National ethos and its role in preserving trauma communities: Observations from the Palestinian uprising 2000 to 2005

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Abstract: This paper sticks to the assumption that conflicts become intractable when contradicting sets of national ethos exist. Therefore, it is essential to comprehend the traits of national ethos. We contend that national ethos comprises three basic themes: a sense of collective victimhood, a feeling of victory, and a sense of universal justice. Based on this theoretical foundation, we took the Israeli and Palestinian mutually negating sets of ethos during the 2000 to 2005 Second Intifada as a case study. We analyzed the public speeches of Ariel Sharon as well as those of Yasser Arafat and searched for matches to the three components of national ethos in their addresses. Consequently, the empirical observations confirmed that national ethos is often based on the three distinct themes. Additionally, the data from the case study of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict suggest that the three components of national ethos form fundamental barriers to reconciliation.

Subjects: International Politics; Sociology & Social Policy; Psychological Science

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1. Introduction
Scholarly literature presents considerable research indicating how violence in the form of wars or terrorist attacks causes collective psychological distress. This perception encompasses, among others, studies of American cases (Garfin et al., 2018), European cases (Vuillermoz et al., 2020), Palestinian cases (Al Muranak et al., 2017) and Israeli ones (Kutz & Dekel, 2006). Much of this literature is aimed at psychological support, and at a search for solutions to the traumatic conflict (Halperin & Pliskin, 2015; Halperin et al., 2013; Hester, 2016; Hutchison, 2016). However, this research offers a different approach. Our proposal is to comprehend, primarily, the nature of National Ethos as the source for intractable conflict, in order to seek effective techniques to handle it. This paper takes as a point of departure the common assertion that conflicts are inclined to become intractable and unresolvable when contradicting sets of national ethos exist (Lavi et al., 2014; Oren & Bar-Tal, 2006; Oren et al., 2015). In the words of Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat in his statement before the Israeli Knesset on 29 November 1977: “[There is] a wall [that] constitutes a psychological barrier between us […], a barrier of distorted and eroded interpretation of every event and statement.” Hence, our understandings of the various traits of national ethos as a cause for conflict are bound to enable future studies that will find effective ways to control this factor.

Although some studies indicate that history empowers ethnic groups differently (Jasiewicz, 2015), our research reveals a general pattern of national narratives among rival parties. We contend that national ethos comprises three basic themes: a sense of collective victimhood, a feeling of victory, and a belief that the group behaves according to norms of universal justice. Consequently, we outlined the theoretical foundations for a basic comprehension of national ethos and introduced theoretical concepts concerning each of its three components. Scholars that preceded us theorized victimhood as a psychological mechanism that is capable to justify violent actions of one group towards another, yet whereas the empiric case studies were either Israeli or Palestinian (Halabi et al., 2021), our research seeks for a larger view, and we therefore took symmetrically both sides of a case study conflict.

Based on the theoretical foundations—particularly, the three components of national ethos, we analyzed the Israeli and Palestinian mutually negating sets of ethos at a crucial point in time: the 2000 to 2005 Second Intifada, a Palestinian uprising that produced a death toll of about 3,000 Palestinians and 1,000 Israelis (Schachter, 2010). Noteworthy, previous studies have already touched the topic of national ethos among the rival parties in the Middle Eastern conflict. Usually, such research covers either the Palestinian side (see, for example, Litvak, 2009; Mahmid, 2020) or the Israeli point of view (see, for example, Bar-Tal et al., 2009b; Lewin, 2014). There are also studies that encompass both sides of the dispute (see, for example, the review in Caplan, 2012). Yet a comprehensive analysis of Hebrew and Arabic primary sources of a specific event is indeed one of the unique empirical benefits of this paper. Furthermore, the Palestinian and the Israeli case studies are particularly interesting due to the fact that both nations have a history of conflict-generated diaspora groups that function as mobilizers of conflict construction (see, for this issue, Koinova, 2017).

The choice of the Second Intifada as our case study is important because it stands as a prototype for other modern conflicts all over the world, where established armies are challenged by insurgent militant factions that supposedly represent the interests of large civilian constituencies. In this conflict, as well as in many other modern conflicts, violence is widely used by both insurgents and governments to achieve their goals. There is little systematic evidence of the effects of violence on the political attitudes of any of the rival sides (Jaeger et al., 2012). Furthermore—there is little comprehension, if any, of mechanisms that would end the circle of violence. If there is any key to deciphering violent vicious circles, we believe that it lies in better understanding how the mechanism of national ethos works.

We analyzed the public speeches of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon as well as those of Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat, and searched for matches to the three components
of national ethos in each presidential or other official address. Consequently, the empirical observations confirmed that national ethos, no matter whose national ethos, is often based on the three distinct themes of victimhood, victory and universal justice. Additionally, the data from the case study of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict suggest that the three components of national ethos form fundamental barriers to reconciliation.

We open this research study with a theoretical review of national ethos as a social phenomenon. We then present its three major components—a sense of collective victimhood, a feeling of victory, and the group’s sense of universal justice. Subsequently, we review the case study of the Second Intifada and its historical background. We then turn to a description of our methodology and findings. Finally, we reach some comprehensive conclusions about national ethos and the exact role of its three components—in general, as well as in the context of the Middle Eastern arena.

