

The necessity of observing real life situations: Palestinian-Israeli violence as a laboratory for learning about social behaviour

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Abstract

Social psychology emerged in the early part of the last century as a distinct discipline that focused on the study of social behaviour of individuals and collectives. Over time, however, social psychology has relatively ignored the 'social' part of the equation and has become mainly concerned with individual behaviour. The major part of social psychological research was carried out in the artificial context of the experimental laboratory. Studying social behaviour in real life contexts is essential, not only to return social psychology to its roots, but also to ensure that our contributions are both theoretically rich and socially valuable. Observation of real life situations is essential if we want to advance our understanding of how individuals and collectives behave. To illustrate the importance of a contextually rich social psychology and the usefulness of natural observations, the recent violent confrontation between the Israelis and the Palestinians is described and analysed, focusing on social behaviours of Israeli Jews. In conclusion, it is argued that social psychology should strive towards equilibrium between natural and experimental approaches, between personal and contextual emphases and between micro and macro perspectives. Copyright © 2004 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY: PROMISE AND DISILLUSION

Social psychology will soon celebrate its centenary. In 1908 the first two textbooks in the field were published: One by the psychologist William McDougall and one by the sociologist E. A. Ross (McDougall, 1908; Ross, 1908). This beginning implied that the new discipline of social psychology was established to combine and integrate psychological and sociological conceptual frameworks and methodologies from both psychology and sociology. The objective of the new discipline was to understand human social behaviour in the context of groups and societies.

This new branch of psychology constituted a promising development. Many believed that it would bring a fresh psychological perspective to the social sciences, on the one hand, while opening

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psychology up to a new range of problems faced by human beings in so far as they are members of collectives, on the other hand. The promise of the new discipline was not only in the development of new knowledge, but also in its variegation and multiformity. Indeed, social psychology in its first decades employed a variety of research methods and studied a wide scope of problems (see Cartwright, 1979; Jackson, 1988). Thrasher (1927), for example, observed a group of boys who tried to create a society for themselves, Shaw (1930) investigated the effect of environment on the emergence of delinquent behaviour, and Mayo (1933) and Roethlisberger (1941) studied small group behaviour of workers.

Already in the twenties, however, suggestions were being made that the emerging social psychology should be limited to individual orientations, leaving aside the study of collective behaviours. Such calls for a more narrow focus reflected the behaviourist revolution that was overtaking American psychology and the efforts to emulate the physical sciences through the use of experimental research methods (Farr, 1996). Floyd Allport, one of the leaders of this trend, suggested that: 'All theories which partake of the group fallacy have the unfortunate consequence of diverting attention from the true locus of cause and effect, namely, the behaviour mechanism of the individual' (1924, p. 9). As a consequence, social psychology began to shed its concern with actual social contexts and was being drawn to laboratory settings where individual psychological mechanisms could be tested.

Nevertheless, many social psychologists still formulated their research questions from an interest in various societal issues (see as example the list of readings for social psychology by Maccoby, Newcomb, & Hartley, 1958). For instance, Hadley Cantril (1941), a productive social psychologist, studied a wide range of social phenomena from the mob gathered to perform a lynching, through the Townsend movement, to the rise of Nazism. And Newcomb (1943), another leading social psychologist, studied the influence of the college setting on the beliefs and attitudes of students. Moreover, it is important to note that the founding fathers of modern social psychology, Kurt Lewin, Salomon Asch and Muzaref Sherif viewed the study of human social behaviour, including that of collectives in their social context, as an essential part of social psychology.

But social psychology's regression to an individualistic-experimentalistic orientation did not stop and already in the early fifties Newcomb noted that.

Most social psychologists of primarily psychological persuasion take no systematic account of the facts of the social environment in which human organisms live. More specifically, they minimize or even ignore the nature of the social structure of which their subjects are members. (1951, p. 32).

The 1960s, 70s and 80s witnessed an increase in the individualistic orientation of social psychology. Major contributions, by Henry Tajfel about social identity and Serge Moscovici about social representation and minority influence, which were published during these years, did not substantially affect the development at that time. In fact, the USA model of social psychology was adopted by many European social psychologists (Farr, 1996).

Only in the 1990s issues concerning collectives, mainly regarding social identity or shared stereotypes, began to receive growing attention. Nevertheless, experimentation remained the main method of research in social psychology, even in the study of intergroup relations. The prevailing stress on experimentation was aimed to make social psychology a scientifically respectable discipline, to find immediate causes to effects and accumulate enough facts in order to construct general theoretical models (Aronson, Wilson, & Brewer, 1998; Gergen, 1992).

This has had a number of consequences (see also Cartwright, 1979; Elms, 1975; Sears, 1986), especially in view of the ethical considerations that greatly constrained experimentation. First, it resulted in the artificiality of studied social phenomena. The manipulated context in an experiment is

very different from the real life situations in which human beings operate and often imposes a reality that its participants do not normally encounter. In addition, this type of a context is simplistic, as it introduces very few of the variables that influence human behaviour in reality at any given point in time. Real life situations are usually complex, including many variables that may influence individuals' behaviour. The reductionism of the laboratory environment is often irrelevant and lacking interest to participants. Real life situations, in contrast, are likely to be challenging, full of dilemmas and stimulations, prompting strong emotions. They take place in various social situations, with other people of different backgrounds and so on.

Second, the over-reliance on experimental methods narrowed the range and scope of the investigated issues, because there is a limitation to the manipulation that can be done in the laboratory. The laboratory cannot recreate real life situations—neither in terms of the seriousness and extreme nature of the problems that individuals face, nor in their relevancy, nor again, in their complexity. It is especially hard to recreate, under laboratory conditions, collective situations and therefore they are often either omitted from investigation or examined in an artificial way. Finally, experiments done in a laboratory cannot study evolvement, continuity or change of social phenomena over time.

Third, the emphasis on experimentation directed social psychologists to pay more attention to the operationalization of their variables than to the research problems studied. Often manipulations appeared as if they were the most important part of the research, instead of reflections on interesting and challenging problems and conceptual development. Years ago Aronson and Carlsmith (1968), in their influential chapter about experimentation, encouraged this trend by writing: 'where the ideas come from is not terribly important...the important and difficult feat involves translating a conceptual notion into a tight, workable, credible, meaningful set of experimental operations' (p. 37). Social psychologists honed the art of manipulation, relatively neglecting development theories and conceptual frameworks, especially with regard to real life collective phenomena.

The above stated observations do not intend to imply that laboratory studies should be abandoned. It is their absolute, dominant status in the mainstream of social psychology that I bring up for criticism. The experimental laboratory method should be one of several research methods used by social psychologists. Certain research questions require its use, for example, in the investigation of the causal relations underlying certain, observed real life situations. Also, experimental methodology may focus on particular, fine-grained processes whose investigation needs full control, or it may be used in studying implicit or unobservable processes and structures.

This criticism is not new: the 1970s and early 1980s saw a wave of dissatisfaction with the way social psychology was developing (see for example, Elms, 1975; Gadlin & Ingle, 1975; Helmreich, 1975; McGuire, 1973). Nevertheless, mainstream social psychology did not open itself dramatically to new ways of looking at social behaviours (see for example, Higgins, 1992; Kelley, 2000; Kruglanski, 2001; Wallach & Wallach, 2001). Although there is currently more openness to various scientific methods and to a wider scope of research problems than a decade ago, still the experimental approach relatively ignores problems of contemporary life.

