The Interdependence of Israeli and Palestinian National Identities: The Role of the Other in Existential Conflicts

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The interactions between identity groups engaged in a protracted conflict lack the conditions postulated by Gordon Allport in The Nature of Prejudice *(1954) as necessary if contact is to reduce intergroup prejudice. The article examines the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from this perspective. After summarizing the history of the conflict, it proposes that a long-term resolution of the conflict requires development of a transcendent identity for the two peoples that does not threaten the particularistic identity of each. The nature of the conflict, however, impedes the development of a transcendent identity by creating a state of negative interdependence between the two identities such that asserting one group's identity requires negating the identity of the other. The resulting threat to each group's identity is further exacerbated by the fact that each side perceives the other as a source of some of its own negative identity elements, especially a view of the self as victim and as victimizer. The article concludes with a discussion of ways of overcoming the negative interdependence of the two identities by drawing on some of the positive elements in the relationship, most notably the positive interdependence between the two groups that exists in reality. Problem-solving workshops represent one setting for equal-status interactions that provide the parties the opportunity to "negotiate" their identities and to find ways of accommodating the identity of the other in their own identity.*

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Many of the conflicts that have preoccupied the contemporary international system, particularly in the post–Cold War era, have not been classical interstate conflicts, even though different states may align themselves on opposite sides of these conflicts. Rather, they have been intense, protracted, and often deadly conflicts between identity groups within the same political structure.

These conflicting groups have typically lived in close contact with one another, although the degree and nature of the contact varies from case to case. Both Greek and Turkish Cypriots, for example, have in the past been distributed across the island, and many had lived in mixed towns and villages; for the past quarter of a century, however, since the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974, the two communities have been completely separated and there is virtually no contact between them, except for small but growing segments of the elites who have been actively pursuing intercommunal activities. In Northern Ireland, there is no strict geographical separation, but the two communities are socially, educationally, and of course religiously segregated; in the working-class district of Belfast, Catholic and Protestant (or, to be more precise, republican and loyalist) neighborhoods are separated by a "peace wall," which residents cross at their own risk. In some cases, as in Rwanda or Bosnia, the conflicting communities share a common language and culture and indeed a history of peaceful coexistence and even intermarriage for extended periods of time. But these contacts have not protected them from deadly conflict when the boundaries between Hutus and Tutsis, or between Serbs, Croats, and Bosnian Muslims, became defined as the battle lines for the zero-sum pursuit of fundamental needs and interests, of identity, and of survival. Some of the most chilling stories that have come out of Rwanda and Bosnia have described the genocidal massacres in which people systematically and brutally killed some of their own acquaintances and neighbors, with whom they had had harmonious relations in the past.

Much remains to be explored and explained about the conditions that make such massacres and genocides possible and probable. Social psychologists can contribute significantly to this exploratory effort and, indeed, some have begun to do so (for example, Charny, 1982; Kelman & Hamilton, 1989; Staub, 1989). But one thing that can be readily inferred from a half century of social-psychological theory and research on intergroup contact (Pettigrew, 1998) is that contact per se does not preclude or reduce violent intergroup conflict. The potentially positive effects of contact depend on the nature of that contact: on the situational conditions under which it takes place. In the absence of these conditions, contact between antagonistic groups is more likely to increase rather than reduce stereotypes, distrust, and hostility. Moreover, even a history of positive contact may not deter violent conflict when the supporting conditions evaporate.

Gordon Allport, in *The Nature of Prejudice* (1954), spelled out the situational conditions that must be present if contact is to reduce intergroup prejudice. According to Allport, prejudice is likely to be reduced only "by equal status contact . . . in the pursuit of common goals. The effect is greatly enhanced if this contact

is sanctioned by institutional support . . . and . . . leads to the perception of common interests and common humanity between members of the two groups" (p. 281). Precisely these conditions are lacking in the contacts between identity groups that are engaged in a protracted, deep-rooted conflict (such as the two conflicting communities in Northern Ireland); or, insofar as these conditions have prevailed in the past (as they did in Yugoslavia under Tito's leadership), they evaporate when new leaders exploit ethnic divisions to consolidate their own power.

This article focuses on the Israeli-Palestinian case. After summarizing the history of the conflict, the article proposes that a long-term resolution of the conflict requires development of a transcendent identity for the two peoples that does not threaten the particularistic identity of each. It goes on to show how the nature of the conflict impedes the development of a transcendent identity by creating a state of negative interdependence between the two identities, which is further exacerbated by the fact that each side perceives the other as a source of some of its own negative identity elements. It concludes with a discussion of ways of overcoming the negative interdependence of the two identities by drawing on some of the positive elements in the relationship, most notably the positive interdependence between the two groups that exists in reality.

The Israeli-Palestinian Case

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a protracted, deep-rooted conflict between identity groups that is now a century old.[1] The origins of the conflict can be traced to the advent of political Zionism at the end of the nineteenth century (see Halpern, 1967; Hertzberg, 1973). The waves of Jewish immigration into Palestine in the early decades of the twentieth century—purchasing land, building settlements and social institutions, and clearly intending to establish a Jewish homeland and ultimately a Jewish state in Palestine—soon clashed with the Arab population of the land, which was itself responding to the growth of Arab nationalism and to the construction of a specifically Palestinian identity (see Khalidi, 1997; Muslih, 1988). There was considerable contact between the communities throughout this period, but it was largely negative in nature. Although there were many instances of friendly relations and cooperative endeavors, the overall relationship was marked by social and economic separation, political conflict, and periodic violent confrontations. The significant contact of the two communities within the land that they both claimed created a high degree of interdependence between them but, as this article argues, it was mostly negative interdependence of their national identities.