2. National ethos
The national ethos of a political entity derives from the array of shared particularistic values and traditions that form a people’s visions of its future and past. The ethos integrates the community into feeling a common mutual destiny and forms the foundations of its unique identity as a distinctive social group. The integrative ethos also constitutes the moral source for the national community’s informal social controls; it enforces commitments upon society, and drives its members into a largely voluntary social order. Thus, the ethos of a nation, in fact, is one of the most important key factors in a people’s ability to unite into a cohesive society (Etzioni, 2009). The national ethos is composed of three basic constituents: a sense of collective victimhood, a feeling of victory, and a belief that the group acts according to universal justice.

Scholars, as well as practitioners and educators, stress the narrative, both personal and social, as the essential factor that guides our life and structures our social world. These scholars refer to the personal and social narratives, that are strongly linked, as the major factors that lead society (see, for example, Fisher-Yoshida & Lopera, 2021; Rafferty, 2020). However, in our research we prefer to relate to a broader term, that is—national resilience. We do so because some of our previous works show that national resilience is a broader term, it contains also significant cultural settings that are intertwined with social narratives (see, for example, Lewin, 2014, where the Finnish victory in their 1939 Winter War relates to the story that the Finns tell themselves but also to an inherent cultural term that is inherent in their story—SISU—which stands for national inspiration).

2.1. Collective victimhood
This article relies on the political theory of victimhood that distinguishes between victimization as an act of harm perpetrated against a person or group, and victimhood as a form of collective identity based on that harm (Jacoby, 2015). Whereas collective victimization refers to the objective infliction of harm by one group on another, collective victimhood refers to the psychological experience and consequences of such harm. These consequences effect cognitions and behaviors that shape collective identity. Most instances of collective victimhood are preceded by some form of victimization, whereas not every act of victimization results in a state of victimhood (Noor et al., 2008).

Collective victimhood can emerge as a result of diverse events, such as genocide, war, or ethnic conflict. It can be inflated by religion, racism, and any form of hatred towards certain groups of society. Scholars investigate how the notion of collective victimhood is inherited by groups where people did not experience events personally, yet this feeling is an integral part of their collective identity. In order to understand the psychological-political origins of collective victimhood, one ought to take into account the social power structures and the various historical contexts of each case study (Johanna, 2020). At all times, one must remember that victims are not passive or apolitical: they propel their victimhood throughout the conflict, but also in post-conflict societies, where victimhood is defined, negotiated and also—contested ((Druliolle & Brett, 2018).
Although collective victimhood can be found in non-violent conflicts, such as the intergroup relations in Belgium between French and Dutch speakers (Jasimi et al., 2017), groups tend to maintain a sense of collective victimhood as a result of various traumatic experiences – such as past colonial occupation, widespread harm and damage, wars, prolonged exploitation and discrimination, or genocide. Many of these events fall within the framework of vicious and violent conflicts (Bar-Tal et al., 2009a).

The sense of collective victimhood is a result of a hostile context and the socio-psychological range of narratives that accompanies conflicts. Violence, loss, and unavoidable suffering are framed within an ethos of conflict, which inevitably leads to a collective self-perception of victimhood (Bar-Tal et al., 2009a).

Collective victimhood is defined as a mindset that is shared by group members following perceived intentional harm with severe and lasting consequences inflicted on the members of the group by others (Bar-Tal et al., 2009a). Collective victimhood experiences are complex, multi-layered, and are among some of the most impactful experiences that individuals and groups can have (Noor et al., 2008). The harm caused to group members is viewed as undeserved, unjust, immoral and unavoidable. It is noteworthy that collective victimhood can develop within society even if the harm has not been experienced personally, but only by other members of the group. Furthermore—it could also develop if the event did not occur in one’s lifetime, even if it happened decades or centuries ago (Bar-Tal et al., 2009a). Ervin Staub and Daniel Bar-Tal phrased it accurately:

> Groups encode important experiences, especially extensive suffering, in their collective memory, which can maintain a sense of woundedness and past injustice through generations. (Staub & Bar-Tal, 2003, p. 722)

Thus, a victim is not necessarily just someone who suffered one calamity or another. Victimhood is a perception, and it has to do with one’s definition of oneself, or in the cases that we analyze—the group definitions following a certain chain of events. A collective self-definition as a victim requires five conditions: (1) the people were harmed; (2) they were not responsible for the occurrence of the harmful act; (3) they could not prevent the harm; (4) they are morally right and suffering from injustice done to them; (5) they deserve sympathy (Stroble, 2004; Sykes, 1992).

In General, scholars see victimization as a dynamic social process divided into several sequential stages that eventually result in the above specific conditions. For instance, the symbolic interaction approach asserts that group members experience a harmful act that causes suffering; they consequently remove self-responsibility for the suffering; then they acknowledge the causes of the harmful act and create the specifications of expected responses and behaviors (Bar-Tal et al., 2009a).

Collective victimhood is a social construction, and to flourish it needs a social environment where it is constantly legitimized. Various social surroundings where different social groups evolve allow cultural variations of victimhood according to changing political contexts (Holstein & Miller, 1990).

