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ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT: A COGNITIVE ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT. The present paper attempts to analyze the Israel-Palestinian conflict in the framework of an epistemological approach as an example of cognitive analysis of international conflicts. It suggests that the beliefs of one group are incompatible with the beliefs of the other. This situation of cognitive discrepancy is assumed to enhance and maintain the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In order to analyze the sources and dynamics of the cognitive discrepancy, the epistemological approach to beliefs acquisition is presented. In this framework, of special importance are the three epistemic motivations that determine whether the beliefs are "frozen" or "opened" for substitution by alternative hypotheses. It is suggested that the motivation for specific conclusion reflects freezing on a specific belief through the desire to hold a given belief as truth and refraining from entertaining rival alternative hypotheses. The motivation for specific conclusion indicates that certain needs in the form of wishes and/or fears motivate the maintenance of the given beliefs. On the assumption that both Israelis and Palestinians have the motivation for specific conclusion, the present paper analyzes a few of the fears and wishes that underlie their motivation. Finally, a few suggestions for "unfreezing" the beliefs of the two opposing sides are offered.

The Middle Eastern conflict is one of the longest conflicts of our century, and, therefore, it is not surprising that much has been written about it by historians and political scientists (e.g., Cohen, 1979; Hurewitz, 1976; Khouri, 1976; Kimche & Kimche, 1960; Sharabi, 1969). Most of the above mentioned analysts, however, emphasized the historical, political, cultural, and social bases of the conflict, while the present paper focuses on one of its psychological roots. The purpose of the present paper is to suggest a psychological perspective based on the epistemological-cognitive approach, which might help to analyze a few sources of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The paper does not intend either to elaborate historical and political events or provide empirical psychological data, but only to suggest a framework within which the Middle Eastern conflict can be analyzed. The presented evidence therefore serves only as illustration for the proposed conception. This approach does not pretend to replace other psychological approaches to the analysis of the international conflicts, but comes to illuminate certain

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aspects that exist in every international conflict (see a general analysis of Bar-Tal & Geva, 1985; Bar-Tal, Kruglanski, & Klar, 1989; Klar, Bar-Tal, & Kruglanski, 1988). Specifically, the present paper consists of five parts. The first part presents a short example of the beliefs of the Israelis and the Palestinians regarding the history of their conflict and demonstrates the incompatibility between their beliefs, called *cognitive discrepancy* of the rival parties. The second part discusses the epistemic process which describes the formation of beliefs and explains the causes of the cognitive discrepancy as found in the wishes and fears of the two parties. The third and fourth parts analyze the wishes and fears that bias the beliefs of Israelis and Palestinians. Finally, the fifth part describes the contribution of the epistemological approach for conflict resolution.

EXAMPLES OF THE ISRAELI AND PALESTINIAN BELIEFS

It is usually taken for granted that two parties engaged in a conflict have different accounts as to the causes of the conflict. In order to illustrate a *cognitive discrepancy* between the Israeli and the Palestinian version of the historical background of the conflict, two very short examples are provided.[1]

The Palestinian version is taken from a book entitled *Palestine Occupied* written by Sami Hadawi (1968), while the Israeli version is taken from a book distributed by the Israel Information Center entitled *History from 1880* which consists of material originally published in the *Encyclopedia Judaica*.

Immediately, in the beginning, the two versions differ in providing the background for the accounts. They differ in their emphases while describing the causes and implications of the emergence of the Zionistic movement. The Palestinian version is as follows:

The basic issue in the Palestine Problem is the uprooting and dispossession in 1948 of an entire nation in order to make room for the 'ingathering' in Palestine of Jews from all parts of the world. This build-up of the Jewish population in Palestine was not inspired by humanitarian considerations for the oppressed and persecuted Jews of Europe as was made to believe, but was achieved mainly in order to fulfil the political aspirations of a major ideological movement called Zionism. (Hadawi, 1968, p. 8)

The Israeli version is as follows:

The merging of two trends — the rationally intellectual and the emotionally traditional — gave birth not only to Zionism as an organized political effort, but also to

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[1]The examples presented here are, of course, not the only Israeli and Palestinian versions of the conflict, but certainly reflect the main focus of all accounts by the two parties, which may vary in emphasis or even in the facts cited.

the beginnings of the pioneering movement of the late 19th century, which laid the foundations, on the soil of Erez Israel, for the economic, social and cultural rebirth of the Jewish nation. The land itself seemed eminently suitable for the purpose: a marginal province of the weak Ottoman Empire, sparsely inhabited by a population consisting of various religious groups and seemingly lacking any national consciousness or ambitions of its own; a motherland waiting to be redeemed from centuries of neglect and decay by its legitimate sons. (p. 1–2)

Similarly, both versions differently describe the outbreak of the Six Day War, a crucial event of the present crisis. The Palestinian version:

The Israelis, disappointed by their failure to achieve what they had gone out to get, were unwilling to give up or to make concessions that would solve the Palestine problem. They kept the area in a state of tension, and hardly a month passed without the Middle East news making the headlines. (Hadawi, 1968, p. 20)

There were other reasons why the Israelis selected the year 1967 for their attack on the Arab States. First, inter-Arab differences were at their highest and therefore the Arabs were least able, militarily, to resist any thrust which the Israelis might make. There were signs that fences were being mended, and the Israelis could not afford to wait and see Arab unity and preparedness frustrate their plans. Second, the 1968 U.S. presidential elections were approaching, and the Israelis felt confident that their influence in the United States was now sufficiently strong to make the 'Jewish vote' a factor to be reckoned with in preventing a repetition of United States interference to dislodge them, as President Eisenhower did in 1956. (Hadawi, 1968, p. 21-22)

