The quest for reciprocity in an asymmetric conflict: problems and prospects of Israeli/Palestinian academics' engagement in peacebuilding

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Introductory remarks

As we have been witnessing lately some hopeful signs in the protracted Israeli/Palestinian conflict, this may be a good time to for a more balanced introspect. One often witnesses with dismay the extent to which two different people looking at the same objects within a violent conflict situation perceive two drastically different realities. Admittedly, contending points of view are affected both by the individuals' own objective needs and interests but also through the lens of their subjective feelings. And yet, even when both sides profess to adhere to shared universal values of human rights, democracy and peace, why is there often such a low level of concern for the "Other?" How is it that my side so easily becomes right and the other wrong? In this article, I examine this "humanity gap" in the exploration of two terms: "asymmetry" and "reciprocity"—appearing as antonyms in my laptop's Webster dictionary.

Asymmetry is inherent in the nature of most violent conflicts, while equilibrium is supported from the perspectives of both a realist—who is calculating costs and sees at least a minimum level of symmetry acting as a deterrent—and a liberal—who sees symmetry as an equalizer in power dynamics. From these perspectives, symmetry reduces the motivation to fight aggressively for a change in the status quo. In the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, Palestinians often stress the Occupied/Occupier unevenness and ask for solidarity with the weak. However, some Israelis also emphasize their weaker position when taken in the context of a small country surrounded by what are perceived as hostile neighbors and rising anti-semitism. From both of these perspectives, opposing asymmetry is the argument of the underdog. Asymmetries can be acknowledged in terms of power (military, economic, popular support, resources, political leadership, etc.) and losses (death, disabling injuries, homes demolished, futures denied, professional opportunity, etc).

Reciprocity is frequently the argument of the top-dog Israeli liberals;[1] from their perspective unconditional solidarity with the opponent is perceived as naïveté, self-hatred and even treason. Instead, they support strategies that hold both sides of the conflict responsible and accountable for their actions and reactions. However, their ability to act in a reciprocal manner is stalled by their debate on determining blame for the cycle of violence; this focus on cause and effect brings back the issues of the *past* without acknowledging that the intense, constant and widespread suffering of the Palestinians is a *present* reality. Whereas

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[1] We use the term "liberal" in the Western sense, as different from "radical," implying a strong commitment to fundamental freedoms, participatory democracy, tolerance, and evolutionary change.

Tel Avivians—in-between the sporadic yet horrendous suicide bombing—can opt to ignore the daily effects of the conflict with our neighbors, Palestinians' restrictive daily conditions have forced them to face the current conflict's consequences on their well being as individuals or collectively on their entire community in the Occupied Territories.

Can we find some common ground in recognizing both terms? The question becomes how to narrow the "humanity" gap—namely, the breaking down of ethnocentrism and seeing the "Other" as a human being—in a dyadic situation when the asymmetries of power and losses incurred on the conflicting sides are so extreme? The central argument of this article is that reciprocity is a promising force for peacebuilding when approached with awareness of the existing asymmetries. In particular, recognizing the status of shared victimhood while acknowledging the realities of asymmetry may empower members of civil society on both sides towards undertaking social responsibility to redress the situation.

Until now, we have witnessed an unfolding of *negative* reciprocity present in the "spiral of violence" in which reciprocity is in fact revenge, retaliation, tit-for-tat. Instead, we are proposing a paradigm shift to a *positive* reciprocity that could lead to a "spiral of peace." From this perspective, to what extent does a focus on who is involved and how they behave generate a "spiral of action" in direct challenge to apathy, indifference and helplessness?

Firstly, I briefly look at the Israeli and Palestinian sides together, initially at those who have decision-making power, then at public opinion at-large, and finally within the realm of civil society, with a particular focus on the academic community of which I am a member. Although I will refer to both the Palestinian and Israeli university faculty in the spirit of cooperative work, my focus is on the latter to provide a self-critical introspection that may open similar avenues for reflection by my colleagues on the other side of the conflict. Rather than dwelling on mega-theories, I will share personal testimony based on my professional and voluntary experience—both as Executive Director of the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace at Hebrew University of Jerusalem over the last two decades and as one of the founders and later Chairpersons of B'tselem, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories. As one of the community of concerned academics, I have observed and participated in multiple interactions with our Palestinian counterparts. Providing reflections at the societal and individual level on the Israeli side and eliciting the comments and opinions of Palestinian colleagues can shed some new light on our currently dramatic and deteriorating reality. Rather than blaming the Other, I introduce references to the actions of my neighbors for the purpose of analyzing their impacts on my people. I have opted to tackle directly and sincerely the issue, without any intention of being offensive.

Leadership

In looking into our crisis situation, we know that much of the solution to our conflict relies on the leadership. But until recently these leaders have been more part of the problem than the solution. Their seeming misperception of reality has been related to their value systems, and we can infer that they are not truly socialized into the principles of equality and universality. For instance, if we take the concept "human rights" it has been difficult in the past for both Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian Chairman Yassir Arafat to even articulate the term even as lip service. [2] Indeed, this lack of reciprocity in which both sides share common rights and suffer losses is indicative at the highest levels.[3] Each leader also uses language that seemingly condones assassination of the Other without acknowledging the tragedy of the resulting deaths. Arafat condemned Palestinian suicide bombing as "not instrumental to our liberation goals;" but his characterization of bombers as "martyrs" perpetuates an image of heroic status. On the Israeli side, Sharon's government employs the terminology of "accidental deaths" resulting from "surgically targeted clearance and elimination" to justify and sterilize an act of extra-judicial executions.

When the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships reach a stage in the conflict where both sides have lost any trust between them, it becomes even more urgent and vital for us to ask what can be done within civil society to redress this trend? Related to the loss of trust, the asymmetrical power dynamics further erode motivation for negotiation. On the Israeli side, the surplus of financial and military power allows the position that it can dictate the terms of peace; along similar lines on the Palestinian side, the weakness of political, military and economic power leads their leadership to the conclusion that any negotiated settlement with such a strong opponent would lead to terms of surrender and not to a just peace. Asymmetrical losses—losses which include a disproportionate number of civilian casualties for both sides—further expand the distance both sides must cross to come to a mutually agreed upon conclusion of the conflict.

Public opinion

At this stage, characterized by widespread and profound mistrust and hatred of the Other, daring leadership and political diplomacy may not be enough. In protracted communal conflicts, peacebuilding by civil society is an important factor for a sustained peace. If the people in power are too far ahead or behind what the public is prepared to accept or fight for,

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[2] In a content analysis of the speeches of Ariel Sharon as Prime Minister till 2004 only once he mentioned the term "human rights" (the Akaba meeting in 2003 with at that time Prime Minister Abu Mazen) whereas Arafat only mention the term "rights" repeatedly but in relation to the Palestinians and not the Israeli people. Edy Kaufman and Ibrahim Bisharat) Are Human Rights Good for the Top Dog as Well?– Rescuing the Missing Dimension of the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process , Palestine-Israel Journal, (Vol. 10, No 3, 2003), pp 89- 95.