2.2. Victory

Feelings of victory and patriotism are directly affiliated with historical collective memories of the national community, since every nation needs to proclaim its people’s achievements in every aspect of daily life, from politics to the economy, science, sports, and beyond (Maniou et al., 2016). The accurate context of victory depends on how the goals of the campaign are defined. A successful military campaign is not a sufficient condition for victory, nor is it always a necessary one. Political, economic, and civic forces may all shape the longer-term outcome of the war, so as to render it an overall success or failure (Blum, 2013).

The military, civilian, and political dimensions of war and victory have always been inextricably intertwined. However, they have become even more entangled in contemporary wars. Whereas
the classic form of victory is a phenomenon that is presented only in battlefields, 21st century warfare can no longer be reduced into just a military campaign, and there are ongoing attempts to formulate victory using longer term, more abstract, and more complex criteria. Wars have become about long-term change, requiring not only aggression but also a measure of compassion, particularly regarding individual targets; consequently, the political and civilian dimensions of victory have outgrown the military one (Blum, 2013). Hence, in post-World War II reality, victory has become more difficult to identify, define, and evaluate. Total wars no longer take place, and one can consequently lose a war, certainly a battle, without a total surrender. The practice of formal surrender has ceased to exist, and greater debates over the classification of the outcomes of war have developed (Blum, 2013).

What creates victory is the strategic outcome. A victory that is only operational and tactical does not count as one; it should also have a crucial effect beyond the battlefield. Victory, then, is not an objective result based on concrete measures, but a state of mind, a perception of reality, shaped and maintained either by traditional media or, recently, by the new social media. Skill at managing social tools such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube is a key in influencing regional and international perceptions of victory. In this sense, military operations resemble the competitions that took place in the Colosseum (Smith, 2006). Consequently, victory must be expressed through an overall feeling that the achievements that were gained in the battles are acknowledged and sustainable, and that they establish a postwar political situation that resolves former national challenges (Bartholomew, 2008).

2.3. Universal justice
National ethos is a source of deep belief in the justness of the group’s goals and the collective positive self-image – as opposed to an affirmation of the wickedness of the opponents’ goals and characteristics. Focusing on the injustices, atrocities, harm, and evil committed by the group’s enemies leads society members to present themselves as the source of human morality. All the responsibility for the ongoing conflict lies with the group’s opponents. These opponents will always be portrayed as the repository of evil, where violence, atrocities, cruelty, lack of concern for human life, and viciousness rule. The more the other side is inhuman and corrupt, the more one’s group is pure and honorable. Defeating the wicked party is not merely a victory over rivals, but a triumph of the loftiest universal values, since the perception was in the first place that the conflict was imposed by an adversary who fought for unjust goals and used violent and immoral means (Sahdra & Ross, 2007; White, 1970).

In order to understand the role morality plays within the framework of the national ethos, we engage here, as a theoretical foundation, the works of Emil Durkheim. For Durkheim, morality has its basis in social engagement. The construction of morality is fully sociological, since it depends on collective experiences that shape both the emotions and thoughts of human agents (Shilling & Mellor, 1998). Durkheim viewed moral rules as emotionally grounded products of society. He associates moral rules with social facts – that is, facts that are perceived as such because they arise through collective sentiments, and come to hold a compelling and coercive power over the individual’s consciousness. In Durkheim’s work, “moral” is often synonymous with “social,” and accordingly —“individual” stands for immoral qualities, articulating one’s egoistic passions (Fields, 1995).

Essential in Durkheim’s work is the manner in which at the social level there is a collective effervescence that is inspired by assembled social groups, which control people’s passions and attach them to the symbolic order of society. The development of this collective effervescence allows individuals to interact based on shared concepts, sometimes remote from personal ones (Durkheim, [1912] 1995). Durkheim’s notion of collective effervescence captures the idea of a social force at its birth; when that effervescence is embodied, humans feel themselves and are transformed from an individualistic state of mind to a collectivistic one (Gane, 1988).

Examples for the demonstration of national ethos through its three components can be brought from numerous case studies. Perhaps an outstanding example is evident in Winston Churchill’s
World War II speeches, where he expressed victimhood, victory against all odds, and the quest for universal justice. In his first speech in office, on 13 May 1940 addressing the House of Commons, Churchill gave his blood, toil, tears and sweat oration, where victimhood was clearly outlined:

I would say to the House, as I said to those who have joined this Government: I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat. We have before us an ordeal of the most grievous kind. We have before us many, many long months of struggle and of suffering. You ask, what is our policy? I can say: It is to wage war, by sea, land and air, with all our might and with all the strength that God can give us; to wage war against a monstrous tyranny, never surpassed in the dark, lamentable catalogue of human crime. (Churchill, 2004, p. 204)

At the same speech, Churchill also indicated the exact goal of the war, that is—winning, no matter what it takes:

[…] You ask, what is our aim? I can answer in one word: It is victory, victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory, however long and hard the road may be, for without victory, there is no survival. (Churchill, 2004, p. 206)

Of course, this also corresponded with his 4 June 1940 address to the House of Commons after the Dunkirk evacuation:

Even though large tracts of Europe and many old and famous states have fallen or may fall into the grip of the Gestapo and all the odious apparatus of Nazi rule, we shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender. (Churchill, 2004, p. 218)

In his 18 June 1940 address to the House of Commons, Churchill referred to the Battle of Britain, marking its quest for universal justice:

[…] Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilization. Upon it depends our own British life, and the long continuity of our institutions and our Empire. The whole fury and might of the enemy must very soon be turned upon us. Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this Island or lose the war. […] If we can stand up to him, all Europe may be free and the life of the world may move forward into broad, sunlit uplands. But if we fail, then the whole world, including the United States, including all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age made more sinister, and perhaps more protracted, by the lights of perverted science. (Churchill, 2004, p. 229)

These were not just Churchill’s own reflections; the reason why his words inspired a whole nation lie in the fact that they were embedded deep in the British national ethos. As Churchill himself testified on 30 November 1954 addressing both Houses of Parliament on his 80th birthday:

I am very glad that Mr Attlee described my speeches in the war as expressing the will not only of Parliament but of the whole nation. Their will was resolute and remorseless and, as it proved, unconquerable. It fell to me to express it […] It was the nation and race dwelling all round the globe that had the lion heart. I had the luck to be called upon to give the roar. (Churchill, 2004, p. 490)

3. The case study of the Palestinian Second Intifada 2000-2005
The Second Intifada was a period of intensified violence between Palestinians and Israelis, which took place from September 2000 to 2005 and produced a death toll of some 3000 Palestinians and about 1000 Israelis (Schachter, 2010).
The general historical perception is that popular Palestinian discontent increased throughout the years of the Oslo peace process, because daily reality did not match the expectations created by the peace agreements. Beginning in 1993, various aspects of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip deepened rather than decreased. Whereas Palestinians expected their lives to improve in terms of freedom of movement and socioeconomic standing, both factors worsened. The result was a gradual buildup of resentment within Palestinian society. In July 2000, the Camp David summit ended with complete failure of the sides to advance a peace process, and the ensuing discontent created the groundwork for popular support among Palestinians of a militant approach towards Israel. Even Palestinians who believed in negotiations as a means to achieve their political national goals, tended to support the use of force in order to show the Israeli side what would happen if there was no progress at the negotiating table (Eiland, 2010; Pressman, 2003).

The Palestinians used multiple means in their struggle: civil demonstrations that attracted foreign press and pictured the IDF as the aggressor; stone throwing and use of firearms during the demonstrations; fire from ambushes; car bombs; and finally—a growing number of suicide attacks (Eiland, 2010).

After the first phase of the uprising, beginning in March 2001, Hamas started to attract Palestinian factions by implementing suicide terror. About 60 suicide bombings took place, killing almost 500 Israelis—about 50 percent of the Israeli casualties throughout the whole Intifada. Thus, suicide terror proved to be most efficient in terms of lethality. However, over time this tactic was suppressed by governing Palestinian Authority elites, and was discarded by 2005 (Matta & Rojas, 2016).

One of the most important developments throughout the Second Intifada was Operation Defensive Shield, launched by the IDF following the death of 30 civilians at a Passover meal at the Park Hotel in Netanya, on 29 March 2002. The operation included a reentry of Israeli forces into the major cities of the West Bank (Bethlehem, Jenin, Nablus, Qalqilya, and Ramallah), which until then were under Palestinian civil and security control according to the 1993 Oslo accords. The operation resulted in the death or capture of numerous terrorists and terrorist suspects and the discovery of many explosives workshops (Schachter, 2010).

In 2004, IDF operations in the West Bank and Gaza became more frequent. Most importantly, they included the targeted killing of Hamas leaders Ahmad Yassin and Abdel Aziz al-Rantisi. As part of Israel’s defensive actions against terrorists coming from the Palestinian territories, the construction of substantial sections of the separation barrier between Israel and the West Bank was completed (Schachter, 2010).

4. Methodology
Case study design is a research approach in diverse disciplines. It enables the scientist to investigate complex phenomena that require in-depth examination in specific contexts (Munhall, 2006). In this paper, we refer only to one case study where both the Palestinian and the Israeli sides of the prolonged violent struggle are evaluated. Although it is not a valid sample for generalizing empirical data to larger populations, it is valid for judging theoretical propositions on their merits (Yin, 1981). The data collected in this research was taken from official sites and from media sources in Israel and in the Palestinian Authority. In both cases reference was made to speeches in which national leaders addressed in real-time issues concerning the conflict. In order to stick to the exact context of interpretations of events by the speakers, particularly in their domestic settings, we referred to the original Hebrew versions of Israeli public addresses, and to original Arabic versions of Palestinian public addresses. The translation of speeches in both cases was made by the authors of this paper.
We conducted a comparative study, relying on studies that show how in different social groups a presumed common culture can be instrumental in justifying the demarcation of national boundaries (Akinci, 2019). We assumed that a national leader would conduct a process in which he influences his followers to promote what he defines as the common goals of the group (Byman & Pollak, 2001). With this assumption in mind, we chose to focus solely on the speeches of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon on the Israeli side and Chairman Yasser Arafat on the Palestinian side.