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[1] For a comprehensive account of the history of the conflict, see Tessler (1994). Useful shorter accounts can be found in Mendelsohn (1989) and Gerner (1991).

The establishment of the independent State of Israel in 1948, followed by Israel's war with the adjacent Arab states and the displacement of a large segment of the Palestinian Arab population from their homes inside the part of Palestine that became the State of Israel, created a set of new relationships between the two communities. Part of the Palestinian population remained in Israel and became Israeli citizens; they now constitute nearly 20% of the Israeli population. Their situation has greatly improved since the early days of the state, when they were subject to military administration. They have full citizen rights, but they still experience discrimination, some of it resulting from the discriminatory practices of official and unofficial agencies, and some of it based on laws and regulations that give preference to the Jewish population (e.g., by linking certain benefits to military service, which is obligatory for all but the ultra-orthodox Jews, but from which Arabs are exempt). There are numerous private and governmental efforts in Israel to promote cooperative relations between its Jewish and Palestinian-Arab citizens. Palestinians have also been increasing their political influence. Overall, however, they remain second-class citizens to a considerable degree and do not feel fully integrated in a society that defines itself by its Jewish identity.

A large segment of the Palestinian population lives in the West Bank and Gaza, the two parts of Palestine that remained in Arab hands (Jordanian and Egyptian, respectively) after the 1948 war. Part of the population of the West Bank and some 60% of the population of Gaza consists of refugees from the 1948 war and their descendants, many of them living in refugee camps. Between 1948 and 1967, there was no contact between Israelis and West Bank/Gaza Palestinians. This situation changed radically when Israel took possession of these territories in the 1967 war. Since then, Israel has occupied the West Bank and Gaza. After the Oslo agreement of September 1993, the Palestinian Authority (PA) was established and now administers most of the Palestinian-populated areas of the West Bank and Gaza. Israel, however, remains in control and its military forces continue to guard movement across the borders between Israel and the territories and to protect the Israeli settlements that have been built in the territories. There have been many cooperative efforts between Israelis and Palestinians in a variety of domains, most of them initiated in the past dozen years or so and especially since the Oslo agreement and the establishment of the PA. The average Palestinian, however, meets only Israeli soldiers, bureaucrats, and settlers, and the average Israeli meets only Palestinian day laborers who come across the border when they can in order to find work in the face of the high level of unemployment in the West Bank and the even higher level in Gaza. The contacts are the antithesis of the equal-status contacts in pursuit of common interests that Allport (1954) described as necessary conditions for positive changes in intergroup relations.

The third segment of the Palestinian population consists of the Palestinian diaspora. The largest subgroup lives in Jordan, where they have become more than 50% of the total population and have been granted citizenship and largely

integrated in the society (although many still live in refugee camps). Other large subgroups live in refugee camps in Lebanon and Syria, where they have not been granted citizenship. Smaller groups live elsewhere in the Arab world (mostly without citizenship) and in Europe and the Americas. Small but significant numbers of Israeli elites and diaspora-based Palestinian elites have engaged in political dialogue over the years. It was with the diaspora leadership of the Palestinian national movement—the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), headquartered in Tunis at the time—that Israeli officials negotiated the Oslo accord; much of that leadership and its political and military functionaries have now returned to the West Bank and Gaza to take up various positions in the PA.

The primary focus of the present analysis is on the relationship between Israel and the West Bank/Gaza Palestinians, on whose behalf the PA is negotiating with Israel. The PA leadership must ultimately address the problems of the Palestinian diaspora, especially the stateless residents of the refugee camps in Lebanon and Syria. Its initial emphasis, however, has been on securing a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, whose population is thus its key constituency at this point. It is almost certainly within such a state that a solution for a large part of the refugee population will have to be found. Indeed, the refugee problem is one of the issues designated for the final-status negotiations. How it is resolved will contribute significantly to the moral authority of the final agreement and to the political support it will receive everywhere. So far, however, the negotiations have focused on the situation on the ground, rather than the refugee issue. As for the Palestinian citizens of Israel, they do not consider themselves a suitable subject for Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, nor do the Israeli authorities consider them as such. Though they give support to the political goals of the Palestinian movement, the Palestinians in Israel have their own agenda that has to do with their individual and group rights as a sizable minority within Israel. I will refer to this problem whenever it becomes relevant, but it is outside of the scope of the present analysis.

The Israeli-Palestinian negotiations now seem to be clearly moving in the direction of some kind of Palestinian state, particularly in light of Ehud Barak's victory in the May 1999 elections. The precise nature of that state will have to be determined in the course of these negotiations: What will be its borders? What will happen to the Israeli settlements on the land on which Palestinians hope to establish their state? What will be the Palestinian state's relationship to Jerusalem? What role will it have in resolving the problem of the refugees? Most generally, will it be an independent, viable state that will enable the Palestinians, as well as the Israelis, to conclude that a satisfactory and just solution to the conflict has been achieved? The answers to these questions will, in turn, determine whether the negotiations open the way to a new relationship between the two peoples, based on their cooperation as equals in the pursuit of common goals and conducive to a sustainable long-term peace and to ultimate reconciliation. Such a new relationship becomes

possible insofar as the parties can develop a transcendent identity without giving up their deeply cherished particularistic identities.