To escape world condemnation, the Israelis used the closure of the Strait of Tiran and the entry of U.A.R. troops into the non-militarized Sinai Peninsula as a pretext to launch their attack and to occupy the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank of Jordan and the Golan Heights in Syria — a territory they coveted for so long and planned to occupy in their second round of expansion. The argument that the Israelis acted in 'self-defense' was at first accepted by world public opinion, but subsequent events and declarations proved that this was not the case. (Hadawi, 1968, p. 21-22)

The Israeli version:

For a decade after the Sinai Campaign there was no large-scale outbreak of hostilities between Israel and the Arabs, but neither was there a decline in tension. Arab hatred of Israel was continually fanned by teachers, journalists and politicians; incessant declarations of undying hostility came from leaders of both 'progressive' and 'conservative' Arab states. Ben-Gurion repeatedly stated that Israel was prepared for complete disarmament in Israel and the Arab countries under mutual supervision and proposed a joint American-Soviet guarantee of the territorial independence of all Middle East states, but there was no response to either proposal. (p. 194)

On May 14, 1967, Nasser had begun openly dispatching large numbers of Egyptian troops into Sinai. Eshkol told the Israel government that the Egyptian troop movements, apparently, had more demonstrative than practical significance, but ordered part of the reserves mobilized as a precautionary measure. On May 16, Cairo Radio declared: 'The existence of Israel has continued too long. We welcome the Israel aggression, we welcome the battle that we have long awaited. The great hour has come. The battle has come in which we shall destroy Israel.'

On the same day Egypt demanded the withdrawal of the U.N. Emergency Force (UNEF) from the Gaza Strip and Sinai borders and Sharm el-Sheikh, and when U Thant replied that any such request would be regarded as a demand for its complete withdrawal, officially requested the evacuation of the force . . . Nasser announced his intention to block the Straits of Tiran to Israel ships and others carrying 'strategic cargoes,' and Eshkol immediately declared that any interference with freedom of passage in the Gulf of Akaba and the straits constituted 'an act of aggression.' (p. 197–198)

On May 30, King Hussein of Jordan placed his forces under Egyptian control. Egyptian, Saudi Arabian and Iraqi troops were sent to Jordan, and Iraqi, Algerian and Kuwaiti forces to Egypt . . . Surrounded by Arab forces that were liable to attack at any moment, Israel could delay no longer. On the morning of June 5 the Israel air force attacked the air-fields of Egypt, Jordan, Iraq and Syria . . . (p. 199–200)

The Security Council, which met on almost every one of the six days of fighting, called for a cease-fire on June 6, 7 and 9. With the acceptance of the cease-fire by Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, the Six-Day War came to an end. (p. 202)

Military government was established in the areas administered under the cease-fire agreements, but the existing local authorities and officials were left free to operate without interference, except where security interests were concerned . . . (p. 205)

Perusal of the two versions shows contradiction. The two accounts are incompatible with each other. Each party presents a set of beliefs which does not correspond to the other party's. That is, although both sides describe the same events, there are differences in the contents of the two accounts as demonstrated in differences of emphasis, interpretation and selection. *When a set of beliefs of one group is incompatible with a set of beliefs of the other group, this situation is defined as cognitive discrepancy* (Bar-Tal & Geva, 1985). *In a conflict situation, the cognitive discrepancy involves incompatibility of beliefs regarding solutions, incompatibility in the accounts of the background or the course of the conflict, and other contents.* In any event, the cognitive discrepancy enhances the magnitude of the conflict[2] and complicates the possibilities of resolving it. Therefore, it is important to analyze the sources and dynamics of the cognitive discrepancy. The epistemological approach as presented by Kruglanski and his colleagues (e.g., Kruglanski, 1980, in press; Kruglanski & Ajzen, 1983) provides a suitable framework for such an analysis because it concerns the nature of beliefs and the process whereby they are acquired. Moreover, the framework discusses motivational, cognitive, and environmental factors that influence the process and determine the contents of beliefs that individuals form. In the present case, it

allows us to focus on the beliefs that the Israelis and Palestinians have formed about the conflict on the basis of their perception and interpretation of real events as mediated by epistemic motivations; these beliefs constitute their reality. Furthermore, disputants act on the basis of their beliefs, which function as lenses through which individuals interpret the incoming information to which they respond (Brunswick, 1956; Heider, 1958).

EPISTEMOLOGICAL BASIS OF THE COGNITIVE DISCREPANCY

The Israeli and Palestinian accounts of the conflict reflect the beliefs held by each party. The term belief is defined as a proposition with a minimal degree of confidence in it that the individuals store in their cognitive system. Stored beliefs constitute the individual's total knowledge (Bar-Tal, 1990; Kruglanski, 1982). Thus, first, it is necessary to describe the nature of beliefs and the process of their acquisition and change.

Nature of Beliefs

Beliefs are held with various degrees of confidence. Some beliefs are considered as hypotheses since the individuals have minimum confidence in them, while other beliefs are considered facts since the individuals have a great deal of confidence in them. Beliefs differ as well with regard to their centrality at a given time and in a given situation. Some beliefs may be central, while others are not. The degree of centrality of a belief is reflected in the frequency of its accessibility in the cognitive system and its relevance to a wide range of evaluations that individuals make. That is, central beliefs are often accessible in the cognitive system (i.e., we often think about them), and they are frequently taken into consideration when individuals evaluate other issues, including decisions to carry out various behaviors (Bar-Tal, 1986).