We analyzed 19 speeches made by Sharon and 28 speeches given by Arafat. Our analysis took the form of a pattern matching technique, finding corresponding empirical data and theoretical frameworks. Pattern matching techniques first identify, then compare the patterns that are evident in the data with one or several hypothesized patterns that the analyst has developed through familiarity with the field. Therefore, the task of the researcher in a pattern matching method is to specify the variables, based on an a priori proposition derived from theory, and to represent the relevant findings according to these variables (Swanborn, 2010; Yin, 2009). In this specific research, the various themes that we found in the speeches of Sharon and the themes that we found in the speeches of Arafat were positioned against the three themes that construct national ethos: victimhood, victory and universal justice. The notion of pattern identification corresponds with a holistic attitude of analyzing diverse data within the context in which they occur, as opposed to an atomistic approach that tends to reduce data, ignoring the influence of the context that produced it (Campbell, 1966). Pattern matching techniques treat observations from a multivariate rather than a univariate perspective, and they are designed to enhance the consistency of the study. Once the empirically found patterns match the predicted ones – in this research, when the data from the media matches the three themes of national ethos – the findings can strengthen the internal validity of the study and result in the confirmation of the major theoretical propositions (Yin, 2009).

5. Findings from the speeches of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon
Quotations from Sharon’s addresses from the years of the Second Intifada can be split into the three themes of national ethos.

5.1. Victimhood
In different instances, Sharon expressed the idea that being victims is part of Jewish destiny. Jews are victims of an entire category of enemies:

Israel is the only place on earth where Jews have the right and the ability to protect themselves. This right has to be preserved at all cost […]. [However,] the Arab world has not recognized yet our right for a state in this place where our nation had been born. […] Our enemies have not ceased to dream of destroying us (Address to the Knesset, 21 October 2003).

However, in most cases, the Palestinians are considered the first to inflict this collective victimhood:

The Palestinian terror organizations, led by Yasser Arafat, have executed some of the most cruel terror attacks we have ever known (Address at the Herzeliya Conference, 18 December 2003).

Counting current individual victims, Sharon practically turns them into the representatives of Zionism’s collective losses throughout history:

The seventeen-year old girl and her boyfriend who were ruthlessly cut to pieces with knives and axes; the four soldiers that were killed when guarding Palestinian as well as Jewish workers […]; seventeen civilians who were the victims of bomb terrorism in the center of Jerusalem […]. We have been enduring Arab terrorism, that later turned into Palestinian
terrorism, for over one hundred and twenty years now (Address to the Knesset, 16 June 2003).

Another instance where a victim is described as a representation of the national collective victimhood is in a speech on the second anniversary of the assassination of Rehavam “Gandhi” Ze’evi—an Israeli retired general and right-wing politician who was murdered by a Palestinian killer:

Like all victims of Palestinian terrorism, Gandhi was murdered because he was a Jew [yet] he was also murdered because he was a symbol of the [...] Jewish people whose destiny has been to struggle forever for its life (Address to the Knesset, 24 November 2003).

This notion of collective victimhood as part of a historical destiny is elaborated upon in many of Sharon's speeches. To mention one more example:

The struggle of the Jewish people for existence still goes on [...]. We are paying a heavy price for our struggle to defend our citizens. We are fighting a ruthless and inhuman enemy [...]. Let me send my condolences to the [newly] bereaved families and wish health to the wounded soldiers (Address to the Knesset, 11 May 2004).

5.2. Victory against all odds

We can see in Sharon's speeches the sense of victory against all odds in several examples. Going far back in history, to perhaps the greatest victimhood of the Israeli national ethos, Sharon stated in a speech on the fifty-eighth anniversary of the defeat of the Third Reich:

The war against Germany was a struggle for life [...]. The State of Israel, strong and developed, is living proof of the great Jewish triumph over the Nazi attempt to annihilate any Jewish existence [...]. Fifty-eight years after the victory over Germany we should be inspired in our encounters with those who still wish to harm us just because we are Jews (Address to the Knesset, 13 May 2003).

Hence, the heroic victory, as Sharon's quotation ends, is not just limited to the great triumph over the Nazis, but is also inspiration relative to other entities, particularly Israel's rivals in the Middle East. In a speech given at the twenty-fifth anniversary for the peace treaty between Prime Minister Menachem Begin and President Anwar Sadat, Sharon linked the reconciliation process with Israel's decisive winning of the war:

The peace agreement [with Egypt] would never have been achieved had it not been for the bravery of IDF fighters throughout decades of conflict. Their success in stopping the surprise invasion and in turning the [Egyptian] assault into [an Israeli] victory showed the entire Arab world that Jewish revival in our ancient homeland is a fait accompli (Address to the Knesset, 24 March 2004).

The theme of victory in Israel's national ethos also refers, of course, to the war against Palestinian terror in the midst of the Second Intifada. Sharon put things clearly in his speeches:

For the last two years the State of Israel has withstood waves of cruel terror attacks. Terrorism did not subdue our people and would never defeat us. [...] It has always been our destiny, throughout our entire history, to survive, to cope, to endure human as well as heavenly tests that no other people on earth has ever experienced. [...] However, we are an ancient people, mighty in our spirit (Address to the Knesset, 27 February 2003).

On another occasion, referring specifically to the Palestinians, Sharon stated even more concretely:

By fighting against terrorism [...] we managed to bring the Palestinian Authority into agreement with what they have been opposing until lately, that is – to take responsibility
and to stop terrorism in certain districts. [...] As a result of our firm stand, there is a growing voice in the world, calling for actions against the murderous Hamas movement (Address to the Knesset, 16 June 2003).