Particularistic and Transcendent Identities

The development of a larger, transcendent identity, encompassing both Israelis and Palestinians, is a necessary condition for effective cooperation, long-term peaceful coexistence, and ultimate reconciliation between the two peoples in the wake of a political solution to their conflict. This transcendent identity, however, need not replace the particularistic identity of each group; rather, it can develop alongside of it. Maintaining their particularistic identities is important to groups in general, in keeping with the basic need for psychological distinctiveness postulated by social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and the optimum distinctiveness model (Brewer, 1991; see also her article in this issue). It is especially important in the Israeli-Palestinian case or in similar cases of protracted conflict between identity groups. Any attempt, at this historical juncture, to replace the particularistic identities of the two peoples with an over-arching identity would be experienced as highly threatening and would meet with great resistance. Each people has struggled over the past century—and, in different ways, continues to struggle—to define and consolidate its own national identity and to give political expression to it in a state of its own. Neither is ready to submerge that identity in a larger identity, particularly one that it would share with its former enemy. However, development of a transcendent identity need not threaten the separate identity of each group. One recent study (Huo, Smith, Tyler, & Lind, 1996), for example, suggests that identification with a super-ordinate group does not require relinquishing strong ties to one's subgroup. Indeed, Allport, in a discussion of the widening circles of inclusion, as one moves from the family to humankind, pointed out that "concentric loyalties need not clash" (1954, p. 44).

How, then, can the two peoples develop a transcendent identity that would not threaten the separate identity of each? For the Jews and Palestinians in Israel proper (i.e., within "the green line"),[2] the problem is one of developing a shared identity for two peoples who live and hold citizenship in one state. Developing a transcendent identity in this case means shaping an Israeli identity, a concept of national citizenship, that fully includes Israel's Palestinian citizens. Rouhana (1997), in his insightful study of Palestinian citizens in Israel, speaks of such a transcendent identity as "civil identity," which is separate from ethnic identity and assumes

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[2] The "green line" refers to the armistice lines that separated Israel from its Arab neighbors at the end of the 1948 war. This line constituted Israel's effective border until the 1967 war, when Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as well as Egypt's Sinai Peninsula and Syria's Golan Heights.

equal citizenship for majority and minority (p. 228). I shall not elaborate on the nature of the transcendent identity that will have to develop in Israel proper, except to enter one caveat: A transcendent Israeli identity will have to evolve gradually, facing the challenge of accommodating both the majority's commitment to maintaining the Jewish ethos of the state, anchored in Zionist ideology and the Jewish historical experience (cf. Kelman, 1998a), and the minority's commitment to maintaining its ethnic identity, based on its separate culture, language, religions, political allegiances, and sense of indigenous ownership of the land.

It should be noted in passing that the necessity of developing (or strengthening) a transcendent identity for two groups who live and hold citizenship in one state also applies to Jordan, where at least 50% of the population is Palestinian in origin (see Abu-Odeh, 1999, for a rich discussion of this issue). As the establishment of an independent Palestinian state moves closer to realization, the place of the large Palestinian population in each of its two neighboring states becomes a critical issue that can no longer be sidestepped. Since the Palestinians in Jordan, as well as those in Israel, intend to remain in these states and exercise their citizenship rights there, both of these states will have to develop transcendent identities in which their ethnic Palestinian citizens are fully included.

Let us turn now to the primary concern of this article, which is the relationship between Israelis and the Palestinians of the emerging Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. Here the issue is the development of a transcendent identity for two peoples living in two *separate* states, but two separate states that are destined to share the same small land and its limited resources. The transcendent identity could take the form of belongingness to the same land, the land that Palestinians call Palestine and that Israelis call *Eretz Yisrael* (the Land of Israel) and that each people regards as its national homeland. It would be understood that this transcendent identity is shared by members of two different nations, living and holding citizenship in two separate, sovereign states. This concept requires an ability and readiness to distinguish between land and state—to accept the existence of different kinds of borders—which would allow both peoples to give expression to their attachment to the entire land, while claiming ownership (in the form of independent statehood) in only part of that land. Under conditions of stable peace, this landwide attachment can be expressed concretely at both the sentimental and the instrumental levels (Kelman, 1997a): At the sentimental level, open borders would enable citizens of both states to go anywhere in the country to visit historical and religious sites, to enjoy their favorite mountains or beaches, and to meet with relatives and friends. At the instrumental level, conception of the country as a single unit would enable the two societies to pursue more effectively their functional interests in such domains as industry and trade, public health, environmental protection, management of water and other resources, and tourism, which clearly cut across the political borders in their small country.