The Epistemic Process

Epistemic process describes how individuals acquire or change their beliefs. It consists of cognitive operations that the individual performs on route to the experience of acquiring beliefs. Individuals can form beliefs either on the basis of internal sources (i.e., associative thinking), personal experiences, or from numerous external sources such as other individuals, newspapers, books, or television, which provide information. But, the epistemic process by which people validate their beliefs is always the same (Kruglanski, 1980, 1989). According to Kruglanski, the criterion for

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[2]Conflict is defined as incompatability between the goals of two or more parties (Klar et al., 1988; Rapoport, 1960).

assessing the validity of acquired belief is the consistency principle. That is, a given conjecture is believed to the extent that it seems to be consistent with the individual's existing knowledge relevant to the hypothesis entertained.

The central epistemic question for our purpose is whether the acceptance of any hypothesis as a belief is potentially revokable. That is, can individuals become aware of a plausible hypothetical alternative to the original belief, validate it, and accept it instead of the previously held belief, or do they "freeze" with the held belief? Kruglanski and Ajzen (1983) suggested that freezing implies closure on a given belief. In this situation, individuals consider a given belief to be fact and do not generate alternative hypotheses. Freezing can be a consequence of such factors as an incapacity to produce alternative hypotheses, lack of information, inability to collect information, or motivation. Of special interest for the present paper is the factor of motivation. *Three epistemic motivations determine to a large extent whether individuals freeze their beliefs at certain times or in certain situations.*

According to Kruglanski and Ajzen (1983) the three epistemic motivations are motivation for validity, motivation for structure, and motivation for specific content. The *motivation for validity* is the desire for valid knowledge or fear of receiving invalid information. The individuals fear committing themselves to possibly mistaken beliefs, and in order to avoid doing so, they are open to the consideration of multiple alternative hypotheses before accepting any one of them as valid. *Motivation for structure* is the desire to have knowledge on a given topic. There is no preference for specific knowledge, but for any knowledge which allows a closure on a given belief. Under the influence of this motivation, individuals commit themselves to a belief and refrain from critical challenge of it. They do not generate alternative hypotheses, but settle with the beliefs they have. In this situation the individual's preference is for structure as opposed to ambiguity, confusion, and uncertainty which occur as a result of entertaining alternative hypotheses and collecting inconsistent information. *Motivation for specific conclusion (or content)* is the desire to hold a given belief as truth and refrain from entertaining rival alternative hypotheses. Undesirable hypotheses are rejected, while the desired one is accepted. In this situation, the individuals are sensitive to the evidence and ideas consistent with the desired belief and collect them, but disregard and/or subjectively interpret information inconsistent with it. This motivation is a result of wishes that individuals try to fulfil and/or fears that they try to avoid. In contrast to the motivation for structure which motivates the person to close on any belief, the motivation for specific conclusion motivates the person to close on a specific belief. In the former case the directing mechanism is avoidance of ambiguity and/or confusion, while in the latter case the directing mechanism is the personal wishes and/or fears.

Having described the nature of beliefs, the process of their acquisition, and the mediating motivational factors, we can now return to the analysis of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Israelis as well as Palestinians believe that their own beliefs are "true" and "objective" (i.e., have high confidence in them), while the beliefs of the other group are either "incorrect" or "distorted" (see White, 1977). In order to convince other individuals and groups of the truth of its own beliefs, each party publishes material to describe the "facts" and to discredit the "lies" of the other party (e.g., Al-Abid, 1973; Katz, 1973; Rubin, 1972; Said, 1979; Tigay, 1980). For example, while Katz (1973) writes

The distortion of history, ancient and modern, basic to the Arab-British resistance to Jewish restoration had been fully articulated by 1948. After 1948 the Arabs added greater depth and vehemence in presentation and with it a theme of hatred of the Jews . . . The Arabs' version of history, of their and the Jews' relationships to Palestine, is not uniform. It is often accommodated to the tastes or prejudice of the audience. It not only fabricates; it ignores the known recorded facts and unblinkingly replaces the picture of public knowledge of even a year ago with a completely imaged substitute. (p. 219)

Said (1979) points out that

The systematic denial of substantial native Arab presence in Palestine was accompanied . . . by its destruction, blocking and confinement in Palestine, and its blocking and confinement in the councils of the world; in addition the Zionists were able to diffuse their views and their reality *over* the views and reality of the Palestinian Arabs. A negative project — denial and blocking — entailed an equal and opposite positive project — diffusion. (p. 20-21)

At this point, it should be noted that it is recognized that there are individual differences among the Israelis as well as among Palestinians with regard to the contents of beliefs about the conflict and with regard to the motivations for collecting new information or entertaining alternative beliefs. Also, it is recognized that the salience and centrality of beliefs as well as the effects of the underlying needs (wishes and fears) may change with time and situation (Bar-Tal, 1990). Thus, for example, recent events such as the establishment of peaceful relations between Israel and Egypt, the Lebanese war, or the Palestinian uprising have had an effect on the contents of beliefs and possibly on the motivation for collecting new information and/or entertaining new ideas. In principle, however, the presented analysis holds. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is still alive — it is assumed that the majority of Israeli Jews and of Palestinians, including their present political leadership, react in accordance with the epistemic process described under the biasing motivation for specific conclusion.

The perception and interpretations of past and present events not only

indicate cognitive discrepancy, but also imply the difficulty which both sides face with the "unfreezing" of the beliefs. In spite of the recent movements, Palestinians as well as Israelis still have difficulty considering the other party (see also Bar-Tal, 1988). Each side has been selective in the collection of information and biased in its interpretation. The motivation for specific conclusion indicates that each side possesses certain needs in the form of wishes and/or fears that motivate them to maintain their beliefs. That is, the collection of information and the interpretation of beliefs. That is, the collection of information and the interpretation of the information by the two parties is done in the light of the central wishes and fears that affect the life of each of them.