[3] For a full analysis of the issue see E. Kaufman and M. Abu Nimer, " Bridging Conflict Resolution and Human Rights: Lessons from the Israeli/Palestinian Peace Process" prepared for Jeff Helsings et al (ed.), Human Rights and Conflict Resolution, United States Institute of Peace Press, Washington DC, forthcoming.

no leader-initiated advances can be sustained and all leader hesitation will be condemned. No example illustrates this more than the tragic assassination of former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by a Jewish extremist and the prior and later threats of Muslim fanatics on the lives of other Arab leaders involved in peace negotiations.

Judging from the result of recurrent polls, vast majorities on both sides are willing to compromise on a long-term, two-state solution. At the same time, these majorities also feel that even more high-level violence against the Other is justified.[4] In terms of the "humanity gap" there is a clear dichotomy in the Israeli public's attitude, which accepts "painful concessions" in the long-run but holds a hard-line emotional antagonism to the Palestinians at present. As a taxi-driver told us in Jerusalem: "We will beat them and beat them until they stop hating us!"

This silent majority both in Israel and the Palestinian territories is in a confused state of shock from the devastation of the last four years and is willing to follow daring leadership decisions, as could have been the case if Prime Minister Barak and Chairman Arafat would have reached an overall agreement ending the conflict. The challenge is to be able to shift the mindset of both populations from the current intransigence to a "day after" scenario, supportive of ending terror/state terror and re-negotiating peace. However, as mentioned, the present leadership is both unable and unwilling to make this hoped for transition.

Furthermore, within Israeli society, the opponents to the peace process have been acting in concert, although clear differences can be drawn between those who express a clear adherence to the principles of democracy and the rule of law and those who express their total obedience to the "Rule of God" as an unalterable command for their political action. Even among them, we also find an overwhelming majority that clearly rejects the use of violence. The fanatic intransigents in Israel, while often a minority, given their high degree of militancy overpowers the larger segment of moderate self-centered liberals. Faced with the urgency that accompanies militancy, the liberal constituency has become more reactive rather than active. In absence of a dominant strategy, the extremist groups-particularly those strongly motivated by divine inspiration-carry the day and set the tone which becomes a societal impediment to the peace process. Evidence of the pitfalls of ideological and religious extremism is also seen within Palestinian society. In spite of their differences and total antagonism, both sides' religious racism is united in the rejection of the ultimate reconciliation on an equal footing. Despite their independent goals, the uncoordinated effect of each side's extremism is a political simultaneity that serves to destroy the difficult peacebuilding process. Sadly enough, what was initially a dispute between two national movements fighting for the

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[4] The longitudinal public opinion polls conducted by Khalil Shikaki and Yaakov Shamir, whose main findings are presented in the Truman Institute website (http://truman.huji.ac.il), are showing this gap between a hard line legitimating the use of violence now and a long-term common ground towards territorial compromise.

same piece of land has now taken the dimensions of the existential confrontation of two fanatic religious extremes that do not leave room for a dignified presence of the Other.

Even more worrisome are the extremism and a high level of hatred found among the youth of both sides, highly represented among the victims and the victimizers as well. The incitement to hatred and violence can be found in the education of many of our children and grandchildren. Over the last years, it is hard to recognize the societies we grew up in; the self-fulfilling prophecy of the worst images of the Other seems to prevail in the eyes of the younger generation in both societies. Current suffering and gruesome scenes of death reinforce these images.

The competition for recognition as the sole victim of the conflict is deeply embodied in each side. In order to plan alternative strategies I think that our Arab friends elsewhere and Palestinians in particular need to understand the emotional process that the Israeli public has undergone since the collapse of the Oslo peace process, which is widely explained by our side as Arafat's rejection to Barak's "generous offer."[5]

One main explanatory variable for the fear and resentment that accompanies Israeli suffering has been the perception of the enemy's use of *illegitimate **means** of violence* (suicidal bombers), which touches upon the security and self-preservation needs of the population as a whole. The majority expressions of support of the *legitimate **goal** to a Palestinian state* are relegated to a later stage. When high level of violence includes periods of abominable attacks get the public opinion to adopt a 'no choice" attitude, even blaming the Arabs for compelling "our boys" to engage in abnormal behavior. This dynamic impedes the development of a shared victimhood as both sides compete for who suffers the most and their own version of cause and effect.

We are back to the rather old radical debate advocating that the ***ends justify the means***. Derailing the debate—from defining the parameters of a just peace as the desired *end* to delineating the limits of legitimate violence as a *means*—has changed the order of priorities of Israelis. In the current period, the majority has left aside support for the Palestinian right to self-determination in order to focus on what is the legitimate or illegitimate methods of killing for the sake of national liberation. Most Israelis do not equate the devastation of "collateral damage" with that of "suicide bombs," regardless of the higher overall number of Palestinian civilian casualties. There is wide consensus in the Israeli public that the terrorists are to be blamed for these unintended casualties by taking shelter in populated areas, using civilians as "human shields." As a means of psychological self-defense, most Israelis overcome guilty

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[5] For a powerful analysis of the Jewish Israeli sense of victimhood ,see Caplan, Neil, "Victimhood and Identity: Psychological Obstacles to Israeli Reconciliation with the Palestinians," *Israeli and Palestinian Identities in History and Literature,* eds. Kamal Abdel-Malek and David Jacobson, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999, pages 63-86.

feelings brought on by shocking military actions by retreating to the framework of cause and effect. This orientation shapes the discourse toward examining who started the violence rather than toward looking at the longest military occupation in modern times as the underlying reason for rebellion. The theory that Israeli "targeted assassinations" triggered suicide bombings in the early stages of the Oslo peace process was not seen by many as credible, because Hamas's use of such a weapon was perceived as geared at stopping the negotiations rather than revenge per se.

Devastating acts of violence have profound consequences on our timid attempts for positive reciprocity within and between each of our societies. Palestinians blowing up civilians in Tel Aviv—including a high number of families, children housewives, and senior citizens— terrorizes the Israeli civilian population. There is no universal code of conduct that condones such acts, and part of the fear is now brought from the remote territories to the Israeli "home" front, affecting the most basic acts of daily life (e.g., commuting to work, celebrating family holidays, busing children to school, sitting in cafes, shopping at the mall). It also has the added intrinsic concern that such abominable acts are geared specifically to frighten Jews and eventually cause their eviction from *anywhere* in Israel. At the same time, the Israeli public does not internalize that there is a universal code of conduct that bluntly condemns the Israeli soldiers' treatment of Palestinian civilians (e.g., assassinating alleged terrorists without due process, keeping thousands in prison without respecting international standards, accidentally shooting school children in the street as a pattern of "light" trigger, preventing critical medical cases from receiving emergency care). Similar to Palestinian acts which have the potential of driving out Israelis through terror, Israel's policies hold the possibility of making life so miserable and untenable that Palestinians will leave "voluntarily" or through outright deportation or forced transfer.