Although the development of a transcendent identity would contribute significantly to the long-term resolution of the conflict, it is greatly impeded by the nature of the conflict itself. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is at its core a conflict between two national movements claiming the same land. Relationship to the land is a central element of the national identity of each people, and that relationship is viewed as exclusive in the national narrative through which each people's identity is expressed. Even though both sides are now ready to make territorial compromises in order to end the conflict, this readiness is mostly based on pragmatic considerations. Large elements of the two societies are not prepared to abandon their ideological claim to an exclusive relationship to the land: to modify their national narratives in a way that would concede that the other too has legitimate and authentic links to the land.

The exclusiveness of each group's national identity is embedded in a pattern of *negative interdependence* of the two identities that greatly impedes the development of a transcendent identity. This negative interdependence of the two identities is further exacerbated by the fact that each side perceives the other as a *source of its own negative identity elements.* As long as the other's identity is seen as a threat to one's own identity and must therefore be rejected, there is no space for developing a transcendent identity shared with the other.

The remainder of this article elaborates on the meaning and implications of the negative interdependence of Israeli and Palestinian identities and of the view of the other as a source of one's own negative identity elements, and concludes with some observations about possibilities for overcoming these negative dynamics, particularly by way of fostering positive interdependence of the kind envisioned in Allport's (1954) formulation of the contact hypothesis.

The Negative Interdependence of Israeli and Palestinian Identities

The psychological core of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the perception by both parties that it is a zero-sum conflict, not only with respect to territory but, most importantly, with respect to national identity and national existence (Kelman, 1987). Each "perceives the very existence of the other—the other's status as a nation—to be a threat to its own existence and status as a nation. Each holds the view that only one can be a nation: Either we are a nation or they are. *They* can acquire national identity and rights only at the expense of *our* identity and rights" (p. 354). This zero-sum view flows directly from the fact that the two national movements focus on the same land, which both claim as their national homeland. Under these circumstances, acknowledging the other's nationhood is seen as acceptance of the other's right to establish a national state in that land, which each side perceives as relinquishing or at least jeopardizing its own claims to the land. "The issue of territorial claims touches directly on more fundamental questions of national survival. Israelis and Palestinians both see their nations as highly

vulnerable. In their very different ways, both have lived on the edge of national oblivion. The themes of destruction, of physical annihilation, and of nonexistence play a central role in their national self-images" (Kelman, 1987, p. 354).

Over the course of the conflict, each side has been convinced that the ultimate intention of the other is to destroy it—indeed, that its own destruction is inherent in the other's ideology. Israelis have equated the Palestinian movement's goal of liberating Palestine with the intention of liquidating Israel. Palestinians have seen the establishment of Israel in 1948 and the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in 1967 as steps in the Zionist project of eliminating the Palestinian presence in the land. Even now, as the parties seem to be moving toward a peace agreement based on territorial compromise, they are not convinced that the other has really abandoned the project of destroying them and is genuinely committed to the peaceful coexistence of two independent states in the land they both claim. In Israeli-Palestinian workshops that we held during the final months of the Netanyahu government, when mutual trust of the two sides was at a low point, even moderate Israelis and Palestinians, committed to a compromise solution, expressed serious doubts about the other side's real intentions. At a deep level, the perceived intentions of the other still arouse fears in each group about its own existence. Thus, the zero-sum view of national identity is still in place: "Fulfillment of the other's national identity is experienced as equivalent to destruction of one's own identity" (Kelman, 1987, p. 355).

This zero-sum view of national identity has in effect created a state of negative interdependence between the two identities: Assertion of the group's own identity requires negation of the other group's identity; each group's success in identity building depends on the other's failure in that task. Negative interdependence not only creates obstacles to conflict resolution and ultimate reconciliation but also makes it more difficult and costly for each group to establish its own identity. It is not enough for it to demonstrate, to itself and to the rest of the world, its own legitimacy, authenticity, and cohesiveness as a national group; it has the additional burden of demonstrating the illegitimacy, inauthenticity, and lack of cohesiveness of the other, often in the face of powerful evidence to the contrary. Thus, each group's identity becomes hostage to the identity of the other: Since its own identity thrives to the extent that the other's identity languishes, it must invest great energy in discrediting the other. If interdependence means that two parties depend on each other in the achievement of their respective goals, then Israeli and Palestinian identities have been truly interdependent. However, unlike positive interdependence, which creates the conditions for cooperation, negative interdependence creates the conditions for protracted conflict.

The zero-sum view of national identity and the negative interdependence of the Israeli and Palestinian identities to which it gives rise have, indeed, greatly contributed to the escalation and perpetuation of the conflict over the decades and created obstacles to its resolution. One of the consequences of this zero-sum view

and perhaps the prototypical indicator of the negative interdependence of the two identities is the mutual denial of each other's national identity (and hence right to a national state) that has characterized the conflict from the beginning (Kelman, 1978, 1987). Many Palestinians, and Arabs in general, have denied Jewish people-hood, often arguing that Jews are a religion and therefore not a true nation entitled to a state of its own. They have also denied the authenticity of the Jewish national movement, describing Zionism as a form of settler colonialism, perpetuated by Europeans who had no historical links to the land. Many Israelis, on their part, have denied Palestinians' distinctiveness, describing them as Arabs whose self-definition as Palestinians—and in many cases even residence in the country—were of recent origin. In their view, Palestinian nationalism is an artificial creation without authentic historical roots. Such denials have persisted in the face of evidence that both peoples had demonstrated all the characteristics of nations, including the Israelis' establishment of a successful state and revival of an ancient language and the Palestinians' continuing struggle for nationhood culminating in the *intifada*—the popular uprising in the West Bank and Gaza—in the late 1980s.