Outside the experimental laboratories at the universities and colleges, life has been going on: nations have been fighting their wars, interethnic conflicts have erupted and some have even been resolved, societies have tried to reconcile their bloody past, groups have demonstrated over various issues, people have become unemployed, societies have transformed their political-economic systems, violent acts terrorizing whole nations have been committed, gaps between the poor and the rich have widened, new super-identities have been formed, and globalization has evolved as an organizing principle of economic and social human life. These situations and events have shaped people's social behaviour. And as such they included numerous variables and processes that should be important and of interest to social psychology. Readers of mainstream journals in social psychology such as the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *Journal of Experimental*

Social Psychology or the *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* will find very few articles that study social behaviour in these social contexts.

Moscovici (1972) pointed out that 'for reasons which are partly cultural and partly methodological, the systematic perspective in social psychology has not been truly concerned either with social behaviour as a product of society or with behaviour in society' (p. 55). This observation is still valid today. Social psychologists who are interested in the social psychological aspects of real life problems have to go to other fields and disciplines in order to publish or even to make an academic career. It is even difficult to publish observations of real life events and report them as data, in spite of the fact that they may provide rich insights about human social behaviour.

The severe consequences of this narrow perspective should be evident. Observation of the world is essential to the study of human social behaviour. It offers a view of human beings in action in a particular context, and often throws a light on their motivation, beliefs, attitudes, and intentions. Tajfel pointed out that the

...task of social psychology is the study of social situations in which the long-lasting or temporary identifications with some groups, and differentiations from others, bring about a large variety of forms of collective behaviour which can range from a carnival organized by an ethnic minority to deep rumblings capable of shaking up the a whole social system (1984, p. 712).

Tajfel's perspective, in addition to emphasizing context, points to the importance of studying collectives: social psychologists have the unique mission to study not only individuals or individuals in the group context, but also the behaviour of groups, societies, or nations. Tajfel rightly noted that individuals do not only often feel and think as group members, but they also often go through the same experiences as their co-patriots in the groups. They are exposed to the same events, receive the same information, and rely on same epistemic authorities. Moreover, the awareness of this 'togetherness' is a powerful factor in social life. In addition, as society members (members of an ethnic group, or of a nation), they go through similar socialization processes, learning through similar curricula and textbooks and participating in the same ceremonies and rituals. As a result, they share beliefs, attitudes, values, and goals that provide the prism through which they interpret their personal experiences and the information they receive (Bar-Tal, 2000; Fraser & Gaskel, 1990). Thus, in spite of individual differences, groups reveal much uniformity, although they may vary in the extent of this uniformity. Differences range from closed groups that exhibit very uniform behaviour, as for example Chassidic or Amish society, to open groups, like Danish society. But even open societies, when going through powerful collective experiences like wars or famine, will be characterized by greater uniformity. Social psychologists, by observing a particular context, can learn much about human beings, as Tajfel (1972) noted: 'The observed regularities of behaviour will result from the interaction between processes and the social context in which they operate' (p. 74).

Indeed, the investigation of collectives can be done in various ways, including natural observation, even with the participation of the observer. Some important studies testify to this latter possibility. An example is Bettelheim's work (1943), who was imprisoned in Dachau and Buchenwald during 1938–1939. He observed social behaviour in the concentration camp as a prisoner and shed light on coping strategies in an extremely stressful situation, as well as on the conditions which led the camp prisoners to identify with their jailors. Festinger, Riecken, and Schachter's (1956) participant observation of a group of religious fanatics in a situation involving disconfirming information helped to conceptualize dissonance theory. Bronfenbrenner (1961) travelling in the Soviet Union and talking with Russians, observed and reported how 'slowly and painfully, it forced itself upon me that the Russians' distorted picture of us was curiously similar to our view of them- a mirror image' (p. 46). And Billig (1995)

observed the everyday, normal habits that enable the established nations of the West to maintain their national identity and entity.

Even though these studies have thrown much light on the understanding of human behaviour, social psychology has great difficulty accepting natural observation or experience as data. This is the case in spite of the fact that monumental contributions in psychology were based on mere natural observations. Piaget (1952) based his major developmental theory on his observations of the behaviour of his own three children, and Freud derived his grand theory from observing his own and his patients' behaviour and insights. It is thus not surprising that McGuire (1980, 1992) in suggesting dozens of creative ways to collect data, included the observation and analysis of naturally occurring phenomena and Strauss (1987) even writes about collecting experiential data. These proposals do not negate scientific methods of data collection but suggest additional data collection methods.

Human beings participate in particular collective contexts that shape their experience, and which as a result affect their motivations, attitudes and beliefs. Especially influential are either prolonged conditions or powerful but short major events. These conditions cannot be recreated in the laboratory. Real life situations can serve as a macro laboratory, in which, through collecting natural observations, a complete conceptual framework may be construed that allows describing, explaining and even predicting a real life phenomenon. The goal of such studies would be to form a body of systematic and coherent knowledge about the principles of social behaviour in a particular context. Observations of social behaviours in similar contexts may yield generalizations that could lead subsequently to the formulation of a theory.

This type of observation requires knowledge of the background (of the context and of the collective), systematic collection of data from various sources, and social sensitivity to allow understanding of the social processes. There are various ways to conduct observations, like systematically following events, studying survey polls, consistently reviewing mass media information and analyses, talking with people, listening to leaders and so on. In some respect, these observations can be considered as data collection by a participant observer, who, being in a real environment, collects any kind of data, 'qualitative or quantitative, narratives or numbers' (Bernard, 2000, p. 318), on the basis of which she or he then tries to generate scientific knowledge.

The above natural approach to the study of social behaviour of course has its own limitations. It may depend too much on the world view of the researcher, who may bias and distort observations to fit them to his/her preferred or expected outcomes. Also, naturalistic research may have difficulty to establish causal relations between factors involved in the investigated phenomenon. In addition, this approach is unsuitable for investigating subtle or unconscious or implicit processes and may be inappropriate for elucidating the functioning of particular variables.

Without question, both approaches, laboratory and natural, are needed in social psychology. They complement each other and the development of the study of social behaviour is impeded when one of them is ignored, as was rightly envisioned by the founding fathers of social psychology. The next part of this paper will present an example of a study of societal behaviour in a real life situation, based on a natural approach.

The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict as a Laboratory of Social Behaviour

The conflict between Palestinians and Israelis has been a central, frequently reported and analysed conflict. The present observation however refers to a case of limited context and does not attempt a holistic analysis of the conflict. It is assumed that the perspective of a social psychologist provides a unique contribution to the understanding of collective social behaviour (Saxe, 1983) and the present description comes to illustrate how the observation of actual behaviour can be used to inform social psychological theory.

The case refers to the events that have occurred in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during the last two years (July 2000–July 2002). The assumption is that this case teaches us a great deal about social behaviour in the context of violent conflict. Violent conflict has immense influence on human behaviour as it implies a direct threat to the well-being of both individuals and the collective. As a result, individuals and collectives behave in particular ways when they live in such a context, and these social behaviours are of interest to social psychologists. To introduce my observation and analysis let me first present a short background of the conflict.