We have seen that the dynamic of fear and condemnation can change when violent acts are directed toward "targets" that are internationally defined as legitimate. The right to use weapons in rebellions against tyrannies is widely accepted, even if we are talking about soldiers as targets—the sons and daughters and fathers and husbands of all "average" Israeli citizens. As painful as it might be to witness Palestinian armed groups killing Israeli soldiers in Gaza, such acts put the onus of the consequences on the Israeli leadership, and the question becomes what are we doing there? Why are we sacrificing our young sons and daughters when we all know that eventually there will be a pullout of troupes? Suffering the losses of a large number of Israelis in uniform may lead to enough questioning to potentially generate an anti-war movement. Recognizing that much of the escalation and retaliation of combat on both sides is the consequence of maintaining the conviction that "the only language that 'they' understand is force" (as the Hezbollah influencing the pull-out from

Lebanon or Operation Defensive Shield destroying the infrastructure of terror), such confined attacks may indeed have influenced the Israeli decision to pull out from Gaza.[6]

However, even acts of violence directed toward "legitimated" military targets prove to be impediments to positive reciprocity.[7] While the issue of killing combatants has been perceived by many in Israel as part of the "rules of the game" in fighting wars and prolonged battles, such consensus is now eroded into contempt when Palestinians were seen capturing parts of blown up human bodies of soldiers in Gaza and showing a head for bargaining for the release of Palestinian prisoners.[8] Similarly, the fact that Israel keeps bodies of many dead Palestinian fighters and suicide bombers without returning them to their families for proper burial[9] is not mitigated by the fact that those who died were militants. Years ago, Israel has understood the rules of war as outlined by the Geneva Conventions and as applied in their combat against Arab armies in defending our borders. However, Israelis to a large extent have failed to comprehend the international law implications of repressing a nation rebelling against occupation.

Given the reciprocal impact of our bleeding and causing to bleed, I have no doubt that the best way potentially to reduce the "humanity gap"—and encourage a constructive reaction from Israeli civil society—is by the Palestinians embarking on a *nonviolent* struggle. Even in the wake of Palestinian-generated violence, the importance of the endorsement by respected and credible Palestinian leaders—whether those from the political sphere or civil society—of a national nonviolent strategy has been illustrated by the struggle for freedom in Gandhi's India. Highly visible and credible commitment to such a strategy draws the admiration of the global community.[10] In our own context, the overall image as well as reality of the first Intifada as a non-lethal resistance contributed to the reaction of the Israeli public in

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[6] "The escalating violence renewed debate in Israel over its continuing presence in Gaza, where 7,500 Jewish settlers live among 1.3 million Palestinians. Israeli commentators said the violence was increasingly reminiscent of Israel's guerrilla war in Lebanon that ended with a sudden pullout in 2000." *Israel Searches for Dead Soldiers' Remains, Associated Press, 13 May 2004*.

[7] For a dissenting viewpoint see http://www.counterpunch.org/niva01092003.html

[8] "Officials from the terrorist organizations [Hamas and Islamic Jihad] demanded to enter negotiations with Israel to exchange the body parts [of Israeli soldiers] for Palestinian security prisoners incarcerated in Israel….Al-Jazeera showed Islamic Jihad members holding up the head of one of the soldiers." *Six soldiers killed in Gaza mine blast*, M. Dudkevitch, Jerusalem Post, 11 May 2004.

[9] "Health Ministry sources say keeping the bodies at the facility [Abu Kabir forensic institute in Jaffa] for such a long time breaks all ethical and moral guidelines. They say Israel would not want their dead or missing to be treated in such a way by the enemy." *Bodies of 21 Palestinians stored at Abu Kabir*, H. Shadmi, Haaretz, 14 September 2004. OR

[10] G.Sharp, *The Politics of Non-Violent Action*. 3 Vols. P. Sargent, Boston. 1973.

eventually replacing the Likud-led coalition with a more moderate alternative in 1992.[11] With nearly no killings of Israelis on the Israeli-side of the Green Line, the acceptance of the Palestinian distinct right of self-determination in their own state side-by-side with Israel gained a sustained acceptance by the Israeli public. By again choosing the "weapon" of nonviolent sanctions the Palestinians can be equals in their power struggle to the Israelis, as compared with the insurmountable military gap in terms of armament and training. President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) has been stressing from the incipient stages of the Intifada Al Aqsa the negative impact of its militarization and since his assumption of the presidency after the democratic elections of January 2005, he has been showing an unequivocal determination to stop violence against Israelis-and particularly civilians- emphasizing the need of a ceasefire for effective negotiations. But what is still missing is a public endorsement of popular nonviolent action as a way of struggle against occupation which is to replace the use of terror.

And yet, Palestinian belief in the potential of nonviolence is directly impacted by its real and perceived results. The daring Palestinian nonviolent demonstration in Rafah in May 2004 — resulting in the deaths of tens of Palestinians, mostly children who were part of a youth group participating in the march—momentarily awakened many in Israeli civil society and elsewhere as to the potential of nonviolent struggle as a powerful alternative to all other forms of violence already tried. But the extremely limited expression of Israeli condemnation, especially from the political leadership but also from mainstream Israeli society, reinforces the message that even nonviolent resistance is met with brutal, lethal force, and is in seemingly powerless. Unless Palestinian nonviolent acts of resistance receive a visible, clear and effective echo from Israeli society, this strategy will not spread and can not be sustainable. Nonviolence relies on triggering a moral vibration based in a sense of common humanity; if Palestinians do not see that such a response can be inspired why would they continue to have civilians take such risks against a ostensibly unfeeling opponent? Although I may be proven wrong, I believe sustained experimentation with such legitimate methods and actions need to be fully explored.

Academics and Intellectuals

There is no question that the peace movement of today is in a deep crisis. The solidarity actions within Israel with the Palestinian plight include only a few committed Jews mostly from the radical left, also referred to as the "critical left" in recognition of its critique of so-

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[11] E. Kaufman, "Limited Violence and the Intifada," Journal of Arab Studies, (Fall 1990), (Vol. 9, No. 2), pp. 109-121. E. Kaufman, "Israeli Perceptions of the Palestinians' 'Limited Violence' in the Intifada." Journal of Terrorism and Political Violence, (Vol. 3, No. 4, (Winter 1992), pp. 1-38.

called peace activities that focused on Israeli security but neglected justice and human rights concerns. The peace movement itself is aging and withdrawn from the public eye, except on cases of refusal to serve in different degrees in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) and the more radical elements demonstrating against the building of Israel's security fence/wall. Yet, if we look back and until recently we can see that massive mobilizations for peace have taken place. Expanding beyond the academic realm to the larger context of civil society as a whole, we observe that at certain crucial times in the history of this conflict, both sides witnessed sporadic massive mobilization for positive action and the questions are: what mechanisms worked to make such mobilizations occur, and were these actions influential and formative events? Examples of such mobilizations within Israeli society follow:

a) *Protests against Sabra and Shatila massacres*: Although perhaps not as high as the rather mythical number of 400,000, a huge number of Israelis demonstrated in 1982 against the massacres of hundreds of Palestinians in the Lebanese refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila. Subsequent investigations describe the IDF involvement as indirect—by omission in not preventing the bloodshed perpetuated by the Lebanese Christian militia—or complicit by instigation. At that time the liberal Israeli public reacted on a massive scale because they viewed the war as a whole as not indispensable to Israel's existence, this was a "war of choice." The human suffering of unarmed civilians triggered the pressure for a pullout from most of Lebanon, although our military's presence in Southern Lebanon continued for 18 more years. By 1990, the cumulative large number of more than 600 casualties among our own Israeli soldiers made the anti-war (as opposed to the peace builders) movement prevail, influencing the then Prime Minister Barak to bring back the troops to the international border.