A related indicator of negative interdependence has been the systematic effort to delegitimize the other's movement by placing it outside of the bounds of what the world community can tolerate. The most extreme examples of delegitimization of the other have been equation of Zionism with racism and of Palestinian national-ism, as represented by the PLO, with terrorism. These accusations have gone beyond the condemnation of racist policies and practices pursued by Israel or terrorist acts committed by the PLO. They have, in effect, described the Zionist movement as inherently racist and the Palestinian movement as inherently terror-ist. Since racism and terrorism are morally unacceptable in human society, these designations make the other's national movement as such illegitimate by defini-tion. Delegitimization in these cases verges on dehumanization in that it excludes the other from the moral community shared by all members of the human family. It announces that these national movements have no right to exist, which comes close to saying that these national groups have no right to exist, or so it sounds to the targets (cf. Kelman, 1987, p. 355).

At the political level, an important indicator of the negative interdependence of the two identities was the two parties' refusal over many years to recognize each other. Recognition was seen as legitimizing the other, and thus throwing one's own legitimacy into question. Palestinians, as a matter of principle, were unwilling to recognize Israel's right to exist. Indeed, for a long time they did not even recognize the fact of Israel's existence; they referred to Israel as the "Zionist entity" and left it off their maps (as did the Arab states). Israelis, as a matter of principle, were unwilling to recognize the Palestinians as a separate nation with a right to self-determination. They referred to them as Arabs rather than Palestinians and at times argued that there are no Palestinians (as in an often-cited statement by former Prime Minister Golda Meir). Once the two parties became interested in negotiating

with each other, they began to recognize at least the fact of each other's existence and to move, slowly and hesitantly, toward recognizing each other's right to exist. The dilemma they faced was that each needed and wanted to receive the other's recognition but was reluctant to extend recognition to the other, certainly not without assured reciprocation. The thorny issue during those years was who would be the first to recognize the other (Kelman, 1982). Clearly, the answer had to be prenegotiated, simultaneous, mutual recognition, as finally happened in the Oslo agreement of September 1993. The long history of systematic nonrecognition makes it clear why the Oslo agreement, despite its many limitations, represented an important turning point in the conflict (Kelman, 1997b, 1998b). The letters of recognition exchanged by Arafat and Rabin constitute a first step in transforming the relationship: in effect, beginning to move from negative to positive interdependence between the two peoples.

The negative interdependence of the two identities has also burdened the parties with the requirement of maintaining the demonic image of the enemy. Affirming the enemy image is a common feature of conflict norms and indicator of group loyalty in deep-rooted conflicts. Advocates of a softer enemy image and of communication with the enemy open themselves up to intense suspicion and often accusations of treason. One reason for the emphasis on keeping the demonic image intact is its contribution to the group cohesion that is deemed necessary to sustain the group in its life-and-death struggle. The point here is not simply that a group needs an enemy in order to maintain cohesion; rather, it is the felt need of groups engaged in an existential conflict to remain united and steadfast in their vigilance and resistance vis-à-vis a dangerous enemy in order to avoid being lulled into complacency and compromise that may threaten their national existence.

Another reason for maintaining the demonic image of the enemy is that it is considered vital as support for the justice of the group's own cause. The zero-sum view of identity in relation to the conflict does not admit of the possibility that both parties may have some justice on their side, that there may be two perspectives on the conflict, each of which is at least partly legitimate. Any legitimacy extended to the enemy is seen to detract from the group's own legitimacy. The resulting rigidity of the enemy image is a serious obstacle to efforts at conflict resolution. Each party is likely to be unaware of the occurrence or possibility of change on the other side, which might make the other more amenable to serious negotiations. For many years, Israelis and Palestinians have tended to dismiss indications of change on the other side, preferring to stay with the comfortable formula that there is no one to talk to in the enemy camp and nothing to talk about. Those who broke the consensus by "prematurely" entering into dialogue with the enemy or advocating such dialogue were often marginalized, discredited, vilified, or assassinated.

Finally, one of the consequences of the negative interdependence of the two identities is the fact that the ideology and symbols that support each side's positive group identity and sense of legitimacy have entirely negative connotations for the

other side. What sustains the identity of one threatens the identity of the other. Thus, such objects of Palestinian pride and hope as the PLO, its ideology, its institutions, and its international stature, or the *intifada*, or the concepts of Palestinian unity and Palestinian statehood, have had negative valence for Israelis. Similarly, objects of Israeli pride and hope, such as Zionism, the State of Israel and its institutions, the unification of Jerusalem in 1967, or the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty of 1979 have had negative valence for Palestinians. Each party, looking at the other's ideology and associated symbols entirely from its own perspective, has tended to perceive them as having no other purpose than to destroy its own national existence. Each has found it difficult to recognize the positive elements in the other's ideology and symbols, representing the other's vision of national renewal and liberation and of a better future for its people (Kelman, 1987). Under the circumstances, the parties were not very well able to develop the kind of empathy for the other that is necessary for negotiating a mutually satisfactory agreement and moving toward reconciliation.