BACKGROUND

The intractable conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians developed about the territory that the two national movements claimed as their homeland. For more than 80 years, Palestinian nationalism and Zionism, the Jewish national movement, clashed recurrently over the right for self determination, statehood and justice (see Gerner, 1991; Tessler, 1994 for details). The conflict, which started as an inter-communal conflict between Jews and Palestinians living in British-ruled Palestine, became a full-blown interstate war between Israel and the surrounding Arab states in 1948–1949. Since 1967, with the occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip and other territories in the Six Day War, the intractable conflict has been fought at both the interstate and communal levels (Sandler, 1988). For a long time the conflict was perceived as being of zero sum nature, irreconcilable and total (Bar-Tal, 1998). The dispute concerned elementary issues, existential needs of each side, and it was impossible to find a feasible solution for both parties. Israelis' minimum requirements exceeded the Palestinians' maximum concessions and vice versa (see for example, Gerner, 1991; Tessler, 1994).

Only the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt in 1979 brought the first major sign that the intractable conflict with the Palestinians could be resolved peacefully. The Madrid convention in 1991 was another positive step in this direction and in 1993 came the 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 signed Declaration of Principles specified the various stages for the peace process and set the framework for a five-year interim period leading up to Palestinian self rule.

The Declaration of Principles was not only a document of recognition between the PLO and the Jewish state: it suggested how the peace process between the two nations engaged in intractable conflict could be constructed. The basic assumption was that there was a need for a period of trust building to enable the two nations to diminish their animosity and hatred and develop relations of peaceful coexistence. The development of peaceful coexistence would later allow a permanent settlement of the conflict. In other words, the issues at the core of the conflict are of such immense complexity that the sides decided to postpone dealing with them for five years (Beilin, 2001; Savir, 1998).

Seven years later, eventually, the two parties convened to try and 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 development of a peaceful climate of mutual trust. But it is beyond the scope of the present paper to analyse the nature of these developments. In June 2000, the Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak concluded that time had come to try to complete the ongoing negotiations with the final settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Edelist, 2003; Sher, 2001). A major event for the Israeli people¹ occurred when top-level delegations of Israelis and Palestinians met

¹A **major societal event** is defined as an event of great importance in the society that has extensive resonance, has relevance to society members' well-being and to the well-being of the society as a whole, involves society members, takes a central place in public discussion and on the public agenda, and implies information that forces society members to reconsider their held societal beliefs.

between July 11 and 24, 2000, in Camp David, USA, with the participation of a USA team led by the 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. Barak provided major information² about the conference's outcome, blaming the Palestinians for the failure (Edelist, 2003; Pressman, 2003).

The next major event was an eruption of violence on September 28, 2000, with the visit of Israel's opposition leader Ariel Sharon to Temple Mount, where the holy mosques of the Muslims are located. Palestinians began disturbances accompanied by stone throwing, demonstrations and shootings. These were met with a forceful response by the Israel security forces, and in the first four days 39 Palestinians and six Israelis were killed; within a month the toll rose to over 130 Palestinians and 12 Israelis (Dor, 2001; Pressman, 2003).

Major societal events and major societal information provide a transitional context for society members that has great influence on their beliefs, attitudes, emotions and behaviours. This context is observable and temporary. It shapes the environment in which individuals and collectives function. It provides signals and cues which are perceived and cognized by people and in turn they affect their psychological repertoire (see D. Bar-Tal & K. Sharvit, unpublished work).

In our described case, major events of violence continued. The Palestinians continued to launch terror activities against the Jewish population and the Israeli army continued to carry 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 framework 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 increased and the relations between Israelis and Palestinians have deteriorated. The Palestinians increased their terror attacks, mostly using suicide bombers in public places all over the country, killing civilians indiscriminately. In turn, 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, killed civilians during the fighting, imposed harsh restrictions on the Palestinian population, severely affecting their daily lives, made incursions into the Palestinian territories, eventually re-occupying the entire West Bank. Up till August 2002 the violence claimed over 1500 lives on the Palestinian side and over 550 on the Israeli, mostly civilians. Various attempts by external mediators, mostly American and European, failed to stop the violence.

This context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which consists of major sets of information and events of violence, provides a natural laboratory for the study of social behaviours. The situation can be construed as a cause to, and context of, a series of behaviours, which can be considered as effects. Thus analysis of the context and the elicited behaviours sheds light on group behaviour. The focus of the present analysis is on the behaviours of the members of Israel's Jewish society. As an Israeli Jew, I was able to observe and collect this information easily, taking the role of a participant observer. I assume that the behaviours of this group are not unique as they represent behaviours of any other group members who find themselves in threatening intergroup conflict. This is suggested in analyses of conflicts in Northern Ireland or Kashmir (e.g. Whyte, 1990; Wirsing, 1994). Also of importance to note is that the observations do not include all society members as there are subgroups and individual differences (see one attempt by D. Bar-Tal, paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International

²A **major societal information** is information supplied by a societal epistemic authority (i.e. a well trusted source information from which is received as valid) about matter(s) of relevance and great importance to society members and society as a whole that forces them to reconsider their societal beliefs.

Society of Political Psychology, Berlin, July, 2002 to describe a segment of society that behaves differently). The present observations refer to a dominant trend among the majority of Jewish Israelis.

The next part will describe behaviours of Israeli Jews as observed in the two years of conflict between them and the Palestinian people—a conflict which was reignited with great intensity in the fall of 2000. These preliminary observations consisted of the following elements: (1) follow-up of information provided by the Israeli media; (2) collection of survey polls performed during the observed period;³ (3) review of articles and books that deal with the information provided by the Israeli media; and (4) review of books written about this period. The preliminary collected information allowed formulating principles of social behaviour that will be presented below. The presented principles should be viewed as generalizations based on a review of observations, which should serve as a basis for formulation of hypotheses that could be further tested. This sequence reflects a research cycle that moves from observations through inductive logic to general inferences and then through deductive logic to hypotheses or predictions and back through collection of data to general inferences (see Krathwohl, 1993; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). The present description of the behaviours begins with the generalized organizing principle followed by the review of preliminary supporting observations.

PRINCIPLES AND OBSERVATIONS

Major Information about the Rival Group Provided Repeatedly by the Ingroup's Epistemic Authorities⁴ is Accepted as Valid and Serves as a Frame for the Interpretation of Major Events

Essential for understanding behaviours in a conflict is the major information provided to society members. In this case a number of sets of major information were provided to the Israeli public by several epistemic authorities. First, the Prime Minister of Israel, Ehud Barak, built an expectation that the July 2000 Camp David Conference was the critical time for reaching the final decisions in the negotiation process with the Palestinians (Edelist, 2003; Pressman, 2003; Wolfsfeld, 2004; Sher, 2001). Second, when these negotiations failed, Barak provided further major information by saying that (1) he had done all he could, turning every stone in search for peace by making a very generous and far-reaching offer at Camp David, an offer that Arafat refused to accept, and (2) Arafat did not make counter proposals; thus delegating the responsibility for the failure solidly to the Palestinians (Edelist, 2003; Pressman, 2003; Wolfsfeld, 2004). This information was supported by statements of USA President Bill Clinton and of all 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, circulated this information time and time again (Wolfsfeld, 2004) and it was accepted by the majority of the Israeli Jews. This major information is of crucial importance for the understanding of Israeli Jews' views and behaviours. It implied that the goal of the Palestinians was not to resolve the conflict peacefully, but to destroy Israel.

