*The intractability of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict with a focus on the construction of identity*

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signed by candidate

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# Contents

# 1 Chapter One: Introduction

## 1.1 Dissertation overview: problem statement and research question

The aim of this dissertation is to contribute to the existing literature on the defining features of intractable conflict. It will look specifically at the intractability of the conflict between Israel and Palestine, and evaluate the factors that have contributed to sustaining this conflict. Included in the analysis will be an examination of the failed peace processes over time, as well as an assessment of the nature of identity formation and the role this plays in sustaining intractable conflicts. This analysis, which will seek to present an understanding of how the construction of identity in relation to "the Other" has hindered viable options for sustainable peace in the region, draws on John Paul Lederach"s work on conflict transformation. Transformation, Lederach argues, provides not only a lens through which to understand certain aspects of conflict but also an overarching framework to make sense of the conflict as a whole (Lederach, 2003).

## 1.2 Case Study: The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

The relationship between Israel and Palestine presents a situation of protracted conflict. Many reasons are cited as to why this conflict is seemingly intractable. The literature on the origins and progression of the conflict places an increased focus on the construction of antagonistic and uncompromising identities as a key motivating factor driving the conflict and preventing any meaningful progression towards peace. Other factors, which are seen both as a perpetual hindrance to peace and driving motivators of the conflict include, the uncompromising status of Jerusalem, the Right of Return for Palestinian refugees, the sovereignty and security of each state, the continual redefinition of borders and Israeli settlement expansion, among others. Each of these motivating factors form part of the larger picture of conflict in the region. Each will be analysed independently before being discussed in relation to the conflict as a whole. While all these factors play a part in sustaining the conflict, it is evident throughout the literature that at its core the dispute centres on the competing narratives of the conflicting sides.

Central to discussions on failed peace processes is the notion of uncompromising identity construction and demonization of "the Other". While the term „identity" itself is difficult to define, the literature recognises identity both as an outcome of the process of state building and as a key variable in explanations for the continuation of conflict. In the case of the on-going Israel/Palestine conflict, the relevant literature suggests that identity characteristics and dynamics may be a key obstacle to successful peace negotiations. While the construction of identity can be applied to individuals, it is equally important to understand it through the lens of national identity construction, since this has played a key role in obstructing sustainable peace. Additionally, there is a need to analyse why repeated peace attempts have failed. The literature suggests that while concerted efforts towards peace have been

made, no peace negotiation have yielded long-term, durable peace, which is attributed to several reasons, including among others the influence of external actors and international and regional interests.

The central and interrelated themes of this dissertation are the competing identities claimed by Israel and Palestine in relation to the on-going conflict, and the realisation of a Palestinian national statehood. Of particular interest is how these differing constructions of identity contribute to the intractability of the conflict and how this is echoed through the respective narratives. This will be followed by an examination of the various other factors fuelling the conflict, including inter alia the factors which proved particularly difficult to resolve during the negotiation phases. After presenting an analysis of the failed attempts at peace and the various negotiation phases that have taken place, the discussion will try to understand why these attempts have been unsuccessful. The table below gives an indication of dates and events delineating the case study.

| DATE | CONFERENCE | SHORT DESCRIPTION |
|------|-----------|-------------------|
| 1948 | UN General Assembly Partition Plan | Called for the partition of Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state at the end of the British Mandate. |
| 1949 | Armistice Agreement | Agreement between Israel and neighbouring Arab states outlining the borders of the newly formed state of Israel. |
| 1967 | UN Resolution 242 | Drew up principles for a peaceful settlement in the Middle East. Called for the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from all territories occupied in the 1967 war. |
| 1973 | UN Resolution 338 | Reaffirmed the principles of Resolution 242 and called for negotiations. |
| 1978 | Camp David Accords | Agreement between Egypt and Israel. Also set out the Framework for Peace in the Middle East. |
| 1991-1993 | Madrid Peace Conference | Negotiations aimed at attempting to revive the peace process between Israel and Palestine. |
| 1993 | Oslo I Accords | Declaration of Principles geared towards a two-state solution aimed specifically at resolving the Israeli Palestinian dispute. |
| 2000 | Camp David Summit | Continuation of the negotiations of the Middle East peace process where the Final Status negotiations were to be resolved. No agreement was reached. |
| 2001 | Oslo II – Taba Talks | Details the five year interim agreement of Palestinian autonomy. Created Areas A, B and C in the West Bank. Proposed final agreements between Israel and Palestine. No agreement was reached. |
| 2002 | The „Roadmap‟ for Peace | Plan to resolve the Israeli Palestinian conflict specifically outlining steps to reach a peace agreement. |
| 2007 | Anapolis conference | Conference between Israel and Arab neighbours, formally restarting the negotiations and reaffirming the two-state solution. |
| 2010-2014 | General peace talks | Direct talks between Israel and Palestine. |

**Table 1**: Chronology of the various negotiations and peace processes

## 1.3    A Brief look at Lederach's model of conflict transformation

Conflict transformation is an approach to conflict resolution that seeks to address intractable conflicts by constructively managing and bringing about positive change to the conflict situation (Lederach, 2003). Lederach emphasises that this model does not aim merely to provide a quick fix solution; rather, the central goal of conflict transformation is to constructively create change so that both the immediate issues of the dispute are addressed as well as the underlying patterns and causes. Consequently, it is the relationships and social structures forming the foundation and broader context of the conflict, which constitute the key areas to be targeted by any mechanisms seeking to catalyse constructive change (Lederach, 2003).

Lederach's model is premised on an acknowledgement of the constantly changing and fluid dynamic of conflict. Thus a central proposition is that any potential solution for a protracted conflict needs to take into account the contextual situation and identify remedies appropriate for resolving the conflict. Each response will suit a particular scenario; thus, the response needs to be tailored to the nature and context of the conflict and use multiple avenues to address it so as to create constructive change and solutions. Constructive conflict management is thus central to the transformational approach; however, it also emphasises the need to constantly revise and adapt one's approach to the situation, as conflict "...actors, issues, and interests will change over time" (Kiefer, 2015: 29).

Lederach's model of conflict transformation specifically highlights intractable conflicts, which are held to be centred on issues of competing identities. This model is, therefore, particularly important in relation to discussions on the nature of national identities and their contribution to sustaining intractable conflict. Identity-based conflict needs to be approached with the understanding that because the nature of identity is a fluid concept, the nature of the conflict also does not remain static. At their core, these types of intractable conflicts will necessarily introduce a relational dynamic between the actors and influences involved, which undergo constant changes over time. Inherent in the model, is the need to recognise that identity-based conflicts prioritise, to an exaggerated degree, protection of the conception of self with the objective of ensuring the survival of the identity group concerned.

# 2 Chapter Two: Research Design and Methodology

## 2.1 Research Method

Secondary research methods were used to construct the argument. This entailed the acquisition and review of literature on the Israeli - Palestinian conflict. The research material used was drawn primarily from academic sources; the work of influential authors in the fields of intractable conflicts, identity politics and specifically Lederach's conflict transformation model was consulted. The primary objective in respect of the research material obtained was to present and critically analyse the situation of protracted conflict in the Middle East. Furthermore, this paper looked to specifically address the motivating factors which fuel the intractability of the Israeli Palestinian conflict. As such, literature was gathered to present the information relating to the topic at hand in a coherent manner.

Academic writing is used as the basis of analysis for the overall issue of the intractability of the Israeli Palestinian conflict. Key arguments are derived from the academic sources consulted and presented in terms of a theoretical understanding of the literature. The initial discussion centres on the defining features of an intractable conflict, as well as the factors which make a conflict particularly unresolvable. The discussion then aims to identify the primary motivators that have sustained the Israeli Palestinian conflict. A special focus is given to the role played by the construction of opposing identities and narratives, which not only continue to fuel the conflict but also hinder, at a fundamental level, any prospects for peace. This is followed by a discussion and analysis of the various failed peace processes, specifically those aimed at addressing the situation in the Middle East, in an effort to understand why these negotiation phases were unsuccessful in producing any sustainable resolutions to the conflict and the key dynamics at play. Lederach's model of conflict transformation is the central methodological framework used; included is an analysis of how this model could be used effectively to change the focus of discussions so as to accommodate a broader perspective of change in terms of how the conflict is addressed.

## 2.2 Constraints and limitation

The research and analysis on the intractability of the Israeli - Palestinian conflict, in particular how the construction of identity plays a role in sustaining the conflict, remains devoid of a thorough assessment of the situation on the ground or an in-depth understanding of the lived experience of those involved. Nevertheless, as a result of the protracted nature of the conflict and keen interest in the fragility of the Middle East peace process, many authors have written extensively on the subject at hand. As such, the literature available is significant; however, it does not always present an unbiased account. The endurance of the conflict means that the constantly developing literature can only contribute to a limited analysis at the time of writing. Therefore, while an effort will be made to present a holistic view of the

factors contributing to the intractability, it is unlikely to be exhaustive in light of linguistic constraints and the rapid pace of developments in the field. The region has been riddled with violent political conflict for decades and as such, people's perceptions of identity and perspectives of the conflict have changed frequently over time. This presents a substantial limitation to investigating the differing definitions of identity. Therefore, the primary aim is to present an objective account, as much as is possible, on the importance of identity politics and the peace processes. Research into this field is best approached through a theoretical understanding of the situation, the nature of the conflict/ identity construction, and using this as a framework to guide the analysis of the conflict in question.

# 3 Chapter Three: Review of the literature on intractable conflicts and identity politics

This literature review aims to cover the current state of knowledge, theory and scholarly debate on the key factors contributing to intractable conflict. The notion of intractable conflict will be examined, in particular its defining characteristics. This will be followed by an evaluation of the key, fundamental factors which sustain a conflict situation or actively work to hinder peace processes. Because the Israeli - Palestinian conflict is one centred on the construction of conflicting and competing identities, with each looking to advance the ideals of nationalism and sovereignty of the respective parties to the conflict, the literature on notions of identity will also be analysed, with particular attention given to the study of identity politics and how it relates to the conflict. Of particular interest is the construction of national identities and religious nationalism, in light of how this particular conflict has been defined and is viewed across the board.

## 3.1 Defining intractable conflict

The literature on intractable conflicts is concerned primarily with investigating the causes and conditions of conflict that contribute to its intractable nature. There is broad consensus in the literature regarding the characterisation of intractable conflict as one that appears "impossible to resolve" (Coleman, 2006), and scholars generally agree that this is one of the primary features of a seemingly intractable conflict. This being said, it is necessary to unpack what this implies. Often, a key starting point in the examination of intractable conflicts is to explore the relationships between the different processes driving the conflict. Prominent authors investigating the nature of intractable conflicts (Azar, Kriesberg and Coleman for example) seek to provide a theoretical understanding of conflict, with the aim of facilitating a deeper understanding of what allows these conflicts to flourish.

Conflict is generally defined as "the perception of incompatible activities (goals, claims, beliefs, values, wishes, actions, feelings)" (Gray, Coleman and Putnam, 2007: 1415). The perception of incompatible activity creates a situation where, if one actor had to achieve their goals, it is to the detriment of the desired goals of the other. In other words, two actors with contrary goals creates a situation of conflict. In discussions of intractable conflict, it is pointed out that conflicts are perceived through existing cognitive structures such as attitudes towards another or beliefs held about the self and against others. Thus, the contextualisation of certain events and how one understands the nature of a particular conflict, is essentially driven by and understood through existing knowledge schemas. A group"s contextualisation of certain events is understood only insofar as they are able to place it within a framework of their existing normative understandings (Gray, Coleman and Putnam, 2007: 1416).

The literature is largely in agreement that certain characteristics need to be present in order for a conflict to be categorized as intractable. These characteristics, which are pointed out by multiple authors include inter alia; a *protracted* conflict that has lasted at least a generation; *violence* often resulting in the deaths of civilians or the commission of mass atrocities; an element of *centrality,* which implies that the conflict features prominently on the main agenda of the international global political sphere; it is *total* in the sense that both parties to the conflict view the cause for the continuation of the conflict as inherently necessary for their own recognition and for their continued existence or survival; and lastly, the conflict is characterised as intractable in that it demands extensive *psychological* and *material investments* by the parties in order to cope with – and to win – the conflict (Kriesberg and Northrup, 1989; Bar Tal, 1998; Gray, Coleman and Putnam, 2007). Perhaps most importantly, the principle factor defining the nature of intractable conflicts is that it is characterised by a zero-sum orientation. This is significant because any conflict viewed in this light, whereby any gains obtained by one party effectively results in direct losses to the other, essentially offers little incentive for the cessation of the conflict. The essence of the intractability thus lies in the fact that a potential solution to the conflict in which both sides could benefit, is not perceived to exist. Consequently, both sides have a vested interest in the continuation of the conflict, because a peaceful solution would mean that achieving a successful outcome for one side would necessarily mean the incurrence of some losses by the other.

The common ground amongst authors in terms of whether a conflict can be classified as an intractable one, points largely to the defining features outlined above. Other important points of consensus lie in the nature of the conflict: when the major points of contention within the conflict are perceived to hinge on a central dilemma concerning human and social existences, such as ideologies for example, the conflict is often regarded as one that is intractable. The polarities amongst opposing sides may be structured around or based on human needs or principles. As such, the willingness to compromise on these differences would be limited in such a situation, again making the conflict seemingly intractable (Coleman, 2006). The meanings ascribed to the tangible aspects of the conflict, such as for example access to resources or territorial gain, often carry symbolic significance; therefore, control over these tangible aspects is deemed important by both parties to the conflict.