The *intifada* and the Oslo agreement have begun to produce some changes in this pattern. For example, when the Oslo agreement was signed in September 1993 and Palestinians danced in the streets of East Jerusalem in anticipation of achieving an independent state, many Israelis observed, and Israeli newspapers wrote, that it reminded them of November 1947, when Jews in Palestine joyfully celebrated the news that the UN had passed a partition resolution that authorized the establishment of a Jewish state. The ability to identify in this way with the Palestinians' anticipation of statehood represented a remarkable departure from the zero-sum view of national identity. On the other hand, one can cite recent instances demonstrating that, despite significant movement, the old pattern has not disappeared. In 1998, Israel celebrated the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the state. In the same year Palestinians memorialized the 50th anniversary of *al naqba*: the term, meaning "catastrophe" or "disaster," that Palestinians use to describe the Palestinian experience of 1948. Some Israelis saw these memorial events and writings as efforts to attack and spoil the Israeli celebration, inconsistent with the ongoing peace process. Yet even if the Palestinians were in part responding to the Israeli celebration, the fact remains that 1948 *was* a disaster for the Palestinian people and that they had legitimate independent reasons for recalling and mourning these tragic events on their 50th anniversary and reminding the world of them. In principle, Israelis could have acknowledged the Palestinian tragedy and the Palestinians' reasons for commemorating it on the 50th anniversary without abandoning their own narrative or their own anniversary celebration. But insofar as the two identities remain negatively interdependent, assertion of one's own group's identity requires rejection of the other's.

In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as in other existential conflicts between identity groups, each group is to a considerable degree defined and shaped by the conflict. Its relationship to the conflict is a central part of the group's self-definition

and worldview. This fact in itself often creates a psychological commitment that becomes a barrier to conflict resolution. A change in the conflict relationship may be resisted because it would require major revisions in the way people think and feel about significant aspects of their national and personal lives (Kelman, 1997c, p. 222). An integral part of the dependence of each group's identity on the conflict is the negative interdependence between their identities: The perceived success of one's own group depends on the other group's failure. This interdependence is very costly to the conflicting groups. Each must be concerned not only with establishing and bolstering its own identity, but also with undermining and destroying the other's identity; not only with advancing its own cause, but also with thwarting the other's cause. Assertion of the group's own identity requires negation of the other. This dynamic presents serious obstacles to conflict resolution. The parties are impaired in their ability to take the other's perspective, which is an essential step in any effort at mutual accommodation. They are likely to be unaware of the occurrence and possibility of change on the other side, which might point to a convergence between their seemingly incompatible interests. They are hampered in their pursuit of integrative, win-win solutions, which would require some willingness to think of ways of benefiting the other. They interact in ways that create self-fulfilling prophecies, leading to escalation and perpetuation of the conflict.

The Other as Source of Negative Identity Elements in the Self

The negative interdependence of the two identities derives from a view of the other's identity as a direct threat to one's own identity. The conflict thus becomes purely a matter of "us against them": Only one can prevail. To assert one's own identity requires negating the identity of the other. There is another, not entirely unrelated way in which the other, in an intense conflict relationship, often becomes a threat to one's own identity: The other—or, to be more precise, the relationship to the other—serves to bring out some of the negative elements of one's own identity. I refer here to elements of their self-view that the parties want to overcome and put behind them or to suppress and deny. Unlike the negative interdependence of the two identities, this dynamic does not place the two identities in direct competition such that each can prevail only at the expense of the other. It does, however, create obstacles to conflict resolution by making it difficult for the parties to communicate and cooperate with each other at a level of equality.

There are two major types of negative identity elements that are often brought to the fore by the relationship to the other in a protracted conflict: the view of one's self as weak and vulnerable, and the view of one's self as violent and unjust.

The successes of the other in achieving power or legitimacy may serve as reminders of one's own group's weaknesses and vulnerabilities, particularly those that the national movement has been designed to overcome. For Palestinians, of

course, their own weakness and vulnerability is directly related to Israel's power. The Palestinian disaster of 1948 is a consequence of Israel's victory in its war of independence; the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza is a consequence of Israel's victory in the 1967 war. Israeli statehood and military power, the strength of its institutions and its economy, and its achievements in various domains underline for Palestinians their own impotence, statelessness, and inability to shape events. They are especially sensitive to the success of the Zionist movement in achieving its goals in contrast to the continuing failure of the Palestinian movement to achieve its goals on the ground. Although the Palestinian movement has scaled down its demands to an independent state in a small part of Palestine and achieved international support for these demands, it is not yet assured that a viable sovereign state will emerge from the negotiations mandated by the Oslo accord. The sense of weakness relative to Israel is one of the reasons for the reluctance of many Palestinians to engage in cooperative enterprises with Israelis unless the power imbalance is reduced or at least seriously addressed.