Later, when the violence began, following the visit of Ariel Sharon's visit to Temple Mount, major information coming from the Israeli government was that the outbreak of Al Aqsa Intifada had been well-prepared by Arafat and the Palestinian Authority (Dor, 2004; Pressman, 2003; Wolfsfeld, 2004).

³Survey polls performed during the observed period were collected and the data relevant to the discussed topic are reported. Information about each survey can be found in the referenced study.

⁴Epistemic authority denotes a source that exerts determinative influence on the formation of an individual's knowledge (Kruglanski, 1989; Raviv, Bar-Tal, Raviv, & Abin, 1993). Between 2000–2002, at least 60% of the Jewish population felt that they could rely on information provided by political leaders and at least 75% felt that they could rely on information provided by security leaders (Arian, 2002).

This was the explanation, even though at the beginning of the violence there were reported disagreements among security sources of information with regard to this reading of the events (Dor, 2001). Nevertheless, very soon all security and governmental sources rallied behind the major information which was continuously disseminated by the media. It validated the implication of the previous major information suggesting that the Palestinians' goal was to destroy Israel.

These three major sets of information were accepted as truthful by the great majority of Israeli Jewish society. Thus, at the end of July 2001 46.6% of Israeli Jews believed that **only** the Palestinian side carried the responsibility for the failure of the Camp David summit, while an additional 26.6% thought that the Palestinians bore **major** responsibility. Only 12.7% thought that Israelis were either solely or in major part responsible and 12.4% thought that both sides were equally responsible for the failure (Peace Index,⁵ July 2001). The acceptance of the major information was of special importance because for the Israeli Jews it served as a prism for evaluation and judgment of all events in the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation that followed. Hence we can say that the described information played a palpable role in the present upsurge of the violent Israeli-Palestinian confrontations.

Violence and Major Information about Goals of the Opponent, Perceived as Threatening the Essential and Existential Goals of the Group, Sharpen the Perception of the Conflict

The continuation of terror attacks carried out by all the Palestinian political organizations signalled to Israeli Jews that the intentions of the Palestinians were far reaching: not only to struggle against occupation, but also to kill as many Jews as they could. The continuation of the violence was accompanied by consistent information from both governmental and military sources and much of the media, to the effect that the goal of the Palestinians was to destroy Israel, and therefore Israel was engaged in an existential war for its survival (Dor, 2004; Feldman, 2002). Indeed in a survey of March 2001, 72% believed that 'the majority of the Palestinian people have not accepted the existence of Israel and would destroy it if they could' and 75% believed that 'the Palestinian Authority has no desire whatsoever to attain peace with Israel' (Peace Index, March 2001). These responses should be compared to beliefs expressed earlier, in 1997, which showed that 53% of the Israeli Jews believed that the Palestinian people were truly interested in peace and 52% of the respondents believed that the Palestinian Authority was truly interested in peace (Peace Index, March 1997). The perceptions of Palestinian goals and intentions are related to perceptions of the degree to which the conflict is perceived as being irreconcilable in the near future. The polls showed that 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 14, 2001, April 24, 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 39% in 2000 (Arian, 2002).

More specifically, with regard to Palestinian objectives, Israel's official sources provided information about Palestinians' insistence on their right of return to former Palestine/Israel. This information, which implied a will to undermine the Jewish nature of Israel, was presented by official sources as a major stumbling block in Israel's attempt to reach a peaceful agreement. It has gained focal attention in the public debate since the outbreak of the current Intifada (Feldman, 2001; Zakay, Klar, & Sharvit, 2002). Zakay et al. (2002) investigated, in March 2002, Israeli Jews' reactions to this perceived goal of the Palestinians. In response to an open-ended question ('What would happen, in your opinion, if the Palestinians' right of return was realized?') 94.2% of the Israeli Jewish respondents reported very

⁵The Peace Index project is conducted by The Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research at Tel-Aviv University. The data appear in The Tami Steinmetz Center's web site at www.tau.ac.il/peace

negative feelings and thoughts ranging from 'the destruction of the state' and 'Holocaust' to 'impossible' and 'very bad'.

Violence Directed Towards a Group Leads to the Development of, or Increase in, Threat Perception and Eventually to Feelings of Fear and Mistrust

Violence carried out by Palestinians, and especially indiscriminate terror attacks all over Israel against the civilian population, caused a threat experience, which led to feelings of fear and mistrust among the Israeli Jews. Already at the beginning of the violence, in a poll carried out in November 2000, 59% of the Israeli Jews reported feelings of personal threat and 62% felt that Israel's national security was under threat (Peace Index, November 2000). As the terror attacks intensified, Israelis' fear increased, influencing all aspects of life, in particular their behaviour in public places (see for example Lori, 2002). It is therefore not surprising that in 2002 80% of Israeli Jews perceived the continued Intifada as a threat (Arian, 2002).

Perception of threat led to a feeling of fear. In June 2001, 67% of Israeli Jews reported 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). In addition, in 2002 almost all Israeli Jews (92%) reported 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). With regard to trust towards Palestinian people, polls conducted in 1995–2000, showed that between 52% and 67% of Israeli Jews believed that the majority of the Palestinian people wanted peace to a great extent or to some extent, but in 2002 this percentage had dropped to 37%. The great majority of Israeli Jews lost trust in the Palestinians; they started to believe that the Palestinians were striving to destroy Israel and therefore that peace with them could not be achieved (Arian, 2002); moreover 79.8% of Israeli Jews reported that they did not trust Palestinians, since even if they would sign a peace agreement, they would not honour it (Peace Index, May 2001).

Violence and Threat Perceptions Cause Homogenized Delegitimization of the Rival Group and its Leaders

Violence and threat perceptions arouse a need for explanation, to justify own acts and differentiate between one's own group and the rival. Delegitimization fulfils these functions (Bar-Tal, 1989; Bar-Tal & Teichman, 2004). Indeed during the Al Aqsa Intifada systematic and institutionalized mutual delegitimization of Palestinians and Israeli Jews has been occurring (see D. Bar-Tal & N. Oren, submitted; The detrimental dynamics of delegitimization in conflicts; 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 presented as not being a partner for peace. Later, Arafat was presented 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. Finally, he was presented 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 presented by the Israeli government as a 'terrorist entity', which initiates and supports 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 only 39% of the Israeli Jewish respondents in 1997 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 the 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).

Major Events and/or Major Information, Which Cause Perception of Threat and Fear and Delegitimization of the Rival Group, Function as Powerful Factors Influencing Change of the Psychological Repertoire Towards this Group

The major event constituted by the Camp David summit together with the major information about the causes of failure of that summit and about the causes of the violence served as important factors changing Israeli Jews' opinions about Palestinian intentions and their evaluation of the peace process, especially among the doves, who previously supported the process. As noted, the implication was that the intentions of the Palestinians were to destroy Israel. But of crucial significance were other major events, namely terror attacks, which touched every Israeli and influenced his/her way of life. Together with the major information they led to a perception of major personal and collective existential threat, fear, and delegitimization of the Palestinians, which in turn caused a major shift in public opinion.