b) *First Palestinian Intifada*: We also need to recognize the powerful impact on Israeli society of the first Intifada, which resulted in a low figure of 79 Israelis killed over three years and over 1,000 Palestinian deaths by Israelis and a similar number killed in intra-factional rivalry. In this period of 1987 to 1991, we witnessed a mushrooming of human rights organizations in Israel and an active solidarity movement that included a wide political spectrum of Israeli academics, intellectuals, artists and professionals. Without the benefit of a recognized national government, Palestinian community based organizations in the West Bank and Gaza focused on providing needed social welfare services, developing self-sufficiency economic strategies, and supporting transparent and accountable negotiators who truly represented their people.

c) *Public peace rallies connected with Prime Minister Rabin's assassination*: Following the massive peace demonstration in 1994 where Prime Minister Rabin was tragically

and ironically assassinated, the Israeli public commemorated his death over the following years with large rallies calling for continued support for a negotiated peace. Initially, his tragic death generated some new public impetus for implementing the Oslo peace process. But in the longer run, support for a negotiated, staged solution dwindled due to the stalemate in its implementation and the recurrent suicide bombing within Israel.

d) *Israeli demonstrations calling for pull-out from Gaza*: The most recent experience of massive mobilization has been the May 15, 2004, demonstration at the now named Rabin Square with 150,000 calling for Israel's pull-out from Gaza and for the leaderships to "start talking." However, this moment has proven unsustainable as weekly Peace Now demonstrations every Saturday night outside Prime Minister Sharon's Jerusalem residence lately draw only around 50 people.

These sporadic forms of collective action requires sustained active involvement by epistemic communities with a shared understanding of the realities. The urgency of the situation calls for the awareness of academics and intellectuals about their potential peacebuilding role within civil society. However, to a large extent, representatives on both sides identify strongly with their own nations and do not appreciate how distinctly they could empower themselves in this direction.

Academics and intellectuals are influential actors within civil society and often are expected to apply their wisdom and raise their voices at times of major political crises. Whereas no one can deny the responsibility of some of these groups and individuals in generating extreme nationalism, chauvinism and xenophobic feelings among the masses, they also can serve as a major vehicle for advancing democratic values within the context of a vibrant civil society. A commonality of concerns has led more than a few of my Palestinian and Israeli colleagues to becoming part of an embryonic epistemic community, which is likely to continue working together in spite of the adverse circumstances towards the goal of strengthening both human rights and democracy for both peoples. Academics of both societies overwhelmingly adhere to such principles as a necessary condition for functioning societies and their professional freedom. And yet those of us working together across the divide have been in the past, and even more at present, the exception to the rule.

This lack of interest in academic cooperation from both sides may reflect some serious malaise, whose causes could be found in similar past and present protracted communal conflicts. In this section we want to look back and remind ourselves about how our cross-border ties were forged initially and then analyze the obstacles for their further development.

Brief historic introspect

In retrospect, only in the aftermath of the June 1967 War was the opportunity presented to both Israelis and Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza the possibility of a face-to-face acquaintance with each other. Prior to that, the 1948 War had generated a rigid frontier between Israel and its neighboring Arab countries. after the 1967 Six Day War , although most cross-border relations were asymmetrical and characterized by the power relations of occupier/occupied or employer/employee, a few daring and curious Palestinian academics were ready to cautiously meet with their Jewish peers. Despite these sincere efforts, the larger picture was dominated by political activism undertaken by the ultra-nationalist and messianic proponents of the Greater Israel, calling for settling all the "liberated" parts of the Promised Land. The "peace camp," including activist academics, offered a weak response.[12] While the zealots concentrated on promoting exclusive Jewish rights, the "doves" based their arguments in pragmatic, moral and legal terms. But what was needed most from the peace camp was demonstrating that peaceful coexistence with our Palestinian neighbors was real and could lead to full peace and reconciliation. Academics' ability to cooperate openly with the former "enemy" could be the proof of such a possibility.

It was not until 1982 that the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) formally endorsed Palestinian contacts with Israelis. But on the ground, official dialogue with Israelis was only permitted four years later in 1986 when the seventeenth session of the Palestinian National Conference legitimized the activity. Historical realities also served to push Palestinians to conduct dialogue with their Israeli counterparts. The 1982 expulsion of the PLO from Lebanon, the Palestinian sense of abandonment by other Arab armies, and the subsequent intra-PLO conflict in Tripoli, all drove home to Palestinians in the Occupied Territories their sobering isolation. The impetus therefore to take their destiny into their own hands, by directly confronting camps of Israeli moderates, certainly existed, although for some this strategy was adopted more out of fear of annihilation than a desire for joint work. Such a sentiment was catalyzed by the first Intifada (1987-1991), which itself forced the Palestinian existence into the consciousness of the Israeli public.

However by the time of the outbreak of the Intifada, the winds of Israeli politics had shifted to a staunch rightist position with a Likud-led coalition government, which included the Labor party and was piloted by Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir. This Likud/Labor coalition government promptly outlawed communication with the PLO, labeling it as a "terrorist organization." Given that Palestinians in the Diaspora as well as in the occupied West Bank and Gaza maintained a rigid allegiance to the PLO as its "sole representative of the

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[12] "The Intifada and the Peace Camp in Israel," Journal of Palestine Studies, (Vol. XVII, 4, Summer 1988), pp. 66-80.

Palestinian people," dialogue on an official level was all but frozen, if ever it was ever intended to flourish by leadership on either side.

Yet no longer could either side pretend that each other did not exist. The first Intifada was a time of rich academic dialogue, which empowered Palestinian counterparts to tell the Israeli public "with stones and with words" about the need for the occupation to come to an end. Academic cooperation was a natural expression of an implicit desire on both sides to acknowledge each others existence in the hopes that it would end the vicious cycle of violence, fear, repression and insecurity. This interdependence became most clear after the 1991 Gulf War and the Oslo process.

The real breakdown of the tenuous relationships came with the current Al-Aqsa Intifada, beginning in September 2000. The precipitation of the breakdown came not only due to the growing restrictions to the freedom of movement of Palestinian colleagues, but also because the liberal Israeli counterparts have felt—as most of their peers in the peace movement—a fatigue. Increasingly, we are experiencing the sensation that our joint and separate uphill struggles are not leading to results, that we are losing ground and that perhaps it is even too late to swim against the current. Exhaustion and discouragement of our peace activists diminish our overall capacity to stem the tide of yet more bloodshed and suffering on both sides.

Obstacles to academic empowerment for peace

The impediments for the development of supportive relations as a basis for working together across the divide can be seen both at the macro and micro level. The lack of definition of academic freedom in terms of Israeli institutional responsibilities during times of violent conflict makes official cooperation between universities across the divide even more difficult. On the Palestinian side, the original call for the academic boycott preceded the much more intense Israeli restrictions on the freedom and mobility of Palestinian faculty and students imposed during the current Intifada. The majority in the Palestinian's Higher Education Council had adopted much earlier a decision not to "normalize" relations with Israeli universities, and although there are notable exceptions and research ties can be conducted with the inclusion of a third-party or through NGOs. Yet, throughout these difficult decades, there has been no dialogue about whether to cooperate or not.