Although Israel has powerful military forces, far superior to those of its neighbors, its population suffers from a pervasive sense of vulnerability. This sense of vulnerability is rooted in the Jewish historical experience, particularly the Holocaust: "a people that, within its recent memory, has come close to annihilation finds it easy to imagine that it may again be subjected to a similar threat" (Kelman, 1992a, p. 34). Indeed, one of the purposes of the Zionist project of establishing a Jewish state was to put an end to the vulnerability of the Jewish people. But instead, the state was established in a hostile environment, amid neighbors who regarded Israelis as unwanted intruders and denied their state's legitimacy. Palestinians have, over the decades, served as constant reminders to Israelis of their lack of acceptance and legitimacy in the region and hence of their continuing vulnerability. The PLO's success in achieving international support and legitimacy, particularly within the context of the United Nations, has brought home to Israelis their still precarious position in the Middle East—the fact that the process of international recognition of their state is still incomplete. To be considered aliens, outsiders, in their own country is particularly painful since it recalls the outsider status Jews experienced in the diaspora, which the Jewish state was designed to overcome. The very name "Palestinians" is troubling to Israelis because, in choosing that name, Palestinians have identified themselves as the people who belong to Palestine and to whom Palestine belongs, thus implying that Israelis are outsiders and usurpers. Terrorist acts directed at Israelis are perhaps the most concrete reminder to Israelis of their historic vulnerability. The strength of Israeli reaction to such acts exceeds the military threat that they represent; what is significant for Israelis is that they demonstrate the limits of Israel's ability to protect the physical safety of its people.

The second negative element of each group's identity that the relationship to the other brings to the fore is the view of one's self as violent and unjust. The nature

of the conflict forces both sides to entertain views of the self that they find unacceptable, but that they cannot entirely avoid because these views reflect the image of the group held by large parts of the outside world. In the case of Israelis, it is the image of occupiers, oppressors, and racists who are responsible for expulsions, bombings, massacres, torture, cover-ups, and undemocratic practices. In the case of Palestinians, it is the image of violence-prone, uncivilized fanatics and terrorists who target children and other innocent civilians. In both cases, these images are inconsistent with the parties' self-images and the images they wish to project. They see and present themselves as the victims, not the victimizers; as decent and civilized people; as resorting to violence only when deprived of all other options. They blame the other for forcing them into the role of aggressor and deeply resent being relegated to the pariah status of oppressor or terrorist. The other, however, serves as a constant reminder of the fact that, whether they do so reluctantly or not, they are engaged in actions that cast doubt on their decent and peaceful self-images.

The two types of negative identity elements brought to the fore by the relationship to the other are, in essence, the view of the self as victim and of the self as victimizer. In the rhetoric of conflict, these two self-images perform very different functions. Each party claims the status of victim and each denies the role of victimizer. At the level of self-esteem and self-ideal, however, both of these elements of identity are negative and ego-alien. Each group would rather see itself as neither the other's weak and vulnerable victim, nor the other's cruel oppressor or assailant. Yet the conflict relationship forces these negative self-images upon them. Paradoxically, efforts at conflict resolution often bring these images to the fore: They make it necessary to confront them rather than suppress and deny them. Agreeing to a compromise generally means accepting the reality of one's own weakness; one must compromise because one's options are limited in the face of the countervailing pressures that the other is able to apply. Acknowledging the other's rights generally means admitting (at least by implication) that one may have treated the other unjustly in the past. Conflict resolution, particularly if it is to lead to transformation of the relationship and ultimate reconciliation, thus requires some revision of each party's identity, taking ownership of certain negative elements that it had preferred to overlook.

In sum, the fact that the other is a source of some of the negative elements in one's own identity presents obstacles that must be overcome in setting a process of conflict resolution into motion. It exacerbates the effects of the negative interdependence of the two identities by making it more difficult to engage in the kinds of equal-status interactions that can counteract the zero-sum view of identity and promote the development of a transcendent identity in which each side accommodates the claims, narrative, and particularistic identity of the other.

Overcoming the Negative Interdependence of the Two Identities

Overcoming the negative interdependence of the identities of two groups, such as the Israelis and the Palestinians, engaged in an existential conflict is a great challenge to the diplomatic enterprise. A major part of the work, ultimately, has to be done around the negotiating table, but the official setting, in which instructed interlocutors, exposed to public scrutiny of every step of the process, must hammer out an agreement, is not an ideal setting for the negotiation of identity. There is therefore a need for unofficial efforts to complement the official process at all of its stages: to help the parties move toward the negotiating table, negotiate productively when they are at the table, and build a lasting peace after a formal agreement has been reached. A number of scholar-practitioners have developed and applied unofficial, third-party approaches to conflict resolution designed to complement the official process (Fisher, 1997).

My colleagues and I, drawing on the pioneering work of John Burton (1969, 1979, 1984), have developed such an approach, anchored in social-psychological principles and called interactive problem solving (Kelman, 1972, 1979, 1992b, 1998c; Kelman & Cohen, 1986; Rouhana & Kelman, 1994; see also the article by Cross & Rosenthal in the present issue). The approach has been applied for the past 25 years in problem-solving workshops for Israelis and Palestinians. These workshops bring together politically influential Israelis and Palestinians for direct communication in a completely private, confidential setting. The purpose is not to promote interaction per se, but to promote interaction of a special kind. Workshops are structured so as to enable the participants to interact on a basis of equality within the setting, to speak and listen freely, to examine the conflict analytically, and to seek solutions in a nonadversarial, problem solving framework. The purpose of these workshops is to provide the parties an opportunity to explore each other's perspective, gaining an understanding of both sides' concerns, needs, fears, priorities, and constraints, and, through a joint process of creative problem solving, to generate new ideas for solutions to the conflict that satisfy the fundamental needs of both sides, particularly their needs for identity, security, justice, and recognition. The ultimate goal is to transfer the new insights and ideas developed in these interactions into the political debate and decision-making processes in the two communities.