This process could be detected in a poll taken in March 2001, showing that 58% of Israeli Jews changed their views about the Palestinians for the worse (*Yedioth Aharonoth*, March 30, 2001). Another poll, carried out in March 2002, found that 29% of Israeli Jews reported that 'before the Camp David summit they believed that the Palestinian leadership had sincere intentions to reach peace with Israel, but today they do not believe in it'. Fifty-six per cent reported that they did not formerly believe in the sincerity of Palestinian intentions and that they continued feeling this way, and only 8% continued to believe in the sincere intentions of the Palestinians to reach peace with Israel. Among those who voted for Barak in 2001 responses were as follows: 43% changed their beliefs for the worse, 23% continued to mistrust the Palestinians and 29% continued to trust them. When asked about the main cause for change, 57% noted the Palestinians' choice of violence instead of negotiation, and about 24% noted Palestinians' rejection of Barak's generous offer. The change also involved diminishing support for the Oslo agreement: from the index of 50 in Summer 2000, to 25 in Spring 2002 (Peace Index). Of special interest is the finding showing that already between September 26 and 27 (a couple days before the eruption of the violence) and October 2 (five days after) support for the Oslo agreement dropped from 48.9% to 40.7% (Peace Index, September 2000). Also, there was a dramatic change in the percentage of the Israeli Jews who thought that the Israeli-Arab conflict could come to an end through peace agreements with the Palestinians and the Arab states: While in 1999, 67% thought so and in 2000, still 45%, by 2001, the percentage dropped to 30% and further to 26% in 2002 (Arian, 2002).

Finally, another major change took place with regard to the self categorization of Israeli Jews into leftist and rightist camps,⁶ a change that reflects a major polarization in Israeli society. While through the 1990s Israelis were more or less stable in their self categorization, the events and the information

⁶This is a major division of opinions in Israeli society regarding the solution of the Israeli-Arab conflict. While leftists (starting from Labor voters) are in favour of compromise and support the idea of land for peace, rightists (starting from the Likud voters) are less compromising and support keeping the territories occupied in the 1967 war because of security, national, historical and or religious reasons.

since the 2000 Camp David meeting caused a major change in their self identification. While in the early nineties about 36% categorized themselves to the left and about 39% to the right (Arian & Shamir, 2000), in May 2002 only about 19% categorized themselves to the left and 48% to the right. The rest categorized themselves to the centre, or did not know where to categorize themselves (*Maariv*, May 10, 2002).

Violence, Threat Perception and Fear Lead to Support of Violent Means to Cope with the Rival

When group members believe that the other group initiated the violent confrontations, perceive threat, and experience fear, then they tend to support aggressive ways to cope with the violence, especially when they believe that they have the ability to withstand the enemy. In this line Israel's Jewish population began to support violent acts taken by its government against the Palestinians (the support was consistent of about 70%) after the eruption of the Intifada in the fall of 2000. In March 2001 72% of Israeli Jews thought that more 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; and 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 so-called 'targeted assassination' of Palestinian people suspected of terrorist activity (Arian, 2002) and in July 2002, 62% of Israeli Jews supported such assassinations even if this would cause Palestinian civilian losses (Peace Index, July 2002); 80% supported the use of tanks and fighter planes against the Palestinians, 73% supported 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).

In Times of Violence and Perceived Threat People Support a Leader Who Projects Forcefulness

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 in handling the crisis that led to the increased Palestinian violence (even 51% of Barak's own supporters thought so, Peace Index, January 2001). The newly elected Prime Minister, an ex-general, had been involved in all of Israel's major wars, took an extreme 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 forceful activities and a powerful determination to curtail the Arabs, and especially the Palestinian. In his campaign he promised peace and security, and on taking office he stopped negotiations with the Palestinians and insisted on cessation of Palestinian violence as a precondition to any political negotiation. At the same time he outlined the contours of an eventual

conflict resolution proposal, which promised Palestinians very minimal political gains (see interview with Sharon in *Maariv*, April 13, 2001). During his incumbency the terror and violence increased and Israel stuck to a policy of forceful and violent 'containment' of Palestinian violence. In his own constituency, Sharon gained great approval (about 60–70%) and consistent support for his security position, policy and action.

Violence, Threat Perception and Fear Lead to Selective and Unidirectional Thinking in Reference to the Opponent, the Conflict and its Resolution

Situations of violence, threat perception and fear lead the parties involved to adhere to aggressive 'containment' of violence, without trying alternative ways that may reduce and resolve the conflict. In the Israeli case, as Sharon came to power, the violence increased, the political negotiations ended and his policy, which received strong public support, was, as mentioned, an insistence on the complete cessation of Palestinian violence as the condition for political negotiation. This policy was extensively supported by Israeli Jews: In March 2001, 79% of them supported Sharon's policy that no negotiation with the Palestinians would be resumed so long as their violence persisted (Peace Index, March 2001). This policy was meant to reflect the principle that violence cannot pay off and cannot be rewarded with political negotiation. Later, Sharon somewhat toned down the demand, insisting on seven days of complete non-violence, while in the winter of 2002 he began to demand Arafat's removal from his official function and the democratization of the Palestinian Authority as preconditions for political negotiation. These conditions in fact prevented any possibility of trying different political approaches suggested by various mediators. Since the conditions were not met and, on the contrary, the violence increased, the Israeli government initiated different types of violent acts to contain these terror attacks. For instance, it imposed military closures of the Palestinian territories; put up road-blocks and checkpoints; ordered the assassination of people suspected of planning and carrying out terror attacks; bombed various targets of the Palestinian security forces; made military incursions into the territories of the Palestinian Authority; conquered West Bank towns, and destroyed the homes of those involved in terror attacks, expelling their relatives from the West Bank to the Gaza Strip. This policy was advocated by the army and supported by the government, which did not seriously consider political steps as an alternative (Ben, 2002; Caspit, 2002). As said before, all these acts were supported by the majority of Israeli Jews. In effect a vicious cycle of violence evolved. Palestinian terror led to aggressive acts by Israel which in turn instigated rage, retaliation and hatred among the Palestinian population who greatly supported terror attacks which, then again, led, on the Israeli side, to fear, anger, hatred and a desire for retaliation and harsh measures; and so the process spiralled on. As one of Israel's leading columnists wrote: 'the conception practically has not changed since October 2000'. This conception was based on various assumptions such as 'Israel should not surrender to terror', or 'We have no partner for talks on the other side'. These assumptions locked 'the decision makers in the Israeli army and the government into paralyzing thinking patterns' (Benziman, 2001).

Violence and Threat Perception, Fear and Mistrust Lead to Self Focus

The psychological state of threat perception, fear and hatred causes people to focus on their own group. Society members are wholly preoccupied with their own fate since the threatening events are central and prominent in their awareness. They are preoccupied with danger, human losses, injury, damage, the future of the violent confrontation, and so on, without realizing that their behaviour may be threatening the rival group. This was the case of Israeli society during the observed period. Daily

talk focused on threat and violent events, the mass media devoted almost all its reports to describe and analyse the terror attacks that were hitting Israeli Jews and the military steps that were being taken to stop it.