5.3. Universal justice
The third theme of Israeli national ethos, as demonstrated through Sharon’s speeches, is the notion that Jewish triumph inherently carries with it a universal measure of justice and morality. In his speech on the fifty-ninth anniversary of the defeat of the Third Reich, commemorating one and a half million Jewish soldiers who fought among the allied forces, Sharon linked their struggle and their success with their universal values:

This was not merely a military victory. It was a moral triumph of freedom and democracy over dictatorship; the triumph of human spirit and love over hatred and racism in their worst form (Address to the Knesset, 11 May 2004).

These values, however, were not limited to World War II and its aftermath. Later on in his speech, Sharon makes this comparison:

Just like its war against the Third Reich, today too humanity faces a worldwide enemy – international terrorism. This enemy threatens not only human lives, but also the basic values of the Enlightened human society. [...] The historic victory of May 9 [1945] will not be complete unless the Enlightened world maintains the values for which it had fought (Address to the Knesset, 11 May 2004).

Indeed, Israel’s victories, according to Sharon’s speeches from the years explored in this research, were always for one universal human purpose: achieving peace. In a Knesset session dedicated to thirty years since the 1973 War, he stated:

Peace for us is not merely strategy; rather, it is a passion. It is the natural choice of a democratic society that abides under the Jewish tradition calling to “seek peace and pursue it.” [...] Deterrence is not only a matter of superiority in military power or technological abilities [...] it is also the moral advantage of the IDF as an army that is dedicated to Jewish ethics and to the laws of democracy (Address to the Knesset, 21 October 2003).

According to this logic, the victory of universal values should belong not only to the past but also to the future. In another speech, Sharon stated that:

Twenty-five years after signing the peace treaty with Egypt, we are still putting all of our efforts into developing a culture of peace in the Middle East. [...] We yearn for a peace process that will take all the nations of the region towards security, progress and economic prosperity (Address to the Knesset, 24 March 2004).

The connection between historic victories, present victories, and future ones is the theme of ethical values that are an inherent factor in every triumph, particularly in the war against Palestinian terrorism in which Israel was engaged during the 2000s:

Once terrorism is defeated, a new Israel will arise. A country of science, sophisticated industry, beautiful music and dance, medicine, biotechnology and nanotechnology, and modern agriculture. [...] Our struggle against terrorism is just for one purpose: achieving peace (Address to the Knesset, 16 June 2003).

In sum, then, one can see clearly how the three themes are intertwined in Sharon’s speeches, and construct together one solid concept: (1) The Jews have always been victims, first in Europe, then in the Middle East, and lately due to Palestinian terror attacks. (2) Just like in Europe and in the great
wars against Arab states in recent decades, Israel is winning all its struggles. (3) This victory, however, has a universal spiritual merit—the values of an Enlightened society that yearns for peace.

6. Findings from the speeches of Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat
Quotations from Arafat’s speeches, just like the Sharon addresses, can be sorted out into the three components of national ethos.

6.1. Victimization
On the occasion of the Arab Summit in Cairo, on 21 October 2000 shortly after the uprising broke out, Arafat said:

The Israeli Government […] did not forgive the Palestinian worshippers for their steadfastness and committed a new massacre during Friday prayers in the Al-Aqsa mosque compound on the very next day. We all saw the bloody chapters of this massacre in the media […] Innocent blood was shed abundantly on the pure Al-Aqsa land. A new procession of honorable people of this nation was added to the martyrs who defend the holy places and who stand fast on this blessed land and defend its purity with faith and pride. There is no inch of Palestinian territory that has not been saturated with Arab blood that is dear to all of us (speech at the Arab Summit in Cairo, 21 October 2000).

In a speech given in Amman, three months later, he said:

The Israeli military escalation includes the use of internationally prohibited weapons such as depleted uranium, various gases and missiles; blockading cities, camps and villages; trying to starve our people and not paying their financial and tax dues; stealing our land through settlement expansion; bulldozing our crops; demolishing and destroying our factories, roads, and homes; and killing and wounding our children, youth, and women.

Since [October 2000], the number of our martyrs and wounds of heroes has doubled, and the number of our unemployed workers has increased, including preventing our fishermen from fishing in the Gaza Sea. I do not want to describe the degrading of the dignity of our citizens at thousands of military checkpoints, nor the crimes of armed settlers and their attacks on our defenseless people […] Not to mention the Hundred Days plan announced recently by the Israeli Chief of Staff that led to the division of the West Bank and Gaza into sixty-four military squares, within the framework of a comprehensive plan to enter our cities and regions and to kill our leaders and cadres and to crush the peace process (speech at the Arab summit in Amman, 28 March 2001).

When addressing the Palestinian Legislative Council, celebrating the beginning of a third year of uprising, he said:

Today, May 15 is our Nakba day. A day when we remember the suffering that our people have suffered and still endure in the face of all these difficult circumstances and historical challenges. We face unjust aggressive war against our people, from the field of thorns to the battle of the hundred days, to hell, to the rolling, and colored, to the protective fence, and our people in every city, camp, and village, and in every town holding steadfast in the face of occupation, siege, massacres, and aggression (speech at the Palestinian Legislative Council, 15 May 2002).