The central needs (fulfilment of wishes and avoidance of fears) enhancing the motivation for specific content of both parties to the conflict are presented below. While the lists of needs are undoubtedly neither exhaustive nor applicable to all individuals, they definitely demonstrate the important influence needs have on the acquisition of knowledge.

THE NEEDS OF THE ISRAELI JEWS

This section will analyze the most salient fears and wishes of the Israeli Jews.

The Threat of Anti-Semitism

Throughout the centuries the Jews experienced hatred called anti-Semitism which can be traced from the Roman Period through the Dark Ages, the Crusades, the Inquisition, the Reformation, the Industrial Revolution, up to our own days (Poliakov, 1974). In the course of these years there were hundreds of anti-Semitic manifestations in the West as well as in Islamic countries which took the form of anti-Jewish tracts; libels; the imposition of distinctive dress, special taxes, and religious, social, and economic restrictions; forced conversions; deportations; violent attacks; and even mass murders (Grosser & Halperin, 1979; Poliakov, 1974).

The anti-Semitic experience became part of the heritage of the Jews, including the Israelis (e.g., Liebman, 1978; Stein, 1978). Liebman (1978) has suggested that "The term 'Esau hates Jacob' symbolizes the world which Jews experience. It is deeply embedded in the Jewish folk tradition" (p. 45). At present, it is believed that the re-emergence of anti-Semitism is related to a large extent to the question of the legitimacy of Zionistic ideology and the existence of the State of Israel (Antisemitism Today, 1982). Thus, it is not surprising that the belief that "the world is hostile towards us" is deeply rooted and frozen in the Israeli cognitive system (see Bar-Tal, 1986; Bar-Tal & Antebi, 1989). The long history of anti-Semitism has taught the Jews to be suspicious of and attentive to information indicating hostility.

Of special relevance for understanding the beliefs of the Israeli Jews are the anti-Semitic manifestations which occurred in Arab countries following the establishment of the State of Israel, and which included mass arrests, confiscation of properties and restrictions of rights. As a result of these acts, more than half a million Jews fled those countries between 1948 and 1967 (Landau, 1971). The Arabs and especially the Palestinians since the 1947 war are perceived today as continuing the line of anti-Semitism. Israeli Jews have therefore developed a special sensitivity to every cue of hostility coming from the Palestinians (see Harkabi, 1971).

The Threat of the Holocaust

Anybody who wants to understand the fears of Israeli Jews has to comprehend the effect of the Holocaust separately from the general problem of anti-Semitism. Between 1941 and 1945 six million Jews—a third of the Jewish people—were exterminated in an organized effort, known as the "final solution" of the Jewish problem, to annihilate the Jewish people (see Dawidowicz, 1975; Reitlinger, 1961). The extent of the trauma has to be understood in the context of widespread belief that the rest of the world in general and the Allies in particular did not try hard enough to save the Jews and to stop the extermination (see Laqueur, 1980; Morse, 1968). Moreover, the memory of the Holocaust makes it possible to believe the reiterated Arab threat of annihilation. Thus, current political decisions are often explicitly connected with the lesson learned from the Holocaust (Bar-Tal, 1986).

There is no doubt that an experience of the Holocaust has greatly affected beliefs regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Jews are determined that the Holocaust will never be repeated and that the strong and secure State of Israel is the best safeguard against the repetition of this event (Bar-Tal, 1989). In this vein, Elon (1971) described the imprinting of the Holocaust trauma on the present Israeli psyche by suggesting that

The lingering memory of the holocaust makes Arab threats of annihilation sound plausible. But even had there not been any Arabs, or if by some wondrous event their enmity were to disappear overnight, the lingering effect of traumatic memory would probably be almost as marked as it is today. The trauma of the holocaust leaves an indelible mark on the national psychology, the tenor and content of public life, and conduct of foreign affairs, on politics, education, literature and the arts. (p. 199)

The Threat of Arab Attitudes and Behaviors

The beliefs of Israeli Jews regarding the conflict have to be understood also in the framework of the hatred which has characterized Arab attitudes and behaviors toward the Israeli Jews and the State of Israel (see Al

Roy, 1971; Harkabi, 1972; The Arab View, 1973). The forty-year history of the State of Israel as well as the years preceding its establishment have been marked by continuous Arab opposition to the Israeli Jews and their state.[3] Until the peace treaty with Egypt, all the Arab states closed their borders and maintained the pressure of a state of war, refusing to recognize Israel, and employing instead the rhetorics of the "liberation of Palestine" and the "liquidation of Zionist aggression" (see Ben-Gurion, 1963; Eban, 1957; Katz, 1973; Meir, 1973; Rafael, 1981). Harkabi (1972), analyzing Arab speeches, books, declarations, documents, and articles, provides extensive evidence of the hostile and threatening Arab attitudes toward Israel which expressed the main objective — the liquidation of the State of Israel. As Abba Eban, a former Israeli representative to the United Nations, expressed this belief in one of his speeches:

The fierce hostility of the Arab states is a constant threat to Israel's security. The fact that they aspire to Israel's extinction or dismemberment is frankly stated by Arab leaders themselves. These verbal threats are reinforced by constant hostility on land and sea, in international politics and in the arenas of world opinion (Eban, 1957, p. 191)

In this perspective, all the wars fought by the Israelis were inescapable — imposed by the real threat of the rhetorics and actions of the Arab states. Israeli Jews have believed that the ultimate goal of the Arabs is to liquidate the State of Israel. Therefore, every bit of information is collected from the perspective of that belief.