Locked within the vicissitudes of the violent conflict, Israelis have difficulty to be empathetic to the Palestinians, to be attuned to their grievances, hardships, needs or goals. The news reports focus in great detail on information and analyses regarding Palestinian violence against Israeli Jews, while disregarding both in terms of the description and implications, the actions of the Israeli army (Dor, 2004; Wolfsfeld, 2004). In March 2001 63% of Israeli Jews opposed providing economic aid to the Palestinians in order to ease their suffering. But later, in July 2002, as reports about Palestinian's suffering reached the Israeli public, including a USA-generated report about hunger and poverty, 59% supported the idea that the Israeli government, in addition to fighting terrorism, should ease the suffering of the Palestinian people (Peace Index, July 2002). Finally, self focus is reflected in Israeli reports about the violence, as they rely mostly on Israeli sources of information which usually present a one-sided account (Dor, 2004; Sharvit & Bar-Tal, in press; Wolfsfeld, 2004). One consequence of this has been self closure and little information about the effects of the Israeli military activities on the Palestinians, the life conditions on their side or their views (Dor, 2004).

Violence, Threat Perception and Fear Cause 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. This feeling began to evolve with the perception that the Palestinians instigated the 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 the Israeli Jews believed that the Palestinians did not fulfill their commitments as specified in the Oslo agreement, while 66% believed that Israel fulfilled its own part (Peace Index, August 2002). It is not only the attribution of responsibility for the eruption of violence that set the scene for Israelis' deep sense of victimhood. It was powerfully underlined by the continuous terror attacks that claimed many Jewish lives, most of them civilians. A sense of victimhood came to dominate Israeli Jews as every attack on Israeli Jews was viewed as terror and received immense exposure as such in the media. The Israeli media not only provided detailed account 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.

Violence, Threat Perception and Fear Lead to a Will for Maximal Differentiation from the Rival

One result of the violence, threat perception and fear is the tendency to draw clear distinctions between the own group and the rival. Thus, the Israeli public first of all differentiated psychologically between themselves and Palestinians by perceiving the latter negatively as rejectionists, as having ill intentions, as perpetrators of violence and as having generally negative characteristics. In contrast, Jews were perceived as victims with predominantly positive characteristics.

Moreover, the violence led many Israeli Jews to support physical separation between Jews and Palestinians. The notion that 'they should be there and we are here' was propagated by politicians from the entire political spectrum who suggested at least nine different plans for unilateral separation in the

relevant period (Galili, 2002). This reflected not only a desire for self defence 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 over an 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 at the same time prevent terror attacks (Rabinowitz, 2002). The government eventually yielded to these demands and in 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.

Violence, Threat Perception and Fear Lead to Group Mobilization, Patriotism and Unity

In the case of violent conflict which implies common threat and fear, society members tend to unite and mobilize in order to cope better and withstand the enemy. Since the eruption of the latest violence, the majority of Israeli Jews, believing that they were fighting a war for survival, showed a sense of unity and patriotism (Feldman, 2001; Herman, 2002). One month after the start of the violence in October 2000, 64% of the population favoured the formation of a national unity government (Peace Index, October 2000), which actually happened after the election of Sharon as Prime Minister, when the defeated Labor party joined the government (the majority of Israeli Jews continued to support the unity government throughout the ensuing two years of violent confrontations). In fact, about 86% of Israeli Jews believe that the violent events since fall 2000 have strengthened the sense of national unity (Herman, 2002). Also, there were calls for patriotism and forceful resistance to the Palestinians. The mobilization of reserve units for the military operation Defensive Shield was met with extremely high compliance (*Globes*, April 1, 2002): many firms for instance, donated presents for the fighting soldiers (*Globes*, April 18, 2002, April 24, 2002). Finally, in times of violent conflict, the Israeli media felt obliged to stand by the government and security forces and tended to provide information that was in line with national needs and patriotic responsibility, as Prime Minister Ariel Sharon called it (Dor, 2001; Itzik, 2001; Lavi, 2002; Livio, 2002; Molcho, 2000; Sharvit & Bar-Tal, in press).

Violence, Threat Perception and Fear Increase Internal Pressure for Conformity and a Readiness to Impose Sanctions on Dissenting Society Members

Violence, perceived threat and fear lead to pressure to stick to the consensus and to the sanctioning of those who express dissenting views. In the Israeli case, the violence led to the evolvment of consensual opinions about the Palestinians ('They are not partners for peace'), about their leader ('He is a terrorist and has to be removed') and about the Oslo agreement as a major Israeli mistake. Violence also brought about overwhelming support for harsh measures against the Palestinians in order to 'contain' terrorism (see the above reported results of survey polls and the review of media reporting in Dor, 2001; Sharvit & Bar-Tal, in press; Wolfsfeld, 2004). But there has been a minority of Israelis who dissented and had different feelings and opinions about the focal issues of the conflict. Moreover, there are groups and organizations that lead an active campaign against governmental policies, including a group that calls for refusal to do military service in the occupied territories or indeed, to serve in the army, as long as it occupies territories. There has also been political opposition in the Israeli parliament and criticism of government policy. Dissent has also continuously been expressed by a minority in the media, mainly in the newspapers. These voices of dissent were viewed critically by the government and many of its supporters, who regarded them at best as naïve and unrealistic, but also as

unpatriotic. In a poll taken in April 2002, 58% of Israeli Jews thought that journalists who criticize the actions of the Israeli army and government policies in the occupied territories hamper the security of Israel and 48% thought that journalists who oppose government policy should be banned from television (*Maariv*, April 26, 2002).

In addition, those who continued to support the Oslo agreement were ostracized. In extreme rightist circles there was even talk of taking the initiators of the Oslo agreement to court as traitors (see for example, Dayan, 2002; Shragay, 2001). Some of these opposing groups were seen as threatening Israel's ability to withstand Palestinian violence and obstructing the justified struggle. There were even calls to try the opponents in military or civil courts. In reality, the military courts tried only those soldiers who refused to serve in the occupied territories.

Violence, Threat Perception and Fear Lead to the Rejection of Criticism from Outgroups

In a situation of violence, threat perception and fear, a society rejects any criticism from outgroups. It cultivates confidence in its own justice, adheres to its goals and focuses on its own victimhood. In the observed case, Israeli Jews rejected criticism coming from outside Israel, especially from Europe. The critiques were presented at best as misguided but often as being anti-Israeli and even anti-Semitic (see for example, Arens, 2002).