In his last speech, addressing the Palestinian Legislative council, Arafat said:

I turn to the brave knights of our people, whom we cherish, those who struggle and find themselves in [Israeli] prisons, and call them to maintain their patience and steadfastness […] We are all projects of martyrdom, and we do not fear death (addresses to the Palestinian Legislative Council, 18 August 2004).
6.2. Victory against all odds

At the Arab Summit in Cairo, on 21 October 2000 Arafat said:

Our people, who were worshipping in Al-Aqsa, encountered Sharon with their chests and naked fists, and prevented him from conducting this dangerous visit, forcing him to leave the holy place [...]. The blood that was shed in Al-Aqsa definitely unleashed the wrath in the hearts of our Palestinian masses everywhere in the homeland. The unarmed citizens rose to express their feelings in a legitimate spontaneous intifada (speech at the Arab Summit in Cairo, 21 October 2000).

In the speech given in Amman, three months after the uprising began, he said:

We, with all responsibility, and with all clarity, will continue our popular steadfastness by all legitimate and internationally recognized means. Yes, this is our vision, and this is our policy and this is our commitment, in fulfillment of our rights and our sacred places in fulfillment of all our martyrs (speech at the Arab summit in Amman, 28 March 2001).

In his last speech, addressing the Palestinian Legislative council, Arafat said:

Our meeting today is a clear signal for all that confirms the determination of all our people, our leadership and institutions to continue to work and advance despite the continued blockade, occupation and aggressions. Our meeting today is evidence for the vitality of our institutions that have been subject for years to aggressive campaigns aiming to liquidate our national entity [...]. I reaffirm once again that the Palestinian people who resist the last occupation in the world are determined to walk the path of peace in order to gain their freedom, end the occupation, and build an independent Palestinian state with its capital Al-Quds Al-Sharif.

I say to our people, this stubborn people [...]:let us continue our path with confidence as we used to. Dawn is coming, and freedom is coming. [We shall struggle] together, until a cub of our cubs and one of our flowers raises the flag of Palestine over the minarets of Jerusalem and the churches of Jerusalem! (addresses to the Palestinian Legislative Council, 18 August 2004).

6.3. Universal justice

During the Arab Summit in Cairo, on 21 October 2000 Arafat referred in details to international norms, international law, and above all—what he perceived as the relevant UN resolutions:

The Israeli Government, supported by some international quarters, tried to portray the mass extermination campaign against our people as a military engagement between two military sides, and the expression of the need to reach a framework for ceasefire between the two sides unjustly surfaced. Israel should lift the siege on our cities and people and withdraw from all the Palestinian and Arab territories, including holy Jerusalem, the capital of our independent Palestinian state. Israel should also solve the issue of refugees justly on the basis of Resolution 194 and the other international resolutions.

Your majesties, your highnesses: Speaking in the highest Arab forum, I reiterate that despite all the scars and disappointments, we choose a just, lasting, and comprehensive peace. I reiterate that our goals are the liberation of our land, the establishment of our independent state on the blessed land of Palestine with holy Jerusalem as its capital, and the return of refugees based on international legitimacy resolutions, especially Resolutions 181 and 194.

These goals, which our Palestinian People and Arab and Muslim nations agree on, and which the entire world and the UN support, must be realized this year. We have a natural right to self-determination [...]. Our people of revolutionary struggle, the people of the glorious
intifada, whose waves will only stop with victory, pledge to every Arab, Muslim, Christian, and friend to continue their struggle using all legitimate means to reach victory (speech at the Arab Summit in Cairo, 21 October 2000).

In a letter to President Bill Clinton, two months later, Arafat repeated the theme of international norms of justice and UN resolutions:

The catastrophe that has befallen our Palestinian people requires a just solution to the refugee issue as the core of the Palestinian issue and so that this solution is based on international legitimacy in accordance with Resolution 194 to ensure that the right of return of refugees to their homes and properties is recognized (letter to President Clinton, 26 December 2000).

In his last speech, addressing the Palestinian Legislative council, Arafat said:

Every village, every town, every camp, and every city in our homeland has become isolated and encircled in the context of the collective punishment process and economic strangulation that has no parallel in today's world. All this is all happening in front of the world's hearing and sight. We want a lot from the summit. This is our hope and our right, and we say this because the Israeli government and its army do not hesitate to veto all covenants and obligations. [There should be an] Arab and international reaction to [Israel's] barbaric behavior against our people, and towards [Israel's] political position that denies the foundations and rules of the peace process. The world, and in particular the United States, should realize again that the conflict in our region is a struggle with an expansionist Israeli occupation, an occupation that embodies violence and terrorism [...] (addresses to the Palestinian Legislative Council, 18 August 2004).

A statistical overlook at the data that emerges from the Palestinian Chairman's 28 speeches that are covered in this research shows the distribution between the three components of national ethos as indicated in Table 1: Victimhood, Victory and Justice in Arafat's Speeches. The data in the table is based on Al-Quds, Al-Ayyam and Al-Hayat Al-Jadeeda, three daily newspapers in the Palestinian Authority between October 2000 and 11 November 2004 the day of Arafat's death.

The distribution seems to be steady throughout the years, with the sense of victimhood leading with about 40% of the quotations, the belief in universal justice in second place with about 35% of the quotations, and the theme of victory against all odds comes last with about 24% of the quotations. This tendency proved to be stable throughout the years investigated here, except for the measurements of October 2000. These can be overlooked since they reflect only one month.