The intentions of the Palestinians attract the special attention of Israeli Jews. The Palestinians' dream of returning to Jaffa, Ramleh, or Acre and their aspirations to establish "the secular-democratic" state threatens almost every Israeli (e.g., Harkabi, 1974). The majority of Israeli Jews believe that the Palestinians' final objective is the annihilation of Israel and the establishment of a Palestinian state. This belief is based on the Palestinian National Covenant (Harkabi, 1979), which declares as its central tenet "a total repudiation of the existence of Israel, and institutionalises this stand and the theoretical and practical implications that derive from it in an ideological system" (Harkabi, 1979, p. 11). In addition, beyond the attitudes, the Palestinians have carried out continuous attacks on the Israeli Jews in Israel and on Jews elsewhere in the world. During the 1950's the murderous attacks were carried out by *fedayeen* (suicide fighters) who penetrated deep into Israel focusing on civilian targets. In the late 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s with the establishment of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), the Palestinians stepped up their terroristic activities against the Jewish civilian population within

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[3]The peace treaty with Egypt, signed in 1979, has changed the situation. But many Israelis continue to believe that the intentions of Egypt have remained hostile.

Israel and outside it and killed hundreds of civilians (see P.L.O., 1982; Schiff & Rothstein, 1972; Yaari, 1970). Even the present uprising is perceived by many Israelis as an indication of the Palestinian desire to liquidate the State of Israel.

The Wish to Have the Jewish State

The strongest wish uniting the vast majority of Jews in Israel and other countries is the desire to have a Jewish state — a desire reflected in the Zionist movement. The modern Zionism, which arose within the *zeitgeist* and the milieu of nineteenth century European nationalism, sought to establish a homeland for the Jews who were dispersed throughout the world. On the basis of heritage, religion, culture, and tradition the Zionist movement has strived to bring Jews to Palestine, the homeland of their ancestors (see Cohen, 1951; Halpern, 1969). The desire to re-establish the homeland developed as a wish to live as a people, as a nation free of anti-Semitism, not dependent on the goodwill of others for safety and well-being. In this sense the wish for the Jewish state, the national home of the Jewish people from all over the world, became a reality in 1948. Since then, the Jews in Israel and the world have been on the alert to safeguard the existence of the state believing that its security and even its existence are in constant danger (see Bar-Tal, 1989).

THE NEEDS OF THE PALESTINIANS

In order to understand the beliefs of the Palestinians, their fears and wishes will also be analyzed. The present section will elucidate several of their needs.

The Threat of Jewish Expansionism

From the early days of Jewish settlement in Palestine, the Palestinian Arabs felt threatened by the return of the Jews. They perceived the return of the Jews to Israel, their attempts to buy land, their settlement, and their endeavor to establish a homeland as an expression of expansionism. Arafat described this process in his speech before the General Assembly of the United Nations:

Palestine before the Jewish immigration was a verdant area inhabited mainly by an Arab people in the course of building its life and dynamically enriching its indigenous culture. Between 1881 and 1917 the Zionist Movement settled approximately 50,000 European Jews in our homeland . . . By 1947 the number of Jews reached 600,000; they owned about six percent of Palestinian arable land . . . Furthermore, even though the partition resolution granted the colonialist settlers 54 percent of the land of Palestine, their dissatisfaction with the decision prompted them to wage a war of terror against the civilian population. They occupied 81

percent of the total area of Palestine . . . As a result of Zionist aggression in June 1967, the enemy occupied Egyptian Sinai as far as the Suez Canal. The enemy occupied Syria's Golan Heights, in addition to all Palestinian land west of the Jordan. (Arafat, 1975, p. 5-6)

On the assumption that the intention of the Israeli Jews is expansionism, the Palestinians have interpreted the actions of the Israeli Jews in this context and have viewed them with suspicion and hostility (e.g., Kishtainy, 1970; Razzouk, 1970; Said, 1979). Of special concern have been the expropriation of land from 1948 on and the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, which according to the Palestinian sources totalled 800,000 during 1948-49 and 300,000 more during the 1967 war. The attempts to settle the West Bank and the Gaza Strip by Jews since the Six Day War have only reinforced the fear that the main goal of Israeli Jews is to realize the Zionistic dream of establishing a Jewish State within the biblical boundaries.

The Threat of Israeli Attitudes and Behaviors

Beyond the fear of Jewish expansionism, the Palestinians feel threatened by the attitudes and behaviors of Jews, which they believe express animosity, prejudice, and hostility (e.g., Arab Information Center, 1961; Palestine Arab Refugees Institution, 1955; The Arab Palestine Office, 1956; Zogby, 1981; Zureik, 1979). The Palestinians believe that from the early encounters between the Jews and Palestinians the former exhibited disregard, contempt, and superiority towards the latter (Said, 1979).

Of special importance for the Palestinians has been the continuing controversy among the Jews about whether the Palestinians are a nation or even whether they actually exist. As Cattan (1971) explained it:

The unwillingness of the Israelis to recognize the Palestinians as the proper party is understandable. One must suppose that it would be most embarrassing for Jewish leaders, such as Levi Eshkol, Mrs. Golda Meir, Abba Eban and others who emigrated to Palestine from Russia, Poland, South Africa and diverse other countries, to claim, in face to face negotiations with the Palestinians, that they possess any rights to Palestine. This may explain why the responsible leaders of Israel, in their increasing arrogance, have come to deny not only the rights of the Palestinians, but their very existence." (p. 43-44)

The Palestinians have been especially concerned with the treatment of those among them who have lived in the State of Israel as a minority (see e.g., Arab Information Center, 1961; Jiryis, 1976; The Arab Palestine Office, 1956). They believe that in Israel there has been a constant violation of their human rights and discrimination in every aspect of their lives. During the first 18 (1948-1966) years of the existence of the State of Israel, military rule was imposed on the Palestinians which limited their personal, civil, and political freedom. In addition, the Israeli government enacted laws such as the Abandoned Areas Ordinance in 1949 or the Absentees' Property Law in 1954 to expropriate Arab-owned land, expelled thousands of Palestinians, confiscated Arab property, and detained or arrested many Israeli citizens of Arab origin. Finally, Israeli Jews have carried out continuous attacks even on the Palestinians in refugee camps, villages, and towns in Arab countries.