## 3.2    Factors contributing to intractable conflict

### 3.2.1    Violence in intractable conflict
Having discussed the defining features of a protracted conflict, it is now necessary to unpack what these differing defining elements of an intractable conflict entail. The literature on intractable conflicts consistently recognises that a conflict has to feature certain core elements in order to be categorised as intractable. In addition to the fact that intractable conflicts, by their very definition, are protracted, they tend to incorporate a high level of violence (or threat of violence). In other words, intractable conflicts have persisted over a number of years during which they have proved to be particularly destructive in

nature (Bar Tal et al, 2009). The violence perpetuated throughout the duration of the conflict can assume various forms and fluctuate in degrees of severity. The types of violence can be disseminated at an interpersonal or societal level. At the societal level it can be regarded as structural violence (this will be explained in greater detail below) (Galtung, 1969). The level of violence in a protracted conflict varies in intensity at different points of the conflict (Galtung, 1969; Kriesberg, 2010). The destructive nature of a protracted conflict can be attested by the persistence of the conflict, or heightened periods of intense eruptions of violence between the conflicting sides. When violence is perpetrated against individuals or societies, there is clear destruction and loss. The literature highlights that destruction to property and loss of life are regarded as the most pertinent; however, people and communities can experience both physical or material losses as well as psychological losses. Material losses include dispossession of land and homes and the destruction of physical spaces. Psychological losses, on the other hand, become apparent when people and communities are denied recognition on the basis of their identities or suffer institutionalised violence where their very rights and existence are denied. The denial of basic human rights and the loss of security is evidence of the presence and perpetuation of structural violence. Either way, the presence of violence of differing intensities, the level of suffering experienced, and the manner in which the violence is carried out for the duration of any conflict, all these factors are consistent with and thus lend themselves to classification as elements of intractable conflict (Kriesberg, 2010).

### 3.2.2 Intransigence of intractable conflict

A core element, and perhaps the most striking defining feature of conflicts centred on notions of ethnicity and identity, is recognition of the other as a direct threat to the construction and integrity of the oppositional collective identity. Thus, prominent authors in Israeli-Palestinian literature characterise the conflicting notions of identity as one of the core elements of this conflict. Ultimately, the conflict is viewed as a zero-sum gain hinged on notions of identity and existence, since recognizing the right to exist of the other calls into question the legitimacy of the opposing side‟s claims to their own existence and claims to land and resources (Said, 1986; Kelman, 2005; Said, 2000). This element of incompatible needs or interests of both parties to the conflict, fuels the perpetuation of the conflict and makes any tenable resolutions to the conflict unattainable. Barak (2005) and Kelman (2005), both identified this mutual incompatibility of interests, which they assert generally becomes the underlying cause of the intractable conflict when the interests in question remain unfulfilled – irrespective of whether it is a material interest or one premised on ideological constructs.

Authors such as Coleman, (2000) Kelman, (2005) and Kriesberg (2010) agree that when an intractable conflict is difficult to resolve because of oppositional ideologies or competing territorial claims, each side is not willing to compromise its beliefs, which in turn sustains the conflict and further extends its duration. In certain intractable conflicts, particularly when each side holds that the construction and

recognition of another group's identity would necessarily mean bringing into question the legitimacy and authenticity of their own identity, a cessation of the conflict is for the most part unattainable. This is because each side seeks to attain its desired ends; however, since different outcomes are sought by the respective parties, success for one side necessarily means a loss for the other. Thus, each side is determined not to renounce its position which means coming to any constructive resolution (i.e. not a stalemate) would require compromising on entrenched beliefs, which are recognised as drivers of the conflict. The notion of competing ideological constructions of identity and nationalisms with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is explored further below.

### 3.2.3    Resistance to resolution

The third defining feature of intractable conflicts discernable in the literature is the failure of successive negotiations intended to facilitate peaceful settlement or resolution. Because of their complex nature, intractable conflicts seem to have an "immunity to resolution" as Vallacher et al. (2010: 263) and Coleman (2003) aptly note. These conflicts remain irreconcilable despite sustained resolution attempts, largely because the most pressing issues, generally those at the heart of the most significant points of contention, (which as discussed previously, are the issues each side is unwilling to compromise on) are repeatedly deferred during attempted negotiations (Barak, 2005). Kriesberg (2005) and Coleman (2000) point out that the inability to reach a peaceful agreement or resolution persists even in cases where external actors to the conflict act as mediators. Parties to conflicts, in which one or both sides feel that mass injustices have been carried out against a certain group or population, are particularly hesitant to come to an agreement with the opposition. In these instances, each side feels that the atrocities need to be acknowledged before any peaceful resolution can come to fruition. It is only once each side to the conflict feels that their needs are being sufficiently addressed, that they will be willing to negotiate a peaceful settlement. If the conflict is perceived as one where the ideological bases of each side contributes to the enduring nature of the conflict, peace talks and negotiations will continuously be rescinded as the conflicting sides fail to see their demands and recognition being adequately met (Kriesberg, 2005).

### 3.2.4    Power Asymmetries in intractable conflict

A power imbalance exists in many situations of protracted conflict (Rouhana, 2004). This power asymmetry contributes to the intractable nature of the conflict and hinders peace processes in multiple ways. Power dynamics not only influence the nature and quality of peace agreements, they also have an impact with respect to whether or not conflicting parties decide to engage in negotiations. Gallo and Marzano (2009: 38) highlight the fact that conflicting parties will agree to enter into negotiations when "the cost of the struggle is becoming unbearable or when a third party is able to convince or to force them to negotiate". As a result, conflicting parties are able to come to the negotiating table with the aims of recognizing the other's objectives and to grant some measure of legitimacy to their claims.

### 3.2.5 Competing narratives in intractable conflict

As pointed out in the literature, one of the most important underlying characteristics of a seemingly intractable conflict is the desire by one party to the conflict to have their identity recognised by one or more parties (Adwan, Kelman, 2005; Rouhana, 2004; Said, 1986, 2000). Prominent authors have identified narratives created to legitimise the self and demonize the other, as one of the major contributing factors to the intractability of the conflict. The problematic discourses and competing narratives stand in direct contrast to the way in which the other perceives and defines itself; the most problematic aspect of this is the unwillingness by each side to relinquish the desire to be recognised in accordance with how their identity is constructed. The authenticity of each narrative is then called into question: this is because it is commonly understood throughout both societies that when identities stand in direct conflict with one another, granting recognition to the other ultimately jeopardises the legitimacy of one's own. Inherent in this view is the assumption that construction of the opposing side's national identity poses a direct threat to the definition and construction of one's own national identity (Auerbach, 2010). Religious nationalisms can also form part of this process in cases where each party to the conflict draws on religious narrative to enhance their self-definition. The construction of each side's opposing narratives and the problematic discourses which are produced, reinforced and internalized by individuals in these societies will be analysed through the lens of identity politics and discussed below.

Questions of identity and nationalism are deeply entrenched within the modes of construction of historical narratives and the parts of history emphasised in the collective memory of the population (Pappe, 1995; Said, 2000). This in turn can have a profound impact on the manner in which a country constructs its historical traditions and loyalties to the state. The formation of a national identity is preceded by the construction of national narratives, which in certain circumstances can be problematic as this process can never be entirely neutral. Thus invariably, certain traditions and aspects of the historical trajectory of the nation state that is being constructed are highlighted while others are purposefully neglected or downplayed. This is done with the express intention of creating a collective memory which is favourable to the founding of that state. Thus, when an opposing national identity tries to take root with the same territorial claims to the land in question, it can often culminate in a situation of protracted conflict. Manipulating memories has always been at the forefront of the construction of a national identity, especially when each side is looking to establish themselves under antagonistic conditions. As Said (2000: 185) fittingly describes the construction of these national narratives; "collective memory is not an inert, passive thing, but a field of activity in which past events are selected, reconstructed, maintained, modified, and endowed with political meaning". Concurring with this view, Pappe (1995) observes that the historical narrative is the principal tool used to create and preserve a constructed national historical memory.

## 3.3    The study of identity politics and social identity theory

### 3.3.1    Identity Politics

The discussion around identity and identity formation is primarily regarded as a social phenomenon (Brown, 2000; Simpson, 2006). Authors on identity politics note that identity is commonly understood as being formed through interactions with or against other individuals and communities. Behaviours, values and norms are internalised through societal interactions. It is argued that through this, individuals are able to obtain psychological and physical security. A continuous process of internalising one‟s social setting commonly results in the construction of an individual identity within that social dimension (Inac and Unal, 2013). One‟s identity is further categorized as either a personal or collective identity. Simpson (2006) argues that personal identities exist to emphasise the difference between the self and one‟s own personal interests and attributes and that of the collective or society as a whole. The collective social identity on the other hand, serves to highlight the contrasts and distinctions between members of one particular social group in relation to another group‟s members with a differing social identity.

Defining identity is a complex task. Viewed simplistically, it can be regarded as an indicator of belonging. In a more complex discussion on the notion of identity, Derrida argues that identity is an ambiguous concept which derives meaning from „what it is not‟. Thus, one establishes an identity based on one‟s „Otherness‟; in other words, the subject is the identifier and the society can be regarded as the main identifier of „the Other‟ (Inac and Unal, 2013). If we are to accept this feature as the fundamental defining point of identity, then it can be argued that the distinctive features of the „Other‟ are then amplified and the commonalities between people are disregarded. Placing emphasis on this distinction between the self and the „Other‟ can then lead to hostilies between the two groups and humiliation of or negation of the „Other‟. Social identity theory subscribes to this line of reasoning with respect to identity formation; this will be discussed in greater length further on.

Social and cultural identities can be classified into two groups namely; „granted‟ or „gained‟ identities (Inac and Unal, 2013). „Granted‟ identities are those into which one is born, for example family, society, community or ethnic group and even one‟s national identity – all of which are created through the process of socialization. It is important to note that national identities are not defined by geographical boundaries. Even the term itself is not confined to a certain geographical space: rather, a national identity can transcend the limitations of a particular area and exist within a regional or even global space (the role of the diaspora in intractable conflict is discussed later). In contrast, „gained‟ identities can be chosen through the exercise of an individual‟s free will (Yurdusev in Inac and Unal, 2013). The increasing involvement of the modern state in identity formation has placed a growing importance on the construction of national identity and the rise of nationalism within this discourse. A

national identity is therefore a social construction with its foundations built upon both inclusionary and exclusionary choices regarding history, citizenship and national belonging (Gilroy, 1993).

### 3.3.2 Social Identity Theory

Early thinkers looked at social groups and their related identities as deriving from group membership. Anthropologists perceived social groupings, and *membership* to certain identity groups, as the main underlying features of Social Identity Theory (SIT); thus, SIT studies emphasise the social psychological processes involved in maintaining one‟s social identity. Hence over time, researchers have become interested in understanding how groups of people perceive and rationalize their identities in relation to other groups (Brown, 2000).

There are two ways of looking at identity: on the one hand it can be regarded as the fixed identity that is at the core of one‟s personality (previously referred to as the ‚granted‟ aspect of identity), and on the other hand it can be viewed as a changeable self which is enacted and developed by an individual in the context of a wider social group (previously referred to as a ‚gained‟ social identity) (Hammond, 1988). The idea of a changeable self is proposed by Hammond (1988) and is described as an aspect of one‟s personality that is constantly changing as one "moves from one social encounter to another" (Hammond, 1988: 2). The fixed identity is referred to as the "collective-expressive" understanding of identity, according to which individuals naturally have primary group ties in terms of which their involvement in such groups (i.e. family, community) is involuntary. In contrast, the "individual-expressive" view of identity allows one to voluntarily choose to associate with a group; as such, this involvement is deemed independent of social ties (Hammond, 1988).

Notions of civic nationalism, universalism and ideas of attachment to the state indicate that citizens possess an awareness of the ethic of the ‚common good‟. Fearon and Laitin (2000: 847) argue that the assertion that "ethnicity and identity is socially constructed" needs to be unpacked. They argue that national identities are the result of economic changes which have impacted on social changes. This line of argument recognises that because ethnicities and identities are socially constructed, the resultant economic changes impact social standings and as such, lead to a change in how one identifies oneself in relation to other social groupings. Essentially Fearon and Laitin argue that the social construction of group identities arises from the need to differentiate oneself from the Other. Consequently, the construction of identity has the potential to create violent and antagonistic relationships between different social groupings (this argument is fleshed out further below). In terms of the constructivist approach to ethnic identity construction, the logic of any singular discourse invariably impacts on the construction of identity even among different social groupings. However, Brass (in Fearon and Laitin, 2000) asserts that related to this, violence can be socially constructed as "ethnic", therefore, it is not necessarily solely that ethnicities are socially constructed which leads to violent and antagonistic

behaviour or attitudes towards others (Fearon and Laitin, 2003). The idea then that "identities are socially constructed" puts forth the claim that it is *social categories* and the rules that govern its membership, its content, and its values in relation to interactions amongst other social groupings, "can and do change over time" (Fearon and Laitin, 2000: 848).