A central activity of problem-solving workshops is a process of "negotiating" identity: exploring and inventing ways of accommodating the two group identities to one another (Kelman, 1992a, 1997d, 1999). Workshop participants engage in this kind of negotiation explicitly at times, though more often implicitly. An important part of this process involves differentiating the enemy image, particularly, differentiating between the negative and positive components of the other's ideology and symbols of legitimacy. Recognition of the positive components makes possible the development of a common vision of the future, in which

assertion and enhancement of the national identity of one does not presuppose negation and destruction of the identity of the other.

There are some positive elements in the relationship between the two identities on which such efforts to overcome the dominant pattern of negative interdependence can draw. First, there are identity elements that are shared by Israelis and Palestinians, deriving mostly from the fact that the two peoples have been living together in the same country or region for a long time. They share a love of the land and particular places within it; this love of the same geography, of course, is part of the problem rather than the solution when it translates into a desire for exclusive ownership. Some of the shared elements represent cultural patterns that the two peoples have borrowed from each other in the course of their interaction over the years: customs, language, music, foods, sociopolitical attitudes and behaviors. Such shared identity elements can be observed when Israelis and Palestinians meet in informal settings, such as workshops. In and of themselves, of course, shared identity elements of this sort provide no insurance against hostility, intense conflict, and war when vital interests between the two peoples clash. Moreover, shared identity elements can be assimilated to the competitive, zero-sum view of the relationship. For example, Palestinians may express resentment at the description of *felafel* (an Arab specialty, which has become a popular Israeli snack) as typical Israeli food; they tend to see this as another thing that the Israelis have stolen from them. In one of our workshops in the early 1980s, a Palestinian participant made precisely that point about *felafel*. An Israeli participant responded that it is not a matter of taking something from the other, but a small example of the mutual enrichment that can result from the interaction between the two cultures. This exchange led, within the workshop context, to a fruitful reexamination of the zero-sum view of identity. This incident provides an admittedly small example of how, given the necessary conditions for movement toward peace, shared identity elements can contribute to transformation of the relationship.

Furthermore, the other as a group is itself a part of each group's identity, since it is an integral part of the land around which the identity is defined. The inclusion of the other in one's own identity is ambiguous in its implications: In a conflict relationship, it can have a highly negative meaning. For example, Palestinians resented what they perceived to be the attitude of early Zionist settlers toward the Arab population as virtually nonpeople, perhaps akin to the flora and fauna of the land. They also reacted negatively to former Prime Minister Menachem Begin's description of the Palestinians as *Arvei Eretz Yisrael* (the Arabs of the Land of Israel), which subsumed them under Israeli identity. Israelis, similarly, have in the past reacted negatively to the use of the term "Palestinians" in the self-description of the Arab population, since it implied a preeminent relationship to the land, although the term is now used routinely in Israel. Despite the ambiguities, the inclusion of the other in one's own identity creates possibilities for a positive transformation of the relationship. Insofar as the other is seen as living in the same land

as you, belonging to it as you do, and loving it as you do, the other may become, under the appropriate political conditions, a natural partner in a common enterprise and in a transcendent identity.

Finally, and perhaps most important, there exists *in reality* a state of *positive* interdependence between Israelis and Palestinians. Their fates are completely intertwined. The only way in which, in the long run, Israelis can survive, feel secure, develop, prosper, and fulfill themselves as a people is for Palestinians to survive, feel secure, develop, prosper, and fulfill themselves, and vice versa. This reality has, to a considerable degree, been recognized on both sides, even though there is still much hard work ahead before a final peace agreement can be signed. Most Israelis have come to realize that their own vision for Israel can be fulfilled only if Palestinian identity is allowed to express itself; and most Palestinians have come to realize that achievement of their national goals depends on Israel's sense of security about the continued existence of their national state. The positive interdependence of the two peoples does not mean an absence of conflict; it merely means that their relationship is characterized by strong cooperative motives along with the competitive motives that will inevitably persist. Conflict therefore becomes susceptible to non-zero-sum, win-win solutions. In particular, national identity moves from being perceived as a zero-sum commodity that inhibits conflict resolution to being perceived as a facilitator of conflict resolution: Fulfillment of the national identity of one is seen as promoting, rather than jeopardizing, the national identity of the other.

Politically, the positive interdependence of the two identities requires a solution that allows each people to assert its national identity without negating the identity of the other. To achieve such a solution, Israelis have to recognize that Palestinians cannot accept anything less than an independent state on the West Bank and Gaza, with its capital in East Jerusalem, and Palestinians have to recognize that Israelis cannot accept anything more than such a state. For each, an acceptable solution will be one that secures its national existence through the political expression of its national identity.

The reality of positive interdependence can serve as the starting point for the kind of equal-status interactions that Allport (1954) postulated as a condition for intergroup contact conducive to attitude change. Constructive interaction based on the recognition that the two parties need each other to build a sustainable peace can generate ideas for resolving the conflict in a way that allows each side to accommodate the identity of the other.

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