CONCLUSION

The above presented principles of social behaviour, together with observations done in a real life context, provide an analysis of collective human behaviour in a situation of violent conflict. It should be noted that the observations were collected in the Israeli Jewish society by an Israeli Jew: the research problems should be studied in other societies to replicate them. In general, violent acts, when directed against society members, are perceived as threatening personal as well as collective security. The situation very rapidly comes to arouse fear and mistrust of the opponent. In addition, the observations suggest that the public framing of the violence is important. In other words, the type of information provided about the other group and about the conflict by the society's epistemic authorities is important. The provided information presents the violence in a particular way and serves as a influential factor in shaping the psychological repertoire of the collective—its beliefs, attitudes, emotions and behaviours. The psychological repertoire in turn serves as a prism through which society members experience the conflict, perceive their own group, the opponent, and other outgroups as well as the way they process new information about the conflict. The threat perception and fear lead to a preference for violent ways of dealing with the rival. As a result, society members in violent conflict tend to rely on a leader who projects forcefulness in the conflict and shows determination to contain the opponent's violence. Also, the situation of conflict and violence leads to self focus, collective self perception as a victim, delegitimization of the opponent and mobilization for struggle. Finally, the violence increases pressures for unity and conformity and as a result leads to the sanctioning of dissenters and the rejection of outgroups' criticism. In sum, present observations illustrate the great influence of threat and the power of fear. Perception of threat and the aroused fear may lead individuals and collectives into the darkest part of their psychological repertoire.

These observations are not entirely new. The described phenomena were investigated by different psychologists within the framework of stress studies, many of which were carried out in laboratory settings, investigating individuals in a fragmented way (see for example Baddeley, 1972; Easterbrook,

1959; Fisher, 1986; Hamilton, 1982; Hobfoll, 1988; Lazarus, 1991; Mandler, 1982). Therefore, a study of collectives in real life situations is needed. The present set of preliminary observations, done in a real life context, provides principles that reveal a coherent picture of social behaviour in a particular context of violent conflict and perceived threat. It allows a systematic and complex look at various aspects of human behaviour and provides an opportunity to study the behaviour of collectives. Hence the present study takes a macro perspective, using a natural approach on an issue that was usually studied on the micro level, usually in experimental settings. Of special importance is the fact that the present study takes a holistic view, analysing parts of the phenomenon within one particular real life context. Nevertheless, the present preliminary observations should be treated as part of the research cycle in which further formulation of predictions and collection of additional data are needed (Krathwohl, 1993) in order to generalize the findings and validate the principles.

The above observations indicate how violent conflict serves as an imprinting context that affects the individual and collective psychological repertoire on the cognitive, affective, emotional and behavioural levels. This context implies direct danger to the lives of society members, threat to the fulfilment of their basic needs, threat to society's existence, to its functioning, well-being and prosperity. This is a very powerful context which therefore has a marked effect, both on individuals and the collective (Arian, 1999; Brubaker & Laitin, 1998; Breznitz, 1983; Hobfoll, 1991; Jervis, 1985; Kelman, 1997; Pettigrew, in press; Staub & Bar-Tal, 2003; Stephan & Renfro, in press; Worchel, 1999). *It is possible to ask whether the observed patterns of behaviour are unique to Israeli Jews. The answer is that it is highly probable that groups living in a similar context would behave in a similar manner and I assume that patterns of Palestinian behaviour are similar, reflecting a kind of mirror image of the above described Israeli patterns.* Evidence from the behaviour of groups in Northern Ireland and Kashmir confirms this assumption (Heskin, 1980; Schofield, 2000; Whyte, 1990; Wirsing, 1994). **I would like to propose that a context that evokes strong experiences of threat, danger and fear cannot be greatly moderated by other factors because human beings are programmed to act in a particular way in such a context in order to adapt and cope with it.** Empirical evidence supports this (see for example, Doty, Peterson, & Winter, 1991; Gordon & Arian, 2001; Sales, 1973). At least four conceptual approaches, as outlined below, can explain the described patterns of behaviours as reactions to perceived threat, danger and fear.

First, taking the evolutionary approach, the context of violence and conflict arouses the crucial will to survival by containment of the violence and the enemy (Caporael & Brewer, 1991; Ross, 1991). This intensive and extensive effort leads to a series of behaviours that aim to serve the existential need of survival. We can assume that in the long course of their evolution, humans have had to confront a great deal of threat and danger causing both insecurity and uncertainty. As a result, *Homo sapiens* evolved to possess an adaptive psychological repertoire (see Bigelow, 1969; Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 1979; van der Dennen & Falger, 1990). This repertoire includes fear (Plutchik, 1980), prejudice (Fox, 1992), ethnocentrism (Reynolds, Falger, & Vine, 1987) aggression (Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 1977; Eibl-Eibesfeldt, & Sütterlin, 1990), and readiness for self sacrifice for one's own group (Campbell, 1972). This repertoire is triggered and easily evoked whenever the situation is threatening and insecure. As a fundamental characteristic of human beings it emerges automatically and spontaneously and easily overcomes the repertoire that predominates in times of peace, security and prosperity. This is also presently the case with the violent Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The behaviour of Israeli Jewish society, as it was described here, is not surprising if we assume that many Israeli Jews view the bloody confrontations with the Palestinians as a war for survival.

Second, the context of violence and conflict leads to deprivation and frustration of various personal and collective needs, which must be satisfied for normal human functioning. Among these are the needs of security, meaningful comprehension, mastery, control and positive identity. Their deprivation causes people to feel insecure, uncertain, ineffective and not in control, and forms a threat to certain aspects of positive self image. In order to restore psychological balance, people actively try to satisfy

their needs (Burton, 1990; Davies, 1963; Kelman, 1990; Lederer, 1980; Staub, 1989, in press; Taylor, 1983). They then focus on themselves, try to make simple sense of reality, blame others for their fate and tend to rely on simplistic solutions. If this goal cannot be achieved constructively, they may turn to destructive ways. That is, the needs may then be fulfilled at the cost of other people, they may harm other groups, select ways of coping that frustrate others' needs, or adhere to non-functional ways of achieving their goals. Thus, needs for security, for effectiveness and control, and for maintaining a positive identity can lead to actions that bring forth reactions which actually lessen security. This occurs when the group uses excessive violence against another group, intensifying intergroup antagonism (Davies, 1973; Staub, 1996, in press; Staub & Bar-Tal, 2003).

The social psychological theory of terror management proposes that the innate anxiety of annihilation, combined with the human knowledge of inevitable death, creates an ever-present potential for terror. In order to cope with this terror, human beings developed a cultural anxiety buffer, a sense of immortality, that has two components: (1) humanly constructed worldview of reality that imbues life with order, permanence and stability through social connections to institutions, traditions and symbols, and (2) self esteem, the belief that one is meeting the standards of value espoused by one's worldview. But when people are reminded of their mortality due to violence, like terror attacks, they experience threat and then these cognitive constructions come into question (Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & Solomon, 1997; Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 1991). In order to remove the threat of death and bolster their security-providing belief system, people mobilize, organize, and elect leaders that promise to uphold the security beliefs and are ready to lash out at those perceived as responsible for the threat.