A new dimension of the relationship between the Palestinians and the Israeli Jews was added after the Six Day War in 1967 when the West Bank and the Gaza Strip with over a million Palestinians were taken by the Israelis. Perceiving themselves to be under occupation and believing that the ultimate goal of the Israeli Jews is to annex these areas, the Palestinians have opposed the Israeli occupation. Israeli acts in these areas, which include on the one hand such acts as confiscation of land, mass arrests, imposition of curfew, deportation, killing of civilians, tortures of arrested suspects, humiliation, or limitation of civil rights, and on the other hand such acts as building Jewish settlements, giving the Jews special rights, or letting the Jews perform violent acts against Palestinians, cause the Palestinians to believe that they reflect negative intentions and attitudes on the part of Israeli Jews (e.g., Al-Abid, 1970; Palestine Research Center, 1969). Of special meaning are Israelis' ways of putting down the Palestinian uprising in which many thousands have been arrested, thousands wounded, and hundreds killed.

The Wish to Return

The wish of Palestinians which dominates their aspirations is to return to their land and to establish their own state (e.g., El-Dine, 1969; Hussaini, 1975; Said, 1979; Sayegh, 1970; Shukairy, 1966). Shukairy (1966) expressed this wish in the following words:

Israel is there on our land, on our property. They, Israelis, occupy our homes, they occupy our farms . . . We are simply asking justice and our inherent, inalienable right to our homes and our land and to our homeland.

This wish is based on the pre-1948 nationalistic aspirations that are rooted in the specific character of Arab Palestinians as expressed in their language, culture, and historical background (Peretz, 1977).

The Palestinian national movement started at the beginning of the present century and developed parallel with Zionism (e.g., Kayyali, 1974; Porath, 1974, 1977; Said, 1979). The idea of Palestinian statehood was embodied in a bewildering variety of political parties and movements since the 1920s. But in the last two decades, the Palestinian national movement has worn a new form. The new form is expressed in the estab-

lishment in 1964 of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which has been legitimized by the Palestine National Council that fulfils the function of a legislature. It is the PLO which has kept the nationalist tradition alive (Said, 1979). The PLO acts as a unifying umbrella for various Palestinian organizations and groups which differ with regard to their goals, ideology, or strategy, but are all united in their main objective to establish a Palestinian State (Khalidi, 1979; Said, 1979). The recent political moves by the Palestinians all come to actualise the desire to establish the State, at least in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, even by compromising the previous positions.

Summary

The analysis of Israeli and Palestinian needs reveals that each party has fears and wishes which strongly influence the epistemic process of entertaining new ideas, reorganizing old beliefs, and collecting new information. The described needs cause freezing under the conditions of motivation for specific content. That is, as described previously, the two rival parties uphold mainly desired beliefs which support the wishes and prevent the fears, while other beliefs are rejected as invalid. In such a situation the communication between Palestinians and Israelis is very difficult and the conflict often appears to be irreconcilable. What is interesting in the analysis of the needs of the Palestinians and the Israeli Jews is the parallelism in some of the fears and wishes. A few studies have investigated this issue empirically (e.g., Heradstveit, 1981; Mroz, 1980; Rouhana, 1984; Smooha, 1987). For example, Heradstveit (1981) interviewed political and intellectual elites in Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Israel in 1970–72, 1974, and 1976. Although the respondents included only a few Palestinians, the results reflect the state of the relationship between the Palestinians and Israeli Jews as well. In 1974, 74.3% of the Israeli respondents and 79.7% of the Arab respondents felt threatened by the other side. In 1976, the feelings of threat rose to 91% among the Israelis and to 93% among the Arabs. An interesting finding in that study is that 69% of the Israeli respondents and 45% of the Arab respondents believed that the other party felt threatened as well. Also, in the same study while the majority of Arab respondents believed that the main reason for the conflict is Jewish intention to expand, the majority of Israeli respondents believed that the main cause is Arab intentions to destroy the State of Israel (see also Bar-Tal, 1989).

There are several ways of reducing the impact of the motivation for specific content and increasing the possibility of unfreezing. These ways may facilitate the communication between the Palestinians and Israelis and, therefore, may lead to negotiation between the rival parties which may end in a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

CONDITIONS FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION

The epistemological approach does not offer specific solutions to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. But, it provides conditions for proposing ways which may facilitate the unfreezing process. The proposed conditions are derivatives from the described conception. The unfreezing process may move the parties towards mutual understanding and communication, which are necessary but not sufficient conditions for peaceful conflict resolution (see also Kelman, 1982). The state of knowledge, the beliefs, of the two parties must be unfrozen and their motivation for validity aroused in order to impel them to begin collecting information that may be inconsistent with the desired beliefs and to start entertaining alternative plausible proposals for the solution of the conflict. The core problem in the attempt to resolve any international conflict is how to unfreeze the beliefs of the parties in conflict (see Bar-Tal & Geva, 1985; Bar-Tal et al., 1989).