Fearon and Laitin (2003) argue that the socially constructed nature of identities imbues identity with the potential to create antagonistic relationships between social groupings as one aims to differentiate themselves and their social group from the Other. This line of reasoning can be extended to the social categorization of ethnicities, such that the social construction of ethnicities can be used as a justification for ethnic violence. This is because membership criteria governing admission into the social category and the boundaries delineating the extents of the social groupings are formed by individuals within the group who construct not only what status the identity entails, but also, produce and reproduce systems of social categorisation in relation to other social groups. This ties in with the need to differentiate from the Other, which, Fearon and Laitin (2000) argue, is how the construction of identities and the politicization of ethnicity can potentially fuel ethnic war.

Elaborating on this, Charles Tilly, a prominent author in the field of ethnic violence, asserts that when identities which are structured around notions of the self and „the Other", violence between the two opposing identity groups is more easily triggered. The triggers in this instance, are not always necessarily ascribed to a pre-existing hatred of the other, but rather, changes within the social conditions and the accompanying uncertainty, which makes the situation more volatile and prone to violent episodes (Ikenberry, 2003). When a shift occurs in the existing boundaries that have been drawn between „us" and „them", the situation can lead to violence amongst societies as insecurities about the presence of „the Other" arises and the threat that „the Other" poses is emphasised.

Fundamentally, ethnic categorisation can be understood as construction by means of the actions of individuals who constitute the members of the social grouping who decide on the content and the boundaries of the ethnic group concerned. Therefore, when an ethnic group is governed by elite members looking to advance their own interests, often strategic action is taken to amass political support, increase power and intentionally provoke antagonistic relationships between differing ethnic identities, which can lead to violence between ethnicities.

The notion of identity is multi-faceted. Individuals can identify with different social groupings on multiple levels. While the notion of ethnic identity is particularly relevant to this discussion, it is equally important to note that people also look to identify themselves along statist lines and not merely along ethnic lines. Identifying with a particular state is relevant to this discussion since this conflict not only has an ethnic dimension, but is also fuelled by different social groupings looking to forward their own

ideals of nationalism in order to create distinct states that are recognised the world over. Penn (2006) argues that because ethnic identities can be manipulated for political gain by elites wanting to further their own agendas, states can be constructed around a political system in which one group is the dominant entity, resulting in the exclusion and marginalisation of other social groupings from the political arena. The politicisation of ethnicities can have a huge impact in terms of mobilising sectors of society, particularly in respect of people who identify and hold a close affiliation with a particular identity. This is because the ethnic group essentially serves to provide individuals with a sense of social responsibility and to create strong networks of social support.

## 3.4    Religious nationalism

The role played by religion in situations of protracted ethnic conflict has been analysed time and again. The general findings of various studies show that religion can in fact influence conflict to varying degrees; however, it is not the sole motivating or sustaining factor in different conflict situations (Fox, 2004). The connection between ethnic violence and religious nationalism is evident between Israelis and Palestinians; in the inter-ethnic conflict between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, and between Muslims and Hindus in Kashmir, India to name a few examples. The literature surrounding theories of religion in the political sphere posits that religion is often viewed as a foundational block of civilisation, which makes it relevant to many spheres of modern political and social phenomena. Included in the literature on the fundamentalist nature of religion, there exists a relevance in respect of the ideas of modernity such as nationalism and the rise of religious fundamentalism in many areas of protracted conflict. Fox (2004: 718) succinctly points out that "the preservation of traditional values is linked to the preservation of the nation or the state as a citadel of religious values". In this way, religion and ethnicity is used as a basis for forwarding nationalistic ideals. Still, it is important to note that even though it has been found that while religion is an exacerbating factor in conflict, it is not the only factor at play in either motivating the onset of the conflict or sustaining the conflict. As such, it is necessary to look at the other motivating factors which are crucial to sustaining the conflict while not dismissing the role of religion.

## 3.5    National identities and the role of Othering

Oftentimes intractable conflicts are centred on creating and developing two separate, competing identities. While these can be characterised as competing national identities, the scope for the presence of either identity is not limited by geographical boundaries, such that the identities can exist within the regional sphere. It has been established that in these cases, identity formation is recognized as one of the motivating factors driving the intractability. Within identity formation we see that the socialization process and theories surrounding the development of individual and communal identities, inevitably contains an element of the Othering process. Thus, in order to construct one"s own identity, people look to see what they are not and in so doing, essentially create an identity for themselves while at the same

time excluding others who do not identify themselves in the same way or along the same ethnic or religious lines. Inherent in this process of Othering is the moral exclusion of certain identity groups which Kelman (2005) argues gives way to social and economic discrimination as well as makes certain social groups vulnerable to distrust, violence and prejudice. Ultimately, oppositional identity groups are seen as "a threat to one's own group's interest, status or identity" (Kelman, 2005: I).

The creation of national identities in this type of intractable conflict is perceived as a zero-sum gain; therefore, any attempt to address these situations of instability needs to look at ways in which the recognition and presence of the other's identity does not negate the opposing side's identity (Kelman, 2005). However, this type of conflict, which is centred on competing identities, can be rooted in the threat to the collective identities of both sides, which in turn can lead to a resource and territorial dispute. Ultimately, the presence of the other is regarded as a threat not only to the opposing identity group and their status within the global political sphere, but also to the opposing group's interests, for example control over land and resources. When this is the case, scholars illustrate that until each side is willing to confront the objectives of the other and view their claims as at least in part legitimate, resolutions to peace will continuously be hindered. Kelman (2005) argues that this redefinition of the self (in terms of the group's identity) needs to be restructured if the two opposing group's identities are to accommodate one another. He articulates this key point by stating that "the discovery that accommodation of the other's identity need not destroy the core of the group's own identity" (Kelman, 2005: 3). At the very basis, recognition of the other is a key element of negotiating identities in intractable conflict characterised by competing identity groups.

While the refusal to recognise the national identity of the respective parties to the conflict remains a key obstruction to peace processes, it should also be noted that acquiring increased control over territories and resources would ultimately lend the Palestinian's national existence credibility in order for it to be recognised as an independent entity or state in some cases. It therefore follows that the nature of the struggle, in certain intractable conflicts, is one rooted in efforts to preserve the integrity of an identity (Kelman, 2005). The presence of an oppositional identity group looking for recognition in respect of the same area of land and resources ultimately calls into question the integrity of the competing identity group and their claims to ownership of power, land and resources. This is the primary reason why competing identity groups are viewed as reciprocal threats to one another. If the demand for recognition and the assertion of one's claim to land, power and resources, is to be acknowledged by the opposing identity group, this, as Kelman (2005: 2) puts it, is "tantamount to jeopardising the identity – and indeed the national existence – of one's own group". Thus, throughout the progression of an intractable conflict that is centred on competing constructions of identity, we are constantly called to deny the rights of the opposing identity on the basis that their authenticity, legitimacy of land claims and recognition as a national entity or their entire existence as a competing national group, is questionable.

Claims to land, as well as the historical reference of the area, is a defining element of the opposing identity groups. Competing claims and historical ties to the land are advocated by oppositional identities looking to establish themselves and gain international recognition as national groups. In the Israeli Palestinian case, competing claims and the refusal to recognize the legitimacy of the other"s presence or claims over the land, has in fact left little room for conflict resolution. Kelman (2005) proposes that a "transcendent identity" needs to come to the fore: one where the boundaries of attachment are redrawn and ethnic and political boundaries are restructured so that competing claims are acknowledged by each side looking to forward their national agendas. The denial of the other is essentially what has been the most serious obstacle to resolving the Israeli Palestinian conflict.

The narratives constructed by each side and the manner in which each views their relation to the history of the land, is one of the defining features of the conflict, which has additionally contributed to its intractable nature. The consensus in the literature is that recognising the other and allowing for discussions around the fact that each side may have legitimate claims, is perhaps the first step towards recognising, or coming to any sort of agreement towards, peace. Constructing a narrative and being part of the history connected to a certain land is part of the process of identity formation. Inherent in the construction of a national narrative, is the creation and portrayal of others and how they necessarily fit in to the narrative of the group concerned. Creating an image of the other can either play a role in sustaining a conflict situation, in terms of which the other is characterised as a rival or threat to the existence of said identity; or it can play a role in mitigating the effects of a conflict centred on the construction of identity. Narratives are used to justify and support particular ideologies so that a group"s identity and their presence is regarded as legitimate (Said, 2000; Kelman, 2005). Emphasising the differences in any given narrative between the self and the other, and highlighting particular points of contention between competing identities, only serves to entrench a certain level of intolerance towards the other and in this way, fear, contempt and hatred towards the other identity (which naturally has an opposing narrative) is developed and maintained. As Adwan (n.d.: 5) succinctly states, "one of the main reasons that Palestinian and Israeli (sic) still could not achieve peace is because they are not ready to recognise each other"s historical narrative".

# 4. Chapter Four: The Israeli Palestinian Conflict



Source:

http://www.un.org/Depts/dpi/palestine/ch3.pdf

**Figure 1**: Map outlining Israeli and Palestinian Territories demarcated by the Green line[1]. Later the Separation Wall[2] was built along this demarcation.

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[1] The Green Line (1949 - 1967) is the line of demarcation separating Israel from its neighbouring Arab states. It was drawn during the 1949 Armistice Agreements to end hostilities of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. During this time, Jordan occupied the West Bank and Egypt occupied the Gaza Strip. After the Six-day War (1967), the Green line became the demarcation of the border between Israel and its neighbouring Arab states as well as the separation between Israel, The West Bank and Gaza Strip.

[2] The Separation Wall is the barrier built by Israel during the Second Intifada, along the Green Line, as a physical means of separating Israel from Palestinian Territories. At certain points the wall deviates from the Green Line demarcation and encroaches onto Palestinian land. The International Court of Justice ruled that the barrier is in direct violation of international law. The UN General Assembly adopted a resolution condemning the wall. While initially the wall was built to provide a structure as a temporary means of securitization, it has since been regarded as a more permanent construction unilaterally defining the political borders between Israel and Palestine. The route of the wall is constantly being altered to allow for the territorial expansion of Israel and Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

## 4.1 Background and historical overview

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been on-going for well over a century now. At its essence, it is a conflict defined by the competing desires of two identity groups looking to establish national identities over a contested territory (Kelman, 1999; Shinar, 2003). If we are to perceive of the conflict in this way, it is then a geopolitical struggle rooted in the quest to establish Palestinian nationalism and a Jewish national identity over the right towards self-determination, statehood and justice. The origins of the current conflict can be traced back to the end of the 19th century and the birth of Zionism , which is a political movement constructed on the basis of religious doctrine. Drawing on a religious narrative, Zionism advocated for the construction of a Jewish nation in Israel. Today, Zionism promotes the development and protection of a Jewish national identity through Israeli citizenship within the state of Israel (Kelman, 2005). Establishing a Palestinian statehood stands in stark contrast to this, because existing notions of Palestinian identity were significantly influenced by the rise of Arab nationalism. Ideas on Arab nationalism originated in the late nineteenth century, influenced largely by the Ottoman period. Arab states in the region were looking to advance their independence; and in order to accomplish this, ideas of self-determination and establishing a unique identity started to gain prominence. Essentially, pan-Arab ideologies dominated the narrative for the construction of a Palestinian identity during this time. In recent decades, ideas of Palestinian nationalism are synonymous with universal Western notions of a national identity and the pursuance of an independent Palestinian state (Muslih, 1987).

In 1917 the Jewish Zionist movement had gained the formal support of the British government for the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. This was documented as the Balfour Declaration and in 1922 Palestine became a protectorate of Britain (Qumsiyeh, 2004: xvii). It was during this time that waves of Jewish immigration (*aliyah* translated literally as 'ascent') into Palestine set in motion the intention to establish a Jewish homeland (and ultimately a Jewish state; the State of Israel)  Israeli settlement expansion and the formation of social institutions was facilitated through the purchase and acquisition of land (Kelman, 1999; Kelman, 2005). The growing presence and entrenchment of Zionist Jews in Palestine was perceived as a threat by the existing Arab populations, who were looking to develop themselves as an Arab nation and construct a Palestinian identity. This is integral to our understanding of the conflict even in the contemporary context, because amongst large segments of Palestinian and Jewish communities, "an acceptance of the other identity would negate their own case and identity" (Bar-Tal and Salomon, 2006: 4). In this way, acknowledging the right for self-determination of the competing national identity would be an acceptance of that identity's establishment of a nation state, which would consequently be weakening their own claims over the same land. Thus, the fundamental nature of the conflict is based on territorial claim for the establishment and survival of a national identity (Bar-Tal and Salomon, 2006).

The British mandate over Palestine came to an end in 1948. The United Nations General Assembly proposed a partition plan which sought to divide the land into both a Jewish and an Arab state (Kelman, 2005). It championed the idea of a two state solution, which was largely accepted by Zionist leadership. However, the Arab leadership rejected the partition plan because it was seen as a violation of the rights of the Palestinian majority with regards to the way in which the land was allocated. It was seen as being biased against the existing Palestinian population residing on the land (Anon., 2003).

In May 1948, once the UN resolution was passed and British forces withdrew, Israel was declared an independent state; as a direct result of this, the region witnessed an escalation in conflict: the initial dispute between Israel and Palestine ultimately developed into an interstate war between neighbouring Arab states and Israel (Kelman, 2005). In July 1949, Israel and the neighbouring Arab states signed the Armistice Agreement, which officially declared and demarcated the borders of the state of Israel. However, this agreement did not prove successful as the conflict persisted despite the agreement (Kelman, 2005). During this time, two-thirds of the Palestinian population were displaced from their homes within the newly defined borders while others continued to reside in The West Bank and Gaza (which remained under Arab leadership) or gained Israeli citizenship within certain parts of Israel (Kelman, 2005).