7. Conclusion
This paper examined, through the analyses of the Speeches of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian Chairman Yasser Arafat the rival parties' mutually negating sets of ethos at a crucial point in time: the 2000 to 2005 Second Intifada—a Palestinian uprising that led to a death toll of about 3,000 Palestinians and 1,000 Israelis. Unlike the first Intifada, the Palestinian 2000 uprising was violent, and included suicide bombings, self-sacrifice attacks, and the use of firearms. Various symbols of the Palestinian national ethos were employed during this period, including the enhancement of the image of the victim vis-à-vis the Israeli occupier and the glorification of the martyrs (Allen, 2008). Commemorating the martyrs from 2001 to 2005 became social convention at funerals, restaurants, schools, shops, and homes. Children wore shirts with pictures of martyrs. Pictures of terrorists who sacrificed themselves for the homeland were posted on textbooks and cars (Allen, 2008). This round of ferocity in the Middle East has deepened the psychological effects of violence on both parties, the Israeli as well as the Palestinian faction, turning them more and more into trauma societies.

Our focus was on the fact that the structure of the two opposing forms of ethos was identical. In both cases, we could easily find the three basic themes of every national ethos: a deep feeling of
Table 1. Victimhood, victory and justice in Arafat’s speeches

| Period    | Victimhood | Victory | Universal Justice | Total number of references |
|-----------|------------|---------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| October 2000 | 8         | 6      | 4                 | 18                         |
| 2001      | 16         | 9      | 14                | 39                         |
| 2002      | 21         | 8      | 18                | 47                         |
| 2003      | 10         | 9      | 10                | 29                         |
| 2004      | 11         | 7      | 10                | 28                         |
| Total     | 66         | 39     | 56                | 161                        |

collective victimhood, a strong belief in victory even when chances seem to be low, and an understanding that triumph in spite of victimhood proves moral measures and universal justice.

Our case study is significant in the sense that it embodies traits of conflicts that are typical not only in the local Middle Eastern arena where Palestinians and Israelis quarrel over a specific piece of land. In modern conflicts elsewhere, conducted by various countries of different sizes and histories, military forces must stand against armed civilians. The latter, often—as part of their psychological warfare, present themselves as innocent victims and describe their criminal terrorist activities in terms of legitimate guerilla assaults. However, both sides create their narratives and construct their national contradicting forms of ethos using the same tripartite pattern of victimhood, victory and justice.

The significance of national collective narratives and their social effect on networks of all levels has already been inquired (Finell, 2019). The attitude of narrative approach to conflicts and the idea of constructing strategies for narrative intervention in order to develop a tool for reconciliation has already been suggested in the framework of narrative transformation (Garagozov & Gadirova, 2018). In particular, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been analyzed through the lenses of narrative studies (Adwan et al., 2016; Klar & Baram, 2016; Oren et al., 2015). Accordingly, our point of departure in this research was the belief that if there is any key to decipher violent vicious circles, it probably lies in a comprehension of the way the mechanism of national ethos works. Hence, by realizing the exact generic structure of the national ethos of rival parties in a conflict, we might be close to reaching, or at least to scratching the surface of, possible keys to settling quarrels.

The national ethos integrates trauma community into feeling a common mutual destiny and forms the foundations of its unique identity as a distinctive social group. The integrative ethos enforces commitments upon society and is, in fact, one of the most important key factors for maintaining social cohesiveness, which is crucial for the success of the group. In view of the important functions of national ethos, it makes sense, then, to assume that an immediate change of national ethos is not only unrealistic but might also carry with it some negative ramifications, such as social disintegration. Thus, isolating specific factors within the ethos can be an optional technique to dismantling landmines, so to speak. For instance, if one of the parties manages to diminish one of the three themes of national ethos, the clash with the opposing national ethos is bound to be softer. If, for example, the Israeli party or the Palestinian one reduces their sense of victimhood—the collision between the two forms of national resilience will take place only within the realm of two themes (victory and justice). If, taking it a step further, the Israelis diminish their sense of victimhood and the Palestinians lessen their claim for a universal just cause, the conflict between the parties will remain within the boundaries of a sole theme (victory).
This study analyzed the expressions of leaders, assuming that these leaders are not only private people announcing their personal perceptions, but rather the designers of a collective public consciousness. Despite our focus on leaders, the social phenomena, which the study points to in the conclusions reflect the development of the ethos among the public. However, in his works, mediation trainer and conflict resolution consultant John Paul Lederach suggested that the concepts of leaders and their public concerning national ethos might differ (Lederach, 1995, 1997).

Our findings suggest clearly that the three components of national ethos form fundamental barriers to reconciliation in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In fact, they bear the capacity to maintain conflict and trauma. If a political leader conducts the process where he influences his followers to promote what he defines for them as the national goals of the group, then the national leader can also alter the national ethos, or at least moderate one or two of its three components. The notion that national ethos, unlike merely specific narratives that relate to one event or another, has the capacity to change people’s attitudes towards conflict, even towards protracted conflict, leaves room for researchers as well as practitioners to concentrate on its three components. In this sense, this research might be a theoretic cornerstone for further – perhaps more practical and less academic—inquiries that will eventually promote peace efforts and diminish violence affected collective trauma.

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