Since the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, the Palestinian Ministry of Education joined the short-lived Ministry for Nongovernmental Organizations and reaffirmed the decision to bar academics from participating in joint educational institutional activities with Israeli

colleagues.[13] The Ministry and most university administrations explained that this renewed policy expresses their condemnation of the lack of concrete support from Israeli academic institutions for educational rights of Palestinians. Until it perceives an adequate response from the Israeli academic community, the Palestinian Authority will uphold this policy. Indeed, there has been little response from the Israeli academic leadership directly addressing the realities of their Palestinian colleagues. This apathy towards the repression of their colleagues is made possible by unquestioned acceptance of the security arguments of the Israeli establishment. And yet, under no circumstances have the Palestinian university presidents appealed to Israeli counterparts or the Faculty Senates to adopt a position concerning flagrant academic freedom violations, such as the military closure of university campuses. The lack of initiative on the Palestinians has enabled the Israeli side to ignore such burning problems.

Unfortunately, the Palestinian boycott and Israeli violations of academic freedom have prevented the full development of potentially beneficial relationships between Israeli and Palestinian academics. Moreover, by imposing this separation, Israeli academics are further sheltered from witnessing directly the reality of the occupation's effects on Palestinian academic freedom. Additionally, these policies have adversely impacted the Palestinian universities' access to valuable resources. For example, some NGOs circumvent the boycott by contracting with individual Palestinian academics to work jointly with Israeli universities, leading to the flow of resources and individuals to these NGOs instead of enriching Palestinian university infrastructure.

But these policies only describe structural impediments to joint cooperation. They do not tell us the rationale for upholding such positions, what the psychological state of members of either community is, or whether there is in fact a genuine effort on behalf of some academics to support peacefully negotiated solutions. Academics that are often called "liberal" are more likely to actively participate in joint efforts and are over-represented among such groups. And yet, on the other hand, only a tiny minority across the divide has been involved in the last decade in cooperative projects[14] or has maintained sustained personal relations with each other.[15]. While the merits of those committed members should not be forgotten, the fact is that the majority of academics on both sides have rejected, neglected or simply not been

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[13] An exception was made for organizations that stood up in solidarity with the Palestinian agenda, but as is the case in most places worldwide, the principle of institutional neutrality towards domestic or foreign issues, has been the norm for Israeli universities.

[14] See findings of the study conducted by Paul Scham, "Arab-Israeli Research Cooperation, 1995-1999", MERIA Journal, September 2000 (Vol.4, No.2).

[15] M. Hassassian and E. Kaufman, "Problems and Prospect for Israeli-Palestinian Academic Cooperation" (unpublished study). All in all, the dimensions of Israeli-Palestinian academic cooperation should not be exaggerated. A rough estimate of the approximately 7,000 fall term Israeli academics (total 9,000 over the course of the academic year) and the 2,000 Palestinian counterparts, speculates that no more than 200 academics on the Israeli side and about 100 on the Palestinian side are involved in what we shall call peace building initiatives. In terms of percentages, that calculates to 2% Israeli participation, and 5% Palestinian.

interested in developing such ties. Such a trend became even more acute with the outbreak of the second Intifada.

Despite the potential contribution to peace of the "usual suspects" within the Israeli academic community, the vast majority of my colleagues are characterized by a lack of motivation to engage in cooperative relationships across the divide with our Palestinian counterparts. In the spirit of self-reflection, I will try to explain to myself and to the reader the reasons for the lack of involvement and in particular the even further desertion and the reduction of level of activism that has occurred since the high level of violence on both sides during the current Intifada period.

Many Israeli academics and Middle East experts were closely associated with the Israeli army, intelligence and security community, and therefore Palestinians "may have seen cooperation with them as inconsistent with the privacy of the interaction."[16] Furthermore, former chief of Israeli Defense Forces Intelligence and later a dovish professor Yehoshafat Harkabi indicted most Israeli intellectuals for their complacency and preference to remain inconspicuous, rather than to act as a mitigating counterforce to Israeli hard line politicians and to convince their publics that there is enough room for a just compromise. Harkabi believed that the Israeli intellectual moderates showed an inability to produce a clear and cohesive message concerning the question of peace with the Arabs. Explaining this may be the fact that these moderates did not start from an analysis of Arab positions. Ignorance of these positions led to their failure to meet a popular argument from the Likud arsenal that Arab interests are such that no peace is feasible. Their dovish-ness was mostly unilaterally derived, having little or nothing to do with Arab positions. Israeli academics' views appear to be derived, instead, from their inability to consider collaborative discussions productive: a precondition for anyone wishing to negotiate with an opponent who also has his or her own basic needs and fears. As such, nothing seems to press "moderate" Israeli academics to participate in or feel the urge to initiate combined dialogues.

On the side of Palestinian academics, there has always been a tacit understanding to present a unified front when confronting Israel. This stems from the reality that Palestinians are the disproportionately weaker party. Natural divisions in Palestinian positions are therefore formally overlooked when facing a common enemy, out of a simple fear that their opponent may take advantage of their lack of unity. Peer disapproval and even intimidation at times have kept many Palestinian academics "towing the party line," while individually they may have been tempted to consider alternative positions, some of these more moderate and pragmatic than the group view.

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[16] E. Kaufman, "Israeli-Palestinian Co-authoring: A New Development Towards Peace?", <u>Journal of Palestine Studies</u>, (Vol. XXII, 88, No 4, Summer 1993), pp. 32-44.

Palestinian academics also find themselves in a curious bind. Conscious of the political situation, they view the Palestinian cause as that of victims of historic and continued injustice. Rather than overlook or forget this fact, the Palestinian academic condemns the *status quo* for his people and demands justice. Here justice takes primacy over any contrived desire for peace because it is exactly this lack of justice that is seen as the cause of Palestinian suffering. Peace offers the cessation of violence. However justice offers them not only the possibility for the cessation of violence but also a sense of acknowledgment that such violence was inflicted unjustly. Justice assuages the pain of military defeat. Peace alone implies a relinquishing of the justice of their cause, and an admission of their military defeat. This rationale is why many Palestinian academics are unable to accept peace without justice, despite the promise of the very real benefits of the peace process.

This drive for interaction in the past is in sharp contrast to the current reduced level of intellectual exchanges. Such exchanges are made nearly impossible through the physical obstacles of the Israeli checkpoints and travel permit requirements limiting the freedom of movement of the Palestinians as well as the psychological obstacles streaming from the anger and frustration of both sides. Interactions that still exist often take place in foreign countries, such as the workshop organized by the Center for Contemporary Cultural Center in Barcelona (CCCB) which has been the basis of this book.

But not all obstacles are principle-based. Often realism means to prioritize one's selfish concerns for personal professional advancement. "Publish or perish" in Israeli competitive universities is much more the acceptable norm than contribution to the community, let alone the community of the Other. Especially true before tenure, career considerations must be taken into account for promotion and getting positions of responsibility within the university hierarchy. Even principles of academic freedom have been hampered by concerns about the resulting image and reality of working with the "enemy." Both institutions and peers may look critically upon activism. Let me illustrate with a couple of personal experiences.

