomes apparent that each state would have marked identities, the reconciliation towards the other may be overridden by a bigger nationalist sentiment.

The binational state presents a situation in which both Israelis and Palestinians could coexist under the same territories, while equal rights would be granted, and the two group identities would coexist. However, this would imply the dismissal of the basic character of Zionism as Jewish citizens would have to give up the idea of the Jewish nature of the whole state. It is difficult to imagine how a community that has established a state with privileges for itself could be willing to cede part of it and lose the benefits it has. At the same time, for Palestinians it would also mean the acceptance of a group that has long been delegitimising them and denying them their rights.. The coexistence of both groups, even in a binational state where the two groups could express their ethnonational identities would imply the construction of one common identity uniting both of them, and thus the reconciliation of their collective memories. Short term, this idea presents challenges and could derail attempts at such an intertwined coexistence of the two groups. Nevertheless, although shared spaces and coexistence could be difficult in the short term, the prospects for long-term stability in this scenario would be higher since it would address many of the issues that plague a PSC. In a binational state each group's needs and governance would come under different authorities, with matters of economy or defence shared (Scheindlin, 2016). Moreover, the international linkages, that currently plague the conflict would presumably be remedied since as a single binational state, outside interference on one side against another would no longer be as simple to do given the shared coordination in defence matters.

The Right of Return has become a shared concern among Palestinians, not only for those living in the territories but also for those living abroad. The Clinton Parameters, in this regard, considered that the Palestinian State would be “the focal point for Palestinians who choose to return, without ruling out that

Israel will accept some of the refugees (Clinton, 2000). Establishing the state of Palestine as the main focus for the return of refugees poses questions such as whether Palestinians would want to go back to what had been their home before being expelled, which would most likely be inside what would now be considered Israel. Not having the possibility of return to their homeland but only to designated areas such as those outlined in the Clinton Parameters would increase their feeling of injustice and ingroup victimisation recognised by Bar-Tal.

This factor becomes even harder if we consider the option of a one-state. While equal rights would be granted among its citizens, be they Jewish or Palestinian, the number of Palestinians who would qualify to have a Palestinian citizenship would create a Palestinian majority in the land and would therefore probably be restricted. In fact, this remains one of the concerns of acknowledging the right of return of Palestinians since Israel does not consider it legitimate. Israeli authorities have also rejected the Right of Return in a two-state solution for fears of a demographic shift. Kelman (1978) explains that the right of return could suppose a demographic change in the territories, reversing the objectives of the One Million Plan, which was meant to attract Jews to Israel.

The Right of Return is a big social-psychological factor in the collective memory of Palestinians and therefore its reconciliation seems decisive for the resolution of the conflict. The recognition of Israel's responsibility to the Palestinian diaspora will certainly constitute a key factor for the reconciliation of both groups. The inability to acknowledge this could greatly contribute to amplifying the societal beliefs that feed the conflict, especially ingroup victimisation and delegitimization of the opponent as each group would continue to hold onto their own discourses.

Theoretically, the feeling of victimhood present in both discourses could be a starting point in forming a new common identity towards a binational state, since both groups share experiences of victimisation. Nevertheless, the fact that Palestinians consider the state of Israel as their major enemy enhances their sense of unity and patriotism. On the other side, the sense of victimhood from Israelis comes from being victims, in the past, of other groups, which justifies their need for personal safety and national survival. This situation complicates the sense of reconciliation through a common identity coming from a persecution.

Conclusion

The Israeli and Palestinian identities are discursively constructed in opposition to each other. Their political discourse, collective memory and societal beliefs in relation to the conflict dominate their identities, enhancing the sense of ingroup unity and delegitimising the other. The resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict will have to accommodate material and practical elements of their coexistence, however without reconciliation between their group identities, the resolution of it will only perpetuate opposing sentiments.

The framing of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a Protracted Social Conflict enables one to better understand the social and non-material implications and characteristics of the conflict. The power dynamics between Israelis and Palestinians in Israel, as well as between Israelis and Palestinians in historic Palestine continues to construct a sense of victimhood and animosity towards the other. The focus on governance and deprivation of human needs showcases the importance of power distribution to best accommodate the respective identities and cultures.

As exemplified by their political discourses, both groups feel the continuity of their identity threatened by the other. Israelis prioritise the Jewish character of the state above all and Palestinians feel the right of return as essential to the future of the group identity. The challenges posed by collective memories in these two aspects are the biggest factors hindering a solution to the conflict, which inevitably clash. Any political solution would have to carefully consider the contrasting identities and possibly work towards the reconciliation of their collective memories as a key to a long-standing peace. There can be no reconciliation if societal beliefs are not only different but also built in opposition to each other. It is certain that there are many short-term challenges for the creation of a binational state. However, long-term, the establishment of two states runs the risk of never fully addressing reconciliation.

The idea of analysing group identities without being able to discuss it with members of the groups, such as through focus group sessions, has limited how I have approached this analysis. Nevertheless, I have intended to provide the most honest representation of each group's political discourse, according to important political actors on each side. At the end of the day, my intention has never been to state what the right solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is, but rather to explore how their identities and social-psychological factors relate to the conflict and discuss how these could be best reconciled in the two proposed solutions. In fact, I believe this study would greatly benefit from a complementary phase based on field work where the ideas of collective memory, ethos of the conflict, and emotional orientation are discussed with focus groups from the respective communities.

Throughout the course of this study, I have comprehended different ways to understand conflict, ultimately wanting to explore new perspectives in conflict resolution and sociological topics. Given the recent report of Human Rights Watch where Israel's policies are amounted to crimes of apartheid and

persecution, further research could be conducted to explore how reconciliation processes and lessons learnt from South Africa could possibly apply to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

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