QUINTESENTIAL INTRACTABILITY:
ATTRACTORS AND BARRIERS IN THE
PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI CONFLICT

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I. THE INTRACTABILITY OF CONFLICTS

Intractable conflicts are those that linger despite the parties’ understanding that they would be better off resolving their disagreements in negotiation. The obvious ensuing question is why these conflicts persist when rational considerations indicate they should cease. A valuable way to examine this ostensible paradox is through the lens of Dynamical Systems Theory1 (“DST”) and specifically by applying the concept of conflict attractors, which are “patterns of thinking, feeling and acting . . . pulling . . . toward a negative, destructive state that becomes self-organizing and self-perpetuating.”2 The DST frame is particularly useful to observe intractable conflicts since it focuses on nonlinear, multi-dimensional and interconnected developments taking place within an integrated system over time. Such complexity generates potential attractors from various sources, capable of feeding and sustaining intractability and rendering conflicts protracted. Conflict, as a system of interactions and an interface in which interests, motivations,

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1 Dynamical systems theory is an interdisciplinary paradigm which advances concepts and approaches to better understand intractable conflicts. Compare Robin R. Vallacher & Andrzej Nowak, Toward Computational and Social Psychology: Cellular Automata and Neutral Models of Interpersonal Dynamics, in CONNECTIONIST MODELS OF SOCIAL REASONING AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOR (S.J. Read & L.C. Miller, eds. 1998), with STEVEN H. STROGATZ, SYNC: HOW ORDER EMERGES FROM CHAOS IN THE UNIVERSE, NATURE, AND DAILY LIFE passim (2003), and Robin R. Vallacher, Stephen J. Read & Andrzej Nowak, The Dynamical Perspective in Personality and Social Psychology, 6 PERSONALITY AND SOC. PSYCHOL. REV. 370 (2002). Dynamical system consists of interrelated beliefs, values, norms and behaviors that change and evolve with time. A change in each component is affected by impacts from any other element on various levels of interaction (from personal to collective, from physical to psychological and emotional and vice versa). Ultimately, DST highlights the array of factors relevant to the durability of conflict and the complexity of relationships that renders disputes resilient to change.

passions and fears of two parties or more collide, is constantly furnished and fuelled by internal as well as external stimuli. Some originate from within—inside drives and impetuses of the involved parties; others emerge from the environment or landscape in which conflict dwells. Both influences serve to confound and defy the simple explanation of why conflicts prevail even when they turn futile and counter-productive.

Intractability takes hold when “many different components of a conflict collapse together into one mass, into one very simple ‘us versus them’ story that effectively resist change.”\(^3\) Thus the more intertwined aspects conflict consists, the more the chances it might fall into the trap of intractability. Intractable conflicts are not widespread but their durability and perseverance produce long-term impairments and damages to the agents and to their environment. Crocker and his collaborators perceive of intractable strife as a conflict that has persisted over time and refused to yield to efforts to arrive at a political settlement.\(^4\) Using different levels of analysis they assert that the major causes which encourage and facilitate the advent of insolvability are: (1) the likes of quest for identity, sense of belonging and sense of purpose; (2) unattended human needs, perception of relative deprivation, persisting structural violence, poverty and reinforcing cleavages; (3) geography and geopolitics (rivers, access to sea, minerals, fault-lines between cultures, religions, ethnicities, tribes); (4) internal weakness, instability or rifts; and (5) bad leaders, thirst for dominance and control.\(^5\) Zartman underlines five factors as decisive in detecting intractability: protracted time, identity denigration, solution polarization, conflict profitability, and absence of ripeness.\(^6\) While extended time span is a clear feature of prolonged strife, the mutual vilification of identities and vastly incompatible solutions augment intractability. Additionally, if conflict is lucrative to some or all participants and conditions are not apt for reconciliation, the conflict is bound to continue. Kriesberg concurs with the principle of extended and prolonged duration but adds the destructive and pernicious nature of the dispute as a precondition and resistance to


\(^5\) Id. at 6–7.

change or accommodation, not merely absence of ripeness, as salient characteristics of intractability.\(^7\)

The Arab-Israeli conflict, and since 1967 the Palestinian-Israeli conflict,\(^8\) has certainly manifested throughout its long trajectory all the traits of unmanageability and recalcitrance to forbear settlement. Scholars have been constantly relating to the Middle East dispute as the quintessential example of deep-rooted, protracted and immune to resolution.\(^9\) This Article aims at exposing sources of intractability in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The history of this conflict is fraught with obstacles and hurdles on the path to possible resolution and reconciliation between the rivaling sides.\(^10\) This Article detects the possible origins of such hindrances.

\(^7\) LOUIS KRIESBERG & BRUCE W. DAYTON, CONSTRUCTIVE CONFLICTS: FROM ESCALATION TO RESOLUTION 318 (4th ed. 2011).

\(^8\) Most scholars agree that the origins of the Arab-Israeli conflict are to be found at the end of the nineteenth century with the surge of Jewish nationalism and the birth of the Zionist movement following waves of violent riots (pogroms) mainly in the region known as the pale of settlement in Eastern Europe where the Jewish population of the Russian Empire was concentrated since 1791. The Anti-Semitic riots triggered the first waves of immigration to Palestine, which pitted the Jewish newcomers against the indigenous Arab population. With the continuing waves of immigration and the rise of Arab nationalism, the conflict consolidated in the 1920s into a confrontation of two national movements vying for territory and sovereignty. See generally, JAMES L. GELVIN, THE ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT: ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF WAR (1st ed. 2005); DAVID W. LESCH, THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT: A HISTORY WITH DOCUMENTS (2006); THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT: A DOCUMENTARY HISTORY OF THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT (Walter Laqueur & Barry Rubin, eds., 7th ed. 2008). Until 1967, the Arab states headed by Egypt, represented the Palestinians’ plight in political and diplomatic forums as well as on the battlefield. After the devastating defeat in June, 1967, the Palestinian leadership reached the conclusion that they could not rely on the Arab government to fight for their independence. The Palestinian Liberation Organization (“PLO”), founded in 1964, became fully independent in early 1969 and the militant Fatah faction assumed control over most of the PLO executive bodies. The same year, the PLO launched independent guerrilla warfare against Israel and the Middle East conflict began to be exemplified by the Israeli-Palestinian rift. See ARTHUR GOLDSCHMIDT, JR., A CONCISE HISTORY OF THE MIDDLE EAST (5th ed. 1996); JAMES L. GELVIN, THE ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT: ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF WAR 166–99 (3d ed. 2014); WILLIAM B. QUANDT, PEACE PROCESS: AMERICAN DIPLOMACY AND THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT SINCE 1967 23–54 (3d ed. 2005).


and addresses them in terms of attractors—the tendencies that drag the disputants back into the morass of confrontation whenever they try to yank themselves out.\textsuperscript{11} Although there are positive attractors, which tend to prod conflicting parties toward constructive and gratifying patterns of communication, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is unfortunately laden with negative attractors. These harmful attractors consolidate and perpetuate themselves as the conflict persists in a vicious cycle of self-fulfilling prophecies on both sides of the fault-lines.

The internal conflict attractors emanate from people’s psyches, memories, values, norms, beliefs, fears and gut feelings. In the specific case of groups involved in an ongoing and protracted strife that might traverse years, decades, even generations of hostilities and discord, proclivities to preserve antagonistic attitudes vis-à-vis “the other” are reinforced by endless negative images, labels, frames, stereotyping and generalizations adamantly inculcated in hearts and minds.\textsuperscript{12} Denigrating and vilifying the adversary throughout the long years of contention have become more than a strategic imperative: they turned out to be powerful leverage for consensus building and the cornerstone of collective identity. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict manifests stability and perseverence over the years. It is not an aberration or abnormality on either party’s behalf: the disagreements are genuine and the reservoirs of deleterious feelings are profound. Even though they might seem vainly ensnared in a useless friction and intransigently scuffle with each other to no avail, the negative attractors on both sides are germane and coherent. This is precisely why it is imperative to get to know and understand them and then attempt to transform the conflict landscape to alleviate its intractability. Attractors spawn and nurture barriers. While attractors are perceived as internal attitudes, tendencies, habits and moods of each actor, barriers are captured as standing between the rivaling sides, an obstruction on the road. Barriers are welded to negative attractors that uphold and sustain them. This distinction is not only analytically important but operationally as well: internal mindsets are more effectively attended by psychological means whereas external impediments highlight communication as the skill to be employed.

\textsuperscript{11} Coleman, supra note 3, at 2.
\textsuperscript{12} Daniel Bar-Tal, Societal Beliefs of Intractable Conflicts, 9 Int’l J. Conflict Mgmt. 22, 34–35 (1998); Daniel Bar-Tal & Yona Teichman, Stereotypes and Prejudice in Conflict: Representations of Arabs in Israeli Jewish Society (2005); Beyond Bullets and Bombs, supra note 9, at 116–18.
Deciphering the code of attractors and barriers’ implacability is the first step toward their undoing. Attractors to sustain conflicts include powerful motivations such as establishing and maintaining group identity, consolidating internal unity and cohesion, and creating opportunities to exhibit leadership.\textsuperscript{13} Barriers include structural, psychological and strategic impediments that cripple the interaction between the belligerent sides.\textsuperscript{14} After presenting some of the more conspicuous examples of each obstacle, this Article focuses on the fragile and most precarious phase of moving from conflict to conflict resolution. It is there that the parties are most vulnerable to fall back into the trap of rancor and discord shifting reticently from the comfort zone of defiance to the uncertainty of compromise. Next communicational and psychological sources of intractability in the Palestinian-Israeli strife are probed to finally come up with several suggestions of how to tackle the pattern of recurring confrontation toward a better future for both parties.