Unfreezing may occur in a number of situations, among others: (a) when the parties have realized that the beliefs are relative and subjective; (2) when needs have been satisfied; (c) when salient information of overwhelming significance has been encountered; and (d) when a third party as an epistemic authority has intervened.

Recognition of Relativism

An unfreezing occurs when both parties realize that neither of them has the monopoly on truth and objectivity, that knowledge is subjective, and that each of the parties grasps its own truth and facts which reflect only its own reality constructed on the basis of its own history and experience. Furthermore, it is helpful when both parties realize that one's own fears and wishes limit the possibility of perceiving the fears and wishes of the other party and that any new information is elaborated on the basis of its own needs.

The monopolization of objectivity and truth, the disregard of the other's beliefs and needs, moral self-righteousness, placing the blame on the other party, and using the propaganda to perpetuate one's own beliefs, do not create the proper atmosphere for negotiating a peaceful solution, but increase tension, suspicion, and hostility. To make things worse, each party considers its own actions to be reactions, and emphasizes the atrocities, terrorism, inflexibility, animosity, and cruelty of the other party (e.g., Al-Abid, 1973; Katz, 1973; Palestine Arab Refugees Institution, 1955; P.L.O. 1982; Schiff & Rothstein, 1972; The Arab Palestine Office, 1956; Yaari, 1970). Thus, for example, the Israelis on the one hand publicize such events as Arab riots in Hebron in 1929 and in Jaffa in 1936 where Jews were murdered, the massacre of Jewish doctors, nurses, and

teachers on their way to Mt. Scopus in 1948, the murder of Israeli athletes at the Olympic Games in Munich in 1972, the massacre of Israeli school children in Maalot in 1974, and the present use of stones and Molotov bottles to disturb Israeli transportation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. On the other hand, the Palestinians publicize such events as the massacre of civilians in 1948 in Dir Yasin, the massacre of civilians in 1953 in Qibya, the murder of Arab civilians in 1956 in Kafr Qasim, the bombardment of refugee camps in the last decade, and the continuous killings in the course of the current uprising. In this situation any uninvolved reader who tries to extricate the "objective facts" will find the Rashamon story dwarfed by the complexity, ambiguity and contradictions, which characterize the story of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

The recognition that no party has a monopoly on truth and objectivity, that both parties have valid claims, and that the wishes and fears of both parties are justified, may help to open a new dialogue between the rival parties. The recognition of the subjectivity of truth may create an atmosphere of patience, consideration, empathy, and understanding. Such at atmosphere may facilitate communication which ultimately may lead to a search for peaceful solutions acceptable to both parties.

Satisfaction of Needs

On the basis of the analysis regarding the needs of the Israelis and Palestinians, it is possible to infer that the removal of fears and the fulfillment of wishes may change the epistemic motivation of the two parties. Thus, for example, if the Palestinians and Israelis could be convinced that each of them does not constitute a threat to the other, then there is a possibility that both parties would become open to new solutions and ideas. It is admittedly very difficult to remove fears and wishes which affect the epistemic process, as their removal often means downplaying one's own history and experiences. Such processes rarely occur. What can often be achieved, however, is a reduction of the effects of fears and wishes on the epistemic process. In other words, an attempt can be made to minimize their effects on information collection and on the consideration of solutions for the conflict, by raising the awareness of their consequences, or by introducing a new need which will decrease the effect of the previous ones. In the former case, the awareness of the fears and wishes may decrease their impact on information processing and on thinking. In the latter case, the introduction of a new wish in the form of a new goal or the appearance of a new fear may repress the original needs. A peace agreement with Egypt or the appearance of a new enemy in the form of the Islamic fundamentalism may modify the centrality of previously dominant wishes or fears. In these cases the reluctance to

absorb new inconsistent information may be reduced in view of the changes.

Salient and Significant Information

Salient information may sometimes be absorbed and processed, even if it is inconsistent with the desired beliefs, when that information is so striking that it cannot be disregarded. Thus, for example, information collected on the basis of personal experience or from mass media may stimulate the unfreezing process. The war in Lebanon and the present uprising have had definite effects on Israelis as well as Palestinians with regard to their beliefs about the conflict between them. For example, some Israelis have begun to believe that the Palestinian national movement cannot be crushed militarily and Palestinians have begun to entertain the possibility of a political solution.

The flow of information may increase the availability of evidence which may raise the saliency of new hypotheses. The influence of the information may not be felt immediately, but only after a long period of time. Very dramatic events or information may of course have an immediate effect on the saliency of new beliefs—for example the Lebanon War or the present Palestinian uprising. That is not to say that any information influences all members of the group equally. It is recognized that individuals elaborate information differently, and therefore it may have different effects on the epistemic process. While some members of the group may be influenced by the information, others may downplay it and/or interpret it differently. The collection and processing of the information depends on previously possessed knowledge, capacity, and motivation.

Third Party Intervention

In many cases of international conflict, the unfreezing process comes as a consequence of third party intervention, where the third party plays the role of an epistemic authority. Epistemic authority is defined as a source from which a given proposition or information may exert a determinative influence on the tendency to accept inconsistent information and/or entertain and generate rival alternative solutions (Kruglanski, in press). The use of the third party in conflict resolution was also suggested by other theorists (e.g., Burton, 1969; Fisher, 1978; Rubin, 1980).

The ideas and/or information emanating from the epistemic authority cannot be disregarded and therefore facilitate the unfreezing process. The parties in conflict process the ideas, information, and/or solutions suggested by the epistemic authority and elaborate them within the framework of their own cognitive knowledge, even when they are inconsistent

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with the desired beliefs. In addition to changing the beliefs of the parties in conflict, the functions of the third party are to create a psychological atmosphere of trust and communication that will facilitate the unfreezing process and to provide new information and ideas. Finally, the third party may make the two sides aware of the subjective and relative state of their knowledge and of the needs of their own side and of the rival's.