The historical progression of the conflict is also largely defined and influenced by the 1967 Six Day War between Arab states in the region and Israel. Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza and effectively gained control over the two remaining Palestinian territories. This war is significant in terms of the historical context of the conflict, because it was during this event that Palestinians decided to regain control of their struggle for self-determination and the establishment of a Palestinian statehood. Prior to this, the conflict had been defined as a struggle by Arab states to maintain control of the region and avert Israel‟s encroachment (Barak, 2005).

The First Intifada (uprising) was undertaken by Palestinians living in the Occupied Territories (OPT), with the period between 1987 and 1991 characterised by continued unrest and increased violence. It was during this time that the Palestinian movement gradually came to the fore, recognising that the nature of the conflict was changing. A sharp focus was now placed on gaining recognition and determination towards the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. This marked a departure from the prior preoccupation with gaining freedom for Palestinians through armed struggle. This was the point at which it was realized that The West Bank and Gaza should be recognised as an independent Palestinian state, and that political means and channels were the most effective means by which this could transpire.

The Second Intifada happened as a direct result of the Palestinian population‟s rising discontent with the failures of the Oslo Accords. In summation, the failures of the series of peace talks and negotiations held since the end of the 1980s, (which will be discussed in further detail in the next chapter) led Western European nations to acknowledge the legitimacy of the Palestinian national agenda, and it was at this point that peace initiatives became increasingly geared towards a "two-state solution".

## 4.2    Defining Israeli identity

Israeli and Jewish identity has become intertwined with the politics of national identity. Domestic identity politics has repeatedly been identified as a critical factor underlying the failures of the peace process. Ideologies on statehood run throughout the discourse, with the ultimate goal of creating a homogenous national identity. The fundamental issue at hand centres on conceptions of what it means to be an Israeli citizen and consequently, the defining characteristics of the Israeli nation (Waxman, 2006). The formation of Israeli collective identity is situated in the political arena, but it is also premised on ideals of shaping individual identity within the collective Israeli identity. Integral to discussions on the construction of both Israeli and Palestinian identity, is the creation of narratives giving rise to and reinforcing the identities in question.

The construction of an ethnically Jewish state as the basis for Israeli citizenship has placed an emphasis on Israel‟s Jewish identity and constructed any non-Jewish political and national identities as a fundamental threat to the persistence of a Jewish Israeli state. Throughout history, Jewish populations have been persecuted, as a consequence of which the Jewish identity has been regarded as one constantly under threat and thus requiring protection.  Informed by this, the Jewish Israeli identity is born out of the need for preservation, especially as it is located in the context of insecurity and a hostile geo-political environment. The presence of communities identifying themselves as anything other than Jewish and Israeli, such as Arabs for example, is deemed a threat to the desired demographic and regarded as an existential threat to the creation and sustainment of the Israeli state.

In instances where the national identity is constructed and understood through the lens of an ethnicity or in this case religion, the very definition of the state hinges upon protecting the dominant group‟s demographics so as to preserve ethnic control of the state (Rouhana and Sultany, 2003). In order to protect the demographics of the state, non-Jewish citizens are increasingly marginalised and the boundaries of citizenship constantly redrawn through legislations and policies. In this way, the creation of the state of Israel serves to strengthen the discourse surrounding the notion that Arabs and Palestinians in particular, are not true citizens of the state entitled to legal citizenship status. This has further consequences in that these "non-citizens" of the state are then denied certain rights and accessibilities to the state, further marginalising them from Israeli politics and society (Rouhana and Sultany, 2003).

Shamir and Arian (1999) identify two dimensions of collective identity that come into play when looking at identity formation in the state of Israel. There is the external identity which is concerned with borders, land and relations with Israeli Arabs (that is, non-Jewish citizens of Israel who ethnically identify as Arab or Palestinian). In addition there is the internal dimension, which is concerned with aspects relating to the nature of the Jewish state, including notions of citizenship, nationhood and religion. In the discussion surrounding the conception of Israeli identity, there is a need to distinguish between differing aspects pertaining to its construction. On the one hand, it is identified as a civic concept relating to the national identity of its citizens; while on the other hand, it is understood as a Jewish construction which leans towards an ethno-religious conception of identity (Waxman, 2006). Internal divisions relating to competing ideas of Israeli and Jewish identity are at the forefront of defining Israeli identity, and have repeatedly been cited as one of the many motivating factors leading to the failures of peace processes. As Waxman (2006: 6) points out "the conflict both shaped this (Israeli) identity and helped sustain it". This suggests that any viable prospects towards peaceful outcomes would require concessions to be made with respect to the construction of Israeli identity. In doing so, not only would they be compelled to reconsider what it means to be an Israeli citizen, but attention would also be drawn to the fact that their national narrative needs to be re-imagined and altered.

The Zionist project, which aimed to establish a new homeland for Jews, has fundamentally shaped contemporary Israeli identity. It is an identity that is entrenched within the narrative of the creation of the state of Israel, which is based on one of the central tenets of Zionism, namely: the creation of a state whereby Jews around the world would have a homeland through the establishment of one nation-state (Waxman, 2006). The ideological and demographic viability of the state relied heavily upon the migration of Jews into the state. Essentially the foundation of the state was to provide a space where the Jewish diaspora could re-establish itself and preserve its Jewish identity. It was hoped that through this, the centuries-long oppression of Jews could come to an end (Cohen, 2005). The global nature of the Jewish - Israeli identity today has allowed Israeliness and Zionism to take on a global form, with the result that Jewish-Israeli identity is not solely located within Israel. During inception of the nation-state of Israel, the importance of the diaspora was to relocate and populate the state; today, however, the significance of the diaspora lies in its ability to gain influence in the political sphere, particularly in the United States (Gold, 2002; Cohen, 2005). While keeping the demographics in their favour is still a primary concern, the preservation of the state is no longer as heavily dependent on the migration of Jews to Israel. Today it is more widely believed that the Jewish identity can exist within diaspora communities such that survival of the state is not contingent upon residence within Israel (Safran, 2012).

Initially, Israeli citizenship, while being constructed along the lines of creating a Jewish homeland, did not emphasise Judaism as a central element of Israeli identity. In later decades, however, the Israeli national identity placed emphasis on civic ties and loyalties to the state, and increasingly sought to define itself along ethno-religious lines of affiliation to the state (Waxman, 2006). It was at this point, in the late 1950s and 1960s, about two decades after recognition of Israel's independence as a sovereign state, that Israeli national identity came to be defined less along the lines of civic ties to the state, and inclined more towards Jewishness as indicative of Israeli identity. It is especially since the Six Day War of 1967 that religion has become increasingly intertwined with the conception of Israeli nationalism. This may be because religious principles provided legitimation for the rise in Israeli settlement expansion and increased territorial control. Through the religious narrative, Israeli nationalism was able to find a stronghold and to legitimise the strengthening of the relationship between the people, the history of the land and God (Shamir and Arian, 1999).

Underpinning the creation of the Israeli state, Zionism advocated a "Judaization" of the land. It was during these years of construction (after the British mandate over Palestine had ended) that many Arabs were expelled in a process of „de-Arabization" of the land. The withdrawal of Britain from Palestinian territories was not accompanied by a transfer of power, which essentially meant that the land of Palestine and the Arabs in the land were subjected to the control of Zionist colonialists (Pappe, 2006). A sharp focus was placed on changing the demographics of the landscape while keeping a stronghold on the emphasis of Jewishness of the Israeli citizen. "Zionism was a secular Jewish nationalist movement, which sought to transform a traditionally religious identity (albeit one with ethnic dimensions) into a modern, secular national identity" (Waxman, 2006: 23). Essentially, Israeli national identity today has its foundations in the Zionist movement, which ultimately sought to create a secular national identity out of a collective history based on a religion (Shamir and Arian, 1999; Waxman, 2006). The creation of the state of Israel relies heavily on religious narrative in that it "represented a rightful return of the Jewish people to its ancestral homeland" (Kelman, 2005: 2). This narrative is then used to entrench not only the creation of the state, but additionally, the construction of the Israeli national identity. Thus, both national identities respectively rely heavily on their connection to the land and its history.

## 4.3   Defining Palestinian identity

Local nationalisms in the Arab world, namely areas of Palestine, Syria and Iraq, began to prevail with the fall of the Ottoman Empire. The concepts of sovereign nations and nationhood were primarily a Western influence that began to take hold and put in motion steps towards a shift in the ideological transformation and underpinnings of a nation. Initially, there was a rise in Arab nationalism which, simplistically put, came about as a result of the fall of the Ottoman Empire. This idea aimed to advance the right to independence of Arab nations, including that of Palestine. Later, it was evident that the idea of local nationalisms began to anchor itself in the framework of nations and Arab nationalism (Muslih,

1987). In Palestine, the primary concern was the need to strengthen the Palestinian identity with the growing concern and presence of Zionism as the settler movement of Zionism sought to create a homeland for Jews.

Muslih (1987) argues that Zionism catalysed the emergence of the Palestinian identity with coalescence around political organisation and the formulation of a nationalist ideology to challenge that of Zionism. However, he contends that although this may have been a motivating factor, it is not a sufficient explanation for it. Perhaps the role that Zionism played in the emergence of Palestinian nationalism was to foster a strong patriotic devotion to a Palestinian national identity and a greater bond to the land of Palestine. In opposition to Zionism, and as a form of direct resistance to the growing presence (some argue it is more accurately regarded as the growing threat) of Zionism, Palestinian patriotism began to take hold. This being said, Muslih (1987: 87) maintains that "Zionism provided the Palestinians with a locus for their struggle, but it did not create this force. Zionism may have evolved as the focus of the Palestinians and the pivot around which their politics revolved, but the origin and the growth of Palestinian nationalism as a movement that encompassed all Palestinian Arabs were in the arena of inter-Arab politics". Arab unity and independence, in tandem with the driving force of Zionism, was perhaps what spurred calls for the creation of an independent Palestinian nation state.

The Palestinian national identity that exists today is not confined to one geographical space. It is comprised of people from various areas, including those who live in Palestine (Gaza and The West Bank), Palestinians living in Israel (including ‚Israeli Arabs‟ who possess Israeli citizenship and ‚Permanent Residents‟ who reside in Israel but have not obtained Israeli citizenship), refugees particularly in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Egypt and the broader Palestinian diaspora around the world. Palestinian national identity garnered greater attention and was advanced on the regional agenda through the establishment of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO), However, Palestinian national identity has become fragmented as a result not only of the changing geographic borders of the state but also because the diaspora exists across the globe, with the majority living as refugees in the Middle East (Saʿdi, 2002).

The emergence of the Palestinian identity was influenced by universal notions of nationalism, which is consistent with other states that sought throughout the 20th century to create an identity for themselves. Palestinians the world over yearn for a national discourse with which they are able to identify and which acts to unify them across the geopolitical spaces they occupy. Thus, the principle difference between the construction of Israeli and Palestinian identities lies in their respective visions for the future: whereas Israeli identity places significant emphasis on the territorial and resource control legitimized through the entrenchment of their national narrative, the fundamental aspect of Palestinian identity lies in the creation of a national narrative that Palestinians all over the world can relate to and

by means of which they could gain recognition as a legitimate, sovereign state. This being said, the disputed territorial area (and emphasis on historical ties to the land) still remains one of the central pillars in Palestinian national collective memory. This points to the idea that Palestinian identity is still composed to a large extent, by the need to incorporate or at the very least, recognise Palestinians" Right of Return in any negotiation process (Shemesh, 2004). Al-Nakbah ("The Catastrophe"), seen as a primary element of Palestinian identity, is situated within the collective memory as one that "connects all Palestinians to a specific point in time" (Sa"di, 2002). The Nakbah, functioning as a site of collective memory, has been used as a means through which to strengthen social cohesion and foster stronger ideals of nationalism amongst the Palestinian population. It can do so because it provides a framework and a point of reference for individual stories situated within the collective memory of a nation (Sa"di, 2002).

The PLO, established in 1964, put the Palestinian refugee problem at the top of the agenda within the framework of the struggle for Palestinian self-determination and nationalism. The PLO"s nationalist agenda was the primary mechanism through which the construction of a specific Palestinian national identity could emerge. Through political mobilization, the PLO actively sought to create a national identity that would lead to increased legitimisation of the Palestinian people and recognition as a people with rights to a sovereign state (al-Husseini, 2000). In terms of economic and political security, the Palestinian refugee problem has had adverse effects on the creation of a unified Palestinian national identity. A significant component of this identity has a stronghold in populations that reside as refugees outside of Palestine, which gives rise to questions regarding the feasibility of a Palestinian state being developed given the large numbers of the population remaining economically and socially marginalised (al-Husseini, 2000). The commitment of Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland plays an integral part in definitions of national identity, especially since this has remained a powerful motivating factor throughout the construction of the narrative related to the Palestinian identity.

In the same vein as other nationalities that define themselves along Western European notions of nationalism, Israeli and Palestinian identities are also a construction of the interactions between different segments that are used to create a narrative that lends legitimacy to their identities. The narrative constructions of these two identities are expanded on further in this chapter.