Finally, from another perspective, it is well established by now that fear, which functions automatically, spontaneously and unconsciously, is an evolutionary safeguard to ensure survival in view of potential threat and danger (Gray, 1989; Lazarus, 1999; LeDoux, 1996; Ohman, 1993; Rachman, 1978). Also, collective situations of collectively perceived threat instigate fear, which can operate as a collective emotional orientation (Gordon, 1990; Kitayama & Markus, 1994; Mesquita & Frijda, 1992). Of special importance to our understanding of the observed behaviours are findings that clearly show that fear, as a primary emotion, is responsible for the emergence of a particular line of affective, cognitive and behavioural reactions on both the individual and collection levels: It narrows attention and sensitizes people to threatening cues and information; it facilitates the selective retrieval of information related to the perceived cause of fear; it causes great mistrust and delegitimization of the adversary; it increases unity, solidarity and mobilization among society members in view of the threat to individuals and to society at large; it may lead to a collective freezing of beliefs about the conflict, about the adversary and about ways of coping with the danger, it may reduce openness to new ideas; and it leads often to defensive and/or aggressive behaviours, even when there is little or nothing to be achieved by them (Bar-Tal, 2001; Blanchard & Blanchard, 1984; Clore, Schwarz, & Conway, 1994; Eibl-Eibesfeldt & Sutterlin, 1990; Gray, 1989; Isen, 1990; M. Jarymowicz & D. Bar-Tal, submitted; The dominance of fear over hope in the lives of individuals and collectives; Lazarus, 1991; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; LeDoux, 1996; Ohman, 1993; Plutchik, 1980). In addition, it has also been claimed that collective emotional orientation has particular mechanisms of dissemination that spread it among society members and hamper self control processes (M. Jarymowicz & D. Bar-Tal, submitted; The dominance of fear over hope in the lives of individuals and collectives).

It is important to note that the observations presented in this article refer to major trends in Israeli society. The analysis does not concern individuals or even sub-groups, who may behave differently. And of even greater importance is the fact that the present analysis does not refer to a minority in the Israeli public who have been expressing a very different line of affective, cognitive and behavioural reactions towards the described major information and events, towards the Palestinians and Israel's prime minister and government. Between 15 and 30% of Israeli Jews (depending on the particular issue)

expressed views and reactions that differed from those of the majority. The question how a minority comes to have very different reactions to the same events and contexts should be of significance to the analysis of human behaviour in situations of conflict, but it is beyond the scope of the present analysis (see examples of analysis of minority reactions in D. Bar-Tal, paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Society of Political Psychology, Berlin, July, 2002; Ophir, 2001).

It is important to note that it is not the first time that the above described psychological repertoire has been observed in Israeli society. It is part of the ethos of conflict, which has been dominating Israeli society throughout decades of intractable conflict with the Arabs, and with the Palestinians in particular (Bar-Tal, 1998, 2000). It re-surged with the latest cycle of violent conflict that started in the fall of 2000. The ethos of conflict consists of shared societal beliefs which pertain to the eight following themes: *societal beliefs about the justness of one's own goals*, which deal with the reasons, explanations and rationales of the goals that are at stake in the conflict and, foremost, justify their crucial importance; *societal beliefs about security*, which stress the importance of personal safety and national survival, and outline the (especially military) conditions for their achievement; *societal beliefs supporting positive self image*, which concern the ethnocentric tendency to attribute positive traits, values and behaviour to the own society; *societal beliefs concerning own victimization*, which concern self presentation as a victim; *societal beliefs that delegitimize the opponent*, which deny the adversary's humanity; *societal beliefs supporting patriotism*, which concern attachment to the country and society, by propagating loyalty, love, care and sacrifice; *societal beliefs supporting unity*, which refer to the importance of ignoring internal conflict and disagreement during intractable conflict in order to unite forces in the face of external threat; and finally, *societal beliefs of peace*, which refer to peace as the society's ultimate desire. These beliefs associated with the ethos of conflict facilitate a society's adaptation to the threatening and stressful conditions of a lasting intractable conflict, which is characterized by violence, contradiction of existential goals, zero sum nature, centrality and great investment (Bar-Tal, 1998; Kriesberg, 1993). These beliefs enable satisfaction of various needs such as epistemic, safety or mastery needs and at the same time provide the psychological basis for successful coping with the opponent. Such beliefs are shared by society members and societal institutions maintain and circulate them. In the Israeli case, the lengthy process of changing the beliefs associated with the ethos of conflict only began by the late 1970s, with the peace treaty with Egypt. The events that followed during the 1980s and 1990s strengthened this tendency. But the re-eruption of the violent conflict with the Palestinians caused the resurgence of the ethos of conflict that had prevailed in the Israeli society for so long. The above analysis shows how quickly the ethos of conflict can re-emerge, in contrast with the slow evolvement of the alternative ethos of peace. Contexts of threat and fear very quickly bring back the psychological repertoire that is in line with the ethos of conflict (Bar-Tal, 2001).

Observation of human social behaviours on both the individuals and collective levels, in real life situations helps us understand principles of human behaviour. Real life situations can serve as concrete laboratories that elucidate causes and effects of human behaviour. Natural observations can serve as a basis for the formulation of a theory and for further investigations with other research methods. Human social behaviour always takes place in a context. This was the basic premise of Lewin's field theory which conceptualized behaviour as a product of a person's 'life space', that is, the person's repertoire and the environment (i.e. context) in which he/she acts (Lewin, 1935). Some of these contexts are extremely powerful as they are long lasting and they may have a determinative influence on human behaviour. They can affect human behaviour by providing certainty, peace, prosperity and security, but also by creating insecurity, threat, fear and uncertainty.

The above analysis suggests that without understanding the impact of the real life context, the study of social behaviour is at best incomplete. Also it suggests that knowledge of social psychology originates in social psychologists' observations of their own lives, own groups and societies as well as those of other groups.

Years ago Katz (1978) wrote that complex problems 'are difficult to approach in molecular fashion in the experimental laboratory' (p. 779). Therefore, 'data from surveys, case studies and observation' (p. 779) must be used. Thus, many observations made in real life can serve both as data and at the same time as prompts to further study (using other research methods). Social psychologists must be capable of systematic and coherent observation, they must be socially sensitive and have the ability to make sense of the perceived reality.

Finally, social psychology should go beyond the individual case to understand collective social behaviour. One aspect of collective behaviour is that individuals as members of a group share ideas, attitudes, feelings or emotions. Once they share a psychological repertoire and are aware of this sharing, their behaviour will manifest particular features (Bar-Tal, 1990; Fraser & Gaskell, 1990). The awareness of sharing may influence the social reality that group members construct, the sense of solidarity and unity that they experience, their level of involvement with the shared repertoire, the degree of conformity expected from them, the pressure they exert on leaders, and the direction of the action they take. Thus, the awareness of sharing a psychological repertoire is essential to group and societal life, and social psychology cannot ignore this (see Bar-Tal, 2000).

Social psychology has lost the balance between micro and macro perspectives, between natural and experimental approaches and between personal and contextual emphases. It is time to restore this equilibrium. The question is whether mainstream social psychology is ready to expand in order to accommodate different approaches. A closure of social psychology may lead to the establishment of a new subdiscipline called societal psychology (see Himmelweit, 1990 or Katz, 1978). I hope that the first alternative will come to be the challenge for social psychology in the next decade. In facing this challenge social psychology will have to integrate the study of individual social behaviour within the social context and the study of collectives, looking beyond small groups to societies and nations, as well as opening the discipline to the use of various ways of data collection. It is moreover important that social psychology increases its attention to study societal problems that greatly preoccupy people around the world and influence their well-being. And in addition, it is imperative that social psychology combines experimental and natural research methods. All these changes will boost the advancement of social psychology in its mission to unveil the principles of social behaviour.

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