Twice I felt at risk of being punished at the Hebrew University. The first time was in 1988 at the early stages of the first Intifada when Mubarak Awad, the most prominent Palestinian nonviolent activist, was arrested by the Yitzhak Shamir regime and imprisoned pending deportation. Awad started his hunger strike in Migrash Harusim/Moskobia, a prison in the center of West Jerusalem, and I declared mine in front of it, in the parking lot facing the prison's wall. Our hunger strikes called for his release and right of residence in Jerusalem—his birthplace—and lasted four and a half days until the Supreme Court agreed to a stay-of-execution order and dealt with the complaint. Ultimately, the Court upheld the deportation decision and the government expelled Mubarak. Later, a sensationalist journalist was working on a story, characterizing the Truman Institute as a "PLO Center." The journalist sought evidence from the administration to indicate that while I was on the university payroll I

spent my time protesting and in a hunger strike instead of performing my duties. Luckily, without considering any broader implication, I had earlier requested a "leave of absence" even if continuing my teaching at Mount Scopus during the short hunger strike. Therefore, the accusations were baseless, and the charges ignored.

This was a close escape, but the following incidents were even more difficult. Around the same Intifada days, Palestinian colleagues felt the urge to communicate their appeal for an end to occupation to the Israeli public at-large and the international community. We at the Truman Institute started monthly Palestinian/Israeli workshops on relevant topics. On one particular occasion our friends suggested conducting a session on the "nonviolent aspects of the Intifada," and we agreed scrupulously in advance of the session on all details of the workshop. The wide dissemination of personalized invitations brought a massive turnout, making the Faculty Club conference room too small to accommodate all those who came. Instead of restricting the attendance, I made arrangements to use the large auditorium at our own Truman Institute building. As the speakers were being introduced, one of the Palestinian panelists privately asked me to remove the Israeli flags from the podium, given that we had not agree on displaying any national flags. While thinking about how to proceed, the flash of a photographer triggered my decision not to jeopardize the wellbeing of our Palestinian friends with a widespread exposure of their presence at Hebrew University in unfavorable quarters. I tried to remove the four gigantic flags all at once, and they fell to the ground. A couple of academics in the audience shouted "Why are you removing our flag?" and "The flag is not a rug!" I used the microphone to explain to the audience the situation and said that we needed to respect the ground rules, that we had not made prior agreements on the display of flags, and that we needed to respect their wish even if I cherish our flag. Although my explanations were well-received by the majority of the audience, I could sense incoming trouble. These troubles took the form of critical newspaper headlines, accusations by the Likud-controlled Student Union, explanations required by the Standing Committee of the University, requests for a public apology, and parliamentary questions at the Knesset to the Ministry of Education about the university's policy regarding the display of the Israeli flag. This and more culminated, without my knowledge, in a delegation of distinguished professors asking the university president for my resignation. Luckily for me, a no less distinguished group of professors also went to the president to explain the context of my decision and the importance of the work conducted at the Truman Institute. The late president advised me that my opponents were watching closely "around the corner" and that I needed to be careful, but that he wanted to protect me. A few months later, the invitation of the moderate Hanna Siniora to speak at our Institute resulted in the student union's protests as well as threats of "blowing up Truman"—apparently by an extreme non-student group—circulated to the journalists' boxes at the Government Press Office. The university initially suggested

canceling the event. However, our insistence on not allowing intimidation to block academic freedom persuaded the administration to allow the event, provided that we submit ourselves to the instructions of the campus security. With armed guards at the top of the adjacent building and barriers checking the identity of all invitees, Hanna was smuggled through the backdoor; eventually we were able to peacefully conduct his lecture in front of a full house. And yet for not a few at the university, my own image as a troublemaker and that of the Truman Institute as a liability was growing, to our personal and institutional detriment.

Action carries consequences. Relatively speaking, Palestinian actions against injustice often result in more severe penalties. However the comparatively higher level of academic freedom in our Israeli society should result in Israeli academics assuming more individual and collective responsibilities and associated risks. For Israeli universities, ideological radicalism that eschews action is more convenient than the moderate activist. "Walking the talk" is less comfortable than the stance of a radical colleague, who told me that he does not need to work with Palestinians because he already knows that "they are right." Intellectual understanding is fairly meaningless if it does not lead into commitment to redress wrong-doing. I myself have tried as much as possible to remain within the mainstream; I performed my reserve duties in Lebanon and the Syrian enclave and was for many years the Honorary Secretary of the Public Committee for the Jews in Arab countries. But a Jew fasting for an Arab was too much to take for many around me. My Judaism, however, instructs us "to love our neighbor as ourselves"; not less than the complement that "if I am not for myself, who is to be?"

Knowledge and act-knowledgement:

Among the key concepts for explaining the disappointment with Israeli academia to fulfill its social responsibility is the failure in transforming *knowledge* of the situation into *acknowledgment*, or perhaps better put, a failure to *act* on the basis of such knowledge. We need to transform an internalized perception of injustice into an external, effective behavior. Many Jewish Israeli academics and intellectuals have been fully aware of the asymmetric situation between us and Palestinians: a mostly immigrant Jewish population in the nineteenth century facing an indigenous Arab population; establishing our own independence more than half a century ago and our neighbors still without a Palestinian state; the occupiers' heavy control over the lives of the occupied; the high socio-economic gap; the ability to express dissent in a vibrant democracy when our peers across the Green Line face strong elements of both autocracy and disorganization, ostracizing and intimidation; trends of corporate globalization and the lagging behind in technology. As Jews we can try to ignore the daily consequences of the absence of peace through building walls and fences, while the Palestinians are still stuck with the centrality of the conflict in daily life. Even coming to

Barcelona to discuss our mutual social responsibility was close to a "mission impossible" for many of our Palestinian colleagues. No permits for access to the Tel Aviv airport for any of the West Bankers and harassment and delays for them at the Jordan border made the preparations near to collapse.

Hence, the challenge for the Israeli side is to find ways to translate the *knowledge* of what has and is happening to the Palestinians as a result of occupation to an *acknowledgment.* We must ask ourselves, as academics who hold universal values of equality, what are out duties? What do we demand for our neighbors that we already claim for ourselves?

A denial occurs by creating separate standards on either side of the Green Line and by considering the situation in the Occupied Territories as a temporary evil to be resolved with the end of occupation within the framework of a peace treaty. Stanley Cohen mentions the interpretation of having two types of legal systems.[17] One is a positive one in which the system is a result of the consensual agreement to delegate legitimate authority as part of the social contract to live together. This "consensus model" liberal approach is contradicted by the "coercive model" inspired by Marxist ideology among others, in which the current state is the instrument of the ruling class or elites, and it is designed mostly to have the few oppress the masses. Many of the Israeli academics tend to view the first model as prevailing within the Green Line and the second, of a temporary nature, to be the military regime over the Occupied Territories. This dual model fails to understand the results of war and occupation on the Israeli society.[18] The effect of keeping a nation next door under control without rights is having a steady impact on the deterioration of the standards of democracy in Israel.

So, in the context of these attitudes, how does denial of the rights of the Other evolve? The early justification for the presence of Israel in the West Bank and Gaza was the widespread perception that the 1967 Six-Day War was a legitimate act of self-defense. Consequently, it was acceptable within Israeli society to set-up a dual system in which within Israel there is "rule *of* law" and in the Occupied Territories "rule *by* law."[19] Whilst in Israel we are allowed to do whatever is not restricted by law, in the Territories Palestinians are not implicitly permitted by regulations to enjoy freedom unless explicitly regulated. In comparing the effect of denial on the inaction of white South African liberal academics towards the evils of Apartheid, Cohen further stresses the difference between the overall feeling of injustice in South Africa and the departmentalization – in addition to what Salim Tamari calls their professional

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[17] S. Cohen, "The Human Rights Movement in Israel and South Africa; Some Paradoxical Comparisons," Lecture in Memory of Professor Michael Wade, Occasional Papers No. 1, The Harry S. Truman Research Institute of the Advancement of Peace.

[18] E. Kaufman "The Effect of War and Occupation on the Israeli Society", in E. Kaufman, S. Abed and R. Rothstein (eds.), Democracy, Peace and the Israeli/Palestinian Conflict, (Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 1993).

[19] S. Cohen, "The Human Rights Movement in Israel and South Africa; Some Paradoxical Comparisons," Lecture in Memory of Professor Michael Wade, Occasional Papers No. 1, The Harry S. Truman Research Institute of the Advancement of Peace, p. 4.

"insularity" that allowed the consensus of the Israelis to focus on the prevalence of democracy in the small Israel within the Green Line of the 1967 borders. These days, actions resulting in widespread human rights violations cannot but generate cognitive dissonance among liberal Jews. "Emergency" regulations applied to the Territories codified by the British Mandate as temporary have been constantly used, making it the rule rather than the exception. Furthermore, this characterization of democracy ignores the expansionist policies supporting the growth of settlements, which logically leads to a permanent occupation of a great part of the territories. After many years and clear cases of gross violations, structural violence, targeted assassinations, house demolitions, detention without trial, massive humiliation and collective punishment, it is no longer easy to justify such acts as "lawful sanctions." Yet the question still remains as to what paralyzes many of us and prevents action to redress such crimes?

Facing ourselves in the mirror should reveal the contradiction between avoiding a public posture and our inner voice of alarm. The mentioned mechanisms allow our lives to go on without our sleep being affected. We all pretend to get used to the banality of evil. Within this context, the issue of asymmetry and reciprocity stands out.

Let me end this section by sharing the feelings that erupted in my own peace-focused Institute and within me. During the early stages of the Al-Aqsa Intifada we were watching on the televised news the daily escalations between Palestinian Tanzim snipers firing towards the Jerusalem settlement of Gilo and the IDF's return gunfire and tank shelling of the West Bank town of Beit Jala. In a closed-door meeting with Truman Institute researchers and staff I encouraged all to make an extraordinary effort to continue our joint projects with Palestinians and suggested that we find ways for expressing gestures of sympathy and friendship. I gave the example of my own family, which has four friends and their families living in Beit Jala. Knowing that they must be undergoing a horrible ordeal, we prepared four large bags with chocolate and candy for the children and our little granddaughter added a drawing with a peace message. The silence which implied for me soul-searching was interrupted by one of the most reasonable and moderate researchers, when he asked: "And why did you not bring chocolates to the Jews of Gilo?" I was taken aback and for a few seconds left speechless. I managed to articulate that we have relatives in Gilo, and call them from time to time. But internally I went on asking myself for an answer. I finally came up with what I consider to be at the core of true reciprocity, and told them: If my own neighborhood, the German Colony, is going to be under attack, I would expect my Palestinian friends and colleagues to care for me too!

Since then there have been several attempted and a few actual suicide bombings, which blew up in the bus stops and coffee shops of my neighborhood. The reactions of my Palestinian colleagues were few to start and in diminishing returns. When the bombing of

Café Hillel spread death and a burning stench throughout our quarter, the countless ambulance sirens and TV breaking news stories kept my wife and I awake until dawn. I was praying and hoping for some sign of positive reciprocity; disappointingly, no expressions of concern came from my Palestinian colleagues. Three days later, I was among the Israeli faculty who were planning to demonstrate at the Abu Dis campus of Al Quds University against the unscrupulous building of the security Wall. I recalled that memories of my previous visit to the campus four years earlier were punctuated by the large green banners of Hamas. I agonized whether I could bear the enthusiastic support for the suicide bomber while we were still grieving our dead. I decided not to go. But following the week-long morning period—the Shiva—following the Café Hillel tragedy, I saw myself again actively protesting inhumane and degrading treatment of my neighbors across the Green Line: joining to the South the courageous "Checkpoint Watch" women stationed near to Hebron and the next day driving to the North with the B'tselem staff in their white armored jeep going to the checkpoint at the entrance to Nablus.

Our lives in the Holy land are full of dilemmas and I often wonder what is right and wrong, human or superhuman. In the realm of the possible, what can we do?

Concluding thoughts and ideas for action

Looking back, we recognize that it is easier to be for peace when attuned with our leadership and publics at-large. This trend seems to be unfolding now in front of our eyes. Yet, given past records, civil society has an important duty in seeking, exposing and acting upon common values. In the often repeated words of Dr. David Sazuki: "If the people will lead, the leaders will follow".

On the issue of conditionality, should we demand and expect a response from the other side as a pre-condition for us doing what is in fact needed in the situation? Or act without conditions and independent of the actions and reactions of the other side? If there are pre-conditions, who should act first, the stronger or the weaker? Most who have the strength to act independently either attribute the overwhelming responsibility for the current situation to their own society—as with Israelis who see the current situation as being the result of an occupation that is unilaterally imposed and must be unilaterally withdrawn—or are driven by a set of values that dictate redressing unacceptable behavior regardless of the actions of others—such as public opposition by Palestinians of suicide attacks. From the perspective of the weaker side of any asymmetric relationship, they see that their suffering should be recognized unconditionally by the powerful. Indeed, a few among us have shown solidarity with the Other without any expectations of mutuality. Like falling madly in love, it is exceptionally possible to act unilaterally, sustaining oneself on the dream of growing into a

reciprocal relationship. I am indeed full of admiration for the uncommon few who are willing to give care without receiving some encouragement in return.

However, the majority in both populations require some sort of reciprocity from the other side, especially if they are to adopt actions that are unpopular in their respective communities. Given human nature, it is nearly impossible to maintain a one-sided relationship in the long-run. Even seemingly eternal flames of love usually devolve into resentment, fatigue or disinterest.

One promising approach to reciprocity for both sides is demonstrating genuine concern for the grief of the Other. This willingness for attaining a shared victimhood status does not necessarily require erasing the asymmetry of the relationship and nature of suffering.[20] Recognizing the humanity of my adversary does not belittle my own extreme conditions, but may open up avenues for identification with and understanding of my suffering. However, under such circumstances, do we have the moral right to be recognized as victims while we are also victimizers? Can we ask and expect concrete forms, or at least symbolic gestures, of acknowledging my suffering? Perhaps a starting point could be the shared assertions that neither sides hands are clean, and that our common enemy is not the Israeli or Palestinian people but injustice and violence.

The feedback effect of reciprocal *positive* action is mutually encouraging, and both sides are able and inclined to participate in narrowing the humanity gap. However, if one side embarks on actions of good will and there is no corresponding resonance from the other side, such deficient feedback can likewise reduce willingness for future risk-taking. One example of a missed opportunity to encourage peacebuilding through reciprocity is the published statement signed by a group of 70 prominent Palestinian politicians and intellectuals, calling on their people not to retaliate with violence after the Israeli targeted assassination of Hamas leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin.[21] Unfortunately, no visible response of encouragement came from the Israeli side.

The current reality of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is that there are fewer and fewer "usual suspects" working across the divide. Reaching out and encouraging others to join cooperative efforts is needed more than ever, especially within the academic community. One of the strategies to enlarge the ranks of partnering academics is in negotiating the conditions of reciprocity. The role of academics and researchers in providing accurate

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[20] For a powerful analysis of the Jewish Israeli sense of self as a victim,, see, Neil Caplan, "Victimhood and Identity: Psychological Obstacles to Israeli Reconciliation with the Palestinians," *Israeli and Palestinian Identities in History and Literature,* eds. Kamal Abdel-Malek and David Jacobson, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999, pages 63-86.

[21] To my deepest regret this courageous Palestinian attempt at de-escalation was not met with any significant public answer by Israelis. Often attempts to involve a diverse group of academics to protest the killing of even innocent civilians are fruitless.

information and evaluation from multiple perspectives is crucial. This is not the time for concentrating only on publications that sit on our shelves. Now is the time to address, inform and challenge--with all our tools and skills--the general public, through the media, on-campus presentations, and public events.

It may not be credible for academics and intellectuals to call for such powerful joint efforts and mutual understanding without establishing the norms that can actually guide their own partnership relationship. Over the years, there have been many dialogues between both sides, and one can recognize these as a necessary stage in peacebuilding, albeit not sufficient unless it moves towards concrete actions. Different from other professions such as in the medical field, there is no clear Code of Ethics for professionals within the social sciences, the humanities and the arts that determine members' roles and responsibilities in a conflict situation. Such a code might emphasize cooperation across the divide predicated on common principles of human rights, democracy and peace. These principles would prevail over feelings of denying the legitimacy of the Other. Working towards a wide consensus on such a Code of Ethics can be a concrete contribution to laying the basis for a peacebuilding partnership. This model can also stimulate Israeli and Palestinian sectorial cooperative work of other professional groups (e.g., social workers, unions, teachers, women organizations, lawyers) within their respective civil societies.

Whereas the Code of Ethics can articulate shared values as a common denominator, we need to translate realistically these philosophical standards so as to overcome existing psychological and physical barriers to cooperative work. Concrete examples of such obstacles are the Israeli authority's repeated closures of Palestinian universities, innumerable hurdles preventing students from attending classes, curtailment of the freedom to participate in professional overseas conferences. Or the inability or unwillingness of Palestinian university authorities to restrain expressions of anti-Jewish racism and incitement to violence against civilians in such incidents as the burning of a mock bus.

Over the years, it has been my experience that individual responsibility follows a process of personal growth, which moves us from knowledge of the injustice into "act-knowledgement." My transition was triggered by my disbelief that my own government, let alone my highly respected Supreme Court, would actually sanction the expulsion of Mubarak Awad, mentioned previously as the most renowned Palestinian advocate of non-violence during the first Intifada period. The deportation made even more acute my own sense of personal responsibility when taking into account that Mubarak, a born Jerusalemite, was exiled from his home, and I, an immigrant who came to Israel as a young Zionist with hopes of coexistence, remained.

In defining a course of action that accommodates the needs and aspirations of both sides to the conflict, it is useful to appreciate and find a balance between not only those who promote

morality arguments to "do what is right because it is the right thing to do" but also those who prefer to look into peacebuilding as a matter of long-term, enlightened self-interest. This balance is not easily achieved and often the actions advocated by the two perspectives are in contradiction to each other. Even for those who seek equilibrium between personally benefiting from our actions and the benefits accrued to the combined communities at-large, a strategic outlook is necessary. The reality of peacebuilding is that resolving conflicts often requires the payment of a price (especially in the short run and often disproportionately distributed) to correct historical injustices. Most individuals are willing to go only so far in voluntarily taking on personal suffering, and this individual limit may not be far enough to adequately reach a settlement based on universal principles and the rule of law. This dynamic partially explains the mainstream Israeli peace camp's seeming withdrawal of support for negotiations in favor of "the military option." Until now, the peace camp has focused on peace for the sake of Israeli security (self-interest) instead of peace based on addressing human rights for all (morality focus). We can illustrate this point with expressions of moderate Israelis calling for separation because of the "demographic bomb" (forecasting that maintaining the territorial status quo may inexorably lead towards the Palestinians becoming a majority). Using human rights language replaces the "giving up" territories with the emphasis on recognizing their entitlements. That disengagement from Gaza is not only because it is religiously not significant to the Jewish nation but because of our adherence to the principle of self-determination, as all nations, and our desire not to enslave others given our historical experience.

When the second Intifada began with its onslaught of suicide attacks, a substantial part of the peace camp maintained its ultimate goal of Israeli security and abandoned the strategy of peace negotiations as simply an ineffective vehicle for obtaining that goal. However, Israelis that maintained a call for human rights for all, despite the Palestinian resort to armed resistance, understood better the source of the violence and were not surprised that the structural violence of occupation fueled armed resistance and that only a just solution would lead to a solution for both and not a peace imposed by the stronger side. In fact, the majority on both sides lost faith that mutual security could be achieved through a negotiated settlement. During the Oslo period, the slow pace of implementation, neglect of the refugee concerns, and continued land seizure and settlement expansion similarly persuaded many Palestinians that force was the only mechanism for achieving their aspirations. However, as with the Israelis, some Palestinians recognize the reciprocal needs of national security, acknowledgement of suffering, and recognition of losses. Neither retaliatory nor preemptive violence would address these basic needs on either side. This mutual respect for each other's fundamental requirements holds the potential for providing a common foundation for joint action and authentic partnership across the divide between both sides.

As human beings we have many identities: some are ascribed at birth (ethnicity, age, gender); others, we build ourselves (religion, location, citizenship).[22] In a protracted conflict situation we are raised to stress the identity that separates us. When shooting and mourning, there is no time to ask each other questions; we are seen as either Arab or Jew, friend or foe. Even at abnormal times, we should build on our shared, borderless identity as adherents to democracy, peace and human rights. Most important for both of our academic communities is to understand each others' motives and needs. And to move quickly from understanding to acting in accordance. As an influential part of our respective civil societies, we are responsible for becoming a knowledge-based community with a shared understanding of reality and what needs to be done. At the moment the search of such commonalities is a regrettably low priority among most of our peers on both sides. The time for change has arrived.

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[22] Benedict Anderson, <u>Imagined Communities</u>, New York, Verso, 2nd edition, 1991),