## 4.4 Issues of contention

### 4.4.1 Sovereignty and borders

Sovereignty is one of the fundamental issues defining the nature of the conflict. At its essence, the conflict is perpetuated because each side is not willing to relinquish sovereignty over the same contested area. Thus the territorial basis of the conflict, which is preoccupied with the acquisition of

control over the land and settling disputed national boundaries, has been one of the most inflexible areas of negotiation. Both parties to the Israeli - Palestinian conflict maintain that they have claims to the same land. Each side legitimizes these claims through the use of historical and political narrative.

For Palestinians, a peace agreement would entail the establishment and recognition of a separate, independent (Palestinian) sovereign state comprising the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In addition, sovereignty would require not only recognition of the Palestinian state's right to exist as a nation (and not merely as an entity as currently recognised by the Israeli state) but also the complete removal of Israeli forces from the Occupied Territories. For Israel, however, the question of Palestinian statehood has purposefully not been placed on the political agenda. Israeli leadership has decisively disregarded discussions of Palestinian statehood in peace negotiations, as much of the Israeli population would view the goal of Palestinian autonomy as a threat, and would therefore not support such an agreement (Newman, 1996). Further, while Israel has already gained recognition as an independent sovereign state, it has continued to systematically and consistently redraw the demarcation of borders to accommodate its territorial expansion. Steps towards peace in any negotiation process would require sacrifices or compromises in order to come to an agreement. In this case however, each side views the issue of their own sovereignty as particularly inflexible. Political aspirations are at the forefront of the conflict as Newman (1996: 371) states; "Political independence and self-government, free from all form of external rule, is the first order of the day and overrides all other considerations". This ties into the notion of sovereignty as a particularly contentious issue which is contributing to the intractability of the conflict. Furthermore, because each state is unwilling to forego claims to the land at the expense of establishing national sovereignty, the conflict is further entrenched and defined by a drive towards political independence.

Another significant point of contention is the prominent barrier wall constructed by Israel ostensibly as a security measure (see footnote 2) but which effectively serves to separate areas considered Israeli territory from the West Bank, which is recognised as a Palestinian territory (Napolitano, 2012). The facts on the ground show that the placement of the wall and its consistently changing demarcation has effectively allowed Israel to gain areas of land considered by international law to be part of the Palestinian territory. This is particularly problematic because many of the areas surrounding Jerusalem consist of Palestinian neighbourhoods, which are being annexed by Israel. The separation wall and Israeli settlements are architectural instruments of division used to keep Palestinians out of Israel, while simultaneously increasing the territorial landscape of Israel (Napolitano, 2012). While the wall was initially constructed as a temporary structure to provide security, the permanence of the wall and settlements points to the intensification of the conflict. The presence of these structures is making it progressively more difficult to resolve the conflict, as neither side is willing to relinquish ties to certain

areas of land, which is being used to gain sovereignty and to legitimise their respective existence as independent nation states.

### 4.4.2 Security

While the question of security relates to both parties to the conflict, it has been employed differently by each side. The Israeli state invokes security as the rationale and justification for increasing securitization and militarization tactics, which are experienced as oppressive by Palestinians. Located in the historical narrative that Jews have been a group „constantly in exile", the security discourse finds strength in the need to protect Jewish and Israeli citizens residing within the state of Israel and in parts of the West Bank, that is, the Israeli settlements, from attacks by outside Arab and Palestinian forces. The sense of collective victimhood situated in the collective consciousness of Israeli Jews drives the demand for security and legitimizes the actions of the Israeli government even in the face of attacks on the Palestinian citizens (Plonski, 2005). The oppressive measures taken by the Israeli state towards the Palestinian population (such as checkpoints, the expansion of the wall, security around settlements and control over movements in the region to name a few) all function as a measure against the „threat of violence" that Israel believes it faces. This collective victimhood against the „imminent danger", has allowed Israel to use the security discourse to legitimise their actions towards the Other. As Plonski (2005: 397) states: "the land of Israel has become a symbol of safety and security, central to the survival of Jews as a nation constantly surrounded by hostile forces". It is evident throughout the Israeli Palestinian conflict that through the creation of a collective social narrative based on fear and mistrust of the enemy, the need to protect oneself by whatever means necessary, has allowed a culture of perpetual violence to take root.

The issue of security extends beyond the physical protection of the state. It is in this regard that we see a particularly intractable aspect of the conflict come into play. The Israeli and Palestinian populations have been socialised into believing that each state can only survive if there is a clear separation between the two. The boundaries drawn between them are rationalised time and again as a measure of security, because if there were to be any integration, each state would come under attack by the other. Thus at the forefront of past negotiations, we have seen endeavours to create stable boundaries of separation between the two populations (Falah and Newman, 1995). Security considerations proposed by the state have been implemented as measures to protect themselves from both real and perceived threats. Security measures are put in place to protect both the actual livelihoods of citizens as well as the perceived threats to the existence of each nation state. Perceived threats are built on notions of fear and mistrust of the enemy and as is apparent in the Israeli Palestinian case, these notions have become deeply entrenched in the political and social narratives of each state. The notion of security is not only linked to the protection of national interests, it also plays an integral role at the level of the individual and as such, state security measures are put in place to provide protection to individuals while at the

same time looking to safeguard national interests of sovereignty. This idea is best summarised by Falah and Newman (1996: 694):

> "Thus, for Israelis, the Palestinians (and by extension the whole Arab world) are perceived as constituting an existential threat to the State of Israel, while to the Palestinians, Israel (and by extension, Zionism as an ideology) is perceived as aspiring to a complete transfer of Palestinian residents out of Israel/Palestine. Each is labelled as the ‚cause‟ for the all pervasive sense of vulnerability that haunts respective national consciousness and each refuses to recognize the symmetry in the perceived collective threat."

Having recognised that any perceived threat can materialise at both the level of the state and the individual, it is important to note the differences between the Israeli and Palestinian security discourses. The Israeli state‟s definitions of security place an emphasis on perceptions of threats to their national existence. As a result, the state takes what it deems necessary measures to ensure the physical security of its people and safeguard issues of national and state security. In the Palestinian security discourse, however, emphasis is placed on safeguarding the struggle for Palestinian statehood, which invariably prioritises security issues relating to the individual and communities. From an international perspective, prominence is placed on ensuring national security as opposed to securing the individual (Falah and Newman, 1996). The implications of this for regional security are discussed at a later stage. What is needed is a transformation of the way that "security" is understood and perceived by both parties. A transformation in the concept of security will ultimately result in a redefinition of the way in which this new type of security can be procured. Ultimately there needs to be a shift in the way that boundaries between the two are constructed if there are to be any viable prospects for peace.

### 4.4.3    Settlement Expansion

In spite of the attempted peace processes and negotiations, Israeli settlement expansion continues into the Occupied Territories. A large part of the intractability of the conflict lies in the fact that Israel, as a settler state, has implemented policies to keep the demographics in their favour (Will, 2000). As previously stated, the concept of the state of Israel finds legitimation in the fact that it is a ‚homeland for Jews‟. This, along with a fixation on security, means that Israel has continually worked to cement the rhetoric that their presence and increased geographical expansion is to forward national interests in the creation of the homeland (Zellman, 2012). This has resulted in the continuous process of settlement expansion throughout the West Bank, the Gaza strip and the Golan Heights (Newman, 1996). All of the settlements, however, still remain under full Israeli control even though they occupy space on what is recognised as Palestinian land. While some settlements are in close proximity to the Green Line (see footnote 1), others are situated in such a way that it is possible to annex to Israel parts of the West Bank while still managing to exclude Palestinian towns and villages. This expansion of Israeli settlements

into parts of Palestine and beyond the demarcated areas of the Green Line is in contravention of existing agreements and UN Accords.

Israeli settlement expansion has continually acted as a hindering process to peace processes, which may be why settlements are excluded from current negotiations (Newman, 1996). From a Palestinian perspective, they are viewed as infringing on Palestinian territorial integrity; therefore, any final status agreements would need to include the removal of these settlements. Israel, on the other hand, sees these settlements as part of the process of Judaizing the homeland and keeping demographics in their favour. A particularly problematic area regarding settlement expansion is the settlement project in Jerusalem. Holding on to a strong Jewish majority in the Jerusalem area is of particular concern for Israeli authorities. Settlement expansion in and around Jerusalem began immediately after Israel annexed East Jerusalem in the 1967 War. The first phase of settlement construction was designed to create a ring around Jerusalem so that it effectively separated the Arab area of Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank. In essence, this functioned to undermine the territorial contiguity between East Jerusalem and the West Bank. In addition, "[t]his would *de facto* prevent East Jerusalem from becoming the capital of any future Palestinian state" (Napolitano, 2012: 10). The continued increased expansion of Israeli settlements within the occupied territories and Jerusalem specifically, has naturally resulted in increased social, political and economic tensions between the existing Arab populations and Israeli Jews. Israeli settlers are seen as colonizers, therefore, any post-colonial peace agreement would need to make provision for the removal or relocation of these settlements.

### 4.4.4    The status of Jerusalem

Another element observed to continually hinder the peace process is contestation of Jerusalem. For Israelis, the city of Jerusalem is the sole, indivisible capital of the Jewish state. However, Palestinians regard East Jerusalem (the *Haram al Sharif)* as the capital of the future Palestinian state. The symbolic value of Jerusalem for both sides is indisputable: both political narratives position Jerusalem as the cultural and religious centre, with neither side willing to relinquish possession or control of Jerusalem since it is regarded as the embodiment of both religious and national aspirations. Giving up sovereignty over this site would be perceived as a betrayal of the religious and nationalist narratives predicated on the importance of Jerusalem as a holy site.

The issue of Jerusalem as the potential capital city of both states represents one of the most contentious points of the dispute, which has prompted multiple negotiation attempts to stall. From 1948 to 1967, West Jerusalem was under Israeli control while East Jerusalem was under Jordanian rule (Napolitano, 2012). Following the Six Day war of 1967, Israel assumed occupation of the Eastern part of the city as well as neighbouring Palestinian suburbs – in spite of this being in direct contravention of existing international law. The United Nations General Assembly and Security Council Resolutions recognised

the Eastern side of Jerusalem as "the inalienable part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory" (Napolitano, 2012: 4). UN General Assembly Resolution 181 of 1947, the „United Nations Partition Plan", initially stipulated that Jerusalem would come under the supervision of international law. In 1967, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 242 which called for the removal of Israeli forces from the Occupied Territories (Napolitano, 2012). Through occupation, Israel effectively extended its sovereignty into a new geographical area, asserting as justification the right to self-defence. This Resolution was particularly important in the Oslo Accords and subsequent peace talks. Jerusalem remains under Israeli Occupation:  Israeli authorities argue that Resolution 242 does not call for the removal of Israeli forces from *all* Occupied Territories, and particularly not from Jerusalem. For Palestinian authorities, the Resolution confirms that East Jerusalem is recognised as the capital of the future state of Palestine. Israel however, still views Jerusalem, both East and West, as the indivisible capital of the Jewish state. In summary, Jerusalem is viewed as one of the most intransigent aspects of the conflict because of its religious and geo-political importance.

### 4.4.5   Refugees and Right of Return for Palestinians

 Another pressing concern hindering the peace process is Palestinian refugees" Right of Return. At the centre of the Israeli narrative is the principle that the Jewish nation state is a home exclusively for Jews; therefore, the state of Israel needs to maintain a Jewish majority. Recognizing the Right of Return for Palestinians would call into question the very existence of the State of Israel because whereas 1948 was the year in which approximately 750 000 Palestinians fled, it was also the year in which Israel gained its independence as a sovereign state (Said, 1993). Recognising the Right of Return and thereby allowing an influx of so many Palestinians is perceived by Israelis as an existential threat since the demographics would change bringing an end to Israel"s tenure as a primarily Jewish state. Therefore, preserving the Jewish majority and not acknowledging the importance of the Right of Return feeds into the Palestinian narrative and the constructions of identity, remaining one of the major points of contention throughout the various peace processes and negotiations held to date.

Additionally, recognizing the Right of Return would imply that Israel  played a role in the ousting of the Palestinian population, the majority of whom became refugees during the 1948 Al Nakbah. According to the Israeli narrative, however, 1948 marked Israeli independence, which influenced many Palestinians to voluntarily leave. Having an overwhelming segment of the population diametrically opposed to the existence of the Israeli state, and acknowledging Israel"s part in producing the high number of Palestinian refugees that exist today, would seriously delegitimize parts of the Israeli narrative. For Israel, recognizing the Right of Return only serves to threaten the existence and survival of the state, not only as a result of  demographic changes that would obtain, but also because this would actively undermine, if not negate, Israel"s core identity as a Jewish state (Scham, 2006).

According to the Palestinian narrative, Al Nakbah represents "the loss of the homeland, the disintegration of society, the frustration of national aspirations, and the beginning of a hasty process of a destruction of their culture" (Sa'di, 2002: 175). The displacement of people is viewed as being potentially either as the direct result of military action or the threat of forcible removal. This is not the case according to the Israeli narrative. Moreover, Israel does not accept responsibility for the expulsion of the population, asserting instead that Palestinians departed voluntarily (Quigley, 1998).

The Right of Return is thus one of the most problematic aspects contributing to the intractability of the conflict: Israel refuses to recognise it, and Palestine is unwavering in calling for it to be acknowledged. Israel is adamant not to include this contentious point under discussion, since acknowledging it would be to effectively concede that Palestinians are people with the right to self-determination as a state, that they have the right to live in their ancestral homeland and most pertinently, that they have endured generations of hardships because they have been actively prevented from realising these rights (Quigley, 1998).

### 4.4.6    The need to acknowledge mutual needs and interests

At the core of the Israeli - Palestinian conflict is the perceived threat to the respective national identities, which underlies the on-going disputes over land, resources and political control of the area (Kelman, 2005). The conflict is pursued because the core elements of the national identities refuse to adopt compromising definitions of the self or to broaden citizenship criteria for Israeli and Palestinian citizens. They are defined in opposition to the other and in addition, refuse to acknowledge the claims and aspirations of the other. This negation of the other's identity and narratives as a people with legitimate claims to the disputed territory, needs to be acknowledged. Thus, any meaningful peace negotiation needs to realise that these problematic elements of identity construction and national narratives need to be reconstructed in such a way that the core of each identity is safeguarded while simultaneously accommodating elements of the other's identity (Kelman, 2005). Incorporating certain components of the others narrative into one's own is perhaps the starting point of any peace trajectory. Understanding the socially constructed aspect of identity and narrative is key to understanding the protracted nature of social conflicts such as this one (Coleman, and Lowe, 2007). Notions of citizenship and nationalism need to be reconstructed so that each national identity is given credibility without necessarily having to delegitimize one's own identity. To reiterate, national identities and ideals of nationalism are social constructions "built upon a series of inclusions and exclusions regarding history, citizenship, and national belonging" (Inac and Unal, 2013). This indicates that methods of social cohesion can be employed which transform the way each nationality is characterised and perceived so as to create a better understanding of the other in the context of one's own narrative. Advancing self-determination of one nationality need not be to the detriment and negation of the other.

Scham (2006: 73) rightly points out the need for conceptual change: "there needs to be recognition on the part of policy- and opinion- makers on both sides that peace is not attainable unless ideology, as well as territory, is the subject of compromise". As a starting point, therefore, peace negotiations need to look at incorporating a sincere recognition of the mutual needs and interests of both Israelis and Palestinians. As stated by Israel's former chief hostage negotiator, Ariel Merari (in Atran, Axelrod and Davis, 2007: 1040): "Trusting the adversary's intentions is critical to negotiations, which have no chance unless both sides believe the other's willingness to recognize its existential concerns. Indeed, recognition of some "existential values" may change other values into material concerns". Conflicting collective narratives, which serve to legitimize one's own narrative while negating that of the Other needs to be addressed, since this contributes to the intractability on the basis of a lack of recognition of the validity of each argument, resulting in each side to the conflict being unable to come to a compromise. Therefore, the fundamental issue at hand and the pre-requisite for any peace negotiations to make headway, is to acknowledge that the other side is entitled to their own national narrative Formally acknowledging this right allows for commonly held and long established misconceptions used to delegitimize the other to be expelled and for a more constructive, inclusive narrative to be created.

Delegitimization of the opponent serves a number of functions. In this conflict in particular, we see that it contributes to the intractability in various ways (Oren and Bar-Tal, 2006). Firstly, each side would view their own goals and actions as justified in the pursuit of their national agenda, automatically ascribing negative aspects, such as the outbreak of war and continuation of the conflict, to the actions of the enemy. Further, delegitimization justifies one's own violent or destructive actions. It functions to provide validity to the social system, which might employ mechanisms of institutionalised aggression towards the opponent or methods that could cause intentional harm to the other. It also provides motivation for action when the group feels threatened. By taking action first, they are eliminating potential dangers and threats that may cause them harm.

In this context, outlined above, delegitimization of the enemy acts as a barrier to constructive peace. Perhaps most importantly, "delegitimization also contributes to the continuity of the conflict because it prevents contact" (Oren and Bar-Tal, 2006: 123). By delegitimizing a group, not only are the conflicting sides not acknowledging the existence of the other's needs, interests or counter-narrative, but they actively work to prevent negotiation and political contact. Salomon (2004: 274) aptly identifies the need for mutual recognition of needs and interests; "Much depends on the way one chooses to look at conflicts. Whereas focusing on competing political interests (e.g., control over land, independence) leads to attempts to bridge between them, focusing on competing collective narratives and identities (e.g., the way each side sees itself and its role in the conflict) leads to attempts to reach mutual acknowledgement".

# 5. Chapter five: The factors contributing to conflict intractability

## 5.1 Critical analysis of the intractability: Discourses/ Narratives drawn

Many scholars have identified the Israeli Palestinian conflict as one anchored in the opposing narratives constructed around identity and the creation of national narratives, which has made it a particularly difficult one to resolve (Auerbach, 2010). A conflict that is rooted in the quest to establish opposing national identities necessarily means that the conflict is pushed into the political sphere, since the establishment of one national identity over another aims to transform this identity as the basis for a nation state. It therefore sees the opposing identity as a direct danger to the establishment of itself and to its independence as a national identity. Thus it is inherent in an identity conflict that one side will reject the "...definition of the other side as a nation or, at a minimum, denies its right to realize this identity in the context of national statehood" (Auerbach, 2010: 100). It is therefore evident that the Israeli Palestinian conflict can be characterised as a conflict over identity, because the origin and the cause for continuation lies in the fact that each side maintains their denial of the other side's right to establish a nation state in the disputed territory. This ties in to the discussion around negation of the other's national narrative and the need to acknowledge that it exists. The collective memory of each side in the conflict draws on politically and socially constructed narratives as a way of legitimizing themselves. Inherent in this, we see the delegitimization of the other when the accounts of the one are in direct contrast to the other, as in the Israeli - Palestinian case.

A key feature of the way that both the Israeli and Palestinian populations define themselves is in large part intertwined in the phenomenon of exile. Because both narratives are constructed and derive legitimacy from their historical ties to the land, the contradictory historical narratives contribute to the rising levels of insecurity about both having claims to the same disputed area (Scham, 2006).

At the centre of any negotiation process, is the need to create a conceptual change around the competing narratives and the ways in which each narrative is viewed by the other side (Scham, 2006). Each competing ideology needs to allow for an increase in flexibility around incorporating each other's narrative into their own so that the conflicting notions and the legitimacy of the other is given credibility. Both individual and collective identities are created through narratives and because this conflict is one so centred on ideologies surrounding the construction of individual and national identities, it is therefore imperative that the narratives of each side are accepted as legitimate factors. A key staring point, pointed out by many authors in the field, is the need to first acknowledge the existence of a competing narrative and not view it as a zero-sum matter. Once the interplay between the construction of identity and narratives is realised, only then can there be meaningful progression towards peace. The concept of narrative is integral to understandings of identity and identity

construction and as such, this needs to be taken into account as one of the primary motivating factors contributing to the Israeli - Palestinian conflict.

Tied in to the discussion around narratives is the role that identity plays in contributing to the intractability. The peace processes did not adequately address the importance of changing the destructive notions pertaining to the respective identities of the conflicting parties. Using the model of conflict transformation in these negotiations and in any subsequently implemented peace processes, could potentially have had a beneficial effect and produced a favourable outcome. The model stresses the need to reconceptualise identities so that the social structures and the underlying relationships between the conflicting sides can be changed to create a more positive situation and view of the other (Lederach, 2003). The entrenchment of the different narratives has allowed a negative and damaging mind-set to take hold within the different populations. Lederach (2003) argues that in order to address the underlying intractability of the conflict, the manifestation of negative thoughts about the other need to be transformed to allow for a relationship to develop between the two conflicting sides and thus create a situation which allows for cooperation amongst Israelis and Palestinians. Changing the negative depictions of the other and incorporating each other"s existence into one another"s narratives would transform the relationship between the two, and allow for constructive efforts to be taken towards peace.

"In the Israeli - Palestinian case, a transcendent identity could be fostered by separating the concept of the state, as a sovereign political entity, from that of the country, as a geographical entity" (Kelman, 2005: 64). In order for this to occur, the two identities need to become more compatible, which would require a change in the way that both national identities are defined. This is essentially what the model of conflict transformation puts forward. As Kiefer(2015: 17) suggests "[t]he idea of transformation refers to altering the norms, relationships, people, or even the societies themselves in order to productively work toward peaceful outcomes". Emphasising the change in relationships and societies is the key aspect here. There needs to be a fundamental shift in the discourse surrounding the conflict and the way in which each identity is constructed in relation to the other. Changing the way that both national identities are defined would effectively work towards creating a more positive view of the other so that a working relationship can be fostered between the parties to the conflict. This is possible, because as we have seen, national identities are socially constructed notions which draw on common histories, languages, religions, customs, shared experiences and aspirations among others. Thus, it is necessary to change existing ideas of what it means to be an Israeli or Palestinian citizen in order to have any viable prospects for resolving the conflict.

## 5.2    Looking at failed peace processes

The history of Israeli Palestinian peace negotiations is a complex account. Multiple peace talks and conferences looking to devise a suitable reconciliatory outcome have been held over many years. However, these negotiations have repeatedly failed to produce favourable outcomes for both sides and they have repeatedly faltered despite numerous attempts to broker some agreement. As Kriesberg (2000: 546) notes: "The course of the negotiations has been torturous, with steps of progress marked by recurrent stumbles, backsliding, noncompliance with agreement, and deadly violence". The situation of protracted hostilities between the two actors in this conflict has gained increased prominence on the international agenda, particularly with regards to peacebuilding. It has also gained traction in the international sphere because this conflict has shaped how the international community engages with conflict in the Middle East. We see that the multiple peacebuilding processes undertaken in the Israeli Palestinian conflict, have involved key regional and international actors. Because of the numerous actors involved, multiple agenda and varying state interests emerge, which in turn affects the outcomes of the peace processes. The Israeli Palestinian conflict has therefore come to be regarded as a central tenet to peacebuilding in the region.

With the end of the British mandate over Palestine in 1948, the UN General Assembly voted to adopt the Partition Plan. This document called for the division of the land into both an Arab and a Jewish state along the proposed „Green Line", which would serve as the demarcation between the states. In 1948, Israel gained independence and about one third of the Palestinian population became refugees during the Nakbah. In 1949 the Armistice Agreement was signed between Israel and the neighbouring Arab states in the region as a result of the increased hostilities during this time. The agreement specified the borders of the newly formed state of Israel. The relative peace in the region lasted until the 1967 Six Day War. During this time, the UN passed Resolution 242 and later 338, which called for Israel to withdraw armed forces from the territories occupied in the Six Day War.

The series of peace initiatives began with the first Camp David Accords. This was an agreement undertaken by Egypt and Israel in 1979, mediated by the United States of America (Cavanaugh, 2002). The first agreement between Egypt and Israel was signed and it was through this that an outline of the framework for peace in the Middle East was formulated. However, the second agreement, the Oslo Accords which was not signed, specifically outlined an attempt to resolve the Israeli - Palestinian conflict. The success of the Camp David Accord is significant in the progression of the conflict, because it influenced subsequent efforts to broker a peaceful solution (Barak, 2005). Through the signing of the Camp David Accords, Arab states in the region agreed to recognize Israel as an independent state in all future peace-making attempts. This agreement stipulated that Israel should withdraw from all the Occupied Territories seized in the 1967 Six Day War; however, Israel only agreed to withdraw from the

West Bank and Gaza. Israel did not view the occupation of East Jerusalem as a transgression of this agreement. This agreement paved the way for interstate cooperation establishing a precedent in terms of how to address contentious issues and facilitate future peace talks between Israel and Arab states. The Camp David Accords put the Palestinian struggle for statehood on the international agenda and since 1980 onwards, Western European nations began to acknowledge the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) as the authority in establishing and forwarding the Palestinian national movement.

The Oslo Accords of 1993 and 2000 regulated the next phase of peace talks to address the conflict. However, continued uprisings in the OPT sparked the need for renegotiations. The Oslo Accords provided that Israel and the PLO would formally recognize each other (Barak, 2005). The Oslo Accords sought specifically to foster trust between the parties and to address ways in which a peaceful partnership could be established.

The Declaration of Principles (DOP) was signed in September 1993: The UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 were particularly instrumental in the construction of this agreement because it recognized the possibility of implementing a two-state solution, which effectively accepted the rights of both Israel and Palestine to exist. The resolutions emphasised that acquiring land through war was inadmissible and continued to call on Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories. The Interim Agreement stipulated that a Palestinian self-governing Authority would be implemented in the Palestinian Territories for a period of five years to facilitate self-rule in the West Bank and Gaza (Cavanaugh, 2002). After five years, the negotiations would be resumed and the Final Status Agreements, which essentially comprised the most contentious points, would come under discussion. The Final Status Agreements were intended to address aspects such as land and water rights, the status of Jerusalem, the Right of Return for Palestinian refugees and the Israeli Settlements. The Oslo Accords ended in 2000 without any consensus having been reached regarding the most problematic aspects of the conflict, and without any peaceful settlements being implemented (Cavanaugh, 2000). It was at this time, and due to the dissatisfaction with the failures of the Oslo Accords, that the Al-Aqsa uprisings began.

The Oslo Accords took place at Camp David in the United States in 2000 and Taba, Egypt in 2001. The outbreak of violence during this time played a large part in discrediting the peace process. There was increased discontent with the failure of the previous negotiations to produce any tangible results. The expectation surrounding the Oslo Accords was high as were hopes for a successful outcome. However, by the end of 1999, which was the deadline stipulated for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, no visible changes to the conflict situation were discernible. Palestinian control over the West Bank remained unsatisfactorily low and Israeli settlement expansion did not desist neither were existing settlements dismantled. Thus it was evident that both parties continued to be resistant to

compromise, as each perceived the agreement to require more extensive concessions than was initially envisaged (Dowty, 2006).

The negotiations in Taba were the first instance where Israel agreed to accept a return to its pre-1967 borders and Palestinians agreed to concede some settlement blocs. The status of Jerusalem's holy sites, however, was an issue that was barely touched on. Even still, the rising discontent with the progress of the agreements escalated into violent outbreaks amongst the population, serving to confirm that the original optimism and support for the Oslo Accords had seriously diminished by 2000.

In mid-2003, The Road Map negotiation was proposed by international mediators of the conflict. The immediate aim it envisioned was a two state solution in which both Israel and Palestine were internationally recognised as independent states co-existing peacefully. The broader objective of the Roadmap to peace aimed to accomplish a cessation of hostilities by addressing the Final Status negotiations, which were relegated during the Oslo process. Within its text, the Roadmap outlined specific steps for both Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA) to take so that an independent Palestinian state could eventually be recognised and full statehood granted to the population. The Roadmap was clearer than the Oslo Accords in terms of how it was formulated and honed in on the ultimate goal of achieving an Israeli Palestinian peace. Still, it left some of the key issues unspecified, such as the demarcation of borders, the Right of Return for refugees and the status of Jerusalem (Kittrie, 2003). While it did provide a more specific exposition of the incremental steps to be taken by each side, it did incorporate an element of open-endedness, which allowed each side to pursue aspects of the agreement that suited their own interests as opposed to fostering common goals. As a result, it too did not yield a positive outcome and by the end of the negotiations, an agreement still had not been reached.

If we view the Roadmap and the Final Status Agreements through the lens of conflict transformation, one of the fundamental shortcomings of both processes was their failure to address the key issues perpetuating the conflict. Had the processes incorporated the model, the priority of these negotiations would have been to implement systemic changes. The negotiations would have been approached from the vantage point that the conflict was "in a constant ebb and flow" (Kiefer, 2015: 19). Instead, the failure of these negotiations to come to any agreements highlights that they focused too specifically on addressing material manifestations of the conflict, as opposed to focusing on the suitable approach to transform social conditions. If the conflict is understood in a holistic way, the manifestations of the conflict can then be addressed and a constructive approach taken towards altering attendant systemic inequalities (Lederach, 2003).

Palestine has yet to be recognised as a fully sovereign, independent state. The Palestinian Authority under the leadership of Mahmoud Abbas, has sought recognition of a Palestinian state on multiple

platforms. Looking to the UN and the ICC for example, the PA has tried to internationalise the framework of the Oslo Accords and through this, to garner Palestinian UN status as an officially recognised „state". The most recent peace negotiations were held in 2014, under the advisory capacity of the United States. Again, this peace deal did not reach any lasting consensus as it faltered due to disagreements about control over land, announcements regarding further expansion of settlements and the release of political prisoners. The UN Security Council has presented multiple frameworks for negotiations; the call for peace talks to be renewed has also been proposed time and again. The international community has urged Israel and Palestine to engage in bilateral peace talks but this has yet to come to fruition.

## 5.3    Analysis of the failed peace processes

Many authors have suggested that the failures of the Oslo Accords was  due primarily to the inability to negotiate the terms of the Final Status agreement, as opposed to the actual issues themselves being non-negotiable (Roy, 2002). Other authors argue that the Oslo peace process was designed to fail from the outset because the deepest, most controversial issues were left to the final stages of discussion. It is argued that neither side was willing to make the necessary compromises for a legitimate peace deal; consequently, that none of the most rigid points of disagreement were discussed being relegated to a later stage, with the result that these core issues failed to be addressed (Shlaim in Fawcett, 2005). In terms of the transformational approach, however, the shortcoming of the peace process would not be identified as the deferment and thus irresolution of critical issues; this approach would hold that the Oslo process should have incorporated a broader scope of the conflict, beyond that of the actual manifestations.

When the Oslo process failed to facilitate a peace agreement, the situation in the West Bank and Gaza rapidly deteriorated with an intensification of the Israeli occupation in these Palestinian territories. The occurrence of the Al-Aqsa uprisings in 2000 ultimately led to the institutionalization of closure, which in turn affected the Palestinian economy and the livelihoods of the population. The system of closure was designed so as to maintain structures of dependency and introduce mechanisms that further restricted the movements of Palestinian people and goods. Through this, not only was there a demographic fragmentation, but also an economic division. There was an influx of Israeli settlers into these areas and intensified control over movement and territory by Israeli military forces. Land was confiscated for settlement expansion and Jewish settlements continued to create a bigger divide between Palestinian populations. The division of the West Bank into territorial enclaves meant that the geographic fragmentation of Palestine would be maintained. This strategic structuring of the borders between Israeli and Palestinian land, and the non-contiguous nature of the boundaries of the West Bank and Gaza, aimed to allow Israel a mechanism by which it could exercise control over resources and

movements in the region. This was deliberately designed so as to maintain control over the region even if a Palestinian state was declared.

The outcomes and the design of the Oslo process proved that it was not inevitably geared to create a peace and reconciliation process, but rather, it focussed on strengthening Israeli security measures and deepening Israeli control of land, resources and movement of the Palestinian populations within the OPT"s. Thus, the context of the conflict at this point showed that the systemic inequalities became further entrenched, counter to the transformational approach, which highlights the need to find and capitalise on common ground. The transformational approach, which takes into account the changing nature of conflict, would have been better suited to addressing the conflict due to its dynamic and fluctuating nature. Through the changing periods of intensification and decline in the Israeli occupation"s control over the West Bank and Gaza, the peace processes failed to challenge or transform the existing power structure. It was in essence a "security cooperation" (Roy, 2002: 13). This was the main criticism of the Oslo Accords.

In addition, the Oslo peace process was criticized for not being adequately representative of each side"s needs and requirements. The leadership of each side was criticized for not being able to compromise and as result there was a constant clash between respective sides, with each looking to forward their own interests. Each movement sought to recognize their own needs and interests above the others, and because they were so inherently contradictory, there was no compromise or willingness to negotiate these inflexible aspects. Thus it is argued that the Oslo Accords effectively served only to provide an illusion of peace. From the outset, the Oslo Agreement did not accurately represent each side"s interests and because of this, it failed to address the needs of both Israeli and Palestinian populations (Barak, 2005; Shlaim in Fawcett, 2005). The transformational approach would argue in this instance that what was needed was a more relationship-centric way of addressing the needs and interests of each side. By building and strengthening amicable relationships between the two sides, particularly the representatives/ leaders of the people, the negotiations would have produced more favourable results. The conflict transformation model emphasises that human relationships are the foundational blocks on which the cooperation between conflicting sides is built (Lederach, 2003). Identity and the constructions thereof were not adequately addressed by the Oslo process. Cooperation and building positive relationships between the sides starts with recognition that the way in which each nationalist discourse is conceptualised, right down to the way in which each perceives of the other, needs to be recreated. Change needs to occur at the level of the individual, which can only come about as a result of a dramatic restructuring of the way in which both societies are conceived.

The breakdown of the Oslo peace process makes it evident that a gross asymmetry in power relations was (and remains) present. The structural inequality that persists was a prominent feature during the

Oslo years, and it was not dismantled by the peace process. Instead, the breakdown of the negotiations served to further entrench and strengthen Israeli control in the OPT. The structural inequality that existed during the formative years, in the relationship between Israel as the occupier and Palestinian territories as the occupied, was only further reinforced by the breakdown of the peace process (Roy, 2002). The escalation of violence in the OPT and the consequent increased use of force by the Israeli military to suppress the uprisings, contributed to the breakdown of trust between the conflicting sides. The power asymmetry only served to hinder the peace process since in the absence of trust there could be no meaningful progression towards peace. On the contrary, what it did was disrupt the momentum built to secure a peace deal in the first part of the discussions (Shlaim in Fawcett, 2005). The eruption of violence and the simultaneous expansion of Israeli settlements into the West Bank at this time signalled that each side was working to actively hinder the peace process. The settlement expansion showed that Israel was not serious about recognising the creation of a valid Palestinian state on the land, while the escalation of violence in the OPT meant that there would be an increase in the use of force by the Israeli military under the guise of security. Thus the negotiations surrounding the conflict were reduced to discussions concerning the power inequality and the Oslo agreement merely worked to serve this interest, by keeping power in the hands of the Israeli government while simultaneously highlighting Palestinian weaknesses in the face of international negotiations. It did not emphasise the importance or "application of accepted international law or universal standards of justice" (Roy, 2002: 10).

The fractured nature of Palestine's internal political system is not without fault. This has repeatedly undermined the multiple attempts to implement reform. The two leading political authorities, Hamas in Gaza and Fatah in the West Bank, have not worked together to come to an agreement on peace in the region. From the onset, the fundamental ideologies of both leaderships have been at odds. While both realise the urgent need to establish a unified Palestinian state, they are divided on the means by which to achieve this goal, with the chief disagreement centring on the use of force and violence as a tactic to realise this aim. There has been inconsistent cooperation between the two Palestinian leadership factions and coming to the negotiating table with fragmented notions of what an acceptable peace deal should look like, has only worked to further divide and undermine the vision for a unitary Palestinian state. This division and marked inconsistency between the two sides has in fact contributed to the failures relating to implementation of suitable strategies for peace (Bouris, 2010).

From the Palestinian perspective, the Oslo Accords did not meet the requirements for a valid peace deal. Yasser Arafat, leader of the PLO, felt that the Israeli leadership, under Benjamin Netanyahu and Ehud Barak, wanted to withhold recognition of Palestinian refugees' Right of Return and to retain Jerusalem as the undivided capital of the Israeli state. There was also no mention of equality between Israeli and Arab populations. A key element of a mutually agreeable solution is a reduction in inequalities between populations and power structures. However, it was evident that both sides were not willing to make any

meaningful concessions regarding the most serious points of concern. The fact that each side was not willing to bring these points to the negotiating table meant that there was a clear reluctance to address the roots of the conflict. This directly contradicts the transformational approach, which holds the aim of coming to a mutual understanding between parties as the primary goal, as opposed to merely reaching an agreement or settling of terms.

The processes of the peace deal, had they been guided by the model of conflict transformation, would have incorporated provisions to address both the underlying causes of the conflict and the factors contributing to its escalation. By failing to address the most prominent interests of each side, the Oslo Accords merely provided a false sense of commitment to peace, Barak (2005; 729) described as a failure to take into account "the fundamental nature of the conflict and the sheer imbalance between the parties".

From inception, the most promising aspect of the Oslo negotiations was held to be that it would culminate in the formation of two states. However, because of the peace processes" failure to address the fundamental aspects and interests of each side, it did not succeed in garnering the support of the general population. This actively worked to hinder the peace negotiations, since there could not be a visible commitment to peace on the ground. Any agreements would only serve to function as formal agreements between leaders. The first step of the peace process should have been to channel effort towards changing negative perceptions of the other and increasing trust between the two populations, which is necessary for a transformation of any kind to occur. This would foster a change in the fundamental nature and understanding of the conflict as a zero-sum gain. Only through such a re-conceptualization could any meaningful progress be made towards peace. The fundamental shortcoming of the Oslo Accords was the retention of control over Palestinian life in the hands of the Israeli government. That the occupation would remain structurally sound was essentially the cornerstones of the Oslo framework that ultimately limited the scope for a viable peace deal.

Turning now to a more in-depth analysis of the failed peace process, it is necessary to look at the structure and texts of the agreements. One of the oft cited reasons for the failure of the Oslo Accords is the methodological weakness of the structure of the paper and the failure of the text to directly address the most pertinent issues. The Accords were drafted in ambiguous language, which allowed each side to interpret the text in a manner that inevitably protected their own interests (Kittrie, 2003). The main problem with the ambiguity and open-endedness of the guiding principles outlined in the agreement, is that it did not provide specificity for a plan towards reaching an agreement on the final status issues. Thus many authors argue that the primary shortcoming of the guiding principles outlined in the Oslo Accords was that they were too vague (Kittrie, 2003).

Furthermore, the Accords relied on an "open-ended gradualism", which prompted the deferment of discussions pertaining to the resolution of the Final Status Agreements. This was done in the hope that a greater level of trust would gradually be established between the parties, and confidence in the other side's willingness to make concessions about these key issues would grow. Instead, trust came to be eroded over time, undermining the prospects of reaching consensus on any permanent agreements on the most pressing issues dividing Israeli and Palestinian societies. Any evaluation of the Oslo Accords would conclude that the negotiations largely failed. The divergence between the stated objectives and the outcome of the negotiations would endorse the validity of such an evaluation.

The Accords did not embrace the positive potentials proffered by international law. It did not take into account the need to apply a framework which emphasised inter alia the role of international law and UN Resolutions and the potential contribution these could make to a lasting peace agreement (Kittrie, 2003). An inherent shortcoming in the Oslo Accords and the Roadmap was it failed to take advantage of the valuable contributions international law can provide, such as implementation of formal mechanisms to resolve disputes. While it did make provision for requisite and optional mechanisms to which it could turn in the event of a disagreement, what transpired was that both Israeli and Palestinian leadership chose to ignore the implementation of these mechanisms and recommendations. The text failed both to effectively hold both parties to account and to ensure compliance with its provisions with the result that it also failed to facilitate an agreement and secure peace. The actors in the peace negotiations dismissed the norms of international law and disregarded the limits imposed on them. Both sides were not held accountable and the agreement failed to specify the consequences of violating any aspects of it (Kittrie, 2003). It is thus evident that the Oslo Accords and Roadmap needed to incorporate a greater level of adherence to international norms and laws which should have been recognised as legally binding. Greater attention needed to be paid to the potential benefits that international laws could provide in the construction of a peace agreement. The lesson to derive from this is that emphasis needs to be placed on creating a situation where maximizing the likelihood of compliance from both parties is at the forefront of any peace negotiations, visible in both the structure and text of any agreement.

## 5.4    The role of outside actors in peace negotiations

Once Israel and Palestine had formally recognised each other, the role of outside mediators in the Oslo Accords negotiation process came into play. The inclusion of external mediators and intervention by a third party was motivated for on account of the regional nature of the conflict (Shlaim in Fawcett, 2005). However, this may not have been in the best interests of each side, as external intervention does not necessarily translate into the most promising outcome of a negotiated process.

In principle the role of external mediators is to act as impartial arbiters of the peace negotiations. In the case of the Oslo Accords, UN Resolutions served as the foundations upon which discussions would

centre. In reality, however, each negotiating party chose to focus on and adhere to the aspects of the resolutions which suited their own agenda, while disregarding those that did not. Hence it was the facilitators of the negotiation process, the United States government in particular, that influenced the outcome of the process. The United States" involvement redirected attention towards their own preference of a „statist outcome". In contrast, regional influences and support from neighbouring Arab countries was limited due to the initial hesitance of these countries to support the Oslo process and their apprehensions regarding engagement with "Israeli hegemony" (Barak, 2005: 733). While certain states, such as Egypt and Jordan, supported the peace process and engaged in mediation with Israel, others such as Syria and Iran outrightly rejected the peace process as a vehicle for establishing viable peace in the region (Kalhousova, 2009). The refusal by these regional influences to engage in the mediation process also played a part in the failure to achieve peace. The true nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was subverted throughout the negotiation process, which came instead to be framed and addressed as an interstate conflict. This basic misconception of the nature of the conflict ultimately meant that formal peace negotiations, as the primary means of conflict resolution, were inappropriate to address the underlying features of the conflict; hence the peace negotiations were destined to fail.

## 5.5    International power relations

International actors played an integral and influential role in the peace process. The basis of the negotiations, initially regarded as the need to realize the legitimisation of Palestinian self-determination, quickly unravelled. The involvement of international actors advancing their own agenda in the peace process, meant that the defining features and particular points of Israeli- Palestinian contention had to be relegated to a later stage (the Final Status negotiations). Inevitably, this prompted these factors to be regarded as less pertinent to the discussions at hand. Instead, increased prominence was placed on using the negotiations as a platform for multilateral negotiations. The interests of actors external to the conflict were prioritised and prominence was given to addressing the regional unrest. Throughout the various negotiation phases, importance was placed on resolving Arab Israeli disputes, which meant that negotiations to address the issues plaguing Israeli Palestinian relations were relegated, ultimately becoming stagnated (Kalhousova, 2009). This only served to create deeper levels of mistrust between the parties as the cyclical nature of negotiations, and reneging or attacks and counter-attacks in the territories persisted.

The Agreement set out certain terms while tabling others, which were to be addressed during later discussions. May 4, 1999 was stipulated as the deadline for a full agreement on the Final Status negotiations (Weiner, 2000). While the stated overall goal was to create a stable situation and ultimately peace in the Middle East, it is argued that this did not come to fruition largely due to the dearth of internationally recognised laws and norms for resolution disputes in the framework for the final

negotiations, with the result that the formulation of the text and structure of the final agreement was such that it would not be recognised as internationally valid.

It was important for the Oslo Accords to engage with the most contentious issues; however, this did not happen – until it was too late for either side to maintain their level of trust in the other. Both parties violated the agreement and were not held accountable by the international community. The structure of the agreement engendered the belief within the international community that it was enforceable only between the conflicting parties. The question as to whether the Oslo Accords were legally binding remained unspecified, in large part because Israel refused to grant Palestine state recognition. As a result, the agreement could not be regarded as being contracted between states, which left indeterminate the question as to whether it was binding (Weiner, 2000).

The peace process in the Middle East clearly illustrates that the relations between states in any negotiation process are contextually specific; additionally, each party to the dispute will, in all likelihood, choose to adhere to aspects of the negotiations that suit their interests. Thus it is necessary, in any peace negotiation, to take into account the international validity of the agreements since the process will inevitably be dominated by the parties that hold greater power. The legitimacy of the peace negotiation needs to be internationally recognised in order for it not only to be deemed feasible but also so that parties to the agreement are held accountable if they default on the agreed terms. Because this conflict is one that has become entrenched and has the ability to affect the stability in the region, a certain degree of global consensus needs to be garnered. Failing to do so has proven to be disadvantageous to creating a lasting peace agreement.

## 5.6   Regional Influences

The Middle East has endured a constant state of warfare for many decades. The territorial contestation has been the foundation of this regional dispute, and it is consistently cited as the primary obstacle to the attainment of a peaceful settlement. Control of land and resources is a central tenet of the on-going conflict amongst nations, most notably Israel and its neighbouring Arab states. Peace negotiations between Israel and Syria have failed; whereas diplomatic relations, albeit tenuous at times, have been maintained between Israel and Egypt and the two countries have signed and arguably, implemented peace deals. Cumulative failures to secure a peace settlement between Israel and Palestine attest to the fact that future conflict between the two sides has not yet been averted. It is in this context of adversarial relations between Israel and its neighbouring Arab states that a constant state of conflict has transpired.

The perennial tension between Israel and Palestine is located within the context of regional security. Often, scholars cite the need to resolve this conflict as the primary step towards achieving stability

within the region. The securitization of Israeli and Palestinian citizens is prioritized amongst the respective states in the face of both internal violence and external threats to their safety. The intractable nature of the conflict has repeatedly been highlighted through the visible periodic escalation and reduction of violence. This has led to increasing levels of scepticism in the international sphere around the viability of reaching a peaceful resolution. While the focus of the conflict has been situated in the region, it is sometimes viewed as transcendent of the regional focus in light of the large diasporas of both Israeli and Palestinian populations.

The Israeli - Palestinian conflict and resolutions towards implementing peace have consistently featured regional and international actors. Israel in particular has endured longstanding hostilities and conflict with neighbouring Arab states. This has worked to transform bilateral negotiations into multilateral negotiations between Israel and Arab states, which has effectively led to the demise of negotiations and a prolongation of the Israeli Palestinian conflict. It has not only led to its continuation, but has also led to increased intensity of on-going violence. Evident in the peace processes, the involvement of regional actors in negotiations has made bringing about a peaceful resolution an arduous and more complex task.

## 5.7 A constructive or futile attempt at peace?

The failed peace processes of the Israeli Palestinian conflict demonstrate that neglecting to take into consideration the contextual specificity of the conflict undermines any prospects of crafting a durable peace agreement. Over time, the bilateral nature of the conflict came increasingly to be side-lined to accommodate negotiations involving multiple states in the region. While the nature of the conflict can be characterised as an intergroup conflict, the negotiations largely focused on addressing the issues pertaining to it as an inter-state conflict (Barak, 2005). Thus the design and approach of the negotiations treated the actors central to the Israeli - Palestinian conflict as neither sovereign nor territorially defined states, as a consequence of which the rights of the states concerned were not protected under international law or governed by internationally recognised binding norms (which provide protections only to territorially defined states). A serious flaw of the peace processes was a failure to make provision or allowance for the implementation of necessary measures to address the specificities of the conflict. Instead, the failed processes yielded efforts to construct a peace which drew largely on "the legacy of peace-making in the Arab-Israeli conflict" (Barak, 2005: 270), thereby treating the conflict as an inter-state as opposed to intergroup one, which effectively hindered the prospects of creating a viable peace in the region.

The transformational approach emphasises the need to facilitate direct interactions between the parties to a conflict, and through this to strengthen a more positive relationship between the two. This engagement is posited to foster greater understanding of the other and to cultivate mutual respect between the parties. Over time an environment conducive to the implementation of constructive

changes is fostered, contributing to the emergence not only of a progressive relationship between the people but also the conflicting Israeli and Palestinian nationalities. In this way, a peace is actively constructed and tailored according to the nature of the conflict, while constantly being adapted to be context specific. Understanding the conflict through the lens of hegemonic notions of peace and security essentially bases the approach to peace largely along statist ideas of what it means to construct peace. The latter approach offers very restricted parameters in which to craft peace, which is not an ideal to address the instability of the region or suited to establishing peace between Israel and Palestine.

# 6 Chapter Six: Conclusion

Identity is one element of the many motivating factors driving the intractability of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Because identity is a social construct, which is shaped by and to accord with prevailing narratives, the problematic elements of the two opposing identities can be reconstructed "as vehicles of peace and reconciliation" (Kelman, 2005: 9). In order to effectively accomplish this, the conception of the respective Others as an existential threat needs to be challenged. Similarly, and as a first step towards recreating current dominant narratives, the assertion that the definition of one group's identity necessarily means the negation of the other, should be rejected. Additionally, peace processes need to address the underlying causes and patterns of the conflict by taking into consideration the nature of the conflict, if they are to be effective. It is imperative for each society to recognise that the problematic aspects of each narrative need to be challenged. Showing willingness to be self-reflexive in one's own parties' narrative is a step towards collaborative discussion. It encourages greater acceptance of the other when it is apparent that each side is open to accepting one's own role in the conflict.

It is important to note, however, that the notion of justice and equality has failed to be incorporated into any of the peace and negotiation processes implemented thus far. Acknowledging the disparity in the status, rights, needs, aspirations and values of the respective sides should underpin any justice and equality initiative. For this reason, negotiations may well be apt – not only to promote recognition of these fundamental aspects, but also to facilitate a stable peace between nations.

The main argument presented here is that there is need for increased conflict awareness and understanding of the dynamics of the situation. Once this is established, attention can then be turned to addressing other issues of concern, such as the status of Jerusalem, border disputes, the right of return, issues over sovereignty and security and so forth. Mechanisms to address these issues should be premised on an understanding that the conflict environment is constantly changing; consequently, approaches to peace need to be evaluated at all stages and, if necessary, adjusted to fit the shifting context.

Notions of justice need to enter the discussion, particularly in the context of reconciliation. "Introducing justice to the peace-making efforts requires reframing the question in a way that entails transformation of consciousness" (Rouhana, 2004: 48). This is a crucial element of the transformational approach. There needs to be a re-evaluation of the framework of justice and the problematic thought processes of the collective self-image and nationalisms.

Nationalistic ideals, as well as the construction of Palestinian and Israeli identities, remain the most steadfast and pertinent factors driving the intractability of the conflict. Contested definitions of the state

and conceptions of citizenship are fundamental concerns that need to be addressed in any future peace process. Proposed solutions to the conflict need to begin by addressing the ideological norms of nationalism within the situational context of this conflict. Structural transformation must be prioritised and should form the cornerstone of any negotiations or peace talks. The first step in any comprehensive approach to peace is recognising the true nature of the conflict and acknowledging its ever changing nature. With the wisdom of hindsight, it can be argued that there was a disjuncture between the solutions proffered for the conflict and the key dynamics at play. The ideological norms of nationalism currently defined by Israeli and Palestinian leadership are regarded as mutually exclusive: the zero-sum notions of identity within these definitions of the self, render the conflict particularly intractable.

Essentially, the fundamental aim of conflict transformation is to adopt an alternative approach to conflict resolution; one which seeks to transform the multiple levels contributing to its intractability, with the primary aim of "increasing justice, reducing violence, and restoring broken relationships" (Lederach in Gawerc; 2006: 440). The transformational approach provides a useful lens through which to view this conflict. At its core, the model emphasises a shift in focus from a zero-sum approach to one in which incremental constructive changes can be implemented in the development towards peace. The fundamental elements of the model that can be applied to this conflict include the reconceptualization of prevailing narratives, and a mind-set which allows for the conflict to be understood in holistic terms as opposed to a narrow focus on addressing the individual specificities fuelling the conflict.

Equally important – arguably the cornerstone of any peace process – is the balancing of the promotion of justice on the one hand, with efforts to reduce violence on the other. Problematic underlying social structures are another key area to target: addressing these constitutes a concerted effort towards reducing inequalities.

Perhaps the key starting point of any negotiation process should be the implementation of mechanisms aimed at strengthening social cohesion and building a positive relationship between the opposed populations. If both sides were to participate in a process of recreating the discourses of nationhood by among other things, dispelling the internalised threat of the other, and redefining what it means to be an Israeli or a Palestinian citizen, this would allow for the construction of a new, transcendent identity. While this would ultimately only constitute a first step in the process of addressing the intractability of the Israeli Palestinian conflict, this paper has sought to demonstrate that this is a highly necessary albeit insufficient step if it is implemented in isolation from other conflict transformation measures.

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