Different agents can fill the role of epistemic authority, and, indeed, in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict a variety of mediators have attempted to do so. Thus, for example, the United Nations set up a conciliation Commission for Palestine (Forsythe, 1972) and sent special envoys such as Count Folke Bernadotte of Sweden, Ralph Bunche of the United States, or Gunnar Jarring of Sweden (Touval, 1982) to mediate between the rival parties. The United States actively attempted to mediate between the Arab States and Israel. Thus, for example, Kissinger's mediation led to the agreement to convene the Geneva Conference in 1973 with the possibility of Palestinian participation. President Carter in 1978 mediated and helped to conclude the Camp David Accords, which have had implications for the resolution of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (Touval, 1982).

In sum, the necessary prerequisite for a peaceful resolution of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict requires a change of beliefs. A change which should come as a result of unfreezing in the framework of motivation for validity of held beliefs. The unfreezing has to cause a re-evaluation of the stored knowledge, an entertainment of new ideas and solutions, and the collection of new information possibly inconsistent with the desired beliefs. Only courageous new beliefs may begin the process of reconciliation. Without it, Palestinians and Israelis are condemned to continue the conflict.

CONCLUSION

The Israeli–Palestinian conflict is one of the most serious conflicts of our century not only because it is difficult to find a solution satisfactory to both parties, but also because it is an active conflict which threatens the Middle East and the whole world because of the super powers' involvement. The achievement of a peaceful solution seems difficult, not only because of the political, historical, or economical causes, but because of the psychological factors as well. Years of hostility, clashes, and wars have greatly affected the states of mind of both the Palestinians and the Israelis.

The present epistemological–cognitive approach has analyzed the process by which the Palestinians and the Israelis formed their knowledge about the conflict and by which they continue to process new information and form new beliefs. The analysis suggests that both rival parties are
... freezing as a consequence of the motivation for

specific content. That is, both have desired beliefs which they try to uphold to fulfil their wishes and to avoid fears. Both the Palestinians and Israelis accept their own beliefs as true and objective, but consider the beliefs of the other party as lies and subjective.

The present approach does not suggest a simplistic view that the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians is only in the participants' minds. Political, historical, economic, and military conditions are real and undoubtedly shape the development of the conflict. Nonetheless, so-called realistic conditions have to be perceived and believed in order for the conflict to be operative. Both groups have formed beliefs about the background of the conflict and its course, and both have solutions to resolve it. The problem is that the beliefs of the two parties are incompatible. Thus, any solution for a peaceful agreement requires a change in beliefs. The motivation for specific content makes such a change difficult, but not impossible. The epistemic–cognitive approach delineates several ways which may facilitate the unfreezing process to change the beliefs held. Continued freezing will lead to further animosity and bloodshed, while unfreezing may help to create the proper conditions for a possible peaceful solution. Thus, the framework presented provides an additional perspective which together with other approaches may help to attain a better understanding of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and lead to the achievement of a mutually acceptable, peaceful resolution of the conflict.

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ABSTRACT

L'article propose l'analyse du conflit Israelo-Palestinien, dans le cadre d'une approche epistemologique, un exemple

fait croitre et maintenir le conflit Israelo-Palestinien. Pour analyser les sources et la dynamique de ce desequilibre cognitif, l'approche epistemologique concernant le developpement des croyance est utilise. Dans ce cadre de references, trois motivations epistemiques sont importantes dans la determination des croyances qui "ouvrent" ou "gelent" les hypotheses de rechange. Il est suggere que les motivations pour des conclusions specifiques refletent un gel des croyances specifiques ayant l'objectif de retenir une certaine croqyance comme etant "vraie" et refusant de considerer d'autres hypotheses. La motivation d'arriver a des conclusion specifiques, indique que certains besoins sous forme de desirs et/ou craintes contribuent a maintenir les croyances specifiques. Etant donne qu'Israeliens et Palestiniens ont des motivations our des conclusions specifiques, l'article present analyse quelques craintes et peurs qui sont a la base de leurs motivations. Enfin, quelques suggestions sur la maniere sw "degeler" les croquances des deux cotes du conflit, sont offertes. (author-supplied abstract)

El presente articulo trata de analizar el conflicto Israelí-Palestino, en el marco de una aproximación epistemológica, como un ejemplo de análisis cognitivo de conflictos internacionales. Esto sugiere que las creencias de un grupo son incompatibles con las creencias del otro. Esta situación de discrepancia cognitiva esta pretendiendo aumentar y mantener el conflicto Israelí-Palestino. Con el fin de analizar las fuentes y dinámica de esta discrepancia. la aproximación epistemólogica a la adquisición de creencias, es presentada. En este marco, son de especial importancia las tres motivaciones epistémicas, las cuales determinan si las creencias están "Congeladas" O "Abiertas" para su substitución por hipótesis alternativas. Esto está sugiriendo que la motivación por una específica conclusión refleja congelación sobre una específica creencia, dada como verdad y se abstiene de tomar en cuenta a su hipótesis rival alternativa. La motivación de esta específica conclusión indica que ciertas necesidades en la forma de deseos y/o miedos llevan a la conservación de la creencia dada. Sobre la asunción que ambos, Isralíes y Palestinos, cuentan con la motivacion para una específica conclusión, el presente artículo analiza algunos de los miedos y deseos, los cuales son las razón fundamental de su motivación. Finalmente, son ofrecidas unas cuantas sugerencias para un descongelamiento de las creencias, de las dos partes en oposición. (author-supplied abstract)