II. \textsc{The Power of Negative Attractors}

Internal attractors are highly pervasive in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to the extent that they render its landscape a virtual minefield. Some emerge from accumulated emotional, cognitive and motivational frames, which bias and distort relevant information about the conflict and help corroborating a preconceived selected and skewed view of the other. Such slanted predispositions are to be found both on the Israeli-Jewish side\textsuperscript{15} and the Palestinian-Arab side.\textsuperscript{16} They are grounded in steadfast beliefs of the necessity of the conflict for the crystallization of national solidarity and unity; the collective mythologies such as heroism, glory and sacrifice; and deifying the collective memory. These viewpoints are further augmented by negative group images of the other as de-
monic, conniving and immoral and conversely, positive images of self as just, moral and most effectually, as victims to the other’s brutality and inhumaneness. Fear and animosity are widespread on both sides of the fault-lines and they are unfailingly fed by mutual ignorance and distrust. Although Israelis and Palestinians are equally drained of creative ideas to improve the situation, both parties firmly believe that time is on their side and eventually, they will prevail. On the Israeli side, a siege mentality accentuated by an extended experience of isolation and alienation in an unfriendly neighborhood coupled with an acute and tormenting recollection of the Holocaust, contributes to an incessant suspicion of Arab intentions. Analogies of Nazis with Arabs, then with Palestinians and recently with Iranians keep resurfacing with any new flare of disputation. Frequent expressions of militant leaders on the Palestinian side immediately trigger Holocaust-driven doomsday scenarios that magnify the original message to hideous and reprehensible proportions. On the Palestinian side, a severe sense of victimization has been compounded with every historical calamity they suffered and became a lynchpin of their collective narrative. Additionally, among Palestinians there is a recurrent theme of being abandoned and betrayed by their Arab brethren, which makes them even more stalwart and unyielding facing Israeli aggression on their own. This reciprocal pool of sentiments and concerns produces the impermeable negative images of the Palestinian as “primitive” and “terrorist” and of the Israeli as “colonialist” and “conqueror.” These malicious characterizations feed each other since “primitiveness must be colonized and terrorism must be conquered and on the other hand, colonization and conquests must be resisted by those conquered” and so on and so forth.

Conflict is conducted to a large extent on symbolic and ritualistic dimensions. This is convincingly supported by research which relays the symptomatic images of Israelis and Palestinians back to underlying layers of their respective communities, namely

core attitudes and societal norms which hold the society together.\textsuperscript{21} As such, a societal normative core is established as coherent, cohesive and robust basis. It is spawned by integrative ideologies,\textsuperscript{22} worldview about human nature,\textsuperscript{23} bequeathed values and moral standards\textsuperscript{24} and religious precepts.\textsuperscript{25} All these together construct a national ethos, which is destined to become the bedrock of a diverse community seeking unison and solidity to survive. This coveted comprehensive unity is composed of a positive and exclusive self-image in contrast to negative images of others, on the ability to control and defend the core values and on a sense of mission and uniqueness. These collective norms are consistent, cogent and interconnected, and therefore highly change-resistant.\textsuperscript{26} They are cultivated and nourished in a potent incubator of symbols and features that generates close-mindedness, parochialism and lopsided views of reality. Social conflicts are particularly conducive to activate and mobilize all these stocks of self-aggrandizement and imitability since they stem from disparities and competition between two or more collective entities. Conflict serves as a catalyst for group beliefs to assert themselves in the ultimate moment of truth.

The fundamental backbone of core norms is exacerbated by the adverse emotions that are built-up and accumulated around the ongoing conflict. The more deleterious and destructive the conflict becomes, the more toxic the attitudes, sentiments and responses of the agents involved. These antagonistic emotions transform from sporadic, spontaneous and transient to extended, chronic and en-


\textsuperscript{23} Carol S. Dweck, Self-Theories: Their Role in Motivation, Personality, and Development passim (1999).


\textsuperscript{25} Mark Juergensmeyer, Radhasoami Reality: The Logic of a Modern Faith passim (1991); Charles Kimball, When Religion Becomes Evil passim (1st ed. 2002).

trenched.\textsuperscript{27} Suffused by hatred, disdain and fear, emotions on both sides are embedded in education texts, media channels, folklore and mundane parlance.\textsuperscript{28} They become so rooted in the cultural heritage that it inherited by ensuing generations as a congenital trait. With time, these sentiments are part and parcel of the cognitive system through which Israelis and Palestinians perceive and interpret the world around them. When their lenses are so obscure and \textit{a priori} marred by prejudice, it is little wonder that both camps are heavily blemished by negative attractors against peace and recognition of the other. Their endeavors and resources are invested in maintaining cognitive resonance and minimizing dissonance by eschewing external stimuli and information that jeopardize the inner package.\textsuperscript{29} Thus, reconciliatory messages of moderate Israeli or Palestinian leaders are either totally ignored or are cynically referred to as dubious and mistrustful. This has been the misfortune that befell the Oslo Accord in 1993, and its fellow initiatives that failed to even leave the ground—the Geneva Initiative of 2003\textsuperscript{30} and the Saudi (or Arab) Initiative of 2002.\textsuperscript{31} They all fell prey to the negative attractors bushwhacking the conflict landscape for any signs of compromise and rapprochement.

The negative attractors exert an indelible impact on Israelis and Palestinians. Close-mindedness and unyieldingness which sustain the conflict find fertile soil to nurture in and a hospitable public opinion to furnish self-satisfied justifications and sanctimonious arguments. Overall, with a few fluctuations and uncharacteristic turns due to infrequent changes in the conflict environment, many Israelis and Palestinians are reluctant to immerse themselves in a genuine and thorough peace or reconciliation process with each other. On both sides, the exponents of peace are dwindling and the prospects of a political agreement diminish with every passing day. Considerable indication to this trend can be detected in the decade between the Oslo Agreement in 1993 and the peak of the

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\item Bar-Tal \& Teichman, supra note 12, at 208–28.
\item Robert Jervis, \textit{The Logic of Images in International Relations passim} (2d ed. 1989); \textit{Beliefs and Leadership in World Politics: Methods and Applications of Operational Code Analysis passim} (Mark Schaffer \& Stephen G. Walker eds., 1st ed. 2006); Greg Cashman \& Leonard C. Robinson, \textit{An Introduction to the Causes of War: Patterns of Interstate Conflict from World War I to Iraq passim} (2007).
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second Intifada in 2002. Following the historical breakthrough of Oslo and the mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO on September 13, 1993 a surge of optimism was exhibited among Israelis on both sides of the political divide.\footnote{Dov Shinar, The Peace Process in Cultural Conflict: The Role of the Media, 2 CONFLICT & COMM. ONLINE 1, 3 (2003), available at http://www.cco.regener-online.de/2003_1/pdf_2003_1/shinar.pdf.} Although extremists’ intransigence and violence accompanied the peace process from its inception, the majority still positively perceived it.\footnote{Gadi Wolfsfeld, Promotion Peace Through the News Media: Some Initial Lessons from the Oslo Peace Process, 2 INT’L J. PRESS/POL. 54 (1997).} The dire reminder of how difficult it would be to implement the ambitious agreement contained the initial enthusiasm and qualified the support to “a pattern of accommodation regarding long-term political issues . . . and stiffening of short-term positions.”\footnote{Asher Arian, Politics in Israel: The Second Republic 198 (2d ed. 2005).} Although overall attitudes toward the Palestinians became more conciliatory, even in sensitive issues such as an independent Palestinian State,\footnote{Samuel Peleg & Eitan Alimi, A Palestinian State – Yes or No? Constructing Political Discourse in the Israeli Print News Media – An Experimental Design, 4 CONFLICT & COMM. ONLINE 1 (2005), available at http://www.cco.regener-online.de/2005_2/pdf_2005-2/pa.pdf.} insistence on immediate issues such as day-to-day security measures and unilateral removal of sanctions in the West Bank and Gaza was firmly upheld.\footnote{Id.} The second Intifada with its brutal and vicious suicide bombing emphasis drastically impacted public opinion and reaffirmed fear, mistrust and pessimism. As the reliable Jaffa Survey observed “[seventy-seven] percent assessed the likelihood of war between Israel and the Arab state within the next three years as medium or high compared with [thirty-seven] percent in 1996. Only [twenty-one] percent thought that peace between Israel and the Arab states would be strengthened in the next three years compared with [seventy-five] percent in 1996.”\footnote{Arian, supra note 34, at 206.}

Similar shifts from hopefulness to cynicism and gloom were noticeable on the Palestinian side as well. After the preliminary reaction of surprise and cautious optimism, public opinion plunged into despair following unfulfilled expectations of prompt relief and speedy economic improvement. In the first poll of The Center for Palestine Research and Studies (“CPRS”), carried out in the West Bank and Gaza on September 10th and 11th, 1993, two days before the Declaration of Principles (“DOP”), the majority of respondents (64.9%) were enthusiastic about the forthcoming signing of
the agreement. Less than a year and a half later, in February 1995, a trend of declining public support for continuing negotiations in the peace process was clearly discerned. The conclusions were grim:

This figure reflects the perception among West Bank and Gaza residents that Israel is not complying with the agreements, as shown by the procrastination in transferring authority to the PNA, continued land appropriation in Jerusalem and other areas, continued settlement activity and deteriorating economic conditions, especially as a result of the closure imposed by Israel on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Results also underline the growing feeling that the negotiations have not been fruitful and that there is a need to find other means to achieve Palestinian goals.

Notwithstanding the imperfections of the Oslo Agreement, all the longstanding inhibitions and impairments were still waiting to cripple the burgeoning prospects of change. Once, in a self-fulfilling prophecy mechanism, real difficulties emerged, the dormant negative attractors were awoken into action and they in turn, erect the barriers. The Israeli conflict is plagued by the specific bones of contention that characterize these particular antagonists but it also suffers from the more generic inhibitions that afflict many lingering disputes and aggravate their de-escalation. In the heart of the arduous and painful transition from strife to resolution lay fear and mistrust. A great deal has been written about fear, stress and uncertainty as obstinate deterrents to rapprochement. I would like to highlight another collective emotional orientation as a major stumbling block on the way to conflict resolution—the profound and acute sense of distrust between parties in conflict. Successful

39 Id.
conflict resolution relies on cooperation, to which trust is indispensable. Lack of trust, therefore, becomes a considerable obstacle on the road to eliminating the conflict.

A. The Arduous Road from Conflict to Conflict Resolution

Israelis and Palestinians do not trust each other to a larger extent. This abyss of doubt, disbelief and suspicion stretches back to the beginning of their confrontation. A sound indicator to this adverse relationship is perhaps to be found in the opposing narratives each side holds of the other and of the contention they share. These contrasting accounts are consistent along dimensions such as the causes of the rift, the culprits, the collective image of the other and the ideal versus the realistic solution to the conflict. Not only these accounts unbridgeable but they negate and nullify each other. Enrenched in educational textbooks, governmental policies, folkloristic story-telling, art and commentary and the general collective memory and ethos of each side, these opposing narratives constitute a safe and reassuring haven for the two belligerent camps to submerge themselves in each time the going gets tough. Below is a concise list of the contrasting Jewish and Arab accounts as originally depicted by Smooha.\(^\text{41}\)

\[\begin{array}{ll}
\text{Palestinians repudiate Jewish rights and thwart rebuilding Homeland} & \text{Zionism discredited the myth that Palestine belongs to them} \\
\text{Arabs resort to wars and terrorism to expel the Jews} & \text{The Jews are the aggressors and the Arabs are the Victims} \\
\text{Arabs represent a savage culture and reject progress and modernity} & \text{Zionism represents colonial culture and aims at uprooting Arabs} \\
\text{The intragroup Arab leaders are guilty of the refugee problem} & \text{The Israeli Policy is to Blame for the tragedy of the Refugees} \\
\text{Israelis won the 48 war because they were right and more motivated} & \text{Arabs lost the 48 war because of Western treachery and duplicity} \\
\text{Arabs cannot be trusted, they are envious, violent and greedy} & \text{Jews cannot be trusted. They are shrewd, cruel and pitiable} \\
\text{Arabs started conflict by constantly harassing and hurting Jews} & \text{Jews started conflict by taking Arab lands and robbing their dignity} \\
\text{Ideal Solution: Arabs should join their brethren in 21 Arab States} & \text{Ideal Solution: Jews must return to their countries of origin} \\
\text{Realistic Solution: Arabs must recognize Israel, give up the right of return} & \text{Realistic Solution: Israel must allow the right of return and pay reparations} \\
\end{array}\]

\(^{41}\) SAMMY SMOOHA, \textit{1 Arabs and Jews in Israel: Conflicting and Shared Attitudes in a Divided Society} (1989).
The damages of endemic distrust reach deeper than the evocative level of incompatible narratives. They have the potential of actively curbing the best intentions of terminating conflict by sabotaging the possibility of constructive communication between the rivaling parties. An early indication of such deficiency can be termed the “who-blanks-first” dilemma. This difficulty can be characterized as follows: even if the rivals are at their lowest ebb and they are absolutely cognizant of the fact that conflicts leads them nowhere, neither is ready to budge fearing that such a move would be interpreted by the other as a sign of weakness. In a conflict mindset the temptation to win relentlessly prowls. Each wave of a white flag signals surrender and admission of defeat. The opponent, even if equally devastated and hopeless, would cling on to such indication as a miraculous opening for a possible victory after all. This zeal to persist and conquer is urged by the need to convalesce and restore one’s investment and sacrifices in a protracted campaign of attrition. Hence, every glimpse of capitulation from the other side, any blink of submission generates hope in the non-blinking side for an approaching triumph. Since the fear of blinking is mutual, and the concern that such gesture would only augment the rival’s tenacity, both parties are reluctant to initiate. Therefore, despite their common misery they remain locked in an ongoing predicament they share. This is a tragic absurdity whereby all sides realize they would be better off ceasing hostilities but yet they all knowingly prefer to hold out. The only way out of this irrational paralysis is if all parties simultaneously proclaim their intention to terminate the contentious interaction and embark on a new path of reconciliation and dialogue. Only one quality is able to guarantee the success of such a plan and it is the one that is most absent during conflict, the precious trait of mutual trust.42 Israeli and Palestinian leaders and power-wielders are equally incapac-
tated by this dilemma although cognizant of the detrimental effect of elapsing time and the exacting cost of an unending conflict.\textsuperscript{43}

Another attribute in addition to the ambition to win, which cripples the transition to conflict resolution, is the yearning to be just and vindicated. The transition to reconciliation is inhibited by the concern that departure from struggle really means abandoning the belief that you are right. Resoluteness and insistence during conflict is widely perceived as a demonstration of one’s “truthfulness” and integrity while folding symbolizes, according to this logic, lack of self-confidence and a deficient degree of rectitude. One of the highest peaks in Tolstoy’s monumental book, \textit{War and Peace}, describes the Battle of Borodino on September 7, 1812. It lasted only one day but became the largest and bloodiest battle of all the Napoleonic Wars. More than 250,000 soldiers fought there and about 70,000 died. Borodino became a breaking point in the war and a key to the demise of the French Emperor. It was the last charge of Napoleon and Tolstoy focuses on Mikhail Kutuzov, the revered Russian general, who thought to surrender in the face of the preponderant French \textit{Grande Armee}. Against his good judgment and the recommendation of the Russian military High Command, he was forced by Tsar Alexander to persevere in order to uphold the Russian justified cause. He and his soldiers bravely held up until they were overpowered and the road to Moscow was opened for Napoleon.\textsuperscript{44} A frequent and relentless Palestinian demand in negotiation rounds with Israelis is justice. It is raised with vigor and passion unrivaled by any other claim and it cuts across all issues on the agenda. It is so vehement and overpowering that it undermines the entire give-and-take process to the extent that the Israeli negotiators instantly cocoon themselves in the defensive mode and the original bargaining agenda is forsaken in favor of recycled and overused arguments of self-righteousness and triteness.\textsuperscript{45}

Additional inhibitor is the desire for revenge. The quest for vengeance is a powerful motivator to launch a conflict and to main-


\textsuperscript{44} LEO TOLSTOY, \textit{WAR AND PEACE} (Louise Maude & Aylmer Maude trans., 1997).

\textsuperscript{45} This account is taken from my personal experience as a member of a negotiation team in several Track II rounds of peace talks between Israelis and Palestinians, especially in the years 1994 to 1997.
tain it even when it is not successful. The French nurtured their lust to avenge the Germans for forty years, carrying their humiliation from the overwhelming crush by Bismarck in the 1870 to 1871 war to the First World War in 1914. French eagerness for revanche was the central drive behind the mortifying conditions imposed on Germany by French Prime-Minister Clemencenau in the Treaty of Versailles.46 Blind urge for reprisal is never a prudent counselor and in this case, France’s attitude was certainly one of the main accelerators toward WWII. Unfortunately, this destructive force of revenge is rampant in human history. Homer, the Athenian poet of the eighth century BC recounts the sad tale of Troy in his epos The Iliad and The Odyssey, and there again, the main motivation behind the assault of mighty Athens on Troy was Sparta’s King Menelaus willingness to avenge the abduction of his wife Helen by Prince Paris of Troy. The burning desire to avenge losses and sorrow is undoubtedly widespread in the hearts of many Palestinians and Israelis anguished and grieved by the human toll of the century long struggle. Much of the allure of the so-called rejectionist front on both sides to any type of settlements is attributed to the power and patience of the pursuit of redress.47 It is often camouflaged by exponents as the pursuit of justice and moralism but regardless of how it is presented, seeking retaliation is always a negative attractor and sustenance for conflict. Infamous self-proclaimed avengers such as Baruch Goldstein,48 the Jewish settler and perpetrator of the Cave of the Patriarchs massacre in February 1994 or Yahya Ayyash,49 the Palestinian mastermind of suicide missions inside Israel only served to escalate violence and derail the fragile peace process to a halt.

All these hurdles accruing on the path of transferring from conflict to its resolution—the temptation to win, the urge to be just and the desire to revenge—can be curbed or at least tamed by communication between the belligerent sides. If the rivaling parties would expound their intentions to one another and reveal their

concerns and sentiments, they would be able to realize that the non-compromising nature of victory, justice and revenge steers them in the opposite direction and toward a long and cumbersome conflict. The unconditional pursuit of justice in the context of dispute is always on the expense of another and this quest invokes the requirements of achievement and payback in a typical zero-sum framework: mine before his. In 1981, Roger Fisher and William Ury of Harvard School of Law published a seminal little book called *Getting to Yes.*\(^50\) Their thesis focused on how to reach an agreement on contested issues and they highlighted several basic principles.\(^51\) One of the most prominent among them is called “looking at the problem through the eyes of the other.”\(^52\) If someone manages to adopt the adversary’s point of view and observe the contention from an opposite perspective, she would gain invaluable insights hitherto unknown to her when she was restricted to her proverbial funnel viewpoint.\(^53\) But despite the wisdom and value of this role reversal, it is very difficult for Israelis and Palestinians to empathize with each other and try to understand one another’s motivations because of the deeply entrenched vestiges and the reciprocal negative images they hold of each other. Constructive communication helps in assuming the other’s position because it develops acquaintance and proximity to dispel the demonic portrayal and gradually build trust.\(^54\) However, deeply reciprocal acrimonious and hostile attitudes between Palestinians and Israelis render this scenario implausible.

**B. Interdependence and the Strategy of Conflict Resolution**

This is unfortunate because reconciliation and resolution must be launched and conducted within a framework of interdependence. To be in a relationship of interdependence means that the parties involved need each other both to begin a conflict as well as to terminate it. To the same extent that confrontations are not feasible with only one agent, ending them is incomprehensible unilaterally. One cannot simply walk out on a dispute or bury one’s

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\(^{51}\) Id.

\(^{52}\) Id. at 23.

\(^{53}\) See id. at 26.

head in a sand hoping for the disagreement to disappear. Thus, in spite of bad feelings, negative images and mistrust, the rivaling sides must outclass themselves and make amends: they need one another to salvage themselves, not the other. When one party walks away it ostensibly achieves immediate relief: it is not involved anymore and for all he knows conflict could continue without him. But this is a disillusion that entails perhaps temporary respite but not a long-term tranquility. On the contrary, almost inevitably the conflict hounds the defector and is bound to catch up with her in more intense levels of anger and violence. The reason is that shying away from conflict does not resolve it. All the reasons that stimulated the divergence to begin with remain untouched and are likely to be aggravated due to frustration and the breakdown of communication after the desertion of one participant. Conflict could be worked out only in agreement of all sides regarding the process and naturally, the outcomes.\footnote{55}

An informative example of the potency of reciprocity in conflict termination may be the Israeli initiative of getting out of Gaza in the summer of 2005. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, who came up with the idea called it the disengagement from Gaza.\footnote{56} Sharon did not believe that the Palestinians can be genuine partners to a healing reconciliation in the Middle East. Instead, he was aspiring for a monumental accomplishment to mark his term in office. Departure from the violent and bloody Gaza Strip and detachment from the aggrieved and fierce Palestinian population appealed to him as the right and popular thing to do. However, the unilateral withdrawal brought him the opposite results: radicalization of positions among Palestinians, the ascendancy of the extremist Hamas into power and daily bombardment of Israeli settlements from the very

\footnote{55} In his thorough examination of the Nazi leadership and the motivation of the most trusted aids of Hitler, American psychologist Leon Goldenson interviewed nineteen of the Nuremberg trials defendants and fourteen of the key witnesses. Among his interviewees were Hitler’s deputy and defendant Number 1 Herman Georing, Hitler’s loyal lieutenant from the early days, Rudolf Hess, foreign minister Yoachim von Ribentrop, and the ideologues of the Nazi movement Alfred Rosenberg and Ulious Streicher. One common theme emerged from all testimonies: the frustration and bitterness they all felt as Germans from the humiliating Versailles Treaty. Without exceptions, this was the predominant reason all of them saw for Hitler’s ascendency to power and their own personal allegiance to him.\textit{Leon Goldensohn, The Nuremberg Interviews: An American Psychiatrist’s Conversations with the Defendants and Witnesses} (Robert Gellately ed., reprt. 2005).

same areas in Gaza that were evacuated.\footnote{Raviv Drucker & Ofer Shelah, Boomerang: Kishalon Ha-Manhigut Ba-Intifada Ha-Shiniya [Boomerang: The Failure of Leadership in the Second Intifada] (2005) (Isr.); Yedidia Meir and Sivan Rahav-Meir, Orange Days: The Disengagement, and Soul Account (2006).} These grim developments were the direct corollary of Israel not leaving Gaza in an orderly fashion, coordinated and agreed upon by the Palestinians. There was neither synchronized procedure nor jointly arranged time-table. One party aimed at promoting its own benefit on the expense of the other, and as the prisoners’ dilemma model convincingly demonstrates, such scheme very rarely works.\footnote{The Prisoners’ Dilemma illustrates the necessity of cooperation to resolve conflicts. It tells the story of two detainees, who are separately faced with the dilemma of incriminating their partner to win their own freedom. But this is of course, a trap. Both, being rational and utility maximizers opt for getting out and snitch. Obtaining the mutual confession, the police lock both of them up. However, it is an \textit{individual} endeavor rather than a \textit{cooperative} one and the key to every successful resolution of conflicts is a collaborative effort or a \textit{collective} rational calculation: what can we do together to improve our situation. If the two friends had contemplated in tandem how to operate, they would have kept silent and would not have incriminated one another.} The enticement for a quick personal dividend is more likely to be eclipsed by further escalation.

The validity of interdependence in conflict resolution is most vividly exhibited in the process of choosing a negotiation strategy. The strategy of conflict is the general, all-out approach to negotiation. It includes redlines and reservation points as well as goals, interests, time-tables, alternative scenarios, possible allies and various behavioral tactics. The context of interdependence determines five archetype strategies for conflict resolution. They are born out of various combinations of actors considering their own interests or concerns in conjunction with their former opponents’ interests or concerns. These two sets of considerations form the \textit{dual concern model} of Pruitt and Rubin.\footnote{Dean G. Pruitt, Jeffrey Z. Rubin & Sung Hee Kim, Social Conflict: Escalation, Stalemate, and Settlement 41 (3d ed. 2003).} The model consists of two axes: concern for one’s own interest (can also be termed assertiveness) and concern for other’s interests (can also be termed empathy).\footnote{\textit{Id.}} Each axis ranges from zero or no-concern to one hundred, or full concern.\footnote{\textit{Id.} at 42.} The juxtaposition of the two dimensions conjures four cells for different kinds of resolution strategies with a fifth in the middle, as shown in Figure 2.\footnote{\textit{Id.} at 41.}
A strategy of confrontation will be more likely when the actors care mainly for themselves and not a bit about the other. In such attitude, participants would not hesitate to be hostile offensive and aggressive even if they are in the middle of a reconciliation process. They neglected the conflict path only because their losses outweighed their gains and not because they were sympathizing with their enemies. Even though they sit around the negotiation table, their hearts and minds are still stranded in the battlefield and they constantly contemplate how to outwit their opponents and ultimately grab the trophy. The essential ingredients for cooperation and genuine reconciliation—tolerance, caring for the other’s fate and dignity—are still foreign to those who prefer confrontation.

High sensitivity to our volitions as well as to our adversaries would lead to the strategy of problem-solving. This is an idea strategy of conflict resolution but it is also the most complicated, cumbersome and tedious to accomplish. It requires several assets which are not essential in other strategies such as openness for flexibility in priorities, honesty and sincerity, good atmosphere during the process and a fair result to all sides at the end. But most of all and more than any other negotiation strategies, what is crucial in the problem solving approach is communication. The problem-solving orientation is the only one that enables the former quarreling parties to actually work together as partners who use their interdependency to collaborate after moving from positions to interests and isolating the problem that had set them apart. It is the only strategy in which each side equally heeds its counterpart’s
needs and thus endeavors to earnestly study them. Once all sides genuinely collaborate to tackle their differences, they amplify their resources by gaining insight of hitherto unavailable scenarios of resolution sealed in the adversary’s private inventory of last-re-course options.63

Expanding the spectrum of obtainable options as a result of the newly founded cooperation increases creativity and ingenuity across the board. The new partners kindle and inspire each other in producing novel outlets. Unconventional thinking, originality and resourcefulness peak and promote prospects for conflict resolution. In conflict strategy lingo this is called expanding the pie since the goal is to form a situation in which all parties are fully satisfied at the end of the day.64 However aiming for such pure satisfactory condition of everyone achieving 100% of their wants is an arduous and many times a presumptuous assignment especially if tensions and mistrust still lurk under the surface between former foes that test each other out. It is more convenient to obtain under circumstances of harmony, serenity and complete trust, but these are usually the results of cooperation rather than its preconditions. Parting the fruit from the peel in the orange dispute was a good example of a breakthrough idea based on imagination and inventiveness, as simple as it may have been. But it starts with communication. Holding on to familiar patterns and safe recipes hinders flexibility and daring. The more audacious and fearless the process of generating solutions together, the more effective the attempt to break down the barriers toward successful conflict resolution.65

63 The avoidance strategy is a corollary of indifference and lack of interest in the dispute. There is no concern for our interest or theirs. The bone of contention is simply not in the center of attention either because it became obsolete or because substitutes where found elsewhere. In any case, this is a strategy of non-strategy—no initiative is taken and no reaction is made. Avoidance relies on the nullification and abscinding of conflict positions for a non-foreseeable future. Yielding expresses compassion and understanding to the rival’s needs even to the extent of sacrificing some or more of one’s own. Adopting this strategy means to give up a degree of self-interest at a particular juncture and on a specific issue for the opponent’s sake. OLIVER RAMSROTHAM, TOM WOODHOUSE & HUGH MIALL, CONTEMPORARY CONFLICT RESOLUTION 17 (3d ed. 2011).

64 FISHER & URY, supra note 50, at 61–62.

65 The Stanford School of Conflict Resolution emphasizes barriers to the transition from conflict to resolution. The instigating questions to their focus were: (1) Why, if both parties to the conflict know that they would be better off without it, does the conflict still persists?; (2) What prevents the parties involved from advancing to a stage where they can reap more advantages than before?; (3) And ultimately, what stands in the way of cashing in on rational advantages? See BARRIERS TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION, supra note 10, for a discussion of the precepts of the barriers approach.
Creativity and expanding the pie are the major differences between problem solving and the fifth main strategy of conflict resolution—compromise. Compromise is a spellbinding term to many negotiators. It has appeal as simple, practical, fair and relatively uncomplicated to settle. The belligerents who are bogged down in a long, tiresome and quite often frustrating progress of negotiation could be easily tempted by the compromise illusion. Numerous times during conflict termination talks, when the participants are weary and impatient, the proposition “let’s cut it in half and that’s it” might come across as the sanest and soberest idea. Moreover, the expediency of compromise grows normative feathers that influence positions and behavior of discussants around the bargaining table. Since everyone is convinced that the final objective is to compromise, each party deliberately introduces polemically rigid opening stances hoping that the midpoint would eventually be closer to their actual demand. The onerous search for the comforting middle ground emits so much energy and effort that it overshadows the need to explore an unadulterated long-standing solution. Compromise by its nature would be useless in realizing such a remedy. Being based on short-term fulfillment of needs, instantaneous cool and midpoint obsession, it is bound to leave everyone unsatisfied in the barren land of lose-lose.

Compromise is not contingent upon creativity in most cases but on the arbitrary middle point. There is not much deliberation or reflection on novel ideas but detecting the best from already existing scenarios. In conflict strategy terminology, the difference between compromise and problem solving is in referring to the compromise set of alternatives as finite while the option list of problem-solving is infinite. Since in the former the options are scarce, there is a necessity to divide whereas in the latter, the abundance of options allows for the full satisfactions of all. In fact, compromise is still captured in a contentious mindset and in a zero-sum game etiquette: one’s victory on the expense of the other’s defeat. When the pie is expanded this maxim loses its monopoly.

It is true that that in some contentions the challenge to come up with creative ideas is more difficult. The orange quandary, with all due respect, is miniscule compares to the issue of the divided city of Jerusalem for example. What would be the fruit and what would be the peel here? And what if both sides desire the peel? This is of course a legitimate claim but it does not eliminate the difference between the various approaches to conflict resolution and it certainly does not cancel the illusion of compromise.
Rather, this claim restates the essentiality of being more generous and open-minded in seeking out new and productive solutions that would please all parties even in more acute disagreements. To emphasize this point once more—compromise could be viable and sufficient in trivial disputes: over a sandwich, sitting in the front seat, or the sports pages (actually, this is very subjective. Some people would kill for the sports pages). There are no severe complications in these cases and compromise would not devastate anyone. But how could compromise be reached on matters of justice? Equality? Historical rights? Basic needs? These are absolute issues in which every party to a disagreement aspires for full compensation. Who would be satisfied with fifty-one percent sovereignty? Seventy percent independence? Ninety-nine percent freedom? Hence, despite the ever-present lure of culminating the long-drawn-out negotiations and retire, it is better to persevere and walk the extra mile for the full fledge resolution. It might be that compromise would bring about a nifty looking deal and everyone would seem happy for a while. But sooner or later, the 49% lack of sovereignty, the 30% absence of independence and the single percent of servitude will re-emerge, rekindle the unresolved dispute and foment a renewed contention, harsher and fiercer than before due to the wising up from the compromise illusion.

Compromise is hardly a first choice to administer negotiations. As seen in Figure 2, compromise is reached at late in the conflict resolution process when all other basic four strategies have gone awry.\textsuperscript{66} For instance, when two confrontation strategies bout against each other like two ancient gladiators trying to wear each other out to no avail. The shift toward compromise starts when each one abandons his zero concern to the other and starts gravitating toward the middle of the empathy axis. Similarly, avoidance could be left if due to certain developments the parties would consider their differences more emphatically and also with more respect to their rival’s need. Yielding might be changed if the more flexible party feels that her choice was unwarranted and that making a point now weighs more than putative future relations. Finally, problem solving might collapse in every point along its winding path. It demands trust and collaboration between former bitter enemies and its implementation could certainly resurface difficulties that could lessen mutual empathy and regress the participants back down the steep hill and into the comfort zone of compromise.

\textsuperscript{66} See supra notes 66–69 and accompanying text.
Problem solving is almost impossible to have in the current relationship between Palestinians and Israelis. The basic building-blocks of this venerable negotiations strategy—transparent and fluent communication, honesty and trust, frank and sober realization that genuine collaboration is key and the desertion of those ill-fated temptations to win, be vindicated and get even—are yet to be completed. Contention has worn itself out in this protracted, spinning-out-of-orbit strife. All accusations, recriminations, threats and warnings have been used to no avail. The strategy that Palestinians and Israelis keep falling back on is compromise. But being manacled by seemingly insoluble disagreements on intangible and precious priorities, no compromise can be comforting enough to permanently end the conflict.

C. The Spatial Contagion Model

Perhaps Israelis and Palestinians cannot reach the problem-solving stage because they are distracted by other efforts. In might just be that two antagonists are not really interested in talking to each other and together resolve the differences between them. Their attention is concentrated elsewhere, in carrying their case to more supportive audiences. Furthermore, they perceive of themselves as representing broader constituencies in this struggle: the Palestinians on behalf of Arabs, Muslims and the developing world nations while Israelis fight for the world Jewry and the Western world. This is a classic depiction of conflict transformation, or escalation, which describes process of expansion and dynamics of deterioration of an initial disagreement called the spatial contagion model. The model focuses on the communication between those who are directly involved in the dispute and the attentive audience or the critical mass who watches them. The Rodney King inci-

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67 E.E. Schattschneider, former president of the American Political Science Association (“ASPA”) and a former professor of political science at Columbia University, provides the classic description of the Spatial Contagion Model of Conflict. His model accentuates communication in the expansion and contraction of conflict. The interaction between the parties directly involved in the dispute and those who observe them is critical to the direction, scope and intensity of the conflict. When it develops and escalates, the conflict becomes contagious and epidemic, drawing in everyone who touches it, hence the spatial contagion model. ELMER E. SCHATTSCHNEIDER, THE SEMI-SOVEREIGN PEOPLE: A REALIST’S VIEW OF DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA 2–3 (1975).

dent, in which an African-American driver was flagged down the road, yanked out of his car and ruthlessly beaten by LAPD traffic patrol, is an illustrative example of the model. A private citizen captured the assault on video and sold it to a local TV station. Millions of television viewers became the attentive audience and overnight many of them partook in massive rioting that was far more rampant and widespread than several casual observers and bystanders in Los Angeles could ever initiate.

The spatial contagion model of conflict\(^69\) is also relevant in explicating attempts of each party to influence the global public opinion and score points there on the expense of the rival. This is how the model directly links expansion and durability of conflict, or the scope of confrontation with communication patterns. Each of the quarrelsome sides seeks to establish communication venues to the audience and according to one’s relative power (and communicative skills), to mobilize them to support their position vis-à-vis the opponent’s. Each party invests a great deal in elucidating its stands, justifying needs, goals, and motivation for choosing conflict in an effort to win the hearts and minds of the hitherto neutral crowd. Every contender seeks approval and identification with his vantage point and a validation of his endeavor. This is how the original disputants involve others in their collision and by so doing enlarge the original cycle of friction. The communication between them and their environment includes diversified techniques of influence to drag people on their side and win the conflict over. This is the ultimate objective: winning and vanquishing. Otherwise they would not have embarked on this project to begin with. Nobody initiates or joins a conflict in order to lose. The party who develops communication aptitude gains a significant edge in this quest for allies, as Figure 3 depicts:

\(^{69}\) Schattschneider, supra note 67, at 2–3.
Israelis and Palestinians have dedicated a lot of time, energy and resources to present their respective versions to the world instead of talking to each other. Both sides advancing victimization as a leverage theme to win sympathy, Israelis underscoring the Holocaust and anti-Semitism as leading causes, whereas Palestinians marking the refugee crisis and the 1967 occupation as their thresholds. Historical rights, entitlements and justice also play major roles in this tug-of-war to amass support, with each side interpreting these intangible claims in an irreconcilable manner. Political developments are also drawn into this clash of narratives, as new formulations and equations are forged and updated. Some of the most popular in Israeli and Palestinian discourse are the balance between terrorism and occupation, or terrorism and the defense or separation wall that was erected by Israel to minimize suicide bombing within Israel by infiltrators from the Palestinian Authority.
III. Comprising the Socio-Psychological Infrastructure

A. The Potency of Mistrust

Mistrust is a formidable negative attractor that keeps jettisoning Palestinians and Israelis to the recurring path of reluctance and obstinacy. The justifying rhetoric is similarly repetitive: “there is no partner” and “I cannot trust them.” Mistrust could have been vanquished or alleviated by tactics such as “reiterative game”\textsuperscript{70} or a dedicated third side.\textsuperscript{71} However, in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, mistrust is augmented and exacerbated by additional ethnic, cultural, sociological, psychological negative attractors. One conspicuous mechanism that keeps the confrontational option alive is group cohesion and collective identity building.\textsuperscript{72} Both the Israelis and the Palestinians grapple with carving themselves a unique collective identity as a nation and with constructing sharply defined social boundaries.\textsuperscript{73} The former still endeavors to mold a multitude of cultures, ethnicities and various degrees of religiosity into a coherent political entity while the latter, lacking sovereignty and territoriality, labors to distinguish their unique character from the broader Arab nationhood. The sense of belonging on each side is cultivated and intensified on the background of a common external

\textsuperscript{70} A reiterative game strategy is a technique where by a certain game is played over and over so that the participants at some point learn the reactions and responses of the other and develop a set of expectations toward the next move. A meeting of expectations and familiarity with the other side’s repertoire of responses gradually develop trust and a transition to conflict resolution. See Anatol Rapoport, Fights, Games, and Debates passim (1st ed. 1970); Robert Axelrod, The Evolution of Cooperation 55 (1st ed. 1984).

\textsuperscript{71} A third side is called upon when the direct disputants in a conflict are incapable of communicating between them. There are several functions and roles to a third side, such as facilitation, mediation, conciliation and arbitration, and they vary according to the extent of power the third side has. See William Ury, The Third Side passim (2000).


threat. The ongoing friction between the two nations and the insecurity it harbors serve both in their effort of aligning around a joint cause: survival and overcoming the peril. As long as the nation-building process continues on both sides, the option of the simmering feud will be kept fostered by leaders and elites to safeguard against internal rifts.

Social Identity Theory ("SIT") explains further the potent influence group membership has on perceptions and feelings of individual members. Images, labels, attitudes and priorities devised and concocted by the leaders are ardently embrace by the rank-and-file as a token of their allegiance.74 One of the most auspicious circumstances for a rapid an effective group formation is an acute and perennial conflict that is comfortably conducive to an “us” versus “them” and an “ingroup” versus “outgroup” formulation.75 Such circumstances are utilized not only to underline difference from other groups but more importantly supremacy and preeminence over other groups.76 This feeling of exclusivity bolsters prestige, pride and self-esteem and in turn, members are ready to express their loyalty and commitment to the group goals by devotion and self-sacrifice.77 When conflict with the out-group is depicted by the dominant groups in society as existential and therefore necessary and immanent, it creates a compelling incentive for subordinate groups to contribute to the burden of an ongoing struggle.78 Social dominance theory points out how myths, symbols, rituals and labels such as patriotism and homeland are used to imbue and consolidate the national agenda with the mind-


75 See Tajfel, supra note 74, at 254–55; Turner, supra note 74, at 28–32; Ashforth & Mael, supra note 74, at 21; Kalkhoff & Barnum, supra note 74, at 95.


78 See Perkins et al., supra note 77, at 175–76; Moore & Aweiss, supra note 77, at 13.
set and spirit of unity.\textsuperscript{79} Fisher\textsuperscript{80} accurately describes the components that compose group identity and belonging. He stresses group consciousness as a key determinant of collective identity and it is nourished by a history of coexistence, manifest differences in collective qualities between group and environment, jointly practiced symbols, rituals, customs and habits, shared vision of a future, and ultimately, the treatment of others as it is most intensely experienced through competition, disagreement or staving off a threat.\textsuperscript{81}

B. Collective Memory and the Conflict Ethos

A shared vision of the future as an amplifier of group attachment is galvanized and particularized by conflict. The setting of an ongoing dispute along with an acute sense of fear and victimization transforms the abstract and remote notion of a shared future to a concrete and destined plan of how to secure an insecure future by vanquishing the enemy. This common feeling is reinforced by a fortified past and present: the former by constructing a collective memory and the latter by establishing an ethos of conflict. Bar-Tal defines national ethos as “configuration of shared central societal beliefs that provide a particular dominant orientation to a society at present and for the future.”\textsuperscript{82} Every human group develops an ethos as a generator of attitudes, feelings and ambitions. But a group that is embroiled in a bitter intractable conflict weaves its unifying ethos around the reality they became to know so well, a conflict ethos, which Bar-Tal defines as “which gives a general orientation and direction and provides a clear picture of the conflict, its goals, its conditions, requirements, and images of the in-group’s society and of the rival.”\textsuperscript{83} A collective ethos relies of a positive and just image of the self in order to justify decisions and actions


\textsuperscript{81} Id. at 180.


\textsuperscript{83} Id. at 3.
during the confrontation with the enemy.\textsuperscript{84} The conflict is presented as a crisis or a test to the resolve and determination of the group, a test to be successfully passed by exhibiting loyalty, commitment and readiness to sacrifice in a unified spirit that cannot tolerate dissent or hesitation in the hour of need.\textsuperscript{85} The rivalry with the adversary is vital to the durability of the conflict ethos since it is sustained by the quest for stability and solace. Hence the more menacing and powerful the “other,” the more desired and expedient the conflict ethos.\textsuperscript{86} The ethos perhaps unwittingly, forges a Gordian knot between “self” and “other” and acknowledges the significant role of the adversary. Every hero needs a villain to ascertain his or her status and pride and one can best establish heroism in contrast to and in wariness of an antihero. This peculiar nexus between antagonists keep the conflict going and the actors “in costume” as long as the ethos is required.

“Othering” is the psychological process of creating and perpetuating a dichotomy between self and other through education, media, folklore, and discourse.\textsuperscript{87} Edward Said, for instance, embedded the self-other distinction is the specific context of Western identity as self versus non-Western as other.\textsuperscript{88} In an influential book he published more than three decades ago, Said describes his newly coined notion “orientalism” as a political system of reference which advanced and sustained the difference between “us,” the familiar and reassuring West and the “them,” the strange and threatening East.\textsuperscript{89} This understanding has been substantiated in global politics and international relations as “representatives” of each side sought to affirm their own unique collective identity: Orientals lived in their world; “we” lived in ours.\textsuperscript{90} The image and actual reality upheld and buttressed each other.\textsuperscript{91} The “us” and “them” distinction had deep theoretical roots in Social Darwinism\textsuperscript{92} and early anthropological research using “primitive” versus the “civilized” classifications.\textsuperscript{93} It also supplied “scientific” for colonialist policies of Western governments to occasionally intervene

\textsuperscript{84} Daniel Bar-Tal, Shared Beliefs in a Society: Social Psychological Analysis 143 (2000).
\textsuperscript{85} Id. at 144.
\textsuperscript{86} Fisher, supra note 80, at 182.
\textsuperscript{87} Id. at 183
\textsuperscript{88} Edward Said, Orientalism passim (1978).
\textsuperscript{89} Id. at 204.
\textsuperscript{90} Id. at 204.
\textsuperscript{91} Id. at 206
\textsuperscript{92} Id. at 207.
\textsuperscript{93} Id. at 208.
with the affairs of non-Western countries in an attempt to enrich their ignorance with some beneficial knowledge.94

The shared vision of the future and the present national ethos are backed and propped up by the collective memory of the past. Developing collective memory involves the construction of a selective and encouraging presentation of the past especially with regard to the intractable conflict.95 In order to cultivate the support of the people and maintain their conviction that the conflict is worth fighting for, a coherent and consistent narrative is promoted for the inception and duration of the conflict.96 Historical accuracy is compromized for the sake of a socially constructed narrative that enhances preconceived notions about the self and the other. The creatively pieced together history is disseminated in textbooks, ceremonies and rituals and in the public discourse around the conflict. In this way, the past is subordinated to the needs and priorities of the present reminiscent of Orwell’s *1984* admonition that “He who controls the past controls the future. He who controls the present controls the past.”97 However, the intended audience does not look for historical authenticity in times of duress and the task of inculcating them with a diluted even slanted version of conflict relevant history falls on attentive ears and the creative minds that put this historical narrative together are aware of the promising prospects of their success. The potency of the collective memory is sound because it is embraced as societal beliefs that resonate with long-held cultural norms and values. Hence, it is treated as “truthful accounts of the past and a valid history of the society. They omit certain facts, add doubtful ones, change the accounts of events and offer a purposive interpretation of the events that took place.”98 This process occurs simultaneously among Israelis and Palestinians and is fortified directly with the continuation of the conflict.

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In such a socio-psychological mindset, the stands and interests of the other party are most likely perceived as illegitimate and undeserving of consideration. This symmetric conscious-building of history further accentuates the differences between the antagonists and posits additional obstacles on the road to mutual understanding or empathizing with the other’s vantage point. The tailored version of historical explanation to the conflict produces an exclusively private and palatable account of a collective memory, which simplifies and clarifies the chronicles of the conflict in a highly subjective and parochial interpretation. This biased understanding of past and present and the self-other schism it creates are further deepened by a militant and messianic version of religion held by the extreme factions on both sides of the divide. Conflict tends to intensify and escalate if collective memory and national ethos are framed in ideological or religious terminology and symbols. The disagreements are formulated in abstract, intangible and therefore absolute terms that leave no prospects for compromise or common ground. For example, extremist groups on both sides of the Palestinian-Israeli strife, Hamas and Gush Emunim (“Block of the Faithful”) respectively, identify mundane socio-political conflicts with the eternal cosmic struggle. Their publications are fraught with inferences and idioms pertaining to Armageddon. The adversaries—Palestinians or Israelis—are the heretics and the symptoms of chaos. The peace-makers on both camps are perceived as traitors and as interfering with the necessary implementation of moral justice. When both antagonists are roused and provoked by such a holistic and protective socio-psychological infrastructure, it is al-
most impossible to be a nonconformist or a renegade, let alone a peace activist. This was sadly demonstrated in the broader context of the Arab-Israeli conflict when two brave peacemakers, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin were assassinated by religious zealots from their respective camps. Action, specifically violent action, operates as a unifying mechanism. The stress, the sense of common kismet, and the confidence that one is right help release moral inhibitions about violence, and as Hoffer recognizes, “these are admirable qualifications for resolute and ruthless action in any field.”

Collective memory and ethos of conflict complement and augment one another and constitute together a coherent and complete narrative for societal members to share. Similar themes emerge in both the Palestinian and the Israeli stories such as the righteousness of conflict’s goals, confident and optimistic self-collective view, self-view as a victim, and de-legitimacy of the other. Delegitimation is an integral part of collective identity-building and an ongoing conflict is a highly propitious opportunity to do so. Propaganda and consistent vilification of the enemy are more easily promulgated and absorbed when a clear culprit is handily observed. The delegitimation effort spreads and entrenches negative stereotypes of the other, and creates a stringent social categorization of immorality. The ramification of such labeling is severe as the delegitimized who are morally excluded “are perceived as non-entities, expandable, or undeserving; consequently, harming them appears acceptable, appropriate or just.”

Such concepts, when thoroughly and systematically administered by spiritual, religious or political sources of authority, become a

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103 Eric Hoffer, The True Believer 113 (1951).


106 Id. at 55.

license to hate and persecute. The long trajectory of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict granted the reciprocal delegitimization time and leisure to be ensconced in the deeper layers of each society. The negative image of the other became the predominant lens through which Palestinians and Israelis assess each other regardless of shifting circumstances or emerging situation. It ushers in intransigence and obduracy, which stifle creativity and initiatives for change and cement the relationship with unyielding cynicism and doom. Israelis and Palestinians have been engaging in mutual delegitimation processes for decades108 in an effort to achieve intragroup unity and to gain intergroup advantage. Delegitimacy became institutionalized in the mass media, educational systems and the colloquial discourse through poems, songs, idioms, caricatures and jokes.109 It has become so ingrained in each society that even if the conflict would be resolved tomorrow, the psychological imprint of the mutual denigration would linger.

C. Attractors Spawn Barriers

Barriers stand in the way of antagonists attempting to communicate and reach out to one another. According to Kenneth Arrow, barriers to conflict resolution can be classified in three categories: structural, strategic and psychological.110 Structural barriers stem from bureaucratic and procedural disablements that slow down and aggravate dynamics of rapprochement. These are turf battles, personal and egotistical tug-of-wars, funnel views of contending organizations vying for influence, budget and respect, or incongruent understandings and interpretations of disparate administrations to messages of the other side due to traditional, cultural, ideological, or ceremonial discrepancies.111 Strategic barriers emanate from the logic of conflict resolution and the common belief that every negotiation process is destined to end up in a com-

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110 BARRIERS TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION, supra note 10, at 5.

promise. This rationale prompts the disputants to embrace radical and inflexible positions in order to eventually culminate their negotiation endeavor closer to their real bargaining position along the range of possible agreement. The barrier is established because both sides similarly plan to start the process with uncompromising claims, thus balancing out each other’s ability to maneuver to a more flexible position. Similarly to the Prisoners’ Dilemma Model, the participants are imprudently stranded in a worse situation for both. Lastly, psychological barriers are erected because of the accumulated hostility and animosity between the rivaling parties. The more protracted the conflict the more disdain and disrespect pile up to undermine any confidence in the partner and in the viability of conflict resolution.

All three types of barriers are augmented by destructive communication, mutual lack of trust and negative image of the other. This is how internal attractors spawn and cultivate barriers. Structural barriers would have been mitigated had a more sincere and trustworthy image of the other been accepted as a reliable working partner to improved relationships, thereby encouraging cooperation between different bureaucracies to facilitate and expedite the process. Strategic barriers would have been lowered due to the realization that with a trustworthy partner, the strategy could be change from the suspicion and contention of positional bargaining to the coordination and calm of collaborative bargaining. The psychological barriers could have been relaxed by relinquishing the demonic stereotyping of the adversary, cultivating instead a more considerate and tolerable portrait of a potential ally. But this sustenance of barriers by negative attractors will be curtailed only when these attractors are confronted. Mistrust, Othering, collective memory, conflict ethos and delegitimation comprise a conflict environment or landscape contaminated by negative attractors. The entire landscape of the conflict is saturated with reinforcing feedback loops that withstand the destructibility of these obstacles. Under these conditions conflict intractability becomes chronic, whereby belligerency is festered, aggression is fomented while reconciliation is regarded as an aberration, even treachery. If this is the case then the main effort in trying to turn an intractable con-

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112 Roy J. Lewicki, David M. Saunders & Bruce Barry, Essentials of Negotiation 277 (5th ed. 2010); Ramsbotham et al., supra note 63, at 17.
flict around would be to change its environment, or in other words: work the landscape of conflict.

IV. CHANGING THE CONFLICT LANDSCAPE

A. Practices to Grapple with Intractability

An innovative method to approach an intractable conflict’s landscape is promoted by Peter Coleman.\textsuperscript{115} It is the Attractor Landscape Model (“ALM”). Coleman suggests three practices to grapple with intractable conflicts by minimizing negative attractors and encouraging positive ones, and by so doing, rearranging the conflict’s environment or landscape.\textsuperscript{117} The three practices are complicate to simplify, build up to tear down and change to stabilize.\textsuperscript{118} The first focuses on altering the way conflict is presented and perceived.\textsuperscript{119} The tendency to simplify the contention by consolidating all issues into one big and monolithic rift exacerbates the situation and aggravates intractability. In the Palestinian-Israeli case intractability is certainly augmented by linearity and unity of conflict. Although there are several and equally acute bones of contention such as refugees, contested territory, security, borders, water, the status of Jerusalem and the holly sites and normalization and a slew of more specific problems within each topic, Israelis and Palestinians relate to the feud between them as one big mass of incompatibility.\textsuperscript{120} The flip side of this assertion is that complexity hinders intractability. It allows more ways to maneuver, avoid head-on collision and latitude for logrolling, compensation and bartering. Intractability rises when all relationships are collapsed into one big divide of disagreement, when conflict swallows every other aspect of interaction. When multi-dimensional relations are aligned into one single facet, positive feedback loops reinforce the

\textsuperscript{115} Coleman, supra note 3, at 111.
\textsuperscript{116} Coleman, supra note 2, at 342.
\textsuperscript{117} Id. at 343.
\textsuperscript{118} Id. at 343.
\textsuperscript{119} Id. at 346.
\textsuperscript{120} This was vividly captured in a comment a frustrated Palestinian delegate told me in a meeting in Jericho during the post-Oslo multilateral negotiations rounds: “The problem is not the items on the agenda. The problem is you, the Israelis.” (Jan. 1995). The same attitude of including all disagreements under one single auspice appeared in a popular graffiti slogan in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv during the heightened violence days of the second Intifada (2001–2002): “No Arabs = No Terrorism.”
schism. Everything is perceived and understood in terms of that fault-line. This renders the situation highly explosive since when issues become *interlinked and mutually dependent*, a single disagreement ignites all other levels of interaction. Then, finding a solution that *simultaneously heals all rifts* in all levels is highly unlikely.\(^{121}\) The challenge is therefore a formidable one: to disentangle the issues from each other by severing the linkages that bind them and isolating each contested issue. This is the way to infuse the intractable conflict with its genuine complexity but at the same time make it simpler or less problematic to resolve since the impenetrable homogeneity is broken. Once each dispute area is tackled separately, it becomes more amenable to resolution.

To promote the practice of complicating to simplify, a conflict map must be drawn again, with a new detailed resolution of where negative attractors are inspired and fostered, and where positive attractors that inhibit contention and accelerate cooperation hide. The new map, or illustration of the conflict landscape, is instrumental in discovering the actors and dynamics that make the conflict tick, as Coleman meticulously depicts:

> [I]dentifying central hubs of activity, elements that link with many other elements; key reinforcing loops, elements that stimulate themselves through links with other elements in an organizing fashion; and the ratio, or balance, between conflict-reinforcing and inhibiting feedback, which can determine whether a conflict is escalating, deescalating, or stuck in stalemate.\(^{122}\)

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is in urgent need of unscrambling its oversimplified façade. Careful and attentive fragmentation to concrete topics will allow a more effective and practical consideration to each individual dilemma. Once one issue is dealt with successfully, it can become a precedent to tackle other issues in the same rigorous and sincere manner. A momentum, impossible to envision when conflict remains intact, is engendered and the end of the dispute seems nearer. An intriguing example is the delicate matter of justice, a perennial disagreement that has plagued the Israeli-Palestinian relationships across all their other contentions. Both Palestinians and Israelis express the claim for justice. The decision to initiate a conflict or to join one appears more noble


\(^{122}\) Coleman, *supra* note 3, at 138.
and worthwhile if it is embellished with the cause of justice. However, since justice is an ambivalent and a highly slippery term, finding an interpretation that suits both sides’ understanding of the word is futile. Accordingly, Bland and Ross’ recommendation is very prudent in this regard: “Perhaps the more modest goal of reducing injustice generally proves to be less problematic. People of goodwill who cannot agree about the requirements of justice can often recognize suffering that is undeserved and unjust, and can agree on provisions to reduce such suffering.”

A more detailed view of the conflict might reveal other hubs or incubators of negative attractors such as the vociferous and resolute extremists on each side who rather see the conflict pursued and everyone trapped in a lose-lose cycle of violence than losing their relevance and political clout in times of content and prosperity. Such portrayal of the conflict reintroduces it not as a collision between Israelis and Palestinians and not between Jews and Arabs, or even Jews and Muslims, but between extremists on both sides and moderates. This is significant because understood as such, efforts and energies could be directed on the activities of extremists, isolating and ostracizing them as generator of reinforcing loops and at the same time working on finding realistic common ground between moderates. The simplistic view of the conflict deliberately blurs the distinction between moderates and extremists.

By promoting the practice of build up to tear down, a constructive way is sought to locate and empower peace-builders or as Coleman calls them integrative catalysts while at the same time trying to annul and defunct generators of negative attractors. In the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, moderates are the majority but they are silenced by the determined and laud extremists. The sociopolitical framework that is laden with the negative stigmata of the other serves the confrontational extremists better than the rest. Hence each time there is a glimpse of hope that negotiation will be resumed, it is unbearably easy for extremists on either side to derail the process by violence. The toxic environment they operate in is quick to accommodate into a combative mindset because for so

125 Coleman, supra note 3, at 142.
many years it has been the default psychological proclivity. Still, integrative catalysts among Palestinians and Israelis can be traced to stave off the impact of extremism and to plant seeds of cooperation. These could be academicians who study or teach abroad, sometimes in the same universities and the same departments; Youth leaders and community activists who can share a real-politic attitude to pursue improvements on the local and regional scale rather than being impaired by an ideological yoke on the national, ethnic or religious scales.

When we founded the Israeli-Palestinian movement *One Voice* in 2002, our hope was that in light of the dire prospective for peace in the harsh days of the second Intifada and the political stalemate, we will be able to state a grass-root initiative of young Israelis and Palestinians, mostly students, meeting and getting to know each other on a personal level. When these meetings mushroomed and took off, we launched the One Voice Leadership Project in May 2003, in which its graduates became agents of change bringing the experience of coexistence to their prospective communities. This track III diplomatic channel, we found out, has tremendous potency if continuously funded and stimulated. There are plenty of latent positive attractors to expose. There are, for instance, many cultural affinities and similarities between Israelis and Palestinians: they enjoy similar food and music, they have many similarities in temperament and demeanor and they share a similar geographical milieu. Although submerged under layers of anger and resentment due to the ramification of unending violence and vehemence, there is a positive repository of kinship that needs to be excavated and activated. This is a potentially solid common ground to start discussing even the most troubling issues such as refugees and Jerusalem in good faith.

At the same time attention must be given to handling the negative attractors and reinforcing feedback that sustain them. Tending only to the positive attractors would not suffice and the negative attractors can reignite with vigor and vengeance in every given moment. Rendering violence and aggression obsolete and irrelevant is critical and movements for nonviolence such as the *Palestinian Holy Land Trust of Bethlehem* and the *Palestine Na-

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127 John Paul Lederach, Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation Across Cultures 13 (1996); Ramsbotham et al., supra note 63, at 28.
tional Initiative (Mubadara),\textsuperscript{129} or the Israeli Peace Now\textsuperscript{130} and Women in Black\textsuperscript{131} movements can be influential if they remain active and engaged. Another hub that supplies material for incitement and agitation are textbooks that publish vile and venomous propaganda.\textsuperscript{132} They exist on both sides albeit more conspicuously on the Palestinian side. This can be countered by publications which stress positive characteristics of each nation and by incorporating such texts in the curricula of educational institutions on each side.

The third practice change to stabilize, calls for rattling the system in order to bring about the anticipated change.\textsuperscript{133} Intractable conflicts create stability by routinization.\textsuperscript{134} They assume a familiar mode of interactions sustained by entrenched attitudes and opinions. The repetitive pattern of behavior anchored in a cycle of mutual expectations conveys the impression of steadiness and permanence. In order to boost the possibility of change, this countenance of stability must be shaken by brazen and unabashed initiatives. This is not a simple undertaking since Israelis and Palestinians have been inundated with adversarial depictions of the other for so long and so systematically that they got comfortable with it. The robust national ethos is based upon the reciprocal collective disparagement and tempering with such a broad common denominator of one’s group of reference could be a flagrant source of contravening the national spirit and morale. Palestinian and Israeli peace activists, who wish to break the mold of antagonistic relationship, understandably take a great risk doing what they do. Nevertheless, they are indispensable to unnerving and disturbing the dangerous expediency of the status quo. Such “shock treatments” or unpredictable trigger events have the potential of uprooting the system and bring about a cataclysmic change.\textsuperscript{135} Such were the likes of Abraham Lincoln, Rosa Parks, Mikhail Gorbachev, de Clerk and Mandela. In the Middle East conflict, Egyptian President’s Anwar Sadat’s astonishing visit to Israel in

\textsuperscript{133} Coleman, supra note 3, at 113.
\textsuperscript{134} Id.
\textsuperscript{135} PAUL DIEHL & GARY GOERTZ, WAR AND PEACE IN INTERNATIONAL RIVALRY 223 (2001).
November 1977 and the unprecedented mutual recognition of the Israeli government and the PLO of September 1995 championed by Yitzhak Rabin, had this monumental effect. Both historical breakthrough acts sent shock waves throughout the system and prompted deadly reactions from people compelled to protect the balance of hate. In spite of the deterring historical legacy, the most effective way the Palestinian Israeli conflict can be ameliorated and perhaps change direction, is by such valiant acts of outstanding trailblazers. A unilateral unequivocal declaration of Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas, of foregoing all acts of violence and eliminating terrorism as a political option could dramatically transform the mindset of many Israelis toward Palestinians. A forthright announcement of Prime Minister Netanyahu that Israel is ready to promptly terminate the occupation of the West Bank for a genuine peace will do likewise among Palestinians. These would be trust-building islands in the midst of an unwavering skeptical ocean, but someone must navigate to locate these islands. Navigation should be made at the meeting point of opportunity and willingness.

B. **Opportunity and Willingness**

Every political action, including terminating an intractable conflict or peacemaking, is determined and stipulated by two fundamental, necessary conditions: the structural opportunity to operate and the willingness to do so. These conditions are mode-probabilistic (optional, multiple or substitutable) rather than mode-specific or deterministic. Inspired by Most and Starr seminal work on determinants of international decision making in conflict, opportunity represented macro-level (environmental and structural factors), whereas willingness represented the choice processes that occur at the micro-level (selecting a behavioral option from a range of alternatives). These ideas have been developed from the classical Sprouts’ model of ecological triad, composed of an agent, an environment, and the agent-environment relationship. In a similar vein, opportunity and willingness invoke

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interaction between a given or created structure and an agent’s choice. More accurately, the model describes inception of conflict as an intersection of decision-making and a specific surrounding environment.\textsuperscript{138}

More specifically, initiatives of decision-makers, power wielders or peace activists among Israelis and Palestinians are deeply affected by their combination of opportunity and willingness.\textsuperscript{139} The former refer to the political context of mobilization and collective behavior, or more succinctly, the political opportunity structure in which coalition of peace-prone leaders is granted legitimacy for sweeping decisions. These are exogenous factors that the ground-breaking leaders exploit and adapt to rather than bringing them about. The latter are endogenous factors such as leadership, solidarity, group cohesion, motivation, ideology, resolution and conviction.\textsuperscript{140} In the Middle East conflict, Israelis and Palestinians have had their share of missed opportunities and ill-wills.

\section*{V. CONCLUSION: SEEKING RIPENESS}

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has traversed three centuries by now: born in the late nineteenth century, crossing the twentieth century, and now well into the new century, it shows no signs of waning. Every time there are burgeoning attempts at de-escalation, it is rekindled. The chief culprit in perpetuating the confrontation is the socio-psychological infrastructure of Israelis and Palestinians carved and cultivated in years of meticulous endeavors in order to forge consolidated group cohesion to withstand the just struggle, as each side perceived it. These layers of self-righteousness and convictions are very difficult to unwrap. They became a central part of each group’s collective identity and an integral building block of Israelis and Palestinians’ sense of purpose. This mental framework generates negative attractors that fuel and encourage confrontation and erect structural strategic and psychological barriers that further confound Israelis and Palestinians from reaching out to one another. Genuine disagreements such as Jewish settlements in the West bank, the militancy of Hamas, the sepa-

\textsuperscript{138} Id. at 12.
\textsuperscript{139} Harvey Starr, “Opportunity” and “Willingness” as Ordering Concepts in the Study of War, 4 INT’L INTERACTIONS 36, 64 (1978).
\textsuperscript{140} ERIC HOFFER, THE TRUE BELIEVER: THOUGHTS ON THE NATURE OF MASS MOVEMENTS passim (1951).
RATION wall, incitement in education textbook, Islamization and the influence of Iran, and normalization are further complicated by miscommunication, misinterpretation of intentions, distrust, cultural differences, economic and technological disparities, disparate historical, narrative, legacies and myths; customs, traditions and rituals; social values and norms; internal political and economic hardships that make the conflict a convenient escape hatch; attitudes of supremacy and preeminence; and of course, a ready-made incubator for identity, sense of belonging and group cohesion.

These are tremendously high stakes to take on but Israelis and Palestinians have no choice but mobilize against them and change the nature of the conflict that has afflicted them for so long. The spiral of escalation is favorable to no one and it would defeat both sides if not abated. The drastic measures necessary for such conflict transformation were surveyed in this paper. They should occur in conditions of ripeness, when both Israelis and Palestinians are ready to rise to the occasion of terminating their rivalry for the sake of a better future for all.141 Ripeness should not be enforced in order for the participants who wish to embark on a new path not to feel alienated or intimidated. It should not be eternally anticipated either lest the pain and destruction of the escalating conflict might ultimately render reconciliation useless. Ripeness must be expedited and facilitated by preparing propitious conditions and circumstances, or in other words, changing the landscape of conflict by unearthing positive catalysts and burring